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## Fostering flowers: Women, landscape and the psychodynamics of gender in 19th Century Australia

Pamela Hodge  
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**Pamela Jeanette Hodge, B.A. (Hons.)**

**FOSTERING FLOWERS:**

**WOMEN, LANDSCAPE  
AND THE PSYCHODYNAMICS  
OF GENDER IN 19TH  
CENTURY AUSTRALIA.**

**Thesis submitted to the History Department, Edith Cowan  
University, Mount Lawley, Western Australia, fulfilling the  
requirements for a Ph.D., March, 1998.**

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Signature

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**ABSTRACT.**

It is said that when the Sphinx was carved into the bedrock of Egypt it had the head as well as the body of Sekhmet the lioness Goddess who presided over the rise and fall of the Nile, and that only much later was the head recarved to resemble a male pharaoh.<sup>1</sup> Simon Schama considered the 'making over' of Mount Rushmore to resemble America's Founding Fathers constituted 'the ultimate colonisation of nature by culture ... a distinctly masculine obsession [expressing] physicality, materiality and empirical externality, ... a rhetoric of humanity's uncontested possession of nature'.<sup>2</sup> It would be comforting to think that, although Uluru has become the focus of nationalist myths in Australia, to date it has not been incised to represent Australia's 'Great Men' - comforting that is, if it were not for the recognition that if Australia had had the resources available to America in the 1920s a transmogrified Captain Cook and a flinty Governor Phillip may have been eyeballing the red heart of Australia for the greater part of a century.

My dissertation traces the conscious and unconscious construction of gender in Australian society in the nineteenth century as it was constructed through the apprehension of things which were associated with 'nature' - plants, animals, landscape, 'the bush', Aborigines, women. The most important metaphor in this construction was that of women as flowers; a metaphor which, in seeking to sacralise 'beauty' in women and nature, increasingly externalised women and the female principle and divorced them from their rootedness in the earth - the 'earth' of 'nature', and the 'earth' of men's and women's deeper physical and psychological needs. This had the consequence of a return of the repressed in the form of negative constructions of women, 'femininity'<sup>3</sup> and the land which surfaced in Australia, as it did in most other parts of the Western World, late in the nineteenth century.

What I attempt to show in this dissertation is that a negative construction of women and the female principle was inextricably implicated in the accelerating development of a capitalist consumer society which fetishised the surface appearance of easily reproducible images of denatured objects. In the nineteenth century society denatured women along with much else

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<sup>1</sup> Beryl Rowland, *Animals with Human Faces: A Guide to Animal Symbolism*, Allen & Unwin, 1974. The lion and lioness presided over the annual floods of the Nile.

<sup>2</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1995, pp. 396-7.

<sup>3</sup> 'Femininity' - is here used to represent the female principle - as such femininity is not the exclusive property of either gender.



(iv)

as it turned from the worship of God and 'nature' to the secularisation of endlessly proliferating images emptied of meaning; of spirituality. An increasing fascination with the appearance of things served to camouflage patriarchal assumptions which lopsidedly associated women with a 'flowerlike' femininity of passive receptivity (or a 'mad' lasciviousness) and men with a 'masculinity' of aggressive achievement - and awarded social power and prestige to the latter.

The psychological explanation which underlies this thesis and unites its disparate elements is that of Julia Kristeva who believed that in the nineteenth century fear of loss of the Christian 'saving' mother - the Mother of God - led to an intensification of emotional investment among men and women in the pre-oedipal all-powerful 'phallic' mother who is thought to stand between the individual and 'the void of nothingness'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Julia Kristeva, 'Motherhood according to Bellini' (1975) in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Leon Roudiez (ed), Thomas Gorn, Alice Jardine, Leon Roudiez (trans.), Basil Blackwood, Oxford, U.K., 1981, pp. 238-270.

**Acknowledgments.**

In 1977 Ann Douglas wrote that in researching the nineteenth century she had:

[E]xpected to find my fathers and my mothers; instead I discovered my fathers and my sisters. The best of men had access to solutions, and occasionally inspiring ones, which I appropriate only with anxiety and effort that attend genuine aspiration. The problems of the women correspond to mine with a frightening accuracy that seems to set us outside the processes of history; the answers of even the finest of them were often mine, and sometimes largely unacceptable to me.<sup>1</sup>

I can put it no better - the chameleon of patriarchy is seemingly like that, confounding men and women with its mythical ability to endlessly change while endlessly staying the same - a tiny serpent in paradise that looks and feels to us, who know no other, to be as old as time itself.

My thanks for their generous help and support in the preparation and writing of this dissertation goes with gratitude to my very able supervisors Professor Geoffrey Bolton and Dr Maryon Allbrook and to the staff and students at Edith Cowan University, Mount Lawley, Western Australia. Thanks too are due to Professor Bob Hodge, Dr Lenore Layman, Dr Jill Julius Mathews and Pen Hetherington for their professional insights, support and expertise. John Smith was everything a fellow post graduate student should be and I owe him an especial debt of gratitude. Without the encouragement and understanding of my family - Bobby Darling - Turner, Bob Turner, Christopher and Cathy Buchanan and Christine Mitson - and my friends Lesley Aloni and Sally Rogers this dissertation would not have been written; my love and gratitude to them goes beyond anything that can be expressed in words.

I dedicate this dissertation which has taught me so much to my beloved grandchildren Sarah, Melanie, Rose-Marie and James - joyous youngsters who, in their turn, are learning what it means to be born in a society which strongly distinguishes thinking from feeling, self from other, humanity from the rest of nature, and then wonders why its sacred myths (which it distrusts) continue to explore painful polarisation and seek restitution for that which has been lost.

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<sup>1</sup> Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1979, p. 11.

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## Introduction:

One of the things which perplexes feminists and other social analysts in contemporary Australia is, that despite widespread rejection of the tenets of patriarchy and despite changes over time in familial and social structures, patriarchal attitudes have become part of Australia's mythical tradition - and as such are strongly resistant to modification. While some consider the resilience of patriarchy stems from the combining in personal relations of power with 'intimacy, love, commitment and mutual dependency',<sup>1</sup> others claim that it stems from Australian women, conditioned by the internal and psychological forces of a national psyche 'obsessed with masculinity', accepting a role which transmits patriarchal patterns to each succeeding generation.<sup>2</sup> Such differences in interpretation can be explained by disciplinary bias: while philosophers claim that the standard interpretation of concepts - 'moral dualism, reason, individualism, moral development and nature' - work against women being accepted as full moral subjects, materialists stress the importance of economic, social, and physiological factors in maintaining women's subsidiary status, psychohistorians stress the importance of the family in reinforcing and reproducing patriarchal patterns and assumptions, and linguists stress that it is because men control language that women continue to be constructed through maternal and sexual functions.<sup>3</sup>

Men and women who were born in the nineteenth century in Australia inherited conflicted constructions of gender identity in which the *dominant* mythical conception was belief in a hypertrophied 'masculinity' of heroic male conquest and a reductionist 'femininity' of female innocence, passivity and submissiveness.<sup>4</sup> In terms of day to day living this meant that when emigrant women attempted, or were encouraged, to embrace the so-called masculine aspects of themselves - courage, justifiable rage or the wish to achieve, to be potent - they

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<sup>1</sup> Norma Grieve & Michael Perdices, 'Patriarchy: A Refuge from Maternal Power? Dinnerstein's Answer to Freud', *Australian Women: Feminist Perspectives*, Norma Grieve & Patricia Grimshaw (eds.), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, Victoria, 1981, pp. 21, 26. I adopt Grieve and Perdices' definition of patriarchy as 'a cultural rule which accords higher values to the activities, and greater power to the person, of those assigned to the male rather than the female gender'.

<sup>2</sup> David J. Tacey, *Edge of the Sacred: Transformation in Australia*, Harper Collins, Melbourne, 1995, pp. 51-2. Miriam Dixson, *The Real Matilda*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria, 1976, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth J. Porter, *Women and Moral Identity*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1991, p. xiii. Penelope Hetherington, 'The History of Australian Women', in *Studies in Western Australian History VII*, Patricia Crawford (ed.), December 1983, p. 5. Dale Spender, *ManMade Language*, Harper Collins, London, 1990 (1980), pp. 3, 54, 77.

<sup>4</sup> The terms femininity and masculinity have become problematised by contemporary critiques of the nineteenth century construction of a dichotomised ideal 'femininity' / 'masculinity'. As I believe gender differences are socially inscribed, from this point when I use these terms inverted commas are implied.

experienced not only outward resistance but inward trepidation. Hence even socially active women who were born and reared in the nineteenth century tended to partially repress so-called masculine attributes which they then experienced as a threatening shadow hovering on the perimeter of their psyches / lives.<sup>5</sup>

Between 1500 and 1800 a whole cluster of changes occurred in Europe. Among other things, men and women of all social classes began to perceive and classify natural productions, to develop new sensibilities toward animals, plants and landscape and to develop an intensified interest in, and doubt and anxiety about, man's relationship to the natural world.<sup>6</sup> At the same time a growing belief in companionate marriage and the sanctity of childhood modified earlier conceptions of marriage and the family. In both areas of concern it was believed that the 'feminised nature' of women, children, animals and landscape should be understood and controlled - (though not desacralised).<sup>7</sup> It has been claimed that the growth of the domestic ideal resulted in what has been called the 'feminisation' of society and heaven.<sup>8</sup> In settler societies such as Australia and America this 'feminisation' encouraged discourses of the home, family and countryside which intersected with the construction of a 'rural ideal' with the result that it was accepted that the ideal family - seen as the 'natural' and stable unit of society - should be located in a rural setting.<sup>9</sup>

Christian settlers to America and Australia were led by biblical precedent to expect 'a wilderness like Eden and a desert like the garden of the Lord': consequently they looked forward to finding a country in a charming 'state of primitive nature'.<sup>10</sup> Such hopes could lead to resentment when settlers experienced colonial Gardens of Eden as lonely and

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<sup>5</sup> Tacey, 1995. Tacey drew on James Hillman's interpretation of the Jungian concept that unclaimed 'good' and 'bad' potentialities are repressed into the unconscious of the individual to form a 'shadow' self.

<sup>6</sup> Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800*, Allen Lane, London, 1983, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Catherine Hall & Lenore Davidoff, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, Hutchinson, London, 1987.

<sup>8</sup> Patricia Grimshaw, 'Women and the Family in Australian History: a Reply to *The Real Matilda*', *Historical Studies*, vol. 18, no. 72., October 1979, pp. 412-421. By the late nineteenth century women were told to think of the home as 'their inseparable self'. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1977, pp. 8-9, 49, described middle class women's alliance with the clergy to morally uplift society a 'winning strategy which was a hollow victory'.

<sup>9</sup> Lynda Neal, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1988, p. 40.

<sup>10</sup> Reverend John Wollaston, November 1841, in Marian Aveling (ed.), *Westralian Voices: Documents in Western Australian History*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, WA, 1979, p. 110. In 1841 Wollaston wrote: 'Nothing can be more depressing than the loneliness of the bush away from settlement'.

spartan. It was then that settlers tended to describe 'the face of the country' as 'deceitful'.<sup>11</sup> In this, as in much else, women tended to mirror the general perceptions of their time.<sup>12</sup> The term 'wilderness' incorporated a rich mix of allegorical, metaphorical and literal meanings which were shared by settlers from a wide range of backgrounds. The term wilderness thus provided a comprehensive linguistic and imaginative framework which allowed the paradox of redemption / damnation to exist without seeming contradiction. During the years of transportation 1787-1868 a gradual process of accommodation to the Australian landscape was made in which tophilia replaced topophobia and the land came to be seen not only as a resource to be exploited but, for some, as a resource to be enjoyed.<sup>13</sup> Adaptation to the natural environment could be active or passive, conscious or unconscious; the celebration of freedom and newness or the experiencing of powerlessness and anomie. It was those settlers who enjoyed an active and conscious form of adaptation who generally appreciated their surroundings.<sup>14</sup>

It has been claimed that in settler societies colonists, in 'peering outward from the interior of a social 'fragment', attributed their history to the 'open land of the frontier' and later, when mythologising 'pioneer' experience, exaggerated gender difference.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, when a crisis in gender identity occurred in the western world at the end of the nineteenth century, it took the form in Australia and America of the idealisation of an extreme form of masculinity, and (as I contend in this thesis) an extreme form of femininity. In Australia this concept of a hypertrophied masculinity entered male (dominant or public) discourse in the form of a national legend of mateship,<sup>16</sup> and, I would argue, the concept of a hypertrophied femininity entered female (subordinate or hidden) discourse in the form of an iconography of flowers. Recent feminist scholarship suggests that in the period which preceded Federation - a period which was experienced by colonists as the first step in a painful separation from the

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas Watling, Letters from an Exile at Botany Bay to his Aunt at Dumfries, 1794 in George Mackaness (ed.), *Australian Historical Monographs*, NS, Review Publications, Dubbo, 1977, p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur also wrote at this time of the deceitfulness of the land. As European settlement progressed the 'face' of the wilderness was changed and was experienced differently.

<sup>13</sup> Valma Rae Hawkes, *Wilderness was Paradox Enow? An Analysis of Perception and Response to the Australian Environment from 1st Settlement to the National Park 1788-1879*, Ph D Thesis, University of Queensland, Brisbane, 1992.

<sup>14</sup> Amos Rapoport, *Australia as Human Setting*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1972, p. 17. R. Heathcote, 'Visions of Australia 1770-1970' in Rapoport, 1972, pp. 77-98.

<sup>15</sup> Louis Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies: Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada and Australia*, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1964, pp. 5, 10, 11. Hartz argued that, lacking the 'stimulus to change' which their society of origin had provided, it was common for groups of emigrants from revolutionary Europe to go through a period when their imported social assumptions became 'moral absolutes frozen below the surface of thought'.

<sup>16</sup> Hartz, 1964, p. 3. Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1958.

'mother' country - a vacillating commitment to autonomy led to a crisis in male gender identity and to a fear among men that they were losing control of their 'self-representations'. This crisis was so marked that it is said to have constituted 'a hesitation at the heart of masculinity'.<sup>17</sup> I show that there was also a crisis in female gender identity and a parallel anxiety in women that they might lose control of their self-representations.

The softening of attitudes towards 'nature' which was part of the cultural baggage of the migratory fragment of free settlers to Australia coexisted with a belief that masculinity - defined as an outgoing physicality, a categorising mentality, and, (for the middle classes), a 'rational' interest in scientific practice - was inborn. This definition of masculinity coincided with the presupposition that men were the producers, while reproduction was 'women's work'.<sup>18</sup> The conditions of early settlement - which included a high proportion of military and naval men in positions of power - meant that, after an initial period of disruption, women of all classes found themselves locked ever more tightly into marriage and domesticity.<sup>19</sup> When and where women were found necessary for the pioneering enterprise - and this varied as to time and place - women's use-value could enhance their domestic power, but, even when this occurred, such gains were generally made at the expense of women's social and economic power.<sup>20</sup> As the century progressed and frontier life became less the norm, middle class women, (partly in an attempt to compensate for their loss of a 'useful' domestic role) joined ranks with clergymen in an attempt to extend their sphere of moral influence beyond the home. Ready access to the natural environment in Australia meant women frequently challenged self-limitations in regard to physical barriers more readily than their European counterparts at the same time as they were more psychologically restricted to a home-orientated role.

In Australia, as in Britain, disjunctive gender configurations culminated in the late nineteenth century in the development of 'first wave' feminism which saw middle class

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<sup>17</sup> Josie Castle & Helen Pringle, 'Sovereignty and sexual identity in political cartoons', in Sue Magarey, Susan Sheridan, Sue Rowley (eds.), *Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1993, pp. 136-7, 144, 147-8. The authors argue that the depiction of male politicians in drag in Australian political cartoons during the Federation debates expressed male anxiety about virility and the stability of sexual difference.

<sup>18</sup> Hall & Davidoff, 1987. Marian Aveling, 'Imaging New South Wales as a Gendered Society 1783-1821', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 25, no. 98, April 1992.

<sup>19</sup> Aveling, 1992, pp. 5, 6, 11.

<sup>20</sup> Patricia Grimshaw, 'Women's History and Family History: An Exploration of Colonial Family Structure', Grieve & Grimshaw, 1981.



women challenging how male and female sexuality<sup>21</sup> was defined and campaigning to extend the sexual and moral restrictions which applied to women, to men.<sup>22</sup> Marilyn Lake considered that at this time the *Bulletin* advocated a masculinity of male independence which caused battle lines to be drawn between first-wave feminism and what she called its analogous counterpart, 'masculinism'.<sup>23</sup> This 'battle' between feminism and masculinism needs to be understood within the context of the eroticisation of everyday life which took place in western cultures in the second half of the nineteenth century. It has been claimed that the eroticisation of everyday life focused attention on the spectacle of the female body as cultural fetish, with the result that women's bodies - in particular the bodies of pubescent girls - became not only the object of male sexual desire but of male desire for a phallus potent enough to challenge the power of 'the state' - experienced as an increasingly interventionist, controlling 'Father'.<sup>24</sup>

The second half of the nineteenth century when Australian writers and artists were beginning to embrace internationalism and forge a specific nationalism was a period when it was common in European art for the female body to be equated with sexualised primal landscapes and used as the site for negative constructions of female sexuality and female reproductive function.<sup>25</sup> In such paintings the pudenda or pubic 'bush' of a woman was represented as the place from which all human life issued - and by misogynist implication, the place where the energies and life of men were reabsorbed through their sexuality.<sup>26</sup> National identity has been described as the most compelling identity myth of the modern

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<sup>21</sup> Gillian Whitlock, '1901 / 1933, From Eutopia to Dystopia', in Kay Ferres (ed.) *The Time to Write: Australian Women Writers 1890-1930*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria, 1993, p. 172. For first wave feminists 'sexuality' meant the whole terrain of power relations and debates which focused on the female body - pornography, rape, prostitution, monogamy, celibacy, marriage, motherhood, disease, childbirth.

<sup>22</sup> Judith Allen, '“Our Deeply Degraded Sex” and “The Animal in Man”: Rose Scott, Feminism and Sexuality 1890-1925', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 7& 8, Summer 1988, pp. 64-91.

<sup>23</sup> Marilyn Lake, 'The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context', *Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no. 86, April 1986, pp. 116-31. In this battle feminists embraced temperance, suffrage, urban renewal, eugenics and social purity against men who endorsed a radical national masculinist tradition which upheld a 'libertarian notion of male sexuality'. Lake's claims have been challenged - Chris McConville 'Rough Women, Respectable men and Social Reform: a Response to Lake's 'Masculinism'', *Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no. 88, April 1987, pp. 432-440: and defended - Judith Allen, 'Mundane' Men: Historians, Masculinity and Masculinism', *Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no. 89, October 1987, pp. 617-28. David Goodman, *Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994, pp. 149-78, argued that 'masculinism' first emerged during the Victorian gold rushes.

<sup>24</sup> Jon Stratton, *The Desirable Body: Cultural Fetishism and the erotics of consumption*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1996, p. 25.

<sup>25</sup> Bram Dykstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-siecle Culture*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986, pp. iviii - ix. Dykstra argued that a 'virulent misogyny' resulted from men putting women on a 'lofty pedestal'.

<sup>26</sup> Schama, 1995, pp. 372, 373.

world - an explosive force which characteristically has both a historical and a geographical heritage. In Australia, as in America, the two principal symbolic landscapes of national identity have been the Arcadian 'beyond' and the English landed estate.<sup>27</sup> These myths coalesced in Australia in the late nineteenth century when the Australian male imaginary constructed myths of national identity in which the land or 'the bush'<sup>28</sup> (rather than woman) was the principal loved, feared and fetishised 'object of desire'. In such myths the land was represented as an absorbing primal mother, a feminine 'other' against which the 'male-as-norm' and the 'bushman-as-hero' could be constructed.<sup>29</sup>

If it is accepted that in Australian myth in the late nineteenth century the land was 'virtually always' represented as feminine; a metaphor for woman,<sup>30</sup> it suggests that with ongoing commercialisation in Britain and a rural recession in Australia, fluctuations of fortune inherent in a competitive capitalist society generated a climate in Australia wherein both women and the 'unproductive' land were constructed as something from which men felt they needed to escape, and / or over which they experienced the desire to establish a libidinous dominance.<sup>31</sup> I would argue that at the same time as men in the colonies displaced their fetishisation of women onto the land, women displaced *their* fetishisation of themselves and other women onto Australian 'wild' flowers - symbols of women's newly 'acclimatised' and nationalised selves.

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<sup>27</sup> Stephen Daniels, *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States*, Polity Press, Cambridge, U.K., 1993, pp. 3-5. That is, not literally west but 'over there', beyond.

<sup>28</sup> Eliza Brown to Mr Bussey, October 2 1843, in Peter Cowan (ed.), *A Faithful Picture: the Letters of Thomas and Eliza Brown at York in the Swan River Colony 1841-1852*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Western Australia, 1977, p. 38. Eliza described 'the bush' as 'all parts of the country that is not thick forest or cleared land'. As I hope to show, women regarded 'the bush' somewhat differently to men - in time coming to value it for its abundant wildflowers.

<sup>29</sup> Annette Kolodny, 'Unearthing Herstory' in *Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, Cheryl Glotfelty & Harold Fromm (eds.), University of Georgia Press, Georgia, 1996, p. 171. The land not simply as mother but as the 'essential feminine; the total female principle of gratification meant to enclose the individual in an environment of receptivity, repose and painless and integral satisfaction'. Kay Schaffer, 'Women and the Bush: Australian National Identity and Representations of the Feminine', in *Working Papers in Australian Studies*, no. 46, June 1987, London: Institute of Commonwealth Studies. p. 1. Kay Schaffer, *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, p. 91.

<sup>30</sup> Kay Schaffer 'Henry Lawson, the Drover's Wife and the critic', in Margarey, Sheridan, Rowley, 1993, p. 201. Equations such as 'father sky to mother earth, colonial master to the plains of promise, native son to the barren bush, contemporary Australians to the red/ dead heart' reproduce the 'perfect' couple - masculine activity and feminine passivity.

<sup>31</sup> John Tosh, 'New Men? The Bourgeois Cult of Home', *History Today*, vol. 46, no. 12, December 1996, pp. 9-15. Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonisation of Women in Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria, 1975. Beverley Kingston, *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann*, Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1975. Dixon, 1976. Schaffer, 1987. Tacey, 1995, Ch 2. Tacey interpreted the

Given the discursive and social struggle which occurred in gender politics towards the end of the nineteenth century in Australia it is not surprising to find that oppositional Australian myths of settlement were generated - the Pioneer Legend which celebrated the brave men and women who established family life on the frontiers, and the Australian Legend which lionised single, fraternally - orientated men who had entered the malign bush and had either conquered, or been conquered by, it.<sup>32</sup> These oppositional myths of settlement (both of which were predicated on the subjugation, or the need to subjugate, the feminine),<sup>33</sup> not only encoded oppositional constructions of masculinity - that is as *either* domestically social or heroically individual,<sup>34</sup> but, as I hope to show in this dissertation, fragmented constructions of women. In the literature and art of the time married women were represented as either the 'fulfilled' mother at the heart of a benign, protected domesticity,<sup>35</sup> or as the 'suffering mother' the power of whose maternity was diminished or denied by society.<sup>36</sup> Co-existing with these powerful negative and positive constructions of women as wives and mothers was a secondary construction of women as independent and heroic single girls who were perfectly adapted to the Australian environment in which they lived.<sup>37</sup>

Kristeva argued that in western cultures 'becoming-a-mother' can only be accounted for by two discursive practices - that of Science and that of Christian theology. She believed that, while scientific discourse has no concern with 'the subject, the mother as site of her proceedings', Christian discourse defines maternity as 'an impossible elsewhere, a sacred beyond, a vessel of divinity, a spiritual tie with the ineffable godhead'.<sup>38</sup> The nineteenth century witnessed the appropriation by lay humanism of Christian theological discourse to create the cult of the mother as 'tenderness, love and social conservation'; a construction which Kristeva considered positioned women where 'the subject and its speech split apart,

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projection of utopian and dystopian images onto the landscape as evidence that positive and negative shadows from the unconscious had not been integrated into the personality.

<sup>32</sup> J. B. Hirst, 'The Pioneer Legend', in John Carroll (ed.) *Intruders in the Bush: The Australian Quest for Identity*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1982, Ward, 1958.

<sup>33</sup> Gail Reekie, 'Contesting Australia: Feminism and Histories of the Nation', in *Images of Australia: An Introductory Reader in Australian Studies*, Gillian Whitlock & David Carter (eds.), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1992, pp. 145-55. In these terms 'femininity' or femaleness symbolically represents attachment to private concerns or 'mere life'.

<sup>34</sup> Lake, 'Identifying the Masculinist Context', 1986.

<sup>35</sup> Bernice McPherson, 'The Verandah as Feminine Site in the Australian Memory' in Jeanette Hoorn (ed.), *Strange Women: Essays in Art and Gender*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1994, pp. 67-80.

<sup>36</sup> Jeanette Hoorn, 'Mothers in Distress: The Regulation of Maternity in Colonial Academic Painting', in Hoorn (ed.) 1994, argued that the dominant image in the painting of the time was of the 'suffering mother'.

<sup>37</sup> McPherson, 1994.

<sup>38</sup> Kristeva, 1981, p. 237.

fragment and vanish'. In this reading the mother as subject eludes social intercourse by becoming the 'threshold' where nature meets culture, where flesh meets spirit, where materiality meets transcendence. With the growth of scientific discourse in the nineteenth century religious beliefs which for centuries had held that the woman as mother stood 'at the filter between humans and nothingness' were indirectly challenged. With this challenge at an unconscious level 'every speaker' was faced with conceiving 'its Being in relation to some void'. Kristeva believed this was threat against, first, the individual's 'mastery, and ultimately, its stability'. Rather than confront this terror of nothingness, nineteenth century men and women partially transferred belief in the 'saving' feminine mother of Christianity to the 'phallic', or all-powerful masculine mother of science.<sup>39</sup> The conflation in the nineteenth century of the discourses of science and Christian theology meant women began the twentieth century doubly determined in discourse as social objects whose service to the community was to be ambiguously powerful / redemptive.

Individuals in the threatening situation of a frontier society, faced with the possible psychic loss of the Mother of Christian mythology, kept her alive (in terms of this thesis, 'fostered' her) by projecting 'her' onto the landscape, gardens, farms, flowers and other natural productions. At the same time, fearing the psychic loss of God the Father, individuals intensified masculinity within colonial society. My research would suggest that in attempting to adjust to new scientific conceptions of the natural universe in which God the Father was increasingly absent from the landscape men and women in the late nineteenth century in Australia psychically re-embraced the feared and revered 'phallic' mother of pre-linguistic childhood memory. In nineteenth century literature Australia was complexly conceived as a land of freedom and opportunity and a place which caused barbaric regression.<sup>40</sup> This legacy, which reflected a need to foster the 'saving' and later the 'phallic' mother', helps explain why myth continues to represent Australia as a place wherein men and women live a satisfying life in the 'bush' when in reality since the beginning of the twentieth century the majority of Australians have lived an urban life in coastal cities.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Kristeva, 1981, pp. 237-8.

<sup>40</sup> Patrick Brantlinger, *Black Swans or Botany Bay Eclogues: British Literature and Imperialism 1830-1914*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1988, pp. 109-10. The colonial setting served as a backdrop for the conquest and conversion of cannibals and also as an enabling space where the colonisers might or might not be redeemed. Elizabeth Macarthur to Eliza Kingdon, 1 September 1795, in Sibella Macarthur Onslow (ed.), *The Macarthurs of Camden*, Rigby, Sydney, 1973 (1914), p. 46. This was one of the reasons children - most usually boys - were sent to England to be educated.

<sup>41</sup> Geoffrey Bolton, *Spoils and Spoilers: Australians Make Their Environment 1788-1980*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1981, p. 124. For example: between 1900 and 1930 Sydney's population grew from half a million to one and a quarter million.

It is not difficult to discover what men thought about women, gender relations and the natural environment in Australia in the nineteenth century. However, part of the object of this dissertation has been to discover what women thought about themselves and other women, natural productions, landscape, 'the bush',<sup>42</sup> and gender relations in nineteenth century Australia. Because women in the nineteenth century were not encouraged to have, or express, an independent opinion about themselves, landscape or the relations of power, my task has proved to be somewhat difficult.<sup>43</sup> Ann Curthoys believed that in a postmodern world cultural analysts who wish to simultaneously engage questions of class, race and gender need to adopt an interdisciplinary approach and use linguistic and semiotic analysis to tease new and deeper meanings from texts.<sup>44</sup> Keeping this in mind, I constructed a psychohistorical framework and used analytic methods to elicit meaning from texts in the hope that - taken together - this would enable me to see through the strategies nineteenth century women used to negotiate their proscribed position as cultural producers.

As an important part of this approach I have explored nineteenth century women's self-constructions by examining the metaphor women as flowers / flowers as women. This is a two-way metaphor which has been, and is, powerfully operative in western society ever since it first emerged in the fifteenth century with the development of European commercial horticulture.<sup>45</sup> The British middle class metaphor of women as flowers was modified in Australian society by the large number of working class Catholic Irish, and especially working class Catholic Irish women, who after emigrating to the colonies inter-married with Protestants.<sup>46</sup> Not only was the Catholic concept of Mary, the Mother of God, thus (often

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<sup>42</sup> The term 'landscape' can be used to mean a view or prospect or the material environment surrounding an individual. I mostly use 'landscape' and 'natural environment' in the sense of material surroundings. When occasionally I use landscape to mean 'prospect' the context will give the meaning. The term, 'the bush', has its own applicability and as, having overcome their initial reservations, colonial women as well as men used the term to describe newly settled areas or uncleared scrub, I also use it.

<sup>43</sup> Judy Nolte Lensink, 'Expounding the Boundaries of Criticism; the diary as female autobiography', *Women's Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1987, pp. 39-53. The task was made especially difficult by the fact that for the first half of the century even in their diaries women did not ask themselves 'Who am I today compared to who I was before?', but 'How well was I myself today?'

<sup>44</sup> Ann Curthoys, 'Feminism and Chaos Theory; The three body problem', *Hecate*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1991, pp. 14-21. For the postmodernist 'text' has a very broad meaning - in this dissertation I use it to mean women's written (mostly non-fiction) and graphic work.

<sup>45</sup> See Seymour Chwast & Emily Chewning, *The Illustrated Flower*, Harmony Books, New York, 1977, p. 48 for examples of the anthropomorphising of flowers in the present. The recent funeral of Princess Diana in which she was experienced as 'the Rose of Britain' and her coffin smothered in floral tributes, provides a recent example of the emotive power of the metaphor of woman as a beautiful flower who can be 'cut down' in the prime of life.

<sup>46</sup> Patrick O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, New South Wales University Press, Sydney, 1993, (1986).

invisibly) intensified in Australian society, but Irish Catholic influence led to the development of working class discursive modifications of the metaphor of women as flowers. For example the greatest insult which can be offered to an Australian male is to call him a 'pansy' or accuse him of being 'seedy'; while women in Australia have been described not only as sexually active 'sheilas', but, in contradistinction to women as sexually passive flowers, as (flighty) 'birds'.<sup>47</sup>

While close analysis of texts is undoubtedly a fruitful activity, some feminist historians are currently reasserting the need for the use of 'imagination, empathy [and] common sense' in historical reconstruction in order to prevent the subjective experience of historical subjects being submerged and / or distorted by the imposition of cultural meaning.<sup>48</sup> Because nineteenth century women were reticent about their bodies in written texts, and because it was believed in the nineteenth century that God resided in 'nature' and that the soul had a corporeal existence, the danger of misreading nineteenth century women's subjective experience is at its greatest when the female body is under consideration. Christianity has traditionally been a patriarchal religion which equated women, femininity and flowers - and interchangeably depicted them in art as the feminine principle.<sup>49</sup> Because in the nineteenth century women's painting of landscape and flowers represented an attempt to reproduce the 'glory of God', and because science paralleled the breeding of flowers and the 'breeding' of women, floral art was often the means through which women metaphorically represented and / or experienced their own bodies.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> The struggle between working and middle class definitions of women was particularly fierce in Australia. In terms of discourse the former was traditionally encoded in the oral tradition and the latter in the written tradition.

<sup>48</sup> Phyllis Mack in Jane Long, Jan Gothard, Helen Brash, (eds.) *Forging Identities: bodies, gender and feminist history*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, W.A., 1997, Preface.

<sup>49</sup> Kenneth Clark, *Feminine Beauty*, Rizzoli, New York, 1980. Though the ideal of female physical beauty in art changed superficially through the ages, at any period to be considered truly beautiful a woman had to be depicted as embodying 'a peaceful or integrated frame of mind [and a] calm integrity'.

<sup>50</sup> Bible, Matthew, 6: 28-29. The analogy between humans and flowers was first made in the Bible. For example, 'Consider the lilies [ they were anemones as wildflowers] of the field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these'. Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition 1740-1860*, University of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1986, pp. 1, 5. '[O]ur feelings about nature are less censored versions of our feelings about ourselves', 'nature' in the nineteenth century being a 'supreme social value ... called upon to clarify and justify social change'. With the horticultural revolution a huge variety of flowers were collected from around the world and 'improved' by selective cross fertilisation; flower breeding thus opened the way for the eugenics movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Colonial women's favourite past-time - the genteel accomplishment of painting 'wild' and domestic flowers - though it clearly inculcated in women a socially prescribed femininity which suggested that women be passive, accepting, selfless and willing to serve the interests of those who required them to be 'beautiful' and nurturing - could also be exploratory and confirming of self. In the same way as other socially prescribed and prescriptive activities for women in the nineteenth century such as sewing, gardening, diary and letter writing and religious and philanthropic expression, floral art could be either liberating or constraining.<sup>51</sup> Most importantly, in the colonies the painting of 'wild' flowers not only enabled women to engage with the natural environment but, like the writing of diaries, helped women integrate their personalities and adapt to their changed circumstances.<sup>52</sup>

The written<sup>53</sup> and graphic<sup>54</sup> texts I have used in this dissertation were mostly produced by nineteenth century women who lived in Australia and expressed a deep interest in the natural environment. Such women as Jane Franklin (1791-1875), Frances Macleay (1793-1836), Georgiana Molloy (1805-1843), Louisa Meredith (nee Twamley, 1812-1895), Louisa Clifton (1814-1880), Anne Baxter (1816-1905), Louisa Atkinson (1834-1872), Margaret Forrest (1844-1929) and Ellis Rowan (1848-1922). I have sketched a certain amount of biographical material as background,<sup>55</sup> and interjected these women's stories and voices with the voices of a number of their female contemporaries. When analysing colonial women's art I have been mindful of Bernard Smith's injunction to work 'from the art to the documents as well as from the documents to the art'.<sup>56</sup> In trying to steer a course between empathy and textual analysis I have used an eclectic approach to texts - invoking multiple images and

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<sup>51</sup> Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, The Women's Press, London, 1984.

<sup>52</sup> Lensink, 1987, pp. 39-53

<sup>53</sup> As a historical source women's diaries and letters have been well defended - for example Lensink, 1987, pp. 39-53. Robert Dixon, 'Public and Private Voices', *New Literary History of Australia*, Laurie Hergenhan (ed.), Penguin, Ringwood, Aust., 1988. Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath, Marian Quartly, *Creating a Nation 1788-1990*, McPhce Gribble, Ringwood, Victoria, 1994, pp. 1, 635, 651. It needs to be remembered that in the nineteenth century 'non-fiction' written by women was deeply informed by their reading of imaginative and religious literature and hence (sometimes unconsciously) incorporated literary and religious metaphors.

<sup>54</sup> For the benefits to history of decoding graphics see Bernard Smith, *The Antipodean Manifesto: Essays in Art and History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1976, p. 113. For the value of the study of art in understanding the unconscious processes of women and the functioning of patriarchy see Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1979, p. 249, and Kristeva, 1981, p. 242.

<sup>55</sup> Meaghan Morris, 'I Don't Really like Biography', in *Writing Lives: Feminist Biography and Autobiography*, Susan Margarey, Caroline Guerin, Paula Hamilton (eds.), Australian Feminist Studies Publication, 1992, pp. 12-23. Morris defended biography on the grounds of the 'patchy state of Australian cultural history and the scarcity of women "placed" within it'.

<sup>56</sup> Smith, 1976, p. 112.

voices which, although they seem to belong together, are never monolithic, and allowing disparate elements to reflect upon each other. Though at first this might seem confusing, I believe it has added to the strength of the dissertation by emphasising that in the nineteenth century there was never a single construction of femininity, gender difference, women, nature or the natural environment but that multiple conflicting and contradictory individual and social constructions of these matters circulated in society. Especially it needs to be said that in contradistinction to the expressed concern and interest in, fascination with, and rejection of, the natural environment, women and flowers which I have gathered together for this dissertation there was also a vast amount of (necessarily unrecorded) indifference.

Unfortunately, due to the scarcity of nineteenth century texts produced on this subject by working class women, and the virtual lack of recorded recollections of nineteenth century Aboriginal women,<sup>57</sup> I have mainly had to rely on the views expressed by middle class white women. Nineteenth century Aboriginal women are not wholly absent from this dissertation however for they are reflected through the eyes of the white women who looked at them - sometimes in projective loathing, sometimes in sisterly compassion or rivalry, often in despair, occasionally in fierce empathy or emotive celebration, sometimes as if Aboriginal women were simply a part of the natural environment. At a time when Aboriginal women were allocated two roles in white society - those of servant and prostitute / 'wife' - with research suggesting that in frontier locations the two categories were rarely distinguished<sup>58</sup> - white women generally saw Aboriginal women as passive victims of intra and inter-cultural violence. Although seemingly unaware that the power relations within Aboriginal society gave Aboriginal women considerable personal freedom, agency and female solidarity,<sup>59</sup> nineteenth century European women quickly recognised that Aboriginal women as a group, like white women as a group, were subject to the power of men as a group - a power which

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<sup>57</sup> Beverley Kingston, in *The World Moves Slowly: A Documentary History of Australian Women*, Beverley Kingston (ed.), Cassell, Australia, 1977, p. 3. Pamela Hodge, 'Daisy Bates and her Aboriginal 'Children': the Personal and Social Construction of Myth', unpublished Honours dissertation, Murdoch University, 1992. Ch's 5, 7. Daisy Bates was the only 'anthropologist' to use an Aboriginal female informant, Jane Timble (or Timbul), who was born in the nineteenth century (c1859). Official Report, Thomas Kelly, Supervisor Canning Camp to Aboriginal Department, 19 September 1907, Colonial Office Report, 698/ 07, BL. Unfortunately Bates' numerous accounts of the life and sayings of Jane - whom at different times she called Ngilgie, Nilgie, Nyilgee, Ng'Igi and Ngilgian - varied considerably. See Bates, 'The Adventures of Ngilgian', *Australia*, November 1923 in Bates' Papers 365/88/322 ( and the draft of same) 365/85/172, ANL. Also Bates, 'Ngilgee and her Lover', *Western Mail*, 25 April 1908, Bates, 'Ngilgi: An Aboriginal Woman's Life Story', *West Australian*, 23 March 1935, Daisy Bates, *The Passing of the Aborigines*, John Murray, London, 1966.

<sup>58</sup> Kingston, 1977, p. 3. Susan Hunt, *Spinifex and Hessian: Women's Lives in North West Western Australia, 1860-1900*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, WA, 1986, pp. 104-112.

<sup>59</sup> Patricia Grimshaw, 'Aboriginal Women: A Study in Culture Contact', in Grieve & Grimshaw, 1981.



not only interpenetrated all realms of interaction between the sexes but which had the potential to be expressed in the form of male physical and / or sexual violence.<sup>60</sup> Added to this some exceptional white women recognised that they shared with black women the social role of teaching the young to understand, interact with and appreciate the natural environment in a cyclical or rhythmic, rather than a lineal and progressive sense.<sup>61</sup>

According to Jungian scholars, myth not only speaks to, but is autonomously generated by, the unconscious mind in the form of images which largely bypass the processes of the rational mind.<sup>62</sup> This makes myth, particularly myths about the natural environment, extremely powerful.<sup>63</sup> From the period of discovery until the 1820s when society began to exert control over colonial discourse in the hope of attracting prospective settlers, the view of Australia was contradictory - it being seen on the one hand as a 'brilliant and fantastic, enchanted garden' inhabited by 'noble savages', and on the other as a monstrous and freakish place of inversions inhabited by 'savages' given to cannibalism and wild sexual orgies.<sup>64</sup> This dualistic vision of the world, which can be traced back to early Judaist and classical thought, emerged in medieval times in the form of European myths about 'wild' men and women who were thought to live in the primeval forests of Europe. Such primitive beings and surroundings - which could be endowed with either positive or negative connotations - were experienced as off-setting the walled gardens and constrained lives of the 'civilised'.<sup>65</sup> It has been suggested that large-scale emigration to America and Australia -

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<sup>60</sup> Annette Hamilton, 'A Complex Strategical Situation: gender and power in Aboriginal Australia', in Grieve & Grimshaw, 1981, pp. 74-85.

<sup>61</sup> Rhys Jones, 'Ordering the Landscape' in *Seeing the First Australians*, Ian & Tamsin Donaldson (eds.) Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985, pp. 181-207. European women wrote of teaching children about the natural environment with pleasure and expressed attitudes which were similar to Aboriginal women's method of 'ordering the landscape'. Hoorn, 1994, p. 101. By the middle of the century European women were represented in art and literature as having the function of teaching children to 'love' the natural environment.

<sup>62</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, New York, Jonathan Cape, 1972. James Hillman, *Revisioning Psychology*, Harper & Row, New York, 1975, p. 100. As a Jungian Hillman believes there is an independent imaginary in the human psyche which creates fictions 'autonomously, ceaselessly, spontaneously'.

<sup>63</sup> Schama, 1995, p. 574, has shown the importance to historians of a recognition that in relation to the natural environment all humans carry a historically determined 'back pack of myth and recollection'.

<sup>64</sup> Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1788-1850*, Oxford University Press, London, 1969, pp. 226-34. Candice Bruce & Anita Callaway, 'Wild Nights and Savage Festivities: White Views of Corroborees', *Art and Australia*, vol. 27, no. 2, Summer 1989, pp. 269-75. Elizabeth Webby, 'The Aborigine in Early Australian Literature', *Southerly*, vol. 40, 1980.

<sup>65</sup> Edward Dudley & Maximillian E. Novak, *The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1972, pp. x, 305. Stephen Knight, 'Turf Bench and Gloriet: Medieval Walled Gardens and their Meaning', *Meanjin*, vol. 47, no. 3, Spring, 1988, p. 394. Projective constructions of the mythical wild man ('radically underdressed and overphallic' - that is a representative of unregenerate, unacculturated nature) and wild woman who supposedly inhabited the woods of Europe as being either 'close to nature' or 'debased' paralleled the way in

conceived in relation to Britain as 'pre-industrialising Arcadia's' - reactivated in those who emigrated universal mythical longings and a desire to transform the wilderness.<sup>66</sup> The resurgence of myths relating to transforming the wilderness triggered the modification of myths of the wild man and woman as living not only in the woods (as did dispossessed indigenous peoples) but as living *within* Europeans. Michael Taussig, who explored the fascination cannibalism exerted over colonists, believed that this was because those caught up in the colonial enterprise experienced colonisation as an overwhelming force that devoured the body politic of indigenous peoples: in these terms settlers saw behind the mask of the cannibal the face of the coloniser.<sup>67</sup>

Part of the fascination which Australian wildflowers exerted over middle class colonial women was that they represented a mediatory resolution of the fear women had that frontier experience would cause a strongly repressed inner wildness to take over. To emigrate, to adapt to, become part of, new 'uncivilised' surroundings and yet remain flower-like; that was middle class colonial women's greatest desire, greatest need. Colonial women wanted to *become* Australian wildflowers - hence their endless need to draw and (hopefully) internalise them. Though as the century progressed women began to express equal dissatisfaction with their gendered role as men, because women were conceived as the conservators of spiritual, social and moral values, in their art, writing and lives women largely propagated a conservative 'feminine' image. It is part of the complexity of our inheritance however that it was this conservatism in relation to the female role which had the beneficial side-effect of women passing on to their children a belief in the possibility, the need, for humans to have a sense of spiritual and emotional at-one-ness with nature and an acceptance of the natural world. In the short term this conservatism functioned as a covert critique of masculinist values; in the long term it helped generate and inform the conservation movements which burgeoned in Australia in the twentieth century.

The gold discoveries of the 1850s intensified the mythologisation of Australia as a paradise: after them British writers, hoping to cure Britain of its social ills by encouraging

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which indigenous peoples were later represented as noble or ignoble 'savages'. Schama 1995, pp. 96-7. From the middle ages images of hairy, cannibalistic, sexually omnivorous wild men and women were used to represent the antithesis of the civilised Christian.

<sup>66</sup> Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688- 1980*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1981, p. 51, Ch 3. These dreams were applicable to all classes. Working class dreams of creating Australia as a 'Workingman's Paradise' vied with middle class dreams of creating Australia as a place in which a landed gentry could be established.

<sup>67</sup> Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: a Study in Terror and Healing*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987.

emigration, constructed Australia as a *redemptive* Arcadia - a lost paradise from which man had strayed and to which he would return when purified by suffering.<sup>68</sup> Such literary constructions help explain why, as the Australian colonies were settled, each new disappointment resulted in colonists maintaining fantasies about what was 'beyond, that which was not yet seen' with Australia always the 'land of the future, a paradise belonging to the final stage of history'.<sup>69</sup> Although shaped and informed by a common ideology, it appears that the dreams of men and women emigrants, had a different emphasis - while men tended to harbour psychosexual fantasies of conquering a ready-made Eden, a virgin continent, women tended to see the New World as a frontier garden in which they could establish a 'sanctuary for idealised domesticity'. It is claimed that this gendered difference in 'cultural and imaginative space' was the reason why later in the century - 'in anguish at a lost Eden' and guilt at having 'raped the continent' - men reacted negatively against the land while women expressed sadness at the loss of natural or 'wild' beauty.<sup>70</sup>

Because the nineteenth century was a period during which the mental horizons of individuals gradually shifted from being mythical and theological to being historical and scientific, it is now difficult to know when constructions of the land as a paradise were taken seriously and when they were either rhetorical or a convenient fiction which expressed nostalgia and disguised and legitimised commercial development and exploitation.<sup>71</sup> Given that in the nineteenth century religious belief supported and encouraged a rational outlook and the pursuit of commerce, religious fantasy and commercialism often co-existed. Settlers generally represented themselves as emigrating in order to regenerate their fortunes, their health, their spirits, and the power of their church and nation. However, because the country of their dreams belonged to others, in order to turn dreams into reality colonists found themselves resorting to, or condoning, violence. Consequently in Australia, as in America, colonists who held Christian religious beliefs found themselves inadvertently subscribing to

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<sup>68</sup> Coral Lansbury, *Arcady in Australia: The Evocation of Australia in Nineteenth Century English Literature*, Melbourne University Press, Australia, 1970, pp. 2, 35.

<sup>69</sup> Ross Gibson, *The Diminishing Paradise: Changing Literary Perceptions of Australia*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1984, pp. 11, 21, 32, 90, 96, 135. It was the misfit between hope and experience which caused the land to be portrayed as harbouring 'autochthonous malevolence' behind an attractive exterior.

<sup>70</sup> Annette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her, Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers 1630-1860*, University of Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1986, p. xii. Delys Bird, 'Gender and Landscape: Australian Colonial Women Writers', *Working Papers in Australian Studies*, no. 49, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, July 1989.

<sup>71</sup> Max F. Shultz, *Paradise Preserved: Recreations of Eden in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century England*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 1985, pp. xiii, 3.

a myth of 'regeneration through violence'.<sup>72</sup> Most early settlers had exposure to violence (through personal experience or hearing of it from others) - including that relating to wars with the Aborigines, escaped convicts as bushrangers, the lawlessness associated with the goldfields and domestic violence.<sup>73</sup> Such exposure necessarily generated anxiety - especially among women - which may help explain why it was that at the end of the nineteenth century language assumed that the Australian national identity was masculine.<sup>74</sup>

In Britain and Australia in the nineteenth century the female body was 'the site on which internal contradictions were played out'.<sup>75</sup> The establishment of a unique Australian identity was discursively fought through the bodies of Aboriginal and European women - in the pioneer legend (black) women's bodies as the (unstated) source of sexual satisfaction for men and (white) women's bodies as the producers of the next generation; in the Australian legend the bodies of women transposed into desirous images of the 'bush' which absorbed the lives and spirits of unmarried men.<sup>76</sup> In the nineteenth century the picturesque aesthetic specular enterprise - in which 'appearances were construed as essence' - encoded a 'femininity which responded to variety and change'.<sup>77</sup> The picturesque enterprise thus produced images of a superficial femininity which in the nineteenth century suited the fashion revolution and women's new role as consumer / consumed.<sup>78</sup> In the picturesque enterprise where surface was all, women and the land were both represented as ever changing yet ever the same: under these influences the nineteenth century aestheticising eye gradually transmogrified into the fetishising eye.<sup>79</sup> In other words, in rhythm with social change, as the nineteenth century progressed the metaphor of women as flowers intensified as 'the beauty'

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<sup>72</sup> Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier 1600-1860*, Wesleyan Press, Connecticut, 1973, p. 5.

<sup>73</sup> In Chapter 3 of this dissertation I demonstrate that in nineteenth century Australia domestic violence was not confined to the working classes.

<sup>74</sup> Kay Schaffer, 1987, pp. 5, 9.

<sup>75</sup> Penny Russell, *A Wish of Distinction: Colonial Gentility and Femininity*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p. 126.

<sup>76</sup> Dixon, 1977, p. 23 likened Australia to 'the body of an unloved woman'. White, 1981, pp. 120-121. The press represented Australia in cartoons as a beautiful but naive young virgin from the middle of the nineteenth century.

<sup>77</sup> Ann Bermingham, 'The Picturesque and Ready to Wear Femininity', in Stephen Copley & Peter Garside (eds.) *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature landscape and aesthetics since 1770*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1994. The picturesque enterprise embraced women as well as landscape.

<sup>78</sup> Gail Reekie, 'Impulsive Women, Predictable Men: Psychological constructs of sexual difference in Sales Literature to 1930', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 24, no. 97, October 1991, pp. 359-377. This role was more fully exploited with the professionalisation of advertising in the early twentieth century when psychological profiles of women shoppers enabled the typical sales pitch aimed at women to draw on nineteenth century perceptions of women as having an 'instinctive desire for beauty' and an insatiable desire for 'new pastures'.

<sup>79</sup> Bermingham, 1994, pp. 82, 90, 92.

of women became increasingly open to redefinition, specularisation, objectification and commercialisation.

In the nineteenth century the sociology of the female body was dependent upon the 'control of .. female sexuality, by men exercising patriarchal power'.<sup>80</sup> Levi-Strauss distinguished between three communication systems which constitute social life - the communication system of goods, the communication system of words, and the communication system of women.<sup>81</sup> Throughout the world the arranging of 'suitable' marriages for upper class women has always been seen as a problem. In rejecting the practices of female infanticide and polygamy, patriarchal societies found themselves faced with a periodic 'oversupply' of women. With modification of the practice of arranged marriage, the use of women's bodies' as a medium of communication became highly developed - the scopic tradition of the marriage market in many ways paralleling the marketing of land. In the nineteenth century when women were rarely economically self supporting this led to women becoming equated with commodities such as the land and commercially packaged (like flowers) in order to attract suitable male consumers.<sup>82</sup> When Elizabeth Macarthur urged an unmarried friend to find a husband she received the terse response:

[W]hat would you have me do? not surely be so eccentric as to reverse the matter, and make an offer .. I have not courage, nor vanity enough to pursue the scheme, unless indeed I had a vast deal of the ready, now so much looked after, and indeed so absolutely necessary, but having neither youth wealth or beauty to recommend me, I shall endeavour to make myself contented with the state that I am in, you have my grateful thanks however for your kind advice, though it is not granted me to follow it.<sup>83</sup>

The subordination of women is said to rest on two complementary arguments - the nature / culture argument and the property argument. In the former it is claimed that because of their reproductive role women are associated with nature through their sexuality and fertility, awarded a sub-social status, and then trained into a psychic structure of 'maternal instincts', 'affection' and 'emotions'. The property argument suggests that patriarchal attitudes are the

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<sup>80</sup> Bryan S. Turner, *The Body and Society*, Sage Publications, London, 1996 (1984), Ch. 5.

<sup>81</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1966.

<sup>82</sup> Mary Douglas, *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption*, Allen Lane, Isherwood, 1979. Russell, 1994, pp. 60-61, 92-3. In a period when a bread winner could die at any time there was no time when a woman with children and without means could feel herself exempt from the need to attract a husband. The packaging of women included their actions and thoughts as well as their appearance. Russell described this a 'Genteel performance... dogged by fears and vulnerability'. It was because living in 'the bush' allowed women partial escape from such social imperatives that many women preferred living in the bush to living in the city.

result of a need to regularise the distribution of property through legitimate male heirs. One of the features of nineteenth century patriarchy in Australia was that, with its initial shortage of 'suitable' women, Australia was often a place a place where men who failed to obtain adequate entitlement to land or other forms of property - were excluded not only from power but from forming marriage contracts with women of their own class. For obvious reasons throughout history propertyless males have served as the carriers of romantic love. It was no accident that in Britain and Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century the favourite pattern for household china was the Blue Willow Pattern which used oriental motifs to tell a (British) story of illegitimate love which ambiguously encouraged / discouraged the romantic underside of Victorian marriage.<sup>84</sup> It would not be altogether surprising therefore if the shortage of 'suitable' women which marked the colonial period led to the growth of a view of women which claimed women's natural passions were more potent than their powers of reason - that Eve's body governed Eve's mind.

Even during its hey-day in the 1970s the writing of psychohistory gained few supporters in Australia.<sup>85</sup> Though occasionally it has been suggested that psychohistorians should explore 'the mediation of sexuality in Australian society', and / or use psychoanalytic concepts to elucidate why humans 'undervalue the feminine and overvalue or valorise the masculine',<sup>86</sup> little seems to come of it.<sup>87</sup> In a country in which historians view the writing of biography with some ambivalence, even the belief that psychological theory deepens biographical interpretation, has ensured its neglect.<sup>88</sup> Detractors claim that psychological theories introduce unacceptable levels of distortion into interpretations of the past; defenders that the neglect of psychohistory in Australia results from a 'suspicion of emotional intimacy'.<sup>89</sup> One would expect that feminist historians who wish to redress the 'radically historicist position of some post-structuralist thinkers' in favour of 'the varieties of inner

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<sup>83</sup> R. Kingdon to Elizabeth Macarthur, 15 September 1799, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, p. 54.

<sup>84</sup> Patricia O'Hara, ' "The Willow Pattern that we Knew": The Victorian Literature of Blue Willow', *Victorian Studies*, vol. 36, no. 4, Summer, 1983, pp. 421-442. The legend of the willow pattern - which represented the conventional conflicts of youth versus age, romantic love versus filial duty - was invented in Britain in the mid nineteenth century and thereafter widely used in a variety of genres. Blue willow ware functioned as a metonymy for conspicuous consumption, encoding hierarchies based on class and race and asserting the uniformity of women's social status across time and culture.

<sup>85</sup> John Rickard, 'Psychohistory in Australia: The Next Assignment?' *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 8, June 1981, pp. 2-13.

<sup>86</sup> Hetherington, 1983, p 5. Grieve & Grimshaw, 1981, p. 25.

<sup>87</sup> Miriam Dixson's *The Real Matilda* (1976) is the only seminal Australian feminist work which employed a psychological approach - and it aroused considerable outrage among feminists.

<sup>88</sup> James William Anderson, 'The Methodology of Psychological Biography', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 12, no. 3, Winter 1981.

<sup>89</sup> Rickard, 1981. p. 6.

human experience'<sup>90</sup> would see psychohistory as an ally, but if they do, they fail to act upon it. This may be partly because feminist psychohistorians have inadvertently introduced into their historical reconstructions masculinist discourse / assumptions,<sup>91</sup> and partly because in the past psychohistorical reconstructions, modelled as they have been on the work of Erickson, have focused on famous men. In this dissertation I have tried to benefit from feminist scholarship, psychohistory's 'new way of perceiving evidence',<sup>92</sup> and history's current interest in the lives of everyday men and women by using a psychological theoretical framework constructed from the work of women psychologists who have given a feminist perspective to the theories of Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysts - work which to date has been little drawn on in Australia.<sup>93</sup>

It is Dorothy Dinnerstein's contention that patriarchy results from the consequences of female domination of early child care. In her opinion because an infant is wholly dependent on its primary care giver it inevitably experiences rage towards this figure when the figure frustrates its wishes. Infantile rage, envy and fear of retaliation generates in the child fear of abandonment and loss. In order to control such powerful negative feelings the infant tends to 'split off' internal 'good' from 'bad' images of its primary caregiver. In a society where the mother is generally the sole primary care giver this results in an unconscious ambivalence developing in children towards women - and towards nature as a projection of the mother who is experienced by the infant child as a 'quasi-sentient being, an undifferentiated part of nature'. According to this schema women (and nature) then become either the mother as 'absolute, primal tyrant [or as] omnipotent, magical goddess'.<sup>94</sup> Julia Kristeva believed that, although in their 'prelinguistic, unrepresentable memory' both men and women regret the loss of the fantasy of the 'Phallic mother' without whom the individual would have 'to conceive of its Being in relation to some void', because women incorporate the mother as generative force they seek to defuse ambivalence towards the mother and regain the lost paradise of 'maternal jouissance' by child bearing / child rearing. She believed this

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<sup>90</sup> Phyllis Mack, Long, Gothard & Brash, 1997, p. xviii.

<sup>91</sup> Elizabeth Wilson, 'Knowing Women: the limits of feminist psychology' in *Transitions: New Australian Feminism*, Barbara Caine & Rosemary Pringle (eds.), Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1995, pp. 29-41.

<sup>92</sup> Richard, 1981, p. 13.

<sup>93</sup> Estella Lauter, *Women as Mythmakers: Poetry and Visual Art by Twentieth Century Women*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, USA, 1984, p. xi. I agree with Lauter that, contrary to traditional Freudian and Jungian theory, complexes are not 'unchanging realities' but are specific to historical periods. Because Freud and Jung were observing nineteenth century psychological phenomenon - provided their patriarchal bias is recognised - their theories have relevance for the period under consideration.

<sup>94</sup> Grieve & Perdices, in Grieve & Grimshaw, 1981, pp. 31, 33.

'jouissance', this bonding with the mother of first experience which so unsettles the individual's limits, can also be experienced through religious or creative expression.<sup>95</sup>

Complementing the work of Dorothy Dinnerstein is the work of Louise Kaplan, a practicing child psychologist who refined Freud's notion of the traumatic effect on young children of the 'primal scene' - the time when a child is forced to recognise that it is largely excluded from its parents' sexual and emotional relationship. Instead of unquestioningly endorsing Freud's notion of the Oedipus Complex Kaplan traced the development in children who were experiencing exclusion from the parental dyad of attempts to magically eliminate generational difference and, in boys, of the development of 'forbidden and shameful wishes to be female'; in girls, of 'forbidden and shameful wishes to be male'. In other words, in order to avoid the pain of feeling excluded from their parent's relationship children of both genders imagine themselves as adult and capable of being both the male lover of their mothers and the female lover of their fathers. This reaction to the primal scene - which Kaplan believes occurs in all children - is, she feels, strongly reinforced when a child grows to maturity in a society which strongly dichotomises and enforces gender difference. This is because if it is to gain acceptance and love in such societies a maturing child must suppress any desire to incorporate the 'forbidden' attributes and behaviour which are socially assigned to the opposite gender.<sup>96</sup> In Kaplan's opinion this repression can lead to the development of male and female 'perversions' - which in her opinion are exaggerated expressions of maleness or femaleness - that is, 'grotesque caricatures of gender'. In her terms 'perversions'<sup>97</sup> take the form of dramatically acting out or elaborating a fantasy (based on male and female tropes which circulate in society) which will deceive an imagined or real onlooker as to its content / intent. For instance an anorexic girl, aspiring to be as achieving as her father (so as to attract her mother's love) fears that if she does so she will lose her father's love. Hence she uses her 'masculine' will to refuse to eat - thereby becoming a *caricature* of what society decrees is an attractive woman (who could attract her father's love).<sup>98</sup> In this way desire is both acted out and negated in the one pantomime / bodily inscription. Kaplan's thesis is applicable to this dissertation in that it explains the social and

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<sup>95</sup> Kristeva, 1981, pp. 237-9, 241, 242.

<sup>96</sup> Louise J. Kaplan, *Female Perversions, The Temptations of Madame Bovary*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK, 1991, pp. 49 - 63.

<sup>97</sup> The term 'sexual perversions' has traditionally been used because male 'perversions' usually include an active sexual element - and until recently - the less obviously sexual, and hence less visible, female 'perversions' were not understood.

<sup>98</sup> Kaplan, 1991, pp. 115, 173, 196. When wishing to embody gender exaggeration in the nineteenth century women used food control, cosmetics, undergarments, hairstyles, shoes and clothing, and the internal



self construction of nineteenth century women as being flowers and flowerlike. It was not simply that society instructed women to be passive, receptive and reproductive in the way of flowers but being a flower for a woman was a way of sexually attracting the father - without seeming to do so - while at the same time retaining the attention of the mother who, as was expected of nineteenth century women, constantly professed her 'love' of them.

The nineteenth century idealised childhood 'innocence' - and lived in terror of incest. Janet Jacobs demonstrated how nineteenth century gender stereotyping caused female empathic development to become a defining characteristic of femininity. In the nineteenth century family the female child was considered to be an extension of the male members of her family - not simply their subordinate, but their caretaker and rescuer. In striving to create an idealised empathic, 'loving' self the female child lost the internal as well as the external right to distinguish between her needs and the needs of her male relatives. In the same way men came to believe that their needs were identical with, or took precedence over, those of their female dependents.<sup>99</sup>

With birth control not a real option for most people until late in the century, overly frequent childbearing and large families allowed women to use 'illness' as a refuge from sexual activity. Increasingly taught to regard prostitution with abhorrence, nineteenth century men frequently formed intense, sexually sublimated relationships with close female relatives; relationships which appear to have been both a comfort and a strain to those concerned.<sup>100</sup> The nineteenth century middle class family thus experienced itself as extremely vulnerable to acts of incest - and developed extensive systems of surveillance in order to guard against it. Though actual acts of incest in middle class families in the nineteenth century may have been relatively rare, male and female gender stereotyping which attempted to socialise girls into the ideal of the empathic, submissive female and to socialise boys into the ideal of the assertive, impervious male, meant not only that the nineteenth century fear of incest had a real basis, but that psychological incest which exerted a distortive effect on familial relationships, was common.

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tropes of femininity illness / motherhood (as confinement). Female eating disorders were common in the nineteenth century but were often described as physical illnesses such as green sickness (anaemia).

<sup>99</sup> Janet Liebman Jacobs, 'Victimised Daughters: Sexual Violence and the Empathic Female Self', *Signs*, no. 19, Autumn 1993, pp. 126-139.

<sup>100</sup> Marianne North, *A Vision of Eden: The Life and Work of Marianne North*, Kew Royal Botanic Garden & Webber and Bower, London, 1980, pp. 18, 30. 'My father was from first to last the one idol and friend of my life ... [on his death] I went straight to nature to devote myself to painting from nature, and try to learn from the lovely world which surrounded me'. Despite a life dedicated to travelling and painting flowers and animals, in later life Marianne North, who never married, suffered schizophrenic episodes.

To summarise the psychological framework on which this thesis rests: in accepting that the modern family was set in place in the Australian colonies very early in the nineteenth century,<sup>101</sup> I use Dinnerstein to explain the way in which in the modern family ambivalence was / is constructed towards women and landscape and Kristeva to demonstrate the way in which women frequently dealt / deal with this ambivalence by means of childbearing and / or sublimated creative activity. To refine this position I use the theories put forward by Kaplan to demonstrate the way in which the unconscious deals with this ambivalence / anxiety by means of further exaggerating gender stereotyping - which exaggeration is, in turn, mirrored by society - and those put forward by Jacobs to demonstrate the way in which gendered psychological distortion is perpetuated within the family structure.

This dissertation is made up of an introduction, six chapters and an epilogue / conclusion. In the six chapters I treat six areas of concern relating to women and the natural environment in Australia in the nineteenth century. Chapters one to three respectively deal with the construction of women as flowers / flower gardeners, the construction of women as mothers and the construction of women as lovers. Chapter four deals with women as travellers in / explorers of the natural environment, chapter five women's role in science and chapter six women's creative reproduction of natural history, flowers and landscape. Underpinning the thesis is the confused and contradictory construction of women as sacred / sexual - Mary, the Mother of God and Mary Magdalen the sacred whore - active / passive, restrained / excessive, fragile / hardy and superficial / deep. which circulated in nineteenth century Australian society.<sup>102</sup> I argue that it was partly in response to the intensification of a prescriptive and restrictive model of 'femininity' that colonial women turned to gardening, travelling and creative activity in the hope of finding a coherent model for themselves. For colonial women flower and landscape painting, travelling through the landscape and horticultural and natural history writing became important ways to explore what it was to be a woman and hence potential sites for the negotiation of gender contradiction.

In Chapter one I show that, because it served as a means through which the viewer gained access to the 'natural beauty' and power of the pre-oedipal mother, the construction of women as flowers in the nineteenth century was ubiquitously perpetuated by both men and women. The contemplation of the 'beauty' of flowers, described by one nineteenth century

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<sup>101</sup> Grimshaw, 1979, p. 414.

woman as 'the easiest and pleasantest pathway to further love and knowledge of Nature's glories', encapsulated the respectable goals of wealth, purity and chastity and, in common with the contemplation of the beauty of 'pure' women, was thought to be means for reaching God.<sup>103</sup> Middle class women in the colonies used an iconography of flowers to give themselves solace, to try to prevent women being devalued within the emigrant experience, and in order to find a suitable place for themselves within the imperialist enterprise. Louisa Meredith described the first Waratahs she saw flowering in the mountains of New South Wales as a 'sisterhood of Queens' which should on no account be picked.<sup>104</sup> At the beginning of the century women also used an iconography of flowers and flower gardening to promulgate class difference: towards the end of it they evolved an iconography of wildflowers which helped promote nationalism and national pride.<sup>105</sup>

It was through the iconography of flowers that women, silenced in so many other areas of discourse, not only incorporated and inculcated social prescriptions for women, but attempted to modify them. The most important implication growing out of the metaphor of women as flowers was the effect it had on women's bodies. In association with the rise of the middle classes, from the fifteenth century there was a gradual shift towards an understanding of the body as an objectified entity closed off from the world in which it existed.<sup>106</sup> For women, associated in nineteenth century thought with vegetative nature, this meant a representation of themselves as delicate 'cut' flowers severed from their physical roots and from their psychic earth: it was this construction of themselves which women

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<sup>102</sup> From the middle of the nineteenth century there was an intensification of the cult of Mary among the middle and upper classes in Britain. The colonial response was complicated by Catholicism being associated with 'inferior' working class Irish Catholics.

<sup>103</sup> L. A. Twamley (Louisa Meredith), *The Romance of Nature or the Flower Seasons Revisited*, Charles Tilt, London, 1839, p. iix. Louisa's book, and others like it, were eagerly read by women in the colonies. Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 31 January 1840, BL 479A. During her colonial experience Georgiana Molloy treasured and drew comfort from the illustrations in her books *The Language of Flowers* and *Sentimental Flowers* which she claimed she looked 'at repeatedly with unwearied pleasure. ... I often, after a day spent in Servile Drudgery ... sit down quite exhausted with one [of them] in my hand'. In this dissertation I do not mean to disallow the genuine joy women received from flowers, gardens, landscape and nature in the nineteenth century - I simply claim that as well as giving individual pleasure they enabled constructions of women which had mixed consequences.

<sup>104</sup> Mrs Charles Meredith, *Notes and Sketches of New South Wales*, John Murray, London, 1844, Facsimile Edition, 1973. William Morris expressed the sentiments of the nineteenth century when he called the English rose (a symbol for English women) 'the queen of them all - the flower of flowers'. In appropriating the Waratah Louisa Meredith was grafting the imperialist metaphor of English women as 'the queen among flowers' onto the Australian environment.

<sup>105</sup> Jack Goody, *The Culture of Flowers*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1993, pp. 230. White, 1981, pp. 120-1. From the 1850s images of both women - represented as scantily clad young Goddesses - and Australian wildflowers were used to promote Australian nationalism.

challenged / endorsed when they gardened and / or painted flowers.<sup>107</sup> Nineteenth century women identified with their flowers and flowering plants - which they treated as extensions of themselves - so completely that they often referred to them as their children.<sup>108</sup> Therefore in this first chapter, as well as looking at the construction of women as flowers, I trace the impact of emigration or - in terms of the metaphor - the 'transplantation',<sup>109</sup> of women to a new land and attempt to capture women's early responses to their new environment. As one of the earliest responses women made to their 'transplantation' was to begin gardening, I go on to consider the social significance and the internal contradictions involved in flower gardening.<sup>110</sup>

The two principal determinants of femininity in the metaphor of flowers were beauty and physical fitness for maternity. In Chapter two I use the life of Georgiana Molloy (1805-1843) to trace the interaction of settlement and the construction of motherhood as self-sacrificial. The birth rate in Australia did not begin to drop until the 1860s - before which married women in the colonies produced an average of eight children, slightly more than their British counterparts.<sup>111</sup> One of the results of enthroning self-sacrificing motherhood was that for much of the century childlessness and a failure to maintain an acceptable maternal body induced intense guilt in women. By the end of the century the focus changed - 'excessive' self-sacrifice in mothers was frowned upon and motherhood as a religious duty was largely replaced by the secular concern that mother's bequeath their children 'good

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<sup>106</sup> Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process, vol. 1: The History of Manners*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, UK, 1983.

<sup>107</sup> For example Louisa Meredith represented flowers as bold and strongly coloured and Mary Morton Allport painted wildflowers growing in their natural environment.

<sup>108</sup> Mrs Rolf Boldrewood, *The Flower Garden in Australia*, 1893 in Susan Hosking, 'I 'ad to 'ave Me Garden: A Perspective on Australian Women Gardeners', *Meanjin*, vol. 47, no. 3, Spring 1988, pp. 441-2.

<sup>109</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 31 January 1840, BL 479A/2. When forced to move house in the colonies Georgiana wrote 'my poor plants. Torn from their native soil, they seemed to participate in the feelings of their mistress and had evidently met with some terrible reverse'.

<sup>110</sup> David Goodman, 'The Politics of Horticulture', *Meanjin*, vol. 47, no. 3, Spring 1988, pp. 403-412. The nineteenth century saw the feminisation of the discourse of horticulture. As a discursive code gardens and flowers morally disguised economics of class in the same way as women's moral role disguised their lack of economic and political power. Goody, 1993, p. 70. Goody listed the internal contradictions in flower gardening as riches / poverty, excess / restraint, religious / secular. Women planted flowers even when food was scarce and subsistence gardening not yet established.

<sup>111</sup> Margaret Grellier, 'The Family: Some Aspects of its Demography and Ideology in Mid- Nineteenth Century Western Australia' in *A New History of Western Australia*, C.T. Stannage, (ed.), University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, WA, 1981. This drop in the birth rate - effected through a re-legitimation of birth control - has been attributed to rising standards and expectations in regard to marriage and motherhood.

blood, good brains and sound bodies'.<sup>112</sup> The contradiction built into nineteenth century maternity whereby women were expected to be at the one time childlike (dependent and submissive) yet more nurturing, powerful and parent-like than men - both child and mother to her male relatives - was so inductive of confusion in mothers that in Britain in the middle of the century fears were held that the middle class family would be unable to reproduce masculinity in the next generation.<sup>113</sup> In the colonies such fears were laid to rest by encouraging boys to be independent from an early age; that is to roam the bush and work beside their fathers.

Under the conditions of settlement women who bore (and frequently lost) a large number of children often experienced themselves as being physically and emotionally consumed by motherhood.<sup>114</sup> Georgiana Molloy wrote 'this year my third daughter was born .. I do not hesitate to say I am overwhelmed with too much labour, and indeed my frame bears witness to it, as I have everyday expected to see some bone poking through its epidermis'.<sup>115</sup> In the nineteenth century the medical profession and the church fought for the right to control women's bodies and women's maternal function in a way which left women feeling physically dismembered. For many women the only option open to them was a probable death from motherhood - constructed in Christian belief as salvation but physically experienced by women as a form of consumption. This may in part explain colonial women's interest in myths such as the 'child lost in the bush' and 'the grave in the bush' and explain women turning, as Georgiana Molloy did, to 'the bush' as a source of maternal solace. It may also help explain why by the middle of the nineteenth century society found it could no longer ignore widespread evidence of marital discord.<sup>116</sup>

The domestic ideal as a fortress of privacy could work against women who settled in the Australian bush in the first half of the nineteenth century. In Chapter three I use Annie

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<sup>112</sup> Anonymous, 'A Mother's Stumbling Block', *The Dawn*, July 1891, in Olive Lawson (ed.), *The First Voice of Australian Feminism: Excerpts from Louisa Lawson's The Dawn 1888-1895*, Simon and Schuster, Australia, 1990, pp. 199-200.

<sup>113</sup> Tosh, 1996, pp. 12-13. 'Masculinity' being defined as 'independence, energy, endurance and straight forwardness'.

<sup>114</sup> Susan Sontag, *Illness as a Metaphor*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK, 1983. In the nineteenth century when energy was held to be all important, tuberculosis as a dreaded illness which mysteriously consumed body tissue and energy was mythologised as a 'passion which consumed' flesh but gave spiritual salvation. With the 'consuming' grief women experienced at the death of their children, and the increasing number of women who died lingering deaths from puerperal fever following childbirth, women began to construct motherhood in similar psychological terms.

<sup>115</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Mrs Story, 8 December 1834, BL, 3278A/2.

Baxter's life and diaries as illustration of the tensions which developed during this period for women who found themselves living the other half of the equation of the sexless self-sacrificing mother - that is women who, in being childless and unhappily married, attempted to escape their marriages and in doing so put themselves in danger of being constructed as 'aggressive' Magdalenes.<sup>117</sup> For much of her marriage Annie Baxter refused to sleep with her alcoholic, violent husband, justifying her action by claiming it was because he slept with prostitutes.<sup>118</sup> In attempting to form relationships with men other than her husband while still living under his roof Annie attracted considerable social censure.<sup>119</sup> Also, because her husband was prepared to sue any man who attempted to, in the legal terminology of the time, 'alienate his wife's affections', she received rebuffs from some of the bachelors with whom she became romantically involved.<sup>120</sup> As Annie eventually escaped her marriage by using the power of her brother to thwart that of her husband, I go on in this chapter to consider the way in which psychological incest in middle class families served to both counterbalance and unsettle the marriage relationship. Annie's response to the natural environment during the troubled years of her first marriage was one of intensification of the heroic male self as epitomised by men in the society in which she found herself, wearing trousers (culottes) and creating a heroic image of herself as riding behind the cattle and hunting kangaroos, dingoes and black men. An extremely feminine woman, under stress Annie intensified both her femininity and her masculinity in the way which women were to do later in the century.<sup>121</sup> In other words, in Kaplan's terms, she began to enact 'grotesque' caricatures of gender stereotyping. Aware that she was stretching the social code, Annie anticipated criticism by

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<sup>116</sup> James A. Hamilton, *Cruelty and Companionship: Conflict in Nineteenth Century Married Life*, Routledge, London, 1992.

<sup>117</sup> Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988.

<sup>118</sup> Hamilton, 1993, p. 73. It was only towards the end of the century that it began to be recognised that domestic violence was not confined to working class families. Annie's husband also had venereal disease but for a very long time she did not conclusively know this.

<sup>119</sup> Eric Trudgill, *Madonnas and Magdalens: The Origin and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes*, Holmes & Meir, New York, 1976. At that time it was considered improper for a married woman to occasion even unfounded rumours of adultery.

<sup>120</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 20 September 1845, in Lucy Frost (ed.) *A Face in the Glass: The Journal and Life of Annie Baxter Dawbin*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1992. 'Everybody seems afraid of similar damages being laid to their account, and shun me whilst Baxter is away'.

<sup>121</sup> Ellis Rowan, *The Flower Hunter: The Adventures, in Northern Australia and New Zealand, of flower painter Ellis Rowan*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, n.d. (1898), p. 3. The frail and frilly yet intrepid Ellis Rowan claimed travelling in Queensland 'made such a man of me'. Often when women wedded an exaggeratedly 'feminine' persona with what they regarded as 'masculine' behaviour they constructed the land they sought to dominate as male. Schama 1995, pp. 396, 496. When the 'very feminine' Henriette d'Angeville became the first woman to climb Mount Blanc in 1838 she described her climb as 'my wedding to my frozen lover'.

recording in her journal the supposed comment of a neighbour 'Oh! but you quite mistake, if you think Mrs Baxter is masculine, for she is not so'.<sup>122</sup>

In Chapter four I investigate how in an age when to explore - that is to escape into freedom, to discover the unknown - was the epitome of masculinity, women liked to travel and explore, and, given the conditions of travel in the colonies, did so to a remarkable degree.<sup>123</sup> When they travelled women liked, and were encouraged, to share their responses with others - either in letters 'home' or in the form of published articles. Louisa Meredith, on whom chapter four is largely based, celebrated the picturesque enterprise of constructing landscapes in the mind when she wrote of colonial scenery: 'I felt quite busy with so much to enjoy',<sup>124</sup> while Louisa Atkinson claimed 'there is a charm in this nomadic life, which they who have not tried it can form no idea of'.<sup>125</sup> Early settlers, who needed to be able to name and describe the land in order to feel they belonged in it, found that the English language lacked words to describe the country's uniformity / enormity. In other words, because it inhabited a different history Australia was initially experienced as being beyond discourse.<sup>126</sup> While used their travel writing - which blended scientific knowledge and literary allusion with an exploration of the landscape and the inner self - to deal with unmanageable material through the 'reparative work of the shaping imagination' and the unconscious.<sup>127</sup> In doing so women began the process of developing a language and a metaphorical system to describe the Australian environment. One of the unconscious metaphors nineteenth century women frequently used in their travel writing was that of home.<sup>128</sup> As nineteenth century women were taught to see the home, like flowers, as a metaphor for their essential female selves their constructions of the land unconsciously mirrored this externalised home-like self. While colonial women were clearly active travellers in both the physical and the mythmaking sense, late nineteenth century male discourse - which seemed to wish to repress colonial experience

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<sup>122</sup> Annie Baxter, *Journal*, 8 April, 1849, Frost, 1992, p. 118.

<sup>123</sup> Both women's contemporary diaries and letters and their later published 'reminiscences' testify to this.

<sup>124</sup> Louisa Meredith, *My Home in Tasmania or Nine years in Australia*, Bunce & Brother, New York, 1853, p. 22.

<sup>125</sup> Louisa Atkinson, *Excursions from Berrima and a Trip to Manaro and Molonglo in the 1870s*, Mulini Press, Canberra 1978.

<sup>126</sup> Paul Carter, *Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History*, Faber & Faber, London, 1987, pp. 45, 56. Bird, 1989, p. 13.

<sup>127</sup> David Punter, 'The Picturesque and the Sublime' in Copley & Garside, 1994, p. 236. Paul Carter, 'Second Sight; Looking Back as Colonial Vision', *Australian Journal of Art*, vol. 13, 1996, pp. 9-35. Travelling in the colonies was constructed as entering the unconscious or realm of the forgotten - this was encoded in the term 'living down under'.

<sup>128</sup> Paul Rosenblatt, *Bitter, Bitter Tears; Nineteenth Century Diaries and Twentieth Century Grief Theories*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1983.

into the unconscious<sup>129</sup> - constructed 'pioneer' women as having been contained / silenced by the country beyond their garden gate.<sup>130</sup>

In Chapter five I consider colonial women's failed efforts to contribute to scientific endeavour in any but the most peripheral of ways. Almost totally excluded - by a male imaginary which endorsed 'production, prosperity, order, form, unity, visibility, erection', and undervalued or denied 'difference, reciprocity, exchange, permeability and fluidity' - from the pursuit of science except in the role of handmaid or illustrator,<sup>131</sup> women painted and wrote about, flowers, animals, birds and landscape for the public in semi-scientific language which, though it changed in form as the century progressed, never lost sight of the fact that humans, were intrinsically, magically<sup>132</sup> part of a wonderful if, at times, incongruous, nature which existed beyond the control of men.

I deal with women's artistic activities in Chapter six. In the first half of the century at least, women, who sometimes claimed their artistic eye was 'driven wild' by the beauty of their new natural environment, experienced an inner struggle to grant themselves the right to be creative.<sup>133</sup> Ann Douglas claimed that historians have largely ignored nineteenth century women's drive to gain power through the exploitation of the feminine. In these terms women's creativity is seen as marking the site of a sociological transition of women from useful contributor to decorative consumer.<sup>134</sup> Certainly much of women's creative endeavour in the nineteenth century which engaged with or reflected the natural environment - gardening, embroidering, painting and writing about native flowers, animals, birds and landscapes - seems partly generated by a need for self-justification. Nineteenth century women's creative work has traditionally been seen as a variety of (largely private) immaterial

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<sup>129</sup> Carter, 1996, p. 19.

<sup>130</sup> Sue Rowley, 'The Journey's End: Women's Mobility and Confinement' in Hoorn, 1994, p. 96. In late nineteenth century Australian literature adult women who dared venture beyond the garden gate were represented as becoming lost and stranded in the bush as eternal children or 'sprites'. Homelessness was unthinkable for women - only home-based wives or mothers could enter the national identity.

<sup>131</sup> Luce Irigaray, 'Is the subject of science sexed?' in *Cultural Critique*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1985, pp. 73-88. Women were allowed to paint birds, flowers and other natural history specimens as illustrations for male scientific magazines and allowed to collect and prepare for display or storage natural history specimens for male scientists.

<sup>132</sup> Mrs Parker, *A Voyage Round the World*, London, 1795 in *Mapped but not Known: The Australian Landscape of the Imagination*, P. R. Eaden & F. H. Mares (eds.) Wakefield Press, Melbourne, 1986, pp. 53. From the beginning women experienced Australia with all of their senses - especially their olfactory ones.

<sup>133</sup> Mrs Moconochie to Captain Mangles, 26 December 1841, BL, 479A/2. Georgiana McCrae, 27 May 1843, *Georgiana's Journal: Melbourne a Hundred Years Ago*, Hugh McCrae (ed.), Angus & Robertson, Australia, 1934. "Treated myself to a day sketching out of doors".

<sup>134</sup> Douglas, 1977, pp. 8-9.



pursuits which served a decorative, recording or moral function. While it is true that the publication in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of picture books of flowers and travel encouraged middle class women to treat the painting of flowers and landscapes, and natural history writing, as elegant accomplishments which would attract and keep a husband, they could also challenge and extend prescribed notions of femininity.<sup>135</sup> It was considered part of women's role to teach children to love the natural environment.<sup>136</sup> In the search for Arcadian women's role may not have consciously been to find effects in nature which would imbue the environment with value and legitimise its appropriation, but that was the function it usually served. The cost of women's celebration of the beautiful, sacred or 'God-given' in nature was that it often served to legitimate imperialism and that it was achieved at the cost of the repression of all that was 'animalistic' and unacceptable - in women, in nature, in society.

Finally, as a conclusion to the dissertation, I have composed an epilogue which briefly considers the work of May Gibbs and Margaret Preston in order to show that attitudes towards gender and landscape which were engendered in the nineteenth century cast a very long shadow. Throughout the nineteenth century in Australia, whether men were representing women as pre-lapsarian Eves and the land as Eden, or as post-lapsarian Eves (who were at best suggestible, at worst devouring) and the land as desert, women insistently constructed themselves in their writing and art as pure and sacred flowers. At the same time women attempted to embrace some of the attributes of masculinity which their society valorised (but denied them) by heroically travelling 'in a feminine way' into 'the bush'.<sup>137</sup> In so-doing women not only encoded features of individualistic protest and opposition but endorsed a change - which was no change - between a nineteenth century embodiment of woman as 'ascetic restraint' and a twentieth century embodiment of woman as 'commercialised sensualism'.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Schaffer, 1984, p. 1.

<sup>136</sup> Louisa Meredith, *Tasmanian Friends and Foes, Feathered, Furred and Finned: A Family Chronicle of Country Life, Natural History and Veritable Adventure*, Markus, Ward & Co., London, 1881. Dedication, p. 3. The author expressed the hope that her book would encourage children to love nature - contemplation of which gave 'healthy, refining, vivid pleasure' - as much as she did.

<sup>137</sup> They did this actually and figuratively. Australia produced the world's second woman writer of detective fiction when in 1866 Mary Fortune (Waif Wanderer) took on the persona of a male policeman who travelled through the Australian bush catching criminals. Mary Fortune, 'Dead Witness', *Australian Journal*, 20 January 1866. Bird, 1989, pp. 14-15, commented that, compared to their American counterparts, in their writing women in the Australian colonies demonstrated buoyancy - a 'sometimes perverse liberation .. an exuberantly energetic response' to landscape.

<sup>138</sup> Turner, 1996, pp. 139, 234. Turner claimed that after the decline of Catholicism women could no longer appeal to the cult of Mary to endorse female personal power within the patriarchal family. My interpretation suggests that both Protestant and Catholic women adopted the flower iconography of the cult of Mary because it retained a surprising amount of (religious and semiotic) power.

## CHAPTER ONE

### *WOMEN AS FLOWERS*

Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:  
It fell upon a little western flower.

Oberon: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* II, 1 .

There is a garden in her face  
Where roses and white lilies grow  
A Heav'nly Paradise is that place  
Wherein all pleasant fruits do grow.

Thomas Campion.

With the growth of the industrial revolution in Britain in the nineteenth century the cultural myth which attributed achievement orientated characteristics to men - and then awarded them social power - was strongly endorsed by the aspiring middle classes. The middle classes, and later the 'respectable' working classes, were quick to embrace a set of social conventions based on stereotyped gender differences and hone them into what has been described as a 'Social Performance'.<sup>1</sup> The convict beginnings of most of the Australian colonies, the absence of an aristocracy based on inherited privilege, the blurring of class distinctions with emancipation and the large number of free settlers who emigrated in order to 'better' themselves, meant that it very quickly became even more important in the colonies than in Britain *to be seen* to endorse stereotyped gender conventions.

Although middle class women who emigrated to the Australian colonies in the first half of the nineteenth century brought with them some sense of the individual rights of women as expressed by Mary Wollstonecraft in the late eighteenth century, the ideal for women was that they be home-loving. It could be argued that being a fragment society which broke off at a point in time when the domestic ideal was being most strongly promulgated in Europe intensified the mythology of gender stereotyping in the colonies to the point where it seemed self-evident that men, 'by nature' were self exclusively adventurous and rational - the do-ers and thinkers - and women, 'by nature' were self exclusively intuitive and nurturing - the be-ers and begetters. Women in the colonies who accepted contemporaneous gender mythology and conformed to gender conventions could find themselves excluded from attributes needed to ensure their own and their family's survival. Luckily, when survival is at issue, humans are not exclusively subject to even the most powerful dictates of myth and convention, and the early settlement of Australia saw women struggling to come to terms with their new environment by adapting to the conditions of their colonial experience; an adaptation which included for most women an active 'reworking' of gentility.<sup>2</sup>

When women in the colonies endeavoured to modify their conditioning they were inhibited by two powerful mythical conceptions. The first was that of women as flowers; a conception which, though it had developed in Europe over a period of centuries, intensified in Britain and France at the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The second was the

<sup>1</sup> Russell, 1994, pp. 58-91.

<sup>2</sup> Emma Curtin, 'Gentility Afloat: Gentlewoman's Diaries and the Voyage to Australia 1830-1880', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 26, no. 102, April 1994, p. 634.

<sup>3</sup> Goody, 1993, pp. 231-253.

imperialist / colonialist one of *terra nullius*., the land as 'an empty or nothing land', which ensured the invisibility of 'the other' in lands annexed by the British crown.<sup>4</sup> At the personal level this second mythical conception of not being able to 'see' (and thus honour the rights of) the people whose lands they were appropriating was intensified for colonists by their need to deny that they were not still safely back 'at home'. In the case of women the process of filtering and excluding Aborigines was not monolithic but one in which inclusive elements towards Aboriginal women and children (in particular) could easily figure. This inclusiveness to some extent represented behaviour towards those who were perceived as dependent and / or inferior which was expected of women in Britain.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless for many colonists anxiety generated by 'the unsubdued surroundings' and the 'events associated with colonisation' ensured that much colonial experience was repressed - 'psychically neutralised' or wiped out - and thereby inadvertently rendered invisible to future generations.<sup>6</sup>

For women especially, each of these mythical conceptions / psychic 'solutions' interacted with and intensified the another. In the seventeenth century the fertility and delicacy of flowers caused them to be conceived as a symbol for the ephemerality of human life. As children and women came to be highly valued within the family the frequent deaths of children in early childhood and the loss of women in childbirth was metaphorically seen as the life being crushed from delicate flowers. Under the terms of the metaphor, if a woman accepted that she was a flower or flowerlike she became not only fragile and ephemeral, but immobile and sightless; a beautiful but frail and passively reproductive object whose role was to give pleasure to the gaze of others. If a woman emigrant saw herself in these terms and / or accepted the imperialist myth of 'terra nullius', she found herself unable to 'see' herself or her new environment and its people. By being denied genuine identification with 'black' women, colonial women who endorsed contemporary notions of femininity were forced to accept a distorted reflection of their own and their new environment's surface appearance as mirrored by men. In accepting the reductive metaphor of themselves as decorative and disembodied 'cut' flowers, middle class European women could easily come to regard Aboriginal women as the denied 'dark' (earthy or rooted) side of themselves. Fear of, and disgust with, exteriority - that women and the land might be beautiful only on the outside - was a concern expressed by many early settlers. Elizabeth Macarthur complained:

<sup>4</sup> Henry Reynolds, *The Law of the Land*, Penguin, Ringwood, Australia, 1978.

<sup>5</sup> For example as related by Mrs Aeneas (Jeannie) Gunn in *We of the Never Never* and *The Little Black Princess*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1990. (1st published 1905, 1908 respectively) For a discussion of Mrs Gunn's fictive construction of 'Bett Bett' in contrast to the reality of (the kidnapped or 'snaffled') Dolly Bonson's life as a station worker see Hodge, 1992, pp. 144-149.

<sup>6</sup> Carter, 1996.

[O]ur garden produces nothing, all is burnt up; indeed the soil must be allowed to be most wretched and totally unfit for growing European productions, though you would scarcely believe this, as the face of the ground at this moment, when it is in its native state, is flourishing even to luxuriance, producing fine Shrubs, Trees, and Flowers which by their lively tints afford a most agreeable landscape. Beauty I have heard from some of my unlettered countrymen, is but skin deep. I am sure the remark holds good in New South Wales, where all the beauty is literally on the surface, but I believe I must allow it has symmetry (sic) of form also to recommend it, as the ground in all parts that have been discovered is charmingly turned and diversified by agreeable vallies and gently rising hills; but still, these beauties are all exterior.<sup>7</sup>

As the century progressed and religious concepts came to hold less power, women came to accept exteriority as an inevitable part of life. It could be said that many well-educated colonial women suffered progressively from a socially induced and trebly compounded blindness - blindness as to the nature of their new land (mythed as female), blindness as to the nature of the Aboriginal women who lived in and of that land, and blindness as to their essential selves.

### **The history of construction of women as flowers.**

The growth of a cult of flowers and the gardening revolution in Europe and Britain - which depended upon the development of a leisured class and a strengthening commitment to the concept of private property - coincided with a desire to see, understand and control the external manifestations of 'nature'.<sup>8</sup> Though the horticultural revolution began in the sixteenth century it was not until the enclosure movements of the eighteenth century that wealthy landowners were enabled to develop large landscaped flower and prospect gardens.<sup>9</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century changing attitudes to trees, flowers and gardens resulted in the annual publishing of hundreds of books on botany and horticulture, the popularisation of sentimental flower books, and the publication of regular gardening magazines intended to instruct and entertain the flower gardener.<sup>10</sup> The shift in sensibilities which saw the establishment of landscaped estates, male garden designers, and the reduction of middle class women to a decorative function in the landscape, gave flowers and gardens the significations of social class. This had the side-effect of popularising small-scale domestic flower gardens

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 7 March 1791, in Macarthur Onslow, 1973, pp. 30-1.

<sup>8</sup> Goody, 1993.

<sup>9</sup> Bermingham, 1986, p. 12. The enclosure of common fields, small farms and waste lands released land for use as landscaped gardens; peasants and small landowners dispossessed by enclosures provided a pool of cheap labour with which to establish and maintain these large private gardens.

<sup>10</sup> Wilfred Blunt, *The Art of Botanical Illustration*, Collins, London, 1950, p. 266.

for the less wealthy and causing the development of local flower shows.<sup>11</sup> The large landscaped garden with its multiple views and 'natural' effects allowed the owner and his family to view and to ramble; as such they represented private parks which served to guard 'extent and freedom' for the wealthy in a countryside increasingly fragmented by enclosures.<sup>12</sup> It was no accident that the development of landscaped gardens coincided with the establishment of New South Wales as a prison to which (among others) those dispossessed by enclosure who challenged the changed conception of what constituted public and private space could be sent. On the other hand free settlers to the colonies experienced the colonies as Arcadic because they associated the 'park-like' aspects of the landscape - which to their minds had 'the appearance of a wilderness or shrubbery, commonly attached to the habitations of people of fortune' - with landed estates in Britain.<sup>13</sup>

Literary representations of landscape at the beginning of the nineteenth century were thus largely 'aristocratic', celebrating the ordered landscaped garden with its central cultivated 'bower' or retreat and vistas of 'wildness' beyond. The inner garden served as a place where men of leisure could meditate upon the beauty of trees, artefacts, women and flowers as aesthetically pleasing 'objects' of refinement and sensibility.<sup>14</sup> For those not 'hurried on in the career of life', leisurely male contemplation within a garden setting of 'objects' which united the 'sweets of art and nature' (such as women) was seen as evidence of refinement.<sup>15</sup> The aristocratic notions of 'nontaxing learning .. through contemplation' of nature, and landscape as 'untaxing spectacle' were both adopted and challenged by the middle classes who more readily saw nature as needing to be mastered.<sup>16</sup> The perception of women as flowers - which in part resulted from insisting young girls be beautiful, decorative, reproductive and pleasing in order to marry advantageously - also carried contradictory beliefs about nature as being both effortlessly bountiful - the gift of God - and in need of being mastered.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas, 1983, pp. 223-224.

<sup>12</sup> Bermingham, 1986, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 1 September 1795, Elizabeth Macarthur to her mother, 21 October 1807, in Macarthur Onslow, 1973, pp. 46-7, 54. After Bligh became Governor of New South Wales and the Macarthurs wings were temporarily clipped, Elizabeth keened at the loss of her dreams of a private estate: 'Liberty has retired from among us into the pathless wilds, amongst the poor native inhabitants'.

<sup>14</sup> Douglas, 1977, p. 46.

<sup>15</sup> Vicesimus Knox, 'On the Pleasures of a Garden', 1779, in *The Genius of Place: The English Landscape Garden, 1620-1820*, John Hunt, Peter Wills, (eds), Paul Elek, London, 1975, pp. 330-1. Knight, 1988, pp. 389, 393. The point of aristocratic gardens was that they be utilised in order to provide clear evidence of nature made useful and demonstrate the victory of aristocratic acculturation over wild nature.

<sup>16</sup> Barbara Maria Stafford, *Artful Science: Enlightenment Entertainment and the Eclipse of Visual Education*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1994, pp. 226, 228.

The perception of women as flowers inherited something more sinister than this from the middle ages - that is the fear of demoniacal possession. Demoniacal possession was thought to come to humans through their sexuality. Women as the source of life, of reproduction, were thought to bring this curse - this regression to rage, to uncivilised excess - down upon society by having intercourse with the devil. Plants were principally valued in the middle ages for their nutritional or medicinal value, with the 'magical' cure for demoniacal possession being listed in medieval herbals as Mandrake. It was no accident that the Mandrake plant was represented in art (plate 1) as a woman with her leaves and flowers in the air and her reproductive parts exposed in all their explicit sexuality and fecund rootedness. I would argue that in the seventeenth, eighteenth centuries and nineteenth centuries the representation of women as vegetative, sexual and reproductive progressively moved away from this powerful symbolic representation of life / death to one which analogously represented women as beautiful, decorative and rootless 'cut' flowers.<sup>17</sup> The tendency to *explicitly* represent women in art as flowers in order to encode changing notions of femininity co-existed with this trend. In plate 2, which was painted in 1847, 'woman' is represented as beautiful and commercially useful, with rose hips (from which the very expensive attar of rose was extracted for the perfume industry) around her neck and wrists - a sad prisoner of the art of horticulture. Shown wearing Christ's crown of thorns as a symbol of her self-sacrificial nature, her body is deformed and imprisoned not only by her clothes but by the entwinings of an invasive rose. Other paintings made in the nineteenth century of women as flowers evoke nationalism, for instance by showing women in the form of British wildflowers such as lily-of-the-valley, a flower called 'Our Lady's Tears' which had by that time colonised most of Europe.<sup>18</sup>

With the growth of Christian asceticism flowers, which were thought to bloom, die and bloom again without the aid of an 'animal' sexuality, became symbolically associated with an asexual purity which would ensure resurrection for the pure in heart. Through the cult of the virgin Mary, the 'mystical rose' who was 'handmaid of the Lord', purity was seen as women's responsibility. By the nineteenth century the idea of women and flowers as

<sup>17</sup> Stratton, 1996, pp. 19-20, 98. In becoming something which can be represented and gazed at, painted flowers as a symbol for woman represented an early example of consumerism's exploitation of 'lack'. 'The [male] gaze [at women] is one of lack, the lack which gives rise, in turn, to the subjects own fetishising gaze'. Knox, 1779, in Hunt & Wills, 1975, p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Chwast & Chwasting, 1997, pp. 26, 36. In the 1830s a woman's hairdresser in London became famous for his 'dressing' of carnations - that is arranging each separate petal to make 'perfect' flowers.



*Mandragora mas*  
Mandragore.

PLATE 1. *Mandragora autumnalis*. 17 century etching by Abraham Bosse from  
Nicolas Robert Plantes.





PLATE 2. 'The Rose'. J. J. Grandville, 1847. Coloured engraving in The Illustrated Flower.

interchangeable symbols for 'goodness' and as the source of 'pure, tender and devoted thoughts and feelings', had become strongly entrenched in European thought.<sup>19</sup>

As society saw itself becoming more rational, more civilised, more 'scientific', that which was dark in sexuality, in reproduction, in human nature, in nature itself, was ever more strongly denied - and women became the focus of that denial. This trend can clearly be seen in floral art. Beginning with the Dutch flower painters of the seventeenth century who painted huge arrangements of flowers in urns and vases set against the blackest of backgrounds and beset by lizards, snakes, frogs, insects or snails, a trend to denature women and flowers culminated in the nineteenth century with every girl of social standing being expected to press or paint (and treasure) modest little sprays of pansies, violets or forget-me-nots - set against white backgrounds with their cut stems openly displayed.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century in Europe the importation of exotic plants and bulbs from all parts of the world had become commercially established. The growth of a literature which extolled the virtues of flowers and a huge increase in the number and variety of garden flowers under cultivation meant that by 1820 middle class women in Britain not only grew garden flowers but decorated mantles and tables in their homes not only with artificial wax flowers but with freshly cut flowers from gardens and florists.<sup>20</sup> At the same time working class people were judged to be 'respectable' if their 'lowly cottage' was surrounded by a well kept garden. Shortly before she married and emigrated to New South Wales Louisa Twamley (later Meredith) wrote:

[C]overed with sweet and oftentimes rare plants, trained even along the thatched roof and round the chimney stock, with their blossoms peering in at the open lattice, and hanging in draperies gayer and more graceful than ever decked a Royal Hall, over the rough hewn doorway. When we see a Cottage so full of beauty without, we may safely conclude there is a guiding *mind* within ... the Jasmine [once] only attainable to the great and wealthy .. now equally possessed by the poor labourer ... [hence elevating] thoughts are now alike available to Prince and Peasant.<sup>21</sup>

By the 1830s Britain had become the most garden and flower conscious nation in the world with the British public interpreting both garden and 'cut' flowers as markers of class and evidence of 'feminine' refinement.

<sup>19</sup> Jack Kramer, *Women of Flowers: A Tribute to Victorian Women Illustrators*, Stewart, Tabone and Chang, New York, 1996 (1983), p. 21, quoting Sarah Josephine Hale, 1848.

<sup>20</sup> Davidoff and Hall, 1987, p. 374.

<sup>21</sup> Twamley, 1839, p. 147.

Flower culture is so widespread in society today that one needs to be reminded that not all societies have developed an interest in, and appreciation of, flowers.<sup>22</sup> In the west representations of flowers such as the rose and the Madonna lily which were later associated with royalty and Christian iconography were made as early as 2000 BC.<sup>23</sup> The Christian church, which adopted the use of flowers from pagan religions, found that because flowers are sensuous and invoke reproductive function that they served to delineate differences between Catholics, who metaphorically saw Mary, Mother of God, as a 'pure' flower, and Puritans who banned the use of flowers in their churches as a form of sensuous icon. Nevertheless because Mary was equated in Catholic iconography with a variety of 'pure' and 'modest' flowers - the violet, the white lily (or liliun) and the white rose - in the nineteenth century it was common to name women after flowers, especially those that were associated with Mary. Huge numbers of nineteenth century women were prescriptively labelled as feminine at birth by being called rose, rose-marie or rosemary, lily or lilian, iris, violet, marguerite, marigold, myrtle, may, heather, hyacinth, daisy, daphne, jasmine, primula or poppy. That this was a disguised way of referring to women's reproductive function can be seen from the way in which women were also represented as, and given names or endearment's associated with soft fruits such as plums, peaches and cherries.<sup>24</sup> Women have also been called pumpkin as endearment - but that is a special case which I treat in Chapter 2.

Like flowers, in the nineteenth century women increasingly became the passive recipient of the fetishising male gaze.<sup>25</sup> It was no accident that when Oscar Wilde - who used the sunflower as the symbol for his 'new aestheticism' - was lampooned in cartoons for his homosexuality he was represented as an object of derision to be looked at - that is as a dejected sunflower wilting in a vase.<sup>26</sup> Not only did the metaphor take all valency - of vision, intellect, insight and physicality - from women, it defined women in terms of the use men could derive from them as (short-lived) decoration. Women as flowers needed not only men's care, but men's agency - women were 'picked' for marriage or 'transplanted' to a new place of residence after marriage. A 'budding' woman, called by her lover 'petal', 'rosebud' or 'blossom', was considered to be most beautiful when in 'first bloom' or 'blooming'. While young women were thought to bloom and blossom, once she was 'deflowered' a

<sup>22</sup> Goody, 1993, pp. 230-231. In much of Africa flowers have had little or no cultural significance.

<sup>23</sup> J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, trans. Jack Sage, Routledge, London, 1971, pp. 109,110.

<sup>24</sup> Robert B. Riley, 'Flowers, Power and Sex', in *The Meaning of Gardens: Idea, Place and Action*, Mark Francis, Randolph T. Hester Jnr, (eds.), Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1990.

<sup>25</sup> Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fournier, Loyola*, R. Miller, (trans.) University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989.

<sup>26</sup> Chwast & Chwasting, 1997, p. 60.

woman lost her attractiveness and as she aged she was said to have 'faded' or 'gone to seed'. Flowers were associated with youth and freshness - hence the saying she was 'cut off in the flower of her youth': no-one wants a flower which has begun to wither. If flowers were constructed as immobile, silent, sightless, passive, fragile, ephemeral, and secretly or discreetly reproductive a commercial proposition in which superficial beauty was all important, then, in terms of the metaphor, so were women. With such a metaphor firmly in place after the seventeenth century, when men felt free to effect changes in the breeding and appearance of flowers, they also felt free to effect changes in the breeding and appearance of women. From the beginning of the nineteenth century women, like flowers, gradually became specularised, libidinated commodities; the focus of a specular activity which the male picturesque imagination justified in these terms:

It is obvious, on intuition, that nature often intended solely to please the eye. She decorates the flowret, that springs beneath our feet, in all the perfection of external beauty. ... From the snow drop to the moss-rose, the flower-garden displays an infinite variety of shape and colour. ... Did nature bring forth the tulip and the lily, the rose and the honeysuckle, to be neglected by the haughty pretender to superior reason? ... to pass the beauties lavished before us, without observing them, is no less ingratitude than stupidity.<sup>27</sup>

In the early nineteenth century in Britain the sale of cut flowers became a lucrative business in big cities with flower shops proliferating and working class girls selling flowers from barrows on street corners. In terms of the metaphor of women as flowers the custom of working class women selling flowers in the street paralleled the image of working class women as 'street walkers' who 'sold themselves' to men.<sup>28</sup> A popular literary tradition arose about 'beautiful' young flower sellers which disseminated a myth of female sexuality described as perpetuating the supposed 'hypergamous attraction of the rich for the poor' which served to 'gladden the hearts of the less well to do'.<sup>29</sup> The Eliza Doolittle / Cinderella genre introduced the possibility of a rich middle class man meeting, 'rehabilitating', falling in love with and marrying a beautiful and chaste working class seller of flowers. It was a myth which managed contradictions involved in dividing women according to class, sexual activity and whether they were paid explicitly for sex. 'Good' women were considered to be middle class, asexual, discreetly reproductive, and financially 'supported' by their husbands, while 'bad' women were considered to be working class, openly sexual and reproductive, and

<sup>27</sup> Knox, 1779, in Hunt & Wills, 1975, p. 331.

<sup>28</sup> Edna Healy, *Lady Unknown: The Life of Angela Burdett-Coutts*, Sidgwick & Jackson, London, 1978, p. 167. From 1850 flower girls in Covent Gardens were given police protection from sexual assault. Stratton, 1996, p. 91-7. With the fetisisation of women's image all women who were in the street without a male escort were commodified as potential prostitutes.

<sup>29</sup> Goody, 1993, p. 231.

explicitly paid for sex. This was an extremely unstable dichotomy in which flowers served as symbols which enabled fine distinctions to be made between classes of women while ensuring that women as a group would continue to be strongly distinguished from men as a group.

It was no accident that it was at a time when the 'social performance' of women was thought to further the success of 'the family' that a series of publications appeared which were devoted to the 'language of flowers'. These sentimental flower books - which, like books on women's etiquette, were often written and illustrated by women - determined the symbolic meaning of flowers in minute detail. The writers of these books based their interpretations of the symbolism of flowers on the appearance of the flowers and on popular and literary traditions. In these books flowers, like women, were seen as magical icons to be decoded and translated into a language that could be universally understood. In 1839 Louisa Twamley recommended her book of flowers to the public by claiming that flowers were the 'easiest and pleasantest pathway to the further love and knowledge of Nature's Glories ... a universal language of love, beauty, poetry and *wisdom* if we read them aright'.<sup>30</sup> Writing of the violet, the symbol of Mary and of chaste middle class women, Louisa asked: 'Com'st thou, loved flower, mine eyes to greet, because *thou* art alone, the fair - the sweet?'<sup>31</sup>

With the writing and publication of books purporting to interpret the language of flowers women not only accepted that they and flowers were one, but wrote as if this were self-evident. Louisa composed a poem extolling the 'maiden loveliness' of a Narcissus flower in a vase on her desk, writing:

Thanks my flower  
 My gentle, kind companion - for to me  
 Thy silence is most eloquent: - I love  
 Thy quiet steadfast gaze, as, o'er my desk,  
 The long day through thou hast seemed watching me;  
 Thy calm unchanging look.<sup>32</sup>

In this poem - and Louisa wrote hundreds of similar poems - flowers were the woman's true companion, the one who looked back at them, the one who silently confirmed that they existed. In having become herself a flower Louisa needed to gaze at flowers and believe that

<sup>30</sup> Twamley, (later Meredith) 1839, p. ix.

<sup>31</sup> Twamley, 1839 p. 22.

<sup>32</sup> Twamley, 1839 p. 20.

they could gaze at her in order to reconfirm her 'true' (given) feminine identity.<sup>33</sup> In this poem the prescriptions given young middle class women as to what constituted 'appropriate' womanly' behaviour - gentleness, kindness, quietness, calmness, companionability, and an unchanging steadfastness - have been projected onto and embodied in a single narcissus. In this case the narcissus as symbol served to confirm and intensify Louisa's self-projection and open the way for it to be reabsorbed in a strengthened, yet seemingly less troubling form so that - like the mythical Greek youth Narcissus who was changed into a flower because he became pre-occupied with the beauty of his own appearance - Louisa as flower looked at the Narcissus and the Narcissus as woman-self looked back at Louisa as if each reflected the other in a hall of mirrors.

It is as if Louisa consciously or subconsciously recognised that she looked into her mirror and instead of seeing her own reflection saw the image of a white narcissus. It was the tragedy of Louisa Twamley / Meredith's life that although after she emigrated to Australia she became aware of the cost to women of accepting a conception of themselves which reduced them to a self-absorbed chimerical 'appearance', in the context of the time and place in which she lived she was unable to effect a different way of being. In loving flowers and accepting that she needed to empty herself of all that might seem 'selfish', 'changeable', 'independent', 'violent', 'noisy', 'disruptive', 'disloyal' or 'assertive' - that is, in the judgement of the times, all that was considered 'bad' (when it occurred in women) - Louisa felt forced to repress her powerful 'masculine' drives to the point where they leaked out and affected the well being of herself and her family.<sup>34</sup> I would suggest that while both men and women gazed upon flowers in order to 'please without enervating the mind, and gratify desire without corrupting the principles',<sup>35</sup> what the two sexes gained from that contemplation was very different. Men tended to desire what flowers [and women] symbolically represented, while women tended to incorporate the symbolisation of flowers as if they and flowers were one.

The clearest indication of the nineteenth century conjunction between women, femininity and flowers as similarly beautiful, passive, fragile and ephemeral - passive cogs in nature's

<sup>33</sup> Douglas, 1977, p. 46. In the nineteenth century seeing the self was said to be a way of finding the self; the suppression of physicality meant such activity constituted self-evasion for women.

<sup>34</sup> Vivienne Rae-Ellis, *Louisa Anne Meredith: A Tigress in Exile*, Blubber Head Press, Tasmania, 1979, pp. 154-171. Louisa was more ambitious, effective and tenacious than the cousin she married. Her drive and 'impatience' annoyed her father-in-law (her uncle) to the point where he gave the estate on which Charles, Louisa and their three sons were living to Charles' half-brother - thereby effectively disinheriting and bankrupting Charles.

<sup>35</sup> Knox, 1779, in Hunt & Wills, 1975, p. 330.

cycle of renewal - is the superficiality of male artistic representations of woman in the nineteenth century artistic imagery when projected feminine images 'far from being rooted in woman's bodily being [arose] solely out of the male ... imagination'.<sup>36</sup> In his poetry Blake drew on a well-known eighteenth century verse to represent women as flowers overwhelmed by the 'transitory nature of [their] own self'. In the poem, 'The Sick Rose', he portrayed woman (and the feminine principle) as a rose passively consumed from within by a (phallic) 'invisible worm' - in psychological terms by a hidden, unacknowledged and therefore destructive 'male' libido.<sup>37</sup>

By the end of the century women were represented in pre-raphaelite art as pale flower-like tubercular figures who silently languished in an unreal world with their gaze turned in upon themselves - the embodiment of disconnection, emptiness and sorrow. In attempting to reclaim their lost right to their own 'femininity' male 'romantic' poets and artists adopted women as 'muse', as an 'otherness to which desire could be directed, ... an image within the work, mobile [and] metaphoric'. This image of woman as flower and muse, or, to put it another way, the conception of the 'feminine as purest symbol',<sup>38</sup> was an integral part of the male 'romantic' enterprise in both Britain and Australia. It could be said that it was the male need to co-opt women on behalf of their lost feminine selves which gave the metaphor of women as flowers such power within nineteenth century society.

### **Emigration: can flowers be transplanted to a distant land?**

If women were portrayed at the beginning of the nineteenth century as fragile, self-consumed and doomed flowers how could they be expected to take on the rigours of colonisation? How too could they be asked to provide the large families on which it was thought the future of the empire depended? And in actuality this posed a problem. It was the same problem which faced the empire each time it colonised a new country or went to war after a long period of peace and prosperity and found / feared its young men had become too 'feminine' to fight. The British empire was founded on the patriarchal family; yet as the popularity of the story of the Willow Pattern plate shows, it was a foundation which in the nineteenth century kept threatening to 'break into shards'.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Meena Alexander, *Women Writers: Women in Romanticism*, Macmillan, London, 1989, p. 32.

<sup>37</sup> Alexander, 1989, pp. 18, 20.

<sup>38</sup> Alexander, 1989, pp. 22, 34.

<sup>39</sup> O'Hara, 1983, p. 438. In this story illicit or 'romantic' love broke up the patriarchal family.

One way in which the women as flowers metaphor had a safety factor built into it which allowed for a 'toughening up' process in women was the 'love' of 'wild' flowers inculcated in women during early childhood. With the growth of romantic sensibility in the nineteenth century what had been previously been considered 'weeds' were reclaimed as 'wild' flowers and children, who were forbidden to pick garden flowers, were encouraged to sally into the woods in spring in order to collect armfuls of 'wild' bluebells, primroses, cowslips and violets for their mothers.<sup>40</sup> Before she left England for Australia Louisa Twamley wrote:

Need I say that the Wild Flowers of my own fair Land are dearer to me than any others? ... Wild Flowers seem the true philanthropists of their race. Their generous and cheerful faces ever give a kindly greeting to the troops of merry village children who revel in their blossomy wealth ... so dear and beautiful are Wild Flowers, that one would think that every body *must* love them.<sup>41</sup>

In identifying with British 'wild' flowers and remembering pleasant childhood adventures into the 'wild' woods of Britain, women contemplating emigration could find in themselves an imagined 'wild' space in which they believed they could live and thrive. This proved to be the case with Louisa who, despite her 'great love' for British landscape and flowers, married her cousin (who had been reared in Van Dieman's Land) and emigrated with him to New South Wales - hoping (wrongly as it turned out), that one day she would return to her native land. Although such memories might encourage women to emigrate, and, once in the colonies, might help reconcile them to the 'wild bush' and colonial wildflowers, it did not pragmatically prepare middle class women for the rigours which emigration entailed. Only life experience under the guiding will of the patriarch could do that. This could be an internalised will, but, most usually for women it was a living husband or father or brother who - when necessary - encouraged women to adopt some of aspects of the 'masculine' toughness which they had been encouraged to internalise. The sea voyage to the colonies often served women as an initiatory experience in this 'toughening up' process.

One example of a woman who was toughened up in this way by her husband was Emma, the wife of Ford Madox Brown who, when he wanted to capture 'reality' in his painting of emigrants departing for the Australian colonies insisted his wife as model be painted by him out of doors on the coldest of days so that he could get correct flesh tints in the freezing wind.<sup>42</sup> One can only say that if Brown wished to portray his young second wife looking as if she were a white 'rose' which had been abandoned to the sleet of winter, then he

<sup>40</sup> Thomas, 1983, p. 269. This was gradual shift in sensibilities which began in the seventeenth century. Goody, 1993, p. 292.

<sup>41</sup> Twamley, 1839, p. x.

<sup>42</sup> John Hammerton, [ed.] *The Universal Biography*, vol. 1, Amalgamated Press, London, n. d.





PLATE 3. 'The Last of England'. Ford Madox Brown 1865. Reproduced in The Long Farewell.

succeeded admirably. When Brown painted *The Last of England* (plate 3) it was believed art had a moral and pedagogical responsibility so that narrative art such as this commonly expressed cultural frustration and concern. At the time Brown suffered from lack of critical recognition and from its attendant woes, poverty and despair, so it is hardly surprising that his painting encoded personal protest.<sup>43</sup> Brown himself wrote that in his 'historical' painting of 'the great emigration' movement he:

[S]ingled out a couple of the middle classes, high enough, through education and refinement to appreciate all they are now giving up and yet dignified enough to put up with the discomforts and humiliations incident to a vessel all one class.<sup>44</sup>

By representing himself and his wife (with hidden infant) as gazing sadly back to Britain while their bodies almost block from view a happy and oblivious group of working class emigrants, Brown wished to demonstrate that 'sensitive' middle class families who emigrated to the 'uncivilised' Australian colonies at a time when the gold rushes were attracting all classes of people would experience both nostalgia for the loss of their 'home' and humiliation at the breaking down of class barriers.<sup>45</sup> In calling his painting *The Last of England* Brown no doubt meant to invoke 'emigrations' across class barriers with which Britain was endeavouring to come to terms at that time. It has been suggested by one analyst that the 'desolate, perhaps vengeful backward gaze' of the couple in Brown's painting also reflected the indignation generated in those who were emigrating in order to better themselves in being forced to go to a country such as Australia in which 'success' was notoriously precarious;<sup>46</sup> by another that Brown wished the viewer to recognise that middle class emigrants felt forsaken by a homeland which could only offer them a choice between poverty and exile.<sup>47</sup> Given Australia's convict beginnings, for a large part of the nineteenth century it was not clear whether those who migrated to Australia should consider themselves as outcasts, social misfits, criminals or as part of the vanguard of an empire whose role it was to redeem the non-western world from barbarism.<sup>48</sup> With the adoption of middle class

<sup>43</sup> Bermingham, 1986, pp. 179, 191-3. Brown also painted rural scenes in which the countryside was depicted as an allegorical model of the organic society in which all classes (class barriers being depicted as 'natural') worked together in harmony.

<sup>44</sup> Don Charlwood, *The Long Farewell: Settlers Under Sail*, Allen Lane, Ringwood, Australia, 1981, pp. 88-90. The painting was first exhibited in London in 1855.

<sup>45</sup> Ken Inglis, *Australian Colonists; An Exploration of Social History 1788-1870*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1993, pp. 30, 36. Half a million people - most of whom paid their own fares - emigrated to the Australian colonies between 1852 and 1861. Curtin, 1994, p. 637. Curtin argued that because emigrating felt like banishment or exile to many women, women's sense of displacement caused them to defend cherished ideals of status in order to maintain a sense of identity.

<sup>46</sup> Brantlinger, 1988, p. 113.

<sup>47</sup> White, 1981, p. 38.

<sup>48</sup> Brantlinger, 1988, p. 113.

mannerisms by those who aspired to climb the social ladder, middle class emigrants expressed concern that they never felt quite sure that those with whom they were mixing on equal terms were their equals in background and education. It was because Brown expressed such generalised anxieties and resentments in his painting that for the rest of the century copies of *The Last of England* were to be found hanging in most colonial homes.<sup>49</sup>

Part of the attraction of Brown's painting was that, along with encapsulating critiques of 'emigrations' across class barriers and between countries, it also invoked the possibility of 'emigration' across gender boundaries. In the nineteenth century the ideal wife was represented in art and fiction as young, dependent and child-like; representations which both mirrored and influenced family practice.<sup>50</sup> Between 1830 and 1850 it became fashionable to depict wives in terms of the feminine archetype of the Madonna - an image which, in combining immaculate sexual purity and perfect motherly love, served as a 'vehicle for pent-up religious emotion'. Women depicted with the modest demeanour and neatly parted 'Madonna hairstyle' in the way in which Emma is shown in Brown's painting were considered to be 'the flower of moral beauty'.<sup>51</sup> In the painting Emma as Madonna is enclosed by a number of 'protectors' - her dark and brooding, even controlling (Napoleonic) husband as 'Captain of the voyage', her umbrella, her shawl, and her bonnet - which together accentuate her face, her husband's bare hand held in her gloved one, and her bare hand clasping that of her (figuratively) as yet unborn infant. For the wife / mother to be represented as having a child, while not openly being seen to have a child, acts as a powerful endorsement of the virgin / mother paradox. The fragile baby's hand which, in terms of the cold, Emma gratuitously exposes to the wind, greatly adds to the pathos of the painting. While both husband and child are represented as offering their exposed hands to the mother, the mother only bares her flesh to grasp the hand of her (in life, female) child. If the mother is muse in this painting, and if the female muse represents the desired feminine 'other' of the male painter, then only an infant is allowed intimate access to it; the adult male is barred from intimate contact with his wife's (and his own) sexuality / femininity by the exteriority of his wife's image as symbolised by her clothing - in this case a black glove.

Within the frame of the painting Emma's bonnet serves as a second frame to make her (that is the Madonna's) face the centre of attention - a picture within a picture. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the bonnet replaced the elaborate hairstyles of the

<sup>49</sup> Charlwood, 1981, p. 88.

<sup>50</sup> Davidoff & Hall, 1987, p. 323.

<sup>51</sup> Trudgill, 1976, pp. 257-9.

eighteenth century as appropriate dressing for women's heads when walking or travelling. Despite various modifications in style the bonnet continued to be obligatory outdoor headgear for women until the 1860s.<sup>52</sup> Supposedly intended to signify the modesty of women by veiling the ears and hair and sheltering the face, in practice the bonnet was thought to enhance a woman's sexual attractiveness.<sup>53</sup> Well aware of this, women took great care of the sexual and social messages which the shape and trimming of their bonnets conveyed to the world.<sup>54</sup> In the colonies bonnets were thought to be especially important because they shaded a woman's face and kept her skin white, thus preventing her from being seen as working class or, as Rachel Henning put it, 'taken for Aborigines' - that is for native-born white Australians.<sup>55</sup> Some days before she was due to land in Van Dieman's Land the flirtatious Annie Baxter reclaimed her best clothes from storage and tried them on to see what sort of impression she would make on the society of Hobart Town. She wrote reassuringly in her journal: 'I put my white [bonnet] on - a beautiful shape'.<sup>56</sup> On the other hand the discreet Georgiana Molloy wrote to assure her friends that the bonnets she had purchased to wear in the Swan River Colony were 'cottage shape and withx [without] ribbons'.<sup>57</sup> In *The Last of England* Emma too was represented as having chosen for her journey to the new world a cottage shape bonnet without ribbons which she secured to her head with a long scarf. The artist used Emma's scarf to great advantage by painting one end of it as a line of demarcation between Emma's head and that of her husband and the other end stretching like a flag of occupation across her husband's heart. In this way Brown metaphorically made a line of demarcation between male and female reason while simultaneously depicting the captured male as anchored to the captivating female by the most fragile yet powerful of guys.

Bonnets such as that shown in the painting, intended to frame a woman's 'sweet flower-like' face, replicated the shape of the wild pea flowers (plate 7) with which the new world

<sup>52</sup> Charles H. Gibbs-Smith, *The Fashionable Lady in the Nineteenth Century*, Victoria and Albert Museum Publication, London, 1960.

<sup>53</sup> Ivan Block, Trans. William H. Forstern, *Sexual Life in England Past and Present*, Arco Publishers, London, 1958, p. 465.

<sup>54</sup> Valerie Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Beauty from the Victorian Era to the Jazz Age*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1985, pp. 93-4. Women's dress was the means by which women could attempt to construct the ideal feminine self, 'clothed in beauty'.

<sup>55</sup> Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 23 July 1865, *The Letters of Rachel Henning*, David Adams (ed.) Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria, 1969, p. 204. Though Rachel probably meant Europeans who had been born in the colonies rather than indigenous Australians, the implication covers both. The need for English women to keep their skins very white coincided with the colonisation of parts of the world where indigenous people had dark skins and a suntan in a colonist suggested miscegenation. Bonnets and white skins in women thus served as a means of maintaining nuances of both class and race.

<sup>56</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 13 January 1835, in Frost, 1992, p. 2.

<sup>57</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Mary Dunlop, 31 August 1829, BL 3287A/2.

abounded. It could be said that in its physical form the pea flower is analogous to human female genitalia. If this analogy holds then the wearing of bonnets represented a polite, hidden form of female sexual advertisement in which the bonnet represented the outer labia; the woman's face the inner, and the female mouth the reproductive receptor. This interpretation illustrates the sexual contradictions which women faced in the nineteenth century and indicates the way in which flowers as symbols of reproductive function captured, incorporated, neutralised and / or exaggerated contradiction. Women's 'beautiful' and 'chaste' appearance was meant to inspire commitment to monogamous family life in men and effect men's moral regeneration. However if women were to fulfil their reproductive function of populating an expanding empire they also needed to sexually attract men. It was no accident that flowers represented refinement and sensibility while at the same time they were widely used in courtship. Priapus was the Roman god of flowers and gardens; in pagan festivals virgin girls as flowers represented a spectacle which held the promise of deflowering. The nineteenth century perception of the soul and reason as being the 'highest' parts and the body and its appetites as being low or 'animalistic' - a perception which led to 'good' women being called 'tutelary angels' - meant that men and women were encouraged by their social conditioning to repress much of their libidinous selves into their unconscious.<sup>58</sup> Flowers served as symbols of the innocent and nubile to be cultivated in gardens and brought inside to be put in vases or carried as bouquets while at the same time they represented an unthreatening vegetative (rather than animalistic) form of reproduction. Denied all agency except a flowerlike ability to attract a male to look after them, for women flowers came to represent a seeming celebration of women's 'nature' which secured for them a 'protector' and vicarious gratification.

One of the consequences of representing 'respectable' woman as flower-like, infantilised, desexualised and sacralised Madonnas, was that in the nineteenth century marriage and prostitution became a working partnership with the working class woman as prostitute serving as the 'silent' partner in nineteenth century middle class marriages.<sup>59</sup> In the case of the painting under consideration, beside the 'virgin' mother whose chaste, self-contained deportment contrasts with her sensuously full and pouted lips, is a dark and brooding presence representing not only (in Christian terms) the shadowy husband, Joseph, but (in Jungian terms) the 'shadow' or libidinal energies repressed into the unconscious. In this reading the look of brooding resentment on the man's face which suggests a refusal to be

<sup>58</sup> Peter T Cominos, 'Innocent Femina Sensualis in Unconscious Conflict', in *Suffer and be Still*, Martha Vicinus (ed.), Indiana University Press, London, 1973, pp. 155-157, Trudgill, 1976, p. 187.

<sup>59</sup> Cominos in Vicinus, 1973, p. 157.

propitiated, and the excessive white showing below the irises of the woman's eyes which suggests a form of dissociative terror, could imply that the artist (perhaps unconsciously) felt that libidinal energies were being denied expression to such an extent that they were threatening to become awesomely destructive - to the individual, to the couple, to society.

Large scale migrations create tensions within individuals who find themselves confronted with new physical, emotional and spiritual realities. These tensions first manifested themselves on the long sea journey<sup>60</sup> to the Australian colonies. In the eighteenth century the English philosopher Edmund Burke dichotomised and gendered nature into the categories of 'feminine beauty' and 'masculine sublimity' or power.<sup>61</sup> Storms at sea - thought to demonstrate God's 'sublime' [patriarchal] power - often unnerved women, who, in emigrating, were usually forced to put themselves fully under the power of male relatives and sailors. Middle class women handled their anxiety by enthusing over nature, by becoming social 'mothers' to lower class women on the voyage,<sup>62</sup> and, because the European enlightenment had encouraged an interest in personal observation of and the acquisition of knowledge about the natural environment, by the study of astronomy and zoology.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless it sometimes happened that no matter what they did, women could not prevent the sea voyage which divided them from 'mother' Britain, and (usually) their biological mothers as well as from their previous lives and selves, from unleashing repressed fears which influenced how they later experienced the natural environment of the colonies.

Conditions during the sea voyage varied greatly with no two women having quite the same experience. For women who were breast-feeding, pregnant, or travelling with young children not only was the time of year and class of travel important for their own and their family's survival, but the nature of the caterer and, supposing there was one, the ship's doctor. Dietary deficiency, disease and injury from accidents and falls were constant dangers. Small children in particular found it difficult to survive on a diet of salt meat, rationed water and flour and rice products. Although in 1795 lime juice was officially adopted as a prophylactic against scurvy on long sea voyages, well into the nineteenth century caterers could not be relied upon to provide it, or other anti-scorburetics, for passengers. Scurvy not only caused physical symptoms but induced what was called

<sup>60</sup> The journey took three to four months under sail; after 1852 under steam, approximately 80 days.

<sup>61</sup> Davidoff & Hall, 1987, p. 28. Bourke's widely accepted distinction defined beauty in nature as small in size, smooth, sweet, with bright colours, delicacy and the 'lineaments of the infantine', while sublimity in nature represented judgement, wisdom and a strength which could have a terrifying aspect.

<sup>62</sup> Curtin, 1994, p. 639.

'melancholy'; an enigmatic psychological by-product of poor nutrition which reached plague proportions in Europe between the sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries.<sup>64</sup> Passengers who were aware of the need begged caterers to supplement passengers' diets with cow's milk and anti-scorburetics and / or took food and some form of dietary supplement with them on the voyage, while passengers who were unaware of the dietary hazards involved in a long sea voyage often paid the price in the form of their own ill-health and the ill-health or death of their children. Vitamin C deficiency, 'scurvy' or 'sea consumption' as it was variously called, manifested itself as depression, weakness, swelling and loss of appetite. After some weeks young children who were repelled by the unpalatable shipboard diet developed vitamin deficiencies which caused their gums to swell and become too painful to allow the eating of solids. Ellen Monger, one of many women who were devastated in the early months of the voyage by sea sickness complicated by pregnancy, was too prostrate to adequately supervise her children's meals. She later wrote of the result:

[A]s we entered on a warmer climate, the dear children became relaxed (with the exception of Emily) gradually getting weaker and, for want of proper nourishment, became at last sorrowful spectacles to behold. They could eat none of the ship's provisions and our vessel was not provisioned with one or more cows ... if I had the voyage to make again I would make that the 1st consideration... Poor little Alfred was the 1st that died on the 30th of Oct, and on the 8th of Nov, dear Fanny went and three days after on the 11th, the dear babe was taken from me. [This and] the weakness of my frame, reduced me to such a nervous state that for many weeks, I was not expected to survive ... and, though I was quite conscious that the dear baby and Fanny were thrown overboard, I would still persist that the water could not retain them and that they were with me in the berth. ... I had that chair of Mother's in my 'mind's eye for many weeks and was continually talking about it. ... I now experience more resignation to my circumstances.<sup>65</sup>

Debilitated in body and mind, it is not surprising that Ellen regressed to memories of her Mother and the chair in which as a child she had taken comfort. The voyage Ellen made was provisioned by a tardy caterer and serviced by an inexperienced doctor: consequently thirty people died en-route to the colonies and many others, including Ellen and her husband and eldest child, took months to recover physically. Psychological scars would have taken much longer to heal. Nevertheless, despite the scarifying nature of her voyage, seven weeks after arriving in Adelaide Ellen reported having responded positively to the 'beauties' and 'wonders' of nature which she had seen on her voyage to the colonies:

<sup>63</sup> Ellen Monger, Letter, 28 January 1840, in Lucy Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady; Voices from the Australian Bush*, McPhee Gribble / Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria, 1984, p. 37.

<sup>64</sup> Barbara Maria Stafford, *Voyage into Substance: Art, Science, Nature and the Illustrated Travel Account 1760-1840*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Massachusetts, 1984, p. 351. It has been suggested that once vegetable gardens were established in the colonies convict women lost fewer babies than they had in Britain because they no longer lacked Vitamin C.

<sup>65</sup> Ellen Monger to her parents, Adelaide, 28 January 1840, in Frost, 1984, pp. 34-6.

[I] did wish that you were with me, to contemplate the beauty of the setting sun - its splendour was beyond description, and in a few moments you turn to behold the moon rising in silent majesty and shedding her glorious rays over the vast and mighty world of wonders.<sup>66</sup>

Seeing or knowing that the bodies of their deceased children were 'thrown overboard' was extremely distressing for women. Sarah Davenport lost two children on her voyage to the colonies, her youngest son as a result of being badly scalded and the child she was carrying as the result of a premature birth. Already traumatised by the loss of her older son, when she heard that her still-born child was to be thrown in the sea she wrote that she felt 'almost dumb with grief'.<sup>67</sup>

Although an unwilling emigrant, Louisa Clifton, a member of the brethren, wrote lyrically of the 'sublimities' of nature which she experienced on her voyage to Australia.

The towering waves just curling at their summits and displaying an exquisite tint of lucent green, tossed and foamed and roared in every direction, ... presented a spectacle partaking at once of the sublime and beautiful ... I never felt my mind more calm, peaceful, free from fear and dependently trusting in our heavenly guardian and protector.<sup>68</sup>

Women often treasured the 'sublime' experiences of nature which they experienced on their voyage to the colonies for the rest of their lives, even recalling them in moments of crisis. The childless Ellen Viveash, experiencing the early symptoms of the cancer from which she later died, wrote some years after she arrived in Hobart Town:

I was on deck during the worst gale we had coming out. I never saw anything so grand and awful, but the feelings inspired by grandeur and beautiful seas and ocean freshness are never to be forgotten. At one time the insignificance of man would steal over the mind then a kind of transcendence at his making such a powerful climate subservient to his wants. It is better to die in the midst of such grandeur and soul stirring feelings than in the midst of disease.<sup>69</sup>

Whatever they might have felt, said or done on the voyage many women did not find the energy to record their responses to nature until after they had landed. The pregnant Georgiana Molloy, although she stayed up until two in the morning in the hope of seeing the moon rise over the Cape Verde Islands<sup>70</sup> simply noted that the mountainous islands

<sup>66</sup> Monger, in Frost, 1984, pp. 36-7.

<sup>67</sup> Sarah Davenport, *Diary*, November 1841 in Frost, 1984, p. 242.

<sup>68</sup> Louisa Clifton, *Journal*, 15 February 1841, BL 4034A.

<sup>69</sup> Ellen Viveash to Eliza Tanner, 9 September, 1834, *The Tanner Letters: A Pioneer Saga of Swan River and Tasmania, 1831-45*, Pamela Statham (ed.), University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, WA, 1981, p. 99.

<sup>70</sup> Charles Bussell, *Journal*, 24 November 1829, BL Bussell Papers, 139.



reminded her of her 'dear and bonny Scotland',<sup>71</sup> while Georgiana McCrae, worried about her future and busy with her four children, described the sunrise she rose at 4 a.m. to view as 'a grand but unpaintable picture'.<sup>72</sup> And, although a determined optimist such as the colonial Chaplain's wife Sarah Docker could find it in herself to write that she 'more inclined to laugh at the noise and confusion [of a storm] than feel the slightest apprehension of danger',<sup>73</sup> for women such as the convict Mary Talbot whose husband and children had been left behind in England the power of nature as experienced below deck was simply a further source of discomfort and distress. She wrote:

[W]e had a violent storm which lasted 24 hrs. During every moment of its continuance we expected to perish and were washed out of our beds between decks, while the sea sickness and the groans and shrieks of so many unhappy wretches made the situation we were in truly distressing.<sup>74</sup>

Clearly, when women came to record their experiences of nature much depended upon whom they were addressing, their reason for writing, and how empowered or disempowered they felt at the time. Though both convention and religion might dictate that a woman admire the beauty and sublimity of nature there were times during the colonial enterprise when this was just not possible. Perhaps the last word on the subject should go to Ellen Monger, for with the deaths of her three youngest children still fresh in her mind, she followed a lyrical description of the night sky at sea - 'the moon rising with silent majesty shedding her glorious rays over the vast and mighty world of wonders' - with 'whilst gazing at the beautiful scene you are, perhaps, interrupted by a sad tolling of a bell, informing you some poor victim to sickness and privation was about to be launched into a watery grave'.<sup>75</sup> Women who under patriarchy found it necessary to repress into the unconscious much of their resentment could find themselves standing in a fragile relation to exposure to the 'wild' and have difficulty in maintaining the belief that God's love was joyously immanent in the universe of his creation.

Because it stood at the junction of gardening and science the study of botany was seen as a suitable 'scientific' activity for middle class women which would improve their health and their mental and moral well-being. Consequently the study of botany was included in the

<sup>71</sup> Patricia Clarke & Dale Spender (eds.) *Life Lines: Australian Women's Letters and Diaries, 1788-1840*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1992, p. 83.

<sup>72</sup> Georgiana McCrae, Journal, 16 January 1841, in Brenda Niall, *A Biography of Georgiana McCrae: Painter, Diarist, Pioneer*, Murgunyah & Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p.121.

<sup>73</sup> Sarah Docker, Journal, 28 September 1828, Clarke & Spender, 1992, pp. 5-7.

<sup>74</sup> Mary Talbot, Clarke & Spender, 1992, p. 7.

<sup>75</sup> Ellen Monger, Letter, 28 January 1840, in Frost, 1984, p. 37.

education of most middle class girls.<sup>76</sup> After a long period at sea women had an added appreciation of botany and of the 'beauties' to be found on land with the result that Cape Town, a place where middle class women took the opportunity to supplement garden seeds and cuttings intended for their colonial gardens, was usually described in glowing terms. Mrs Maconochie, who was there in Spring, described it as 'a heaven of flowers ... the whole country ... one glorious mass of bloom'.<sup>77</sup>

### Women's responses to a new land.

Women who were eager to reach their new land were usually prepared to be positive in their first judgements of it. Louisa Clifton was typical of many women who viewed the land optimistically from on board ship. While on board the *Parkfield* she wrote that the 'first view and scent of land[which greeted] the weary senses' of the emigrant awoke in them an 'ecstasy of feeling... which the longest life [could] never obliterate'. Louisa particularly liked the fact that along the shore that she could see 'masses of beautiful foliage [growing] down to the water's edge'.<sup>78</sup> Such high expectations could make the realities of settlement harder to bear. When Ellen Monger, in poor health and mourning the loss of her three children, landed in Adelaide during the extremely hot summer of 1839-40 she thought it a dreadful place of 'hot winds', 'whirlpools of dust', 'bugs and fleas' and 'ants and mosquitoes'.<sup>79</sup> That she was right to think so is confirmed by the witty reminiscences of Catherine Spence who that same dreadful summer arrived with her family in Adelaide as a fourteen year old.<sup>80</sup>

It wasn't all bad. Despite the difficult conditions, many middle class women appear to have had a positive response to the landscape. Often what these women enjoyed (in common with middle class men) was the prospect the colonies seemed to offer for the creation of English-type estates.<sup>81</sup> Despite her advanced state of pregnancy and ill-health Georgiana Molloy echoed Louisa Clifton in expressing delight that the Swan River was 'beautifully wooded to the water's edge with both copse wood and magnificent old trees'.<sup>82</sup> Having been

<sup>76</sup> Ann B. Stein in *Women and History: Voices in Early Modern England*, Valerie Frith, (ed.), Coach House Press, Toronto, 1995, p. 145.

<sup>77</sup> Mrs Maconochie to Captain Mangles, Hobart Town, 22 June 1837, BL 479A/2.

<sup>78</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 17 March 1841, BL 4034A

<sup>79</sup> Monger, 28 January 1840 in Frost, 1984, p. 37.

<sup>80</sup> Catherine Spence, Autobiography, 1910, in Helen Thomson (ed.), *Catherine Helen Spence*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, Queensland, 1987, pp. 422-3. Catherine claimed the members of her family felt like 'cutting their throats'.

<sup>81</sup> Simon Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1996.

<sup>82</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Mrs Kennedy 4 April 1830, BL CRO D/Ken/3/28/9.

taught to take an interest in flowers, landscape, botany, zoology and entomology women found consolation in the 'novelty' inherent in their new environment. Elizabeth Macarthur claimed that when she first arrived in Sydney that 'everything [being] new to [her], every Bird, every Insect, Flower etc', helped reconcile her to the lack of female company.<sup>83</sup>

It has been claimed that the socio-politics of gender did not preclude the involvement of nineteenth century women in 'any aspect' of shaping or representing the land but 'simply regulated, in a variety of ways, the cultural visibility of involvement'.<sup>84</sup> This would seem to somewhat overstate the case. However it does seem that, as the same author suggests, that '[t]he character of a woman's relationship with "the bush" became the bounding of her landscape and hence her picturing of that landscape'.<sup>85</sup> Because of this it would seem fruitful to closely explore further the first reactions of a female emigrant to the bush which was to become the perimeter of her perceptual landscape.<sup>86</sup>

As nineteenth century women were skilled at suppressing and selecting information, texts which deal with women's responses to the natural environment need to be read with an eye to what women did *not* express. Georgiana McCrae, who sailed with her three children from England to Melbourne unsure whether the husband she had not seen for two years would welcome her arrival, wrote shortly after she landed:

Incessant rain. Grievous for the emigrants camped in miserable thin tents exposed to the south-west wind, while the flats are dotted all over with pools of water. Yesterday, a woman drowned herself in the river, from sheer despair. Went to the bank for my half-years' pay; quite knocked upon my return from wading through the mud; and my boots - "ablines."<sup>87</sup>

Given the juxtaposition of her remarks and what she chose to leave out of her narrative it could be inferred that Georgiana deeply empathised with the woman whom she considered to have been driven to suicide by colonial conditions (and an indifferent or absent husband?) and that she went to the bank in order to check her money had arrived so that, unlike the despairing woman, she could be sure she had the means to take herself and her children back to Britain should it ever prove necessary. Likewise, before she moved into her first bush home, Georgiana wrote in her diary the few terse words: 'Woke suffering from neuralgic

<sup>83</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 7 March 1791, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, p. 28.

<sup>84</sup> Deborah Malor, 'Women's Points of View: The Domestic, the Vernacular, the Garden, and the Paddock', in *Australian Journal of Art*, vol. 8, 1996, p. 81.

<sup>85</sup> Georgiana McCrae, H, McCrae, 1934, p. 84.

<sup>86</sup> The 'bush' had different connotations at different times / places. In this sense it meant uncleared country.

<sup>87</sup> Georgiana McCrae, 5, 6 August 1841, H, McCrae, 1934, p. 35.

pains ... despatched the rest of our luggage to "Mayfield," and went early to bed'. It was not until many years later that she added:

The "Mayfield" site, "Carran-Carranulk," so called by the natives after the *Currin*, or prickly myrtle, consists of nine and a half acres badly encumbered with boulders, requiring much labour to raise them from the soil. ... In the "reserve" the boys kept a kitchen-garden where they grew quantities of pumpkins, etc. Here, too the women servants carried on their laundry arrangements. ... From the dormer-windows of "Mayfield," looking south, nothing was to be seen but the tops of gum-trees all the way to Richmond Hill.<sup>88</sup>

By that time, less physically exhausted and secure in the knowledge that she had survived her bush experiences, she could afford to be more expansive. While social 'frontiers of control' such as patriarchal prohibitions and physical barriers such as garden fences and 'the bush' certainly existed for colonial women, 'physical boundaries are not necessarily also those of the landscapes of the mind'.<sup>89</sup> Apart from the illusiveness of human perception, at any given point in time the human imagination roves forward and backward 'selecting matters of valency' and intertwining 'individual' with 'social' memory.<sup>90</sup>

In the same way as Georgiana McCrae's journal entries, Annie Baxter's conventional little sketches of her seemingly idyllic home and surroundings in the bush (plates 9 & 10) make little sense without a reading of her diaries and a contextualisation of her life within the world in which she lived. Annie's carefully edited responses to her bush environment make little sense unless it is known that the leases on which she lived in northern and southern New South Wales occupied Aboriginal territory and straddled Aboriginal trails at a time when ongoing violence occurred between European settlers and Aborigines over land, hunting rights and access to ceremonial sites.<sup>91</sup> When both women's conscious and unconscious responses to the natural environment are evaluated however, it becomes clear that women's responses were inextricably inter-connected with patriarchy at the level of the individual, the family, the colony and the empire.

The first works of art produced by a woman in the colonies which I analyse are those of Louisa Clifton. This is partly because Louisa recorded her impressions of the colonial

<sup>88</sup> Georgiana McCrae, 1 February 1842, H, McCrae, 1934, pp. 50, 51.

<sup>89</sup> Georgiana McCrae, H, McCrae, 1934, p. 84.

<sup>90</sup> Paula Hamilton, 'The Knife Edge; Debates About Memory and History' in Kate Darian Smith & Paula Hamilton, (eds.) *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994.

landscape in a series of 'sketches' (watercolour and pencil) which she made during the first days, weeks and months after she arrived at Australind in the Swan River colony in 1841. It is also partly because one of Louisa's 'finished' pencil sketches (plate 4) was used as the base for a lithograph (plate 5) which was hand coloured by a male artist in Britain and used as advertisement for the Wakefieldian settlement in which she lived at Australind. This lithograph was accepted in Western Australia in the 1930s as the production of Louisa Clifton alone - that is as a 'pioneer' woman's first response to the Australian landscape.<sup>92</sup> As the male lithographer, T.C. Dibdin, carefully reconstructed Louisa's vision,<sup>93</sup> the discrepancies between Louisa's pencil sketch and the hand-coloured lithograph illuminate some of the differences in women's and men's perceptions of the natural environment.

Louisa's portfolio of (so-called topographical) art broaches a number of thorny problems. Firstly, were women's 'topographical' representations of the natural landscape more simple and more representational than men's because they expressed the 'immediacy of women's experience', or because women lacked the time, facilities, and professional skills to record landscape in a more formal manner? This question becomes important because the informality of style and format of colonial women's representation of landscape is the reason it is now claimed that colonial women artists 'interpreted the Australian landscape with more 'fidelity' than male artists.'<sup>94</sup> Also, can it be said of colonial women landscape painters - as it is said of their male contemporaries - that they sought in their painting to 'convey information about the places they had visited' as much as to produce works of art? <sup>95</sup> Women certainly intended to convey information in their art - frequently sending art work to relatives in Britain

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<sup>91</sup> Hamilton, 1994, p. 13. 'We have begun to recognise organised structures for forgetting in relation to the Aboriginal people'. After being orally transmitted to each other by several generations of European settlers the 'settler story' with its suppressions became official history.

<sup>92</sup> Joan Kerr, (ed.) *The Dictionary of Australian Artists, Painters, Sketchers, Photographers and Engravers to 1870*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992. Centenary issue *Western Mail*, Perth, 1932. Ironically it was this misconception which helped ensure Louisa was not forgotten as an artist.

<sup>93</sup> Barbara Chapman, *The Colonial Eye: A Topographical and Artistic Record of the Life and Landscape of Western Australia 1798-1914*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, WA, 1979, p. 113. The lithograph is inscribed *A View of Koombana Bay or Port Leschenault, Australind, Western Australia, c 1840's*. Drawn and litho by Dibdin. From an Original Sketch taken on the Spot, by Miss Louisa Clifton. Published by Smith Elder & Co., 65 Cornhill, London: For the Western Australian Company.

<sup>94</sup> Caroline Ambrus, *Australian Women Artists: First Fleet to 1945*, Irresistible Press, Woden, ACT, 1992, p. 12.

<sup>95</sup> Tim Bonyhady, *Images in Opposition: Australian Landscape Painting 1801-1890*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1985, pp. 87, 97. It was common in colonies based on free settlement for male colonists to produce watercolours to be used in the advertisement of the colony - Colonial Light and S.T Gill both painted colonial scenes which hung in the South Australian Company's office in London. Such paintings usually included explicit enticements to settlement such as panoramic views and displays of unsettled land. It is interesting to compare Robert Dale's (artist) & Robert Havel's (lithographer) *Panoramic View of King George Sound*, W.A., c1834, with plate 5. Both lithographs are held by the West Australian Art Gallery.



*PLATE 4. 'View of Leschenault Bay'. Louisa Clifton, 1841. Private Collection. Reproduced in The Colonial Eye.*



*PLATE 5. 'A View of Koombana Bay or Port Leschenault'. After Louisa Clifton. c 1840s.  
Art Gallery of Western Australia.*



*PLATE 6. 'View of Mr Greensill's Bush Cottage', c.1841. Private Collection. Reproduced in The Colonial Eye.*



as a way of sharing the colonial experience. There is also ample evidence that, although colonial women usually painted in watercolour rather than in oils, and although - then as now - the professional art world did not consider colonial women's productions to constitute art,<sup>96</sup> many nineteenth century women artists took their art seriously, and, despite the disclaimers they made as to its imperfections, considered they produced worthwhile works of art.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, the main function of art for emigrant women who lived in 'the bush' would seem to have been to help re-position themselves within the colonial landscape.<sup>98</sup>

Eldest daughter of fifteen children in a well-to-do Quaker family, Louisa grew up in England and 'finished' her education - which included a thorough grounding in art - in France. When difficult financial times decided Louisa's father to accept the position of Chief Commissioner for the Western Australian Company's proposed new settlement at Australind the twenty five year old Louisa dutifully left a relationship which she had hoped represented the prospect of marriage and life in what she saw as a 'civilised' country in order to accompany her parents to Western Australia. One of the characteristics Louisa demonstrated in her diaries; characteristics common to intensely religious people of her time, was an obsessive fear of personal inadequacy and an intense sense of 'God's glory' as manifested in nature. Racked by alternating self-doubt and religious joy, Louisa's approach to landscape was influenced by the concept of the Golden Age of perfect harmony between man and nature as expressed in the early work of Claude Lorraine. In this work Lorraine combined elements of the rustic, the picturesque and the sublime, seamlessly blending 'wilderness' and domestic landscape to give an impression of a 'soft Arcadia'.<sup>99</sup> As his work was influential in Europe during the period when Louisa lived in France it is not surprising to find that when she arrived at Australind Louisa described colonial scenery in Claudean terms - the view of the shore from the boat she wrote was 'most beautiful, worthy of the pencil of a Claude Lorraine [having] a wildness congenial to the spot and exciting to the imagination'.<sup>100</sup> However, judging by her art, Louisa appears to have been as much influenced by the

<sup>96</sup> Joan Kerr, 'Putting the Colonial Lady Painter in her Place', in *Hearth & Home: Women's Decorative Arts & Crafts 1800-1930*, Ann Toy, Margot Riley, Patricia R. McDonald, (eds.), Historic Houses Trust, NSW, 1988, pp. 11-14. Until recently drawings and watercolours produced by colonial women were categorised as 'domestic' art / craft which was considered to have no 'real' artistic value.

<sup>97</sup> Caroline Clemente, *Australian Watercolours 1802-1926*, The National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1991, pp. 42, 44, 68.

<sup>98</sup> Joan Kerr, 'Colonial Ladies Sketchbooks', *Art and Australia*, vol. 17, no. 4, Winter, 1980, p. 361.

<sup>99</sup> Vincent J. Scully, *New World Visions of Household Gods and Sacred Places: American Art 1650-1914*, Little, Brown & Company, Boston, 1988, p. 92. Schama 1995, p. 456. The usual features of a 'soft' Arcadia were trees, water, gentle hills and people going about their business - the arboreal garden and the sacred stream being features mentioned in Genesis.

<sup>100</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 3 April 1841, BL 398/A.

delicately perceived 'factual' landscapes of John Constable as by the idealised landscapes of Claude Lorraine.<sup>101</sup> This may have been partly because colonial women painters tended to record 'the immediacy of their lives'.<sup>102</sup> There are clearly 'effects in nature which produce an immediate response in the Western European mind' - such as barrenness and dryness causing dismay. Colonial women, who in their role as childbearers needed to satisfy their own and their children's 'simple biological needs', generally had a compelling interest in whether or not landscape was likely to be physically sustaining: this could either modify or amplify women's learned responses to landscape.<sup>103</sup>

Louisa and her family were among the 93 settlers on the *Parkfield* who were sent to Australind by the Western Australia company to prepare the settlement for those who were to follow. The *Parkfield* arrived at the (virtually deserted) Leschenault inlet on the 18 March 1841. While their father, Marshall Waller Clifton, was engaged in protracted negotiations with Governor Hutt as to where the site for the proposed settlement would be, Louisa and her sister Mary lived firstly aboard the *Parkfield* and later in a tent on shore and occupied themselves by making pencil and watercolour sketches of what Louisa described as 'picturesque' views of the coast and surrounding countryside.<sup>104</sup> From the day she landed Louisa engaged the attentions of Mr George Eliot, the Government Resident for the Bunbury district who, fifteen months after Louisa arrived in the colony and it had become clear that the Australind settlement would fail, married her in a large ceremony - which it is claimed was intended by Louisa's father to placate the disgruntled settlers at Australind - and in so doing formalised a mutually beneficial alliance between himself and Marshall Waller Clifton.<sup>105</sup> During this period in her life it could be said that Louisa's existence was determined by her father's and future husband's exhaustive and exhausting efforts to keep the doomed settlement at Australind from failing.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Kenneth Clark, *Landscape into Art*, John Murray, London, 1949, pp. 64, 87, 97, 109.

<sup>102</sup> Malor, 1996, p. 86.

<sup>103</sup> Clark, 1949, p. 87.

<sup>104</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 23 March 1841, 29 May 1841, BL 398/A. Louisa claimed she intended to send her drawings to relatives in England.

<sup>105</sup> Clifton Papers, Special Licence, 2 May 1842, BL 2212A. The marriage was arranged in such a hurry that a special licence was obtained to allow it to proceed without publication of Banns.

<sup>106</sup> Jean Northover, 'A Splendid Field Before Us: Women and Colonial Settlement in the Coastal South West of Pre-Convict Western Australia, 1840-50', in B.K. De Garis (ed.), *Portraits of the South West: Aborigines, Women and the Environment*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1993, pp. 82-3. By December 1842 it was clear to Louisa's father, Marshall Waller Clifton, that the Australind scheme was not viable. Of the 230 settlers to arrive 86% were steerage and thus found themselves to be wholly without work or financial resources - that is, unhoused and hungry. The day Louisa married, her father wrote to Governor Hutt to say the emigrants at Australind were starving.

In paying her his respects George Eliot encouraged Louisa to pursue an interest in the natural environment by giving her a gift of 62 packets of native seeds and suggesting she sketch the views at Australind. It is (perhaps) evidence of Louisa's suggestibility that the gift of seeds determined her to begin to collect native seeds and flowers because she was 'destined to do so', and that Eliot's suggestion that she take up sketching made her decide to make 'drawing ... the object and pursuit of my leisure hours'.<sup>107</sup> On the 25 March, having been in the colony one week, Louisa wrote of the view from the hill next to George Eliot's house to which he had taken her - 'charmed with the exquisite view of the estuary, the hills beyond, dips and dells and knolls beautifully studded with large and picturesque trees forming the nearest landscape'.<sup>108</sup> Two days later Louisa and her sister returned to sit upon Mr Eliot's verandah and 'sketch the lovely view'.<sup>109</sup> Louisa's drawing (plate 4) is now considered to be the basis for the hand coloured lithograph (plate 5) which the Western Australian Company used to advertise the Australind settlement in Britain.<sup>110</sup>

It is considered that Louisa's drawing was transformed by Dibdin from 'an accurate topographical depiction of the Australian landscape into an Arcadian scene which might be anywhere in the world' by his addition of 'small figures and cattle in the manner of Claude' and of sailing ships to 'fill' the estuary, and by his transformation of 'low scrubby sand-hills' into 'rolling tree-covered hills'.<sup>111</sup> During the early years of settlement a desire to construct a 'typical' colonial landscape made publishers in England eager to receive topographical sketches from the colonies which could serve as the basis for hand coloured engravings.<sup>112</sup> It was common practice for British lithographers to alter such sketches so that they would accord better with British expectations of landscape.<sup>113</sup> It seems likely that Louisa sketched the view which she described as the 'most picturesque' scene she had seen in the colony with 'large spreading trees, a hill covered with wood and bush rising behind',<sup>114</sup> in order to send to relatives in England and that when the settlement at Australind began to fail her father sent the sketch to the company's head office to be lithographed.

<sup>107</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 25 March 1841, 24, 25 May 1841, BL 398/A. By 'drawing' Louisa meant both 'finished' pencil drawings and watercolours.

<sup>108</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 25 March 1841, BL 398/A.

<sup>109</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 27 March 1841, BL 398/A.

<sup>110</sup> Chapman, 1979, p. 113.

<sup>111</sup> Chapman, 1979, p. 113.

<sup>112</sup> Bernard Smith, *Place, Taste and Tradition: A Study in Australian Art Since 1788*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1979 (1958), p. 42. Smith, 1969, p. 5.

<sup>113</sup> Smith, 1969, p. 238. The norm was to add Australian plants, picturesque figures and to change the foliage of trees because it was thought the colonial landscape lacked variety.

<sup>114</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 23 March 1841, BL 398/A.

Two days after George Eliot's encouragement had freshly determined Louisa to draw she wrote: 'It is astonishing how much the hand of man improves nature (unless particularly picturesque) throwing an air of interest upon a scene otherwise tame and unstriking'.<sup>115</sup> In this she was expressing a sentiment women often articulated in the colonies. When travelling up the Swan River a few years previously Ann Whatley commented that 'the scenery was so park-like that at every turn I found myself looking for country seats. Nature is very beautiful but it must be allowed that a little bit of art sets her off wonderfully'.<sup>116</sup> During May and June 1841 Louisa took extended walks in the company of her father and George Eliot and sketched a number of views such as one from Aylesbury Hill of which she wrote it is 'a sweet spot commanding a view which, if not intercepted by foliage would be almost panoramic, the distant country and even the nearer valleys clothed with trees always reminds me of French views'.<sup>117</sup> Louisa made outdoor sketches of these views when 'the weather permitted' - and claimed she was 'engaged and interested in ...filling them up in the evening'.<sup>118</sup>

Clearly the addition to Louisa's drawing of soaring birds, a boat speeding into the harbour with full sails (despite signs of the lack of wind in the trees and on the water), and vegetation which had an English greenness could only have been added by someone who, knowing little about the subject he was reproducing, wished to add an optimistic and English as well as Claudean aspect to the engraving. Claude's landscapes of the mind projected an image of beneficent order which encouraged the viewer to identify with the small figures in his paintings.<sup>119</sup> As such he was the ideal painter to embody the fantasies which accompanied emigration for he enabled the viewer to imagine British overseas colonies as empty lands and magical landscapes waiting to be entered by the displaced who could therein reinvent themselves and society. Colonial artists who emulated Claude gave order to the experience of settlement by representing the landscape as already tamed. It is no surprise therefore to find that the lithographer altered Louisa's sketch to make it more idyllically Claudean.

While male professional artists in Britain and the colonies may have adapted their style to attract colonists, women such as Louisa appear to have viewed colonial landscape as 'picturesque' in order to stabilise their relation to it. However, in order to do this (essentially

<sup>115</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 26 May 1841, BL 398/A.

<sup>116</sup> Ann Whatley, Journal, February 1830, BL 326A.

<sup>117</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 20 June 1841, BL 398/A.

<sup>118</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 10 July 1841, 29 May 1841, BL 398/A.

<sup>119</sup> Stephen Daniels, *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery & National Identity in England and the United States*, Polity Press, Cambridge, U.K., 1993, p. 151.

internal exercise) women were seemingly prepared to reproduce landscape through a familiar, albeit 'masculine cultural paradigm', which recognised 'natural beauty and cultural potential' as well as strangeness.<sup>120</sup> It is thus not clear whether colonial women failed to produce work which was considered 'finished' due to lack of training and opportunity or from intention.<sup>121</sup> Louisa's pencil sketch (plate 4) could as easily be called picturesque as topographical. Certainly the 'wildness' in it suggests the power of untamed nature picturesquely threatening the boundaries of the framed view.

This of course may be 'projection whereby the inner world seeks to enforce equivalents on the outer'.<sup>122</sup> According to David Punter the irregularity which appears in picturesque representations - misplaced rocks, disjunctive hills - are the artist's recognition of the 'shoals of the unconscious'.<sup>123</sup> Punter drew on Melanie Klein in positing that the wish to establish and destroy symmetry within a created landscape expresses a desire to attack the authority and the cohesion of overly powerful parents in order to gain for the artist an autonomous existence. Having destroyed cohesion the artist makes reparation by building a pastoral myth of reconciliation in which conflict can be seen to have been expressed, legitimated and neutralised.<sup>124</sup> As, unlike her later drawings, no humans appear in this first drawing of Louisa's it seems probable that in psychological terms the dark rise on the left (or West) serves as a metaphor for female power. In a society which on the one hand etherealised and worshipped women and on the other associated them with denigrated animalistic procreative power it was normal practice to situate mental asylums for women on 'a gentle eminence not high enough to be remote', but high enough to provide views of 'fertile and agreeable country'.<sup>125</sup> Despite, or because of its stillness, her scene retains a brooding sense of fecundity. The success of the new colony in the early phase of colonisation was thought to be based upon the fertility and 'earthiness' of women: in a society whose economic base was rural production large families were considered to ensure success. Society, and women themselves, would expect women to devote their lives to reproduction for the 'benefit' of the

<sup>120</sup> Bird, 1989, pp. 8-9.

<sup>121</sup> Smith, 1969, p. 265. Smith's praise of John Glover's 'fresh, unaffected and empirical vision' and 'clear perception of the characteristics of the Australian scene' takes no account of the fact that Glover had professional training and experience, painted in oils and had a studio. His pencil sketches of the Australian landscape do not differ a great deal from those of Louisa Clifton.

<sup>122</sup> David Punter, 'The Picturesque and the Sublime', Copley and Garside, 1994, pp. 223, 231-3.

<sup>123</sup> Hillman, 1975.

<sup>124</sup> Melanie Klein, *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921 - 1945*, H. Segal, (ed.), Virago, London, 1988, pp. 219-32, 306-43

<sup>125</sup> Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women and Madness and English Culture 1830-1980*, Virago Press, London, 1987, p. 35.

family and of society. This reading is borne out by a consideration of another of Louisa's sketches which I will undertake after I have looked more closely at plate 5.

It is interesting to note that while Louisa's earliest sketches of colonial landscape - such as plate 4 - show picturesque wildness and irregularity, her later watercolours are more like the view in plate 5 wherein her landscape was tidied up, tamed and given an air of cultivation by a male professional artist. Keeping in mind that the view in plate 5 emanated partly from the imagination of Louisa Clifton and partly from that of a male professional artist, it is worth considering its content. What immediately strikes the eye about the scene is the way in which, as was typical of Claudean representations, the wildness and darkness in the left foreground contends with the lightness and tranquillity of the rest of the scene. Newtonian science failed to silence alchemists' belief in the supposed vitality in matter: consequently during the nineteenth century belief in a universe which was a 'growing, breathing being' and an age old belief in a universe of 'primitive and crude vigour' combined to challenge more mechanistic interpretations of the universe.<sup>126</sup>

Douglas Davies claimed that in scenes such as that shown in plate 5 a dark, foliage-covered hill supporting tall trees which reached into a light sky represented the universal mythical 'world' tree, the mystical spring of life at its base, set upon the 'world' mountain. The significance of the 'world' tree, shown with its roots in the nether world and its arms reaching into heaven, being that its trunk was thought to link the everyday with both the dark and the spiritual sides of life. Because trees are a living entity which span many human generations a scene such as this serves as a 'historical marker' which links the present with the past.<sup>127</sup> In similar works which show the influence of Claude created by American male artists, the movement from wild to cultivated is said to represent a taming of the countryside through which Americans could adopt the antiquity (of the land and its indigenous people) which their culture did not possess.<sup>128</sup> Devoutly Christian colonial artists such as Louisa Clifton demonstrated a wish to begin again in a new and a non-decadent society; a society which it was hoped would be closer to the origins of the earth, of nature - a nature which it was believed had a dark and unknown side as well as a beneficent one. Because nature was considered to be imbued with God it was considered it should be approached humbly by

<sup>126</sup> Stafford, 1984, pp. 357, 360.

<sup>127</sup> Douglas Davies, 'The Evocative Symbolism of Trees', in *The Iconography of Landscape*, Denis Cosgrove & Stephen Daniels (eds.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1988, pp. 32-42.

<sup>128</sup> Scully, 1988, p. 92.

humans - hence humans were miniaturised in landscape art in order to indicate that man was tiny before God and before the forces of nature.<sup>129</sup>

The psychological use of landscape tends to be either dystopian or utopian; that is it can serve either as a 'field for negative psychic projections of the unconscious' or as an idyllic field that meets the ego's needs for 'stability, peace and security'.<sup>130</sup> At the same time as Louisa Clifton was sitting in the outdoors observing and drawing the south coast of Western Australia, John Glover (who as far as I know was never in Western Australia) painted a West Australian scene called a 'View between the Swan River and King George Sound' which had the same motif as hers - trees, hills, sky and distance. However John Glover so flooded his scene in golden light that it was as if he was representing the Swan River Colony as an ahistorical Arcadia in which his stick Aboriginal figures in the foreground stood in for Europeans.<sup>131</sup> It was common practice for artists to represent Aborigines as Claudean stick figures placed to one side of metamorphosed (bright, optimistic and clear) landscapes.<sup>132</sup> Bernard Smith, who virtually overlooked women colonial artists, believed that the 'fresh, unaffected and empirical vision' John Glover demonstrated in his larger paintings captured the Australian landscape more accurately than any other early colonial artist. Smith saw Glover's vision as an adaptive imaginative construction within a new society attempting to assert it was organically engendered rather than wrested from another civilisation.<sup>133</sup> Jean Campbell, on the other hand, felt John Glover came closest to a true expression of the Australian landscape in his slighter pencil or pen and wash sketches - sketches which closely resemble those of Louisa Clifton.<sup>134</sup>

To my mind plate 5 shows Louisa's unconscious negative projections with their dystopic suggestions of sacrificial compulsion overlaid by statements made by a male artist who wished to create a utopic Arcadia. In plate 4 Louisa sought to incorporate in her mental landscape that which was unknown and unknowable, uncontrolled and uncontrollable in the nature of her new land and in humankind - things associated with life and death, with despair

<sup>129</sup> Schama, 1995, p. 462.

<sup>130</sup> Tacey, 1995, pp. 54, 67.

<sup>131</sup> Reproduced in *Art and Australia*, Spring 1995, vol 33, no. 1, p. 16. As this painting sold in 1995 for \$387, 500, it would appear that the dream of Australia as an Arcadia is alive and well in the present.

<sup>132</sup> Alex Miller, *The Ancestor Game*, Penguin, Ringwood, Australia, 1992, p. 271. This early construction of Australia as a country to which Europeans had a 'God-given' right and in which they could domestically 'imagine themselves into being' has been widely accepted in Australian society.

<sup>133</sup> Bonyhady, p. xi. Until recently the dominant issue re colonial art has been 'the success or failure of the artists in conveying the shape of eucalyptus trees and the sharpness of Australian light'.

<sup>134</sup> Jean Campbell, *Australian Watercolour Painters 1780 to the Present Day*, Craftsman House, Sydney, 1989, p. 37.

and the rebirth of hope. It is significant that the one undeniable contribution to the lithograph which was made by Louisa Clifton was the perspective which looked from the land to the sea - a view which, judging by the direction in which her ships were facing represented not simply a looking back to her land of origin, the mother country, but a hope of an ongoing economic and cultural commerce between the two countries; of not just parental support but of mutual exchange and the mutual modification of cultural beliefs. For reasons which Hartz made clear this early hope was one which was long delayed in finding expression within Australian culture.<sup>135</sup> The way in which Louisa perceived landscape can be inferred from another of her pencil drawings. Shortly after she prepared plate 4; that is while she was still living in a tent and struggling to understand how she felt about George Eliot, Louisa drew a scene which she called 'A View of Mr Greensill's Bush Cottage' (plate 6). Louisa admiringly described the cottage as the 'neatest hut yet built [at Australind]'. As the 'cottage' - which appears to grow organically out of the hill along with the tall trees which overpower it - belonged to a single man who offered it to Louisa and her sisters as temporary shelter, there seems little point in Louisa having placed in the foreground of the sketch a loving couple who gaze upon it from a safe distance, their approach blocked by a felled tree.<sup>136</sup> That is, no real point unless Louisa was already envisioning herself as the wife of a land-owning settler such as George Eliot. And indeed three months before executing the sketch of Mr Greensill's hut Louisa, happy in her developing relationship with George, confided to her journal that although she had been initially prejudiced against marriage she was now inclined to look upon the 'dependency' of marriage with favour. She wrote:

[A]s years have rolled on and I have increasingly needed a prop and support, a kindred heart, I have at times thought that it is a state in which I might have found the dependent happiness I have longed for.<sup>137</sup>

In this sketch Louisa's work has echoes of Constable's in which the apparent disorder in nature was subsumed under a higher order: nature envisioned as providing 'a release *from* order and authority' as well as a - transcendent - 'release *into* them'.<sup>138</sup> In Louisa's case order in nature was partly expected to come through the marriage relation. Louisa's growing conjunction in her art of the domestic, the vernacular and landscape very probably allowed

<sup>135</sup> Phillip Drew, *The Coast Dwellers: Australians Living on the Edge*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria, 1994, pp. x, xi, xiii. Drew traced the way in which Australians have become a nation of coast dwellers and verandah sitters - looking out across the land and sea from the perimeter of the house as home, the land as home. He saw this as part of Australians' sense of not really belonging, a sense which makes Australians go against their own practice and view Uluru the 'true heart' of the country.

<sup>136</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 10 June 1841, BL 398/A.

<sup>137</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 29 March 1841, BL 398/A.

<sup>138</sup> Bermingham, 1986, p. 123.



her to retain a sense of control over her relationship with the environment and a sense of self within the community in which she lived.<sup>139</sup>

After she married George Eliot Louisa experienced many trials in her life. Her first children (premature twins) died at birth. She went on to have eight living children - four girls and four boys - and, as far as can be determined, gave up her artwork after her first living child was born. An extremely devout member of the brethren, Louisa appears to have suffered in having a husband who gave less weight to spiritual concerns than she had been reared to expect.<sup>140</sup> In the early years of their marriage the couple were adversely affected by the failure of the Australind enterprise: five years into her marriage Louisa's brother wrote expressing his sympathy and concern at her 'personal privations' and her 'poverty stricken position in Australia'.<sup>141</sup> Given Louisa's capacity for soul searching it is no surprise to find her devout mother delivering a homily to the young mother which, it seems, was intended to rally her spirits when they flagged under the stress of multiple motherhood. Elinor Clifton wrote:

[W]hat an important, most important, most important dispensation thou art fulfilling in this period of thy life, in bearing and bringing up so fine and high-toned a family! When we reflect on the results of such being given to the world to raise & keep up a high standard! we may not feel a Mother's care of trifling or common place importance for we can hardly be called to a higher; thus I feel of thine and George's position at this time in life.<sup>142</sup>

Perhaps, as she struggled under difficult conditions to raise eight children, Louisa was thinking of herself when she wrote an address on the mistreatment of horses - something which concerned the brethren deeply.<sup>143</sup> The carefully preserved document read as follows:

Deprived of the liberty & natural enjoyment he inherited from the hands of his creator; [the horse] is become the slave of man & his invaluable servant ... Under a very feeling sense of the sufferings horses endure when whilst making every possible exertion they are still flogged ... weary from over-fatigue.. to make efforts beyond their power ... I cannot be easy without making an effort .. to soften the hearts of those who exercise this cruelty towards them.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>139</sup> Malor, 1996, pp. 86-7. Such work by women was characteristically informal and sensual.

<sup>140</sup> Northover, 1993, pp. 82-3. George found himself on different sides of the fence to his wife and her family when it came to matters such as their commitment to teetotalism.

<sup>141</sup> F. Clifton to Louisa Eliot, 30 December 1847, BL 4034A/2

<sup>142</sup> Elinor Clifton to Louisa Eliot, 1 May [n.d.], BL 4034A/8.

<sup>143</sup> Cirlot, 1971, p. 152. Carl Jung believed the horse was a symbol for the 'mother within us'. Thomas, 1983, pp. 41-45. Because of child bearing women were thought to be like animals. Consequently, in a century which interacted with horses a great deal, horses could provide women with 'a point of reference for the continuous process of self-definition'.

<sup>144</sup> Louisa Eliot, 'An Address to all Who Have the Care and Driving of Horses', n.d., BL 4034A/19.

In the colonies being a wife and mother was often not an easy task. It was not helped by a confused symbolism which on the one hand equated women with the fecundity of the 'mother earth' and expected them to put procreation at the centre of their existence and on the other represented them as decorative 'cut' flowers whose roots into the earth were severed / denied.

### **The land before her: gardening as reclamation.**

Annette Kolodny considered American colonial women who accompanied their menfolk to the frontiers of settlement were sustained by a fantasy of landscape in which they saw themselves as actively transforming the wilderness by the establishment of domestic gardens. In her opinion women not only planted home gardens but embraced country which was in any way parklike as a 'ready-made' garden: a 'potential sanctuary for an idealised domesticity'. On the other hand she believed American men were sustained by a mythology wherein they saw the prairies as a rediscovered Eden and themselves as heroic 'wilderness' Adams, or heroes such as Daniel Boone who 'understood' and manipulated nature to their own advantage. Kolodny described this male fantasy as a 'psychosexual' dream of possessing a 'virgin continent' which in time reflexively recoiled - in the form of frustrated desire and guilt - into a negative image of the land as ungiving mother.<sup>145</sup> She believed that, having focused on their domestic space of home and garden in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the nineteenth century women in America progressively proclaimed America a paradise in which 'the natural garden of the landscape and the landscape of home and garden [were] one'. In these terms it was the activity of gardening which gave meaning to women's lives in a new environment by enabling them to make their mark on the landscape and begin to escape from an internalised 'psychology of captivity' into the world beyond the home.<sup>146</sup>

Keeping in mind that settlement in Australia did not begin until late in the eighteenth century, a similar pattern of women's adaptation and response to the natural environment can be traced in the Australian colonies. It has been said that in the Australian colonies women 'consciously produced the view themselves' by designing and working in their gardens and by recording their surroundings; activities which enabled colonial women to form both an actual and a cognitive 'frame for the prospect'. The biggest change for women in frontier conditions - and in Deborah Malor's opinion women's unique contribution to the discourse

<sup>145</sup> Kolodny, 1984, Preface, pp. xii - xv, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>146</sup> Kolodny, 1984, p. 5, 6, 7.

of landscape was the development of the 'vernacular landscape' - that is, a wider prospect which included not only the individual's home and garden but the community and church.<sup>147</sup> Both Kolodny and Malor thus claimed that it was through gardening and cognitive activity of an 'inclusive' and 'civilising' nature (activity which sought to collapse the distinction between 'cultivated' and 'wild') that American and Australian colonial women in the nineteenth century changed the landscape and influenced, or sought to influence, the way in which landscape was perceived.

When they recalled the past middle class women who gardened in the colony in the first half of the nineteenth century were proud to be able to say that they had planted their gardens with their 'own hands'.<sup>148</sup> Raising plants, especially flowering plants, was seen in the nineteenth century as an extension of women's nurturing skills and thus an occupation which would not conflict with women's sense of duty to their families. It was thought that the exercise and fresh air entailed in gardening would improve women's 'health and spirits' and thereby better equip them to be wives and mothers.<sup>149</sup> Because in Britain women experienced the garden as an extension of the home and as a secure world 'all [their] own', once female settlers arrived in the colonies, as soon as they had had time to 'turn .. round' the garden 'became [their] first object of interest'.<sup>150</sup> Parallel to the functions of women, the principal functions of gardens were that of generation and display. In this sense cultivated flowers were initially seen as the opposite of wildflowers which were considered to be the gifts of God and as such the playthings of children and the representatives of a paradisiacal myth of childhood - in biblical terms, of Eden before the fall. The opposition / conjunction between cultivated and wild flowers was a fertile one in the colonies wherein women could experience wildflowers as a form of elision from their cultivated gardens to the garden of nature which was then seen as enticing them beyond the garden gate.<sup>151</sup>

In other words in the nineteenth century gardens served as an idea or moral force which represented Nature's growth and God's design in the form of a paradise whose maintenance required the constant diligence of the gardener. Consequently children as

<sup>147</sup> Malor, 1996, p. 89.

<sup>148</sup> Emmeline De Falbe, 'Memoirs', 1902, *The Bulletin*, March 10, 17 1954.

<sup>149</sup> Hosking, 1988, p. 441. quoting Jane Loudon, *Gardening for Ladies*, 1840. A less popular belief in the 1840s was that gardens served women as consolation.

<sup>150</sup> Kramer, 1996, p. 2. quoting Frances Hodgson Burnett, 'The Secret Garden'. Mrs Edward Millett, *An Australian Parsonage or, The Settler and The Savage in Western Australia*, Facsimile Edition, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, WA, 1980 (1872), p. 65.

<sup>151</sup> Goody, 1993, pp. 24, 230-1, 292. Margaret Plant, 'The Painted Garden', *Art and Australia*, vol. 32, no. 1, Spring 1994, pp. 50-65.

gardens, and gardens as children, became favourite metaphors for writers on domesticity. Gardens thus became teaching devices to provide children not only with practical and scientific information, but to inculcate in them patience, care, tenderness and reverence for life.<sup>152</sup> As a thirteen year old living at 'Arthur's Seat' George McCrae, Georgiana McCrae's eldest son, recorded his daily memorising of botanical lists for his tutor *and* daily work in 'his' vegetable garden wherein he put the information he had learned in his studies to practical use. Encouraged to take a keen interest in both gardens and natural history George's interest led naturally from bringing his mother domesticated lettuces from his garden to bringing her 'native raspberries and currents, ... blossom of the native convolvulus, ...[and] wild clematis seed' from the 'bush'. Before long all the McCrae children (of both genders) roamed the bush and the beach with their mother or their tutor, fishing and collecting flowers, plants and seeds, insects, shells, 'curious' stones or any other natural products which they could find which might prove to be of interest.<sup>153</sup>

Because it was thought that in every woman's soul there was a 'natural fond affinity' for flowers, middle class girls were encouraged to grow flowers rather than vegetables.<sup>154</sup> At the same time as George McCrae was being encouraged to grow vegetables, on the other side of the continent the 14 year old Margaret Hamersley was rambling and riding in the bush and being encouraged to tend her flower garden. She wrote to a family friend: "I have much pleasure in returning you my best thanks for your kind present of garden tools. I have been very busy with them".<sup>155</sup> Like George McCrae, Margaret Hamersley grew up to 'love' nature, paint wildflowers and avidly engage in gardening.<sup>156</sup>

For children reared in the colonies the association between domestic gardens and nature as one's own garden was clearly forged at an early age. While this could breed a reverence for nature as God's garden which belonged to everyone - an attitude which laid the foundation for conservation in the form of National Parks in Australia - it also fudged the

<sup>152</sup> Davidoff & Hall, 1987, p. 373. Georgiana McCrae, 12 June 1844, in H. McCrae, 1934, p. 124. Georgiana recorded that when he visited her Governor La Trobe brought flower roots as a present for Georgiana's children to put in 'their' garden. He suggested Georgiana grow, and encourage her children to grow, native plants.

<sup>153</sup> George Gordon McCrae, Journal, 21-28 December 1846, in Elizabeth Webby (ed.), *Colonial Voices: Letters, Diaries, Journalism and other accounts of nineteenth century Australia*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Queensland, 1989, pp. 122-5.

<sup>154</sup> Davidoff & Hall, 1987, pp. 373-4.

<sup>155</sup> Margaret Hamersley to Bishop Hale, 19 May 1858, a facsimile of the letter was published in the *West Australian*, 23 November 1935, p. 4.

<sup>156</sup> Hugh to Margaret Hamersley, 17 December 1861, Hamersley Papers, BL, 1009A/1A/9. Margaret's brother Hugh often asked how her 'flower garden' was when he wrote to her.

question of private ownership of land, making the unnegotiated appropriation of land belonging to Aborigines virtually invisible.

As well as being a source of pleasant associations and an expression of domestic solidarity gardens represented a demonstration of power over 'nature' (the gardener's own nature as well as nature in general) - that is nature contained, subdued, ordered, selected and enclosed to enable personal, familial and group pleasure.<sup>157</sup> As such gardens offered scope not only for physical recreation but for individual self-improvement / self-expression: in the nineteenth century gardening was an activity for women which ambiguously encouraged both self-expression and self-limitation.<sup>158</sup> In demonstrating a sense of nature as procured and tamed, eighteenth and nineteenth century gardeners habitually gathered plants from distant and 'wild' places, raising them in artificial conditions and making them subservient to the gardener's whims. In the Australian colonies, partly because of botanical interest and partly because the exchange of flowers, plants and seeds formed 'an important nexus of colonial relationships between men and women', once sustenance needs had been met a great deal of attention was given to the establishment of both private and public gardens.<sup>159</sup> There is thus a sense in which gardening mirrors the colonial impulse - that is, serves as an instrument for the reproduction of the old society in the new. In spite of the difficult conditions, gardens and gardening were popular among the middle classes in the colonies because gardening was an activity wherein disorder in society, sexuality and reproduction, beauty and decay and life and death, were managed in a way which gave satisfaction and alleviated anxiety.

On a social level colonial gardens served to demonstrate boundaries and reinforce social distinctions. The secluded or walled garden and the landscaped estate were an extension of the home which came between the family and the external world: as such they were part of

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<sup>157</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to her son Edward Macarthur, 27 December 1830, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, pp. 463-4. '[The garden at Camden] is now finished and in the nicest possible order enriched with the finest fruit trees - and adorned with the choicest flowers - the walks are so well raised and gravelled that you may walk in the garden immediately after very heavy rain without soiling your Shoes - something rare in this new country'.

<sup>158</sup> Thomas, 1983, p. 239. Hosking, 1988, pp. 444-5. Gardens could serve women as private retreats where they exerted territorial rights, practiced acts of insubordination and wilfulness and (sometimes) gained strength to reach out into the world to assert female rights / values.

<sup>159</sup> Goodman, 1988, pp. 403, 405. Jane Franklin to her father Mr Griffen, 3 January 1839 in George Mackaness, (ed.) *Australian Historical Monographs*, New Series, 'Some Private Correspondence of Sir John and Lady Jane Franklin, Tasmania, 1837-1845', 1977, p. 55. When given flowers to welcome her as the Governor's wife to Van Dieman's Land, Jane wrote: 'a bouquet of beautiful flowers; the most characteristic and acceptable compliment which any new country could furnish'.

the romantic, anti-urban middle class drive towards individualism and a tiered society.<sup>160</sup> Louisa Meredith was scornful of the 'slovenly and neglected' plots of ground surrounding country inns in New South Wales where, she wrote, 'no attempt at neatness or improvement was visible'. Such a clear lack of interest in gardens confirmed for her that the working class inhabitants of the Australian colonies were '[m]iserable creatures' who contrasted badly with people of a 'similar station at home'.<sup>161</sup> It is claimed that as the century progressed such attitudes came to constitute an 'all-pervasive social gaze' in which the gardens of working class suburbs and country towns became an object of display and a metaphor for 'industriousness, thrift, marital stability [and] home ownership' among the working classes.<sup>162</sup> In 1871 Louisa Atkinson disguised her class judgements with a picturesque romanticism:

I have seen a rough slab hut rendered quite an object of beauty, by having the common scarlet geranium trained against the wall, while a few saplings made into a rustic porch above an entrance, and clustered over with roses, turns a hovel into "quite a nice little place", in the eyes of passers-by, and to the residents strengthens home love, cheers and animates the hours, and often keeps the husband and father away from the public-house, a better and happier man as he cultivates a few flowers and vegetables.<sup>163</sup>

In other words, despite the fact that moral interpretations of gardens and gardening disguised the lack of social and economic power not only of the working classes but of themselves, middle class colonial women became fervent propagandists for gardening. Though usually forced in the early years of settlement to begin with informal gardens which helped disguise makeshift houses, middle class women quickly designed more formal, geometrically laid out gardens which helped restore their status.<sup>164</sup> Louisa Meredith claimed that for many years she could not have a satisfactory garden because she moved too often. Once settled in a permanent home however she declared that she could not 'possibly sit down to write' until she had designed her new garden which included flower gardens, lawns, a rustic wooden bridge, a fishpond, and an octagon summer house.<sup>165</sup> Both Marianne (sic) Campbell and Georgiana McCrae designed ambitious houses with formal gardens which offset them. Georgiana McCrae surrounded 'Mayfield' with a formal garden - modelled on the Jolimont

<sup>160</sup> Davidoff & Hall, 1987, p. 369.

<sup>161</sup> Meredith, 1844, p. 68.

<sup>162</sup> Goodman, 1988, pp. 406-7. The extension of the work ethic into the working class garden formed part of the new discourse of horticulture - a quietist form of rhetoric intended to attach the populace to the soil. Hoskins, 1988, p. 443. At the same time male dominated Horticultural Societies 'professionally' took over the control of gardening from 'amateur' women gardeners.

<sup>163</sup> Louisa Atkinson, 'The Fitzroy Waterfalls', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 January 1871.

<sup>164</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 4 June 1841, BL 479A/2. Georgiana's new garden at the Vasse was delayed until John Molloy found time to lay 'out the garden beds with geometrical precision'.

<sup>165</sup> Meredith, 1853, p. 23.

garden of her friend Governor La Trobe - which included mass planting's of bulbs and flowerbeds in the form of decorative crescents, diamonds and triangles; while Marianne Campbell, who modelled her garden on that at Hampton Court Palace, included a maze among other splendours in her garden at 'Dunroon'.<sup>166</sup>

Usually when it came to planting native species, official representatives of government were in advance of private colonial gardeners. As a rule only families such as the Macleays who had a deep interest in botany planted largely native species, most other citizens enjoyed introducing 'English greens' into the home garden to contrast with the 'unchanging greens' of 'the bush' beyond it.<sup>167</sup> The list of plants which Georgiana McCrae grew in her garden at 'Mayfield' included fruit trees, vegetables, herbs, flowering shrubs from all over the world and garden flowers such as Nasturtium, Iris, Sweet Peas, Violets, Pansies, Jonquils, Gladioli, Narcissus, Hollyhock, Dark Wallflower, Alyssum, Indian Pinks, Marvel of Peru, Cape Joy, Eschscholtzia (Californian), Love Lies Bleeding, Sunflowers, Poppies, Ixias, Crocuses, Carnations, Stock and Nemophyile.<sup>168</sup> Although she packed up and sent native seeds to relatives in England, it seems that the only native plant which Georgiana McCrae had in her garden was a 'Gigantic Lily from Botany Bay'. This was a native plant whose sheer size fascinated colonial women. Louisa Meredith wrote a poem celebrating its huge flowers, which, she claimed, were not the 'pale and timid flowers of northern climes ..; not shrinking from the temp'rate sun, nor trembling in the breeze'.<sup>169</sup>

While it was common practice for neighbours and visitors to give gifts of 'nosegays' of flowers to women who had not yet established a garden, once it became known that a woman had commenced to garden neighbours and friends encouraged her by sending - usually through the agency of travelling fathers, brothers, sons, - gifts of seeds, sebaceous or 'bulbous' roots, bulbs, cuttings, plants and 'slips'.<sup>170</sup> Once gardens were well established the exchanging of plants for the garden continued as a way of cementing personal friendships and consolidating social bonds.<sup>171</sup> In this way gardening represented an important continuity

<sup>166</sup> Georgiana McCrae in Niall, 1994, p. 183. Kerr, 1992, p. 130.

<sup>167</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 15 July 1818, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, p. 312. While Elizabeth was a fan of native flowering plants, it is not clear that she planted them in her garden.

<sup>168</sup> Georgiana McCrae, Journal, July 1843, H. McCrae, 1934, p. 89.

<sup>169</sup> Georgiana McCrae, Journal, 27 December 1843, 12 June 1844, H. McCrae, 1934, pp. 102, 124. Louisa Meredith, 1844, p. 158.

<sup>170</sup> Sarah Midgely, Journal, 12 January, 2 September 1856, 11, 23, 27 July, 21 August, 4, 18, 25 September 1857, in *The Diaries of Sarah Midgely and Richard Skilbeck: A Story of Australian Settlers 1851 -1864*, H.A. McCorkell, (ed.) Cassell, Australia, 1967, pp. 25, 32, 41, 42, 43, 45.

<sup>171</sup> Georgiana McCrae, Journal, 29, 30 June, 14 July 1843, H. McCrae, 1934, pp. 87, 88, 90.

in women's lives - a reference point which generated a sense of belonging.<sup>172</sup> Though unmarried, when she was about to travel to outback Queensland for the first time Rachel Henning told her sister:

I am looking forward to some rides and some gardening; they say English flowers do not grow very well there, but flowers of some sort must; at all events I shall try them.<sup>173</sup>

When she reached her brother's station Rachel was as good as her word, bagging cuttings of geraniums from friends and encouraging men who worked for her brother to bring her bush flowers for her house and / or dig the ground around it so that she could have some flowers. Once she married Rachel was a passionate gardener who successively established three very extensive gardens which gave her great joy.<sup>174</sup>

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a distinction between flower gardens and vegetable gardens - between that which was seen as decorative and that which was seen as useful - became more marked.<sup>175</sup> With the development of the metaphor of middle and upper class women as expensive, frail and decorative flowers, middle class women increasingly became associated with the 'refinement' of flower gardening as a way of establishing their 'feminine' gentility and 'good breeding'. The expectation that women would maintain flower gardens could become something of a burden which gave women 'an illusion of power without actual power'.<sup>176</sup> Just as flowers - construed as receptive reproductivity - could encourage immobility in women, flower gardening was an outdoor creative activity which could keep women confined behind their garden gate.

An example of this contradictory function of gardens can be seen in the role gardens played in the life of the extremely 'lady-like'<sup>177</sup> Georgiana Molloy whose life as a mother will be considered in Chapter 2. Although the exceedingly conscientious Georgiana was well aware

<sup>172</sup> Paula Hamilton & Dorothy Jones, 'Watering Geraniums and Feeding Dogs: The Letters of Rachel Henning', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 19, November 1986, pp. 84-95. Hamilton and Jones stress the way in which letters 'home' writing about home, garden and landscape formed a link between the old world and the new and created unity out of dislocation.

<sup>173</sup> Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 20 July 1861, Adams, 1969, p. 69.

<sup>174</sup> Rachel Henning, Adams, 1969, pp. 74, 100, 107, 111, 114, 137, 139, 144, 219, 223.

<sup>175</sup> Goody, 1994. Goody made the point that African tribal societies have no floral culture - he concluded that flower culture requires a sophisticated level of agriculture and marketing.

<sup>176</sup> Goody, 1994.

<sup>177</sup> J. Cowan, 'Some Pioneer Women', JPWAHS, vol. 1, part 9, November 1931, quoting Bishop Hale's Journal, 2 November 1848, 'The Colonial Chaplain [Wittenoom said] that she was the best informed, the most accomplished, the most ladylike, woman that ever came to the colony'. Bishop Hale married Georgiana's eldest daughter Sabina in December 1848.



that her role as an (genteelly impoverished) colonial wife and mother could have included supervision of fruit and vegetable gardens to help provision her family, it was her husband, the very busy magistrate and farmer John Molloy, who maintained the kitchen garden, vineyard and orchards.<sup>178</sup> It was flowers and flower gardening which interested Georgiana, or, to use her own frame of reference, her 'floral passion' which gave substance to her dreams.<sup>179</sup> In her early years at Augusta it was the garden which she had left behind her in Scotland with its 'violets and primroses' which she claimed remained 'fresh [in her] memory' and to which she dreamed of returning.<sup>180</sup> Later, when Georgiana had been 'wounded' by having to leave Augusta and her 'own flower garden in its gayest attire ..[with] the dark green of the grass plots which I have interspersed to give solace to the eye' for another property on the Vasse where she had nothing 'worthy of the name of garden', it was the garden at Augusta to which she dreamed of returning.<sup>181</sup> Because part of Georgiana's pleasure in gardening was to combine British flowers with 'numberless flowering plants and shrubs' from all parts of the world, she grew to like Augusta because she became 'convinced no situation can be preferable or more congenial to the vegetation of all countries'.<sup>182</sup> Augusta was cooler and had better soil and a wetter summer than the Vasse, and hence reminded her of 'home' and enabled her to establish a garden like those she had known in Britain.

In the colonies many middle class women, in attempting to establish an exotic garden in a strange and 'difficult' environment, undertook physical work which they had once thought to be 'unbecoming' and / or beyond their physical capacity. In other words, in order to grow flowers in the colonies women had to become less flowerlike. So important was it to many women to establish a buffer of green and 'beauty' against what they saw as the dry and wilted 'bush' that generally women persevered in spite of everything. Although male relatives and servants might help with the digging and laying out of gardens the equally heavy work - in a land of hot and often dry summers - of watering, planting, weeding and propagation, often fell to women. Because of the shortage of servants in the south west of

<sup>178</sup> W.G. Pickering, 'The Letters of Georgiana Molloy', JPWAHS, vol. 1, part 4, 1929, p. 36. August 1830 John Molloy wrote to the colonial secretary of his success in this area. Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 4 June 1841, BL 479A/2. Georgiana had her own part of the garden which her husband had his men prepare for her. At one point she wrote that she had planted 'in part of my own ground, some onions, carrots, peas etc ..[as] a sort of apology for having a preponderance of flowers and the consequent absorption of time'.

<sup>179</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, June 1840, BL 479A/2.

<sup>180</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Helen Story, 1 October 1833, 8 December 1834, BL 3278A/2.

<sup>181</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 1 November 1838, June 1840, 14 March 1840, BL 479A/2.

<sup>182</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles 25 January 1838, BL 479A/1.

Western Australia both Georgiana Molloy's middle class female neighbours - the Bussell sisters and Ann Turner - did heavy work such as digging and preparing flowerbeds.<sup>183</sup>

The amount of physical work a woman did in the flower garden seems to have depended as much upon her temperament and self-image as upon her economic circumstances.<sup>184</sup> While the childless and 'very lovely and ladylike Mrs Viveash' who was judged as not daring enough to 'attack the roughing of it' in the Swan River Colony, claimed she spent 4-6 hours a day in her garden in Hobart Town, it was time spent supervising the work of others.<sup>185</sup> On the other hand, in spite of her image of herself as a 'delicate lady', Georgiana Molloy accepted the current dispensation that it was good for a lady to enjoy (relatively mild) exercise in her garden and set to work with a will.<sup>186</sup> Before she left Britain Georgiana requested that her husband add to his list of provisions popular English flower seeds and garden tools 'suitable for the use of a lady' - a light rake, trowels and a watering pot and rose.<sup>187</sup> Not many years later she begged a friend in England to purchase her a replacement rake because, she claimed, she had long been reduced to borrowing one of her husband's which had 'the most formidable teeth spreading destruction and next to annihilation wherever it is applied'.<sup>188</sup> Georgiana Molloy epitomised the contradiction at the heart of gardening for middle class colonial women in that in being quite active in her gardening she ran the risk of projecting an image of herself as a lower middle class or working class woman in the image of the famous 'Dolly Varden'.<sup>189</sup>

A colonial garden has been described as a woman's own cultivated space where 'the bush' could be engrafted with 'introduced forms of natural growth'; a space which blurred the distinction between 'inside and outside, utility and pleasure, real and ideal'. In this schema women's gardening satisfied a diversity of needs including physical contact with nature,

<sup>183</sup> Ann Turner / McDermott widowed eldest daughter of James Woodward Turner, Journal, September - November 1838, in *Early Days*, JPWAHS vol. 1, part 5, 1929.

<sup>184</sup> Davidoff & Hall, 1987, p. 374. Genteel women could be active and aggressive in the garden provided they gardened in private - that is behind walls or hedges or in outback gardens.

<sup>185</sup> Marnie Bassett, *The Hentys: An Australian Colonial Tapestry*, Oxford University Press, London, 1954, p. 66. Statham, 1981, pp. 105,107.

<sup>186</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 31 January 1840, BL 479A/2. With the move from Augusta to Vasse the responsibility for transplanting plants from her old to her new garden fell to Georgiana.

<sup>187</sup> Alexandra Hasluck, *Portrait with Background: A Life of Georgiana Molloy*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1966 (1955), p. 30.

<sup>188</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 8 September 1838, BL 479A/1.

<sup>189</sup> 'Dolly Varden' was / is an image widely used in embroidery and the decoration of china of a bonneted woman with ringlets and long full dress shown holding a watering can and standing in a cottage garden in full flower. The original Dolly Varden was the spirited *working class* cottage gardener depicted in Charles Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge*.

space in which to philosophise, and aesthetic expression and delight.<sup>190</sup> Most importantly the garden was a place where women could feel they were in control of nature's fecundity - not their own it is true - but a boundaryless and nebulous fecundity. In the early days in the colonies, when food was often short, women's ability to nurture and propagate seed and cuttings was seen as necessary for survival; an equivalent skill to their ability to care for and nurture healthy children.<sup>191</sup> Eliza Brown was a practical woman whose first priority on arriving 'in the bush' had been to establish a garden which would supply her family with vegetables, fruit and wine. Once this was done however she turned her attention toward obtaining and conserving seeds for her prospective flower garden. In regard to the flower seeds her father sent her from England she wrote:

The Bottle filled with garden seeds I have not ventured to unseal as seed time is passed and I think it will be the securest way to keep the seeds in an air tight vessel until next season when I shall most carefully sow them and shall be exceedingly delighted should they flower, and the more familiar the flowers may be or in other words common or rather such as are most common in England the better I shall like them.<sup>192</sup>

Georgiana McCrae, devastated at being told by her husband she must leave her house and garden at 'Mayfield' in Melbourne and 'make up her mind to go to the bush', responded by planting melon seeds. She wrote sadly: '[f]or whom shall they bear fruit?' Within a month she was again pregnant, and was not reconciled to the move until twelve months later, when, with her new baby daughter thriving, she announced her reconciliation to the move with '[p]lucked seeds for Arthur's Seat'.<sup>193</sup> Middle class women who found themselves in the colonies deprived of the medical attention and civilisation to which they were accustomed - and hence, for possibly the first time in their lives, dependent for their own and their children's survival on their learned ability to nurture, turned to flower gardening almost compulsively. Probably there was a large degree of magical thinking in this - if, despite droughts and the difficult conditions of settlement, flowers could be encouraged to survive, then perhaps 'flowers' such women and children might also.

In Australia the settler's garden had ambivalent status within the wider land. This resulted partly from a conception of the aristocratic estate as intentionally escaping the boundaries of the formally landscaped garden,<sup>194</sup> and partly from the burden which maintaining a garden in a harsh climate represented. Georgiana Molloy experienced the stress

<sup>190</sup> Helen Thomson, 'Gardening in the Never Never', in Ferres, 1993. Kay Ferres, in Ferres, 1993, p.6.

<sup>191</sup> Beatrice Bligh, *Cherish the Earth: the Story of Gardening in Australia*, Urc Smith, Sydney, 1973. p. 90.

<sup>192</sup> Eliza Brown to her father, 14 December 1843, Cowan, 1977, p. 43.

<sup>193</sup> Georgiana McCrae, Journal, 20 August 1843, 15 August 1844, H. McCrae, 1934, pp. 94, 128.

involved in being responsible for a domestic flower garden under Australian conditions. She expressed this as irritation at what she saw as a conflict of interest between her wish to establish a flower garden and her need to perform domestic duties. She complained that 'I shall not be able to attend to the formations and culture of my flower Garden, for I am my children's sole instructress, and Seamstress, and that in conjunction with other peremptory duties'.<sup>195</sup> The difficulty of maintaining gardens in Australia is even said to have encouraged nomadism and made 'expulsion from the Garden of Eden into the wider landscape easier', while the timelessness of the Australian landscape encouraged the viewer to see the land as a garden in which the 'sheer extent of the estate' became part of the subject.<sup>196</sup>

This may help explain why Colonial women so frequently wrote of how they saw the country from the inside of their homes and from their verandahs.<sup>197</sup> Reflective women such as Georgiana McCrae introduced self-reflexive irony into their recording of their vision of colonial landscape as seen from their homes. Georgiana wrote of the view she saw from her home at Arthur's Seat - 'the ever-varying seascapes, most delightful to look upon [and] line upon line of living landscape', adding, 'the biggest room [has] no pictures - long lines of actual landscape appearing at interstices between the planks instead'.<sup>198</sup> Louisa Meredith's satisfaction when she looked from her dining room 'through the verandah' came from distinguishing her beloved garden from the 'dull' surrounding bush. She wrote that she looked:

[O]ver the grass plot and flower borders, now past their summer beauty but still gay with noble hollyhocks, carnations, tiger lilies and other autumn flowers. A Hawthorn hedge, and some graceful white blossomed acacias, overhang two ranges of beehives, giving a pleasant home-like interest in marking their gradually deepening green, amidst the unchanging, dull olive natives of the soil.<sup>199</sup>

In contrast to Louisa Meredith, eight years after Georgiana Molloy arrived at Augusta she had mediated the landscape with her garden sufficiently to begin a process of reconciliation with the colours and patterns of the 'bush'. She first began this process by finding 'affects' in nature - as viewed from the inside or verandah of her home - which legitimated sites and allowed colonial landscape to become imbued with value in the same way as the landscape

<sup>194</sup> Thomas, 1983, p. 241. Thomas considered that the inevitable next step after gardening is that many persons will look for their emotional satisfaction beyond the garden fence in 'wild nature' itself.

<sup>195</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 25 January 1838, BL 479A/1.

<sup>196</sup> Plant, 1994, p. 51.

<sup>197</sup> Meredith, 1853, p. 336. In the 1840s Louisa considered 'a spacious verandah .. invaluable [and] a substitute for a greenhouse'. Drew, 1994. Drew claimed that the verandah has served as a site for transformation in Australian culture which has enabled a turning away from colonialism.

<sup>198</sup> Georgiana McCrae, Journal, July 19 1846, in Niafl, 1994, p. 181.

had been for her in Britain. When she wrote of the view from her front window Georgiana framed the view in her discourse with the native creeper which had bloomed at the time of her first baby's death. She wrote:

The purple creeper alone has consented to being domesticated and has associated its beautiful flowers with a very elegant pink climbing plant from Mauritius. ...These two climbers cover one side of our verandah, and the Purple has so peremptorily usurped the external framework of my window as to darken the room, but increase the beauty of the prospect, this said window looks immediately up the Blackwood, the receding points give it almost the appearance of a Lake, in the background is the boundless, and ever green Forest.<sup>200</sup>

Hardenbergia, (what Georgiana called 'the purple creeper') was named 'native' or 'wild' wisteria by the early settlers because it had a similar vigour in growth, and similar, though smaller and more vivid, flowers as Chinese wisteria. It differs from Chinese wisteria in being neither deciduous nor long-living. For the early settlers the dark-leaved, invasive yet ephemeral native wisteria with its beautiful bright coloured pea flowers *could* have lent itself to association with celestial gardens such as Eden and Paradise, but appears to have been more strongly associated with the (female) pagan qualities of wildness, darkness, intensity, vigour, and an imminent mortality.<sup>201</sup> This appears to have been the way in which Georgiana experienced and mythologised it when she placed its flowers in the coffin of her dead child. For Georgiana 'the purple creeper' appears to have stood as symbol for the 'bush' about her. In writing of it she could be said to have used weak conscious Edenic or romantic association in order to bind and harness powerful unconscious 'pagan' sexual and reproductive imagery. In Jungian terms a house usually represents the individual psyche. In the above quotation Georgiana drew a picture of her conscious psyche (the external framework of her window) being taken over by the vigour and beauty of a feminine upswelling from the unconscious mind (the invasive creeper which she encouraged to grow over her baby's grave and her front window) -an upswelling which not only darkened, but beautified. It seems to have been this recognition that it was safe for the unconscious feminine to represent darkness as well as beauty which allowed Georgiana to look upon the 'boundless evergreen forests' of the unconscious (projected as landscape) without the anxiety which she had experienced in her first years at Augusta. It was not until much later when she was forced to leave her home at Augusta and felt deprived of her garden and familiar landscape, that Georgiana began to fantasise it in her memory as a paradisiacal garden.<sup>202</sup>

<sup>199</sup> Meredith, 1853, pp. 367-368.

<sup>200</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 25 January 1838, BL 479A/1.

<sup>201</sup> Georgiana, who was well versed in classical literature, would have known the myth of Persephone who spent six months on earth and six months in the underworld.

<sup>202</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 14 March 1840, BL 479A/2.

## SUMMARY.

For women confined within the house and constrained by their roles as wives and mothers, the land could easily become a projection of the world within themselves. Modiano distinguished between a prospect - which she defined as the mysterious uncultivated view which allows the imaginative appropriation of the viewer - and 'property' which she defined as the need to improve and contain nature.<sup>203</sup> In these terms for colonial women their garden constitutes property and the imaginative construct as seen from the windows of their house the prospect. Sarah Burnell had recently taken a trip outside the valley in which she lived when she wrote:

I had not been outside of the valley for more than two years, but the fact is there is little inducement to go beyond it .. Henry takes us for a ramble occasionally between the Mountain Ranges, where at this season of the year most beautiful wild flowers grow ... I saw no part of the country to equal our own beautiful valley .. persons do not seem to attend to their gardens .. ours is so pleasantly situated, the verandah opens onto it, which affords the opportunity of amusing ourselves when we feel inclined to garden.<sup>204</sup>

For Sarah the whole valley had become her garden, both visually as seen from her front window and verandah and physically when she and her family chose to 'ramble' through it. Her 'garden' consisted of circles which emanated from her house - the verandah flowed into the domestic garden where if they chose the family could 'garden'; the domestic garden in turn melted into the valley which (blissfully) was thought to look after itself. In the internal imagery of place of the Australian-born Sarah the valley had already become an extension of her house and garden and hence part of her 'natural' estate - but it was a part of her estate which she felt she did not have to either control or feel responsible for - for, as a woman whose designated role was the nurturing of others, the 'bush' represented something which she felt would refresh and nurture her, not, for once, her it. The attitude so early set in place among the Australian-born of experiencing the 'bush' as an extension of the home garden - *for which they harboured no responsibility* - appears to have become an accepted part of the Australian psyche.

To contend that such an incorporative construction was a reaction which only occurred in women would seem to over state the case. It has been claimed that the industrial revolution destroyed the landscape which had symbolically sustained the British people, causing in

<sup>203</sup> Romando Modiano, 'The Legacy of the Picturesque: Landscape, Property and the Ruin', in Copley & Garside, 1994, p. 209.

<sup>204</sup> Sarah Burnell to Emily Curtis, 18 October 1839, in Clarke & Spender, 1992, p. 176.

them a deep 'unreasoned grief' as they 'watched nature dying before their eyes'. This grief, it is claimed, led to the promulgation, through literature, of the Arcadian belief that only through a return to the land (in Australia) would men find 'contentment of spirit and a tranquil and prosperous life'.<sup>205</sup> It is also claimed that the nineteenth century Romantic 'philosophy of nature ... extended the nobleman's paradisaical enclosure to include the whole earth as a divine garden'.<sup>206</sup> In seeing her farm in Van Dieman's land as a landscaped park in which she described the grass in the ten acre house paddock as 'our lawn', Ellen Viveash was typical of both male and female settlers.<sup>207</sup> One could say that in Britain the pressures exerted on men and women by industrialisation, commercialisation and widening systems of communication gave rise to a male originated, but not gender specific, mythology of individualism and Edenic visualisation as compensation for a day to day sense of experiential loss. In the colonies this romantic mythology interacted with the intensified hopes and fears of emigrants and with what was experienced by them as a strange and harsh landscape, to give rise to contradictory myths and actions which sought to both control (by farming, by gardening, by travelling through) the natural environment, and to redefine (by artistic representation, by learning to know, by mythologising) what was experienced as the primitive and the wild into the known and nurturing. That this was an enterprise which was shared by both men and women in the early colonial period can be seen by such paintings as John Glover's 'House and Garden', c 1835, (plate 11) which captured the same sort of idyllic merging of (fenceless) garden and the wild beyond as Kolodny and Malor represent as having been the particular activity of women. However, as I hope to show in the chapters that follow, although it is true that both men and women who embraced a 'romantic' ideology tended to incorporate the colonial landscape into their mythology of place in this way, it was an enterprise in which women, in being internally and externally constructed as fragile flowers at the same time as they were called upon by the conditions of colonial settlement to be tough progenitors, had a vested interest.

Perhaps, as a woman who was led to migrate to the new world (a decision she regretted in later life) by a romantic conception of love, nature, and freedom, Louisa Twamley should have the last word in this chapter on women as flowers. Just before leaving for New South Wales Louisa, the consummate lover of 'nature' and of flowers, wrote:

I close my eyes  
And fancy paints a wilderness of wealth,

<sup>205</sup> Lansbury, 1970, pp. 35,43. Brantlinger, 1988, pp. 116, 117, 122.

<sup>206</sup> Schultz, 1985, p. 155.

<sup>207</sup> Ellen Viveash, letter, 1835, in Statham, 1981, p.122.

In those scarce-trodden wilds, and forests vast,  
 And sunny prairies, of the western world  
 Where birds on wings of every glittering dye  
 Flit in gay freedom through their forest homes  
 And insects, sparkling in the sunlight, fill  
 The solitude with Nature's eloquence.<sup>208</sup>

The irony of this was that although at first Louisa hated nearly everything about the reality of her new environment (especially what she described as the 'almost intolerable.. chirruping.. of myriads of grasshoppers'!), when eventually she became reconciled to nature in the colonies it was just in time to recognise that it was being senselessly destroyed by those about her who did not value it. It says much for Louisa and for colonial women in general that it was because of her outrage at this senseless destruction - an outrage which stemmed from her 'love of flowers' (love of self) - that Louisa Meredith became Australia's first dedicated conservationist.<sup>209</sup>

<sup>208</sup> Twamley, 1839, pp. 120, 121.

<sup>209</sup> Meredith, 1844, p. 62. Georgiana McCrae, 19 November 1841, H. McCrae, 1934, p. 44. After only six months in the colony Georgiana McCrae seemed to have accepted the noise of cicadas. She wrote affectionately 'the Bizzwizzes [cicadae are] making a deafening noise in the gum trees'.



In the final years of the nineteenth century when the national identity of Australian women was under contest, 'pioneer' mothers were frequently represented by male artists and writers as having been distressed, suffering, in need of men's support: a representation interpreted by some as a denial of the power of women's maternity.<sup>1</sup> However the lives of nineteenth century women who suffered physical ill health and / or death as a result of their reproductive function and (often) psychological scarring as a result of unresolved grieving,<sup>2</sup> show that this construction had some historical basis. As the century progressed and the tenets of 'science' successfully challenged the authority of the church, male medical practitioners replaced ministers and priests as the sanctioned public source of patriarchal authority over women's minds and bodies. This struggle between the church and medical profession expressed itself in the form of the question - 'is woman primarily a sexual or a moral creature?' If women were flowers it meant that they were 'by nature' passively vegetative / sexually receptive and that men (like bees or moths) were 'by nature' sexually aggressive animals. Under such a system of belief when male medical practitioners replaced female midwives in attending women in labour, the change generated considerable sexual anxiety, it being feared that, lacking the spiritual constraint of the clergy, male medical practitioners might lose control of their sexuality if called upon to manipulate women's bodies.<sup>3</sup>

One result of this deep-rooted fear was the medical profession began to project fears regarding men's supposedly unrestrainable sexuality onto women. Women, it was claimed, lost all moral restraint during childbirth, when in pain, physically ill or hysterical (mad): hence women could never really be trusted to behave in a seemly fashion. This change in attitudes which was initiated by the medical profession in time saw the return of the sexualised woman - a reassessment which threatened the gender difference upon which social order in the nineteenth century rested.<sup>4</sup> Interacting with this reassessment of female sexuality was one of the most powerful myths of the nineteenth century which I call the myth

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<sup>1</sup> Hoorn, 1994, pp. 98-111. Sontag, 1977, Stratton, 1996. I use 'consumption' as a metaphor because in the nineteenth century it had meanings associated with 'desire' and women's reproductive function. The 'mysterious' disease Consumption (Tuberculosis) in which it was thought sufferers were bodily 'consumed' but spiritually 'saved', paralleled the symptoms of puerperal or childbed fever in women and thus became an analogy for motherhood as experienced under colonial conditions. Late in the century 'consumption' in women also took on the secularised sense of women as desirous 'consumers' (shoppers) for the family.

<sup>2</sup> Rosenblatt, 1983.

<sup>3</sup> Poovey, 1988, pp. 32, 33, 37, 48, 49.

<sup>4</sup> Poovey, 1988. Problems associated with this change in attitude first came to the surface in the 1840s with debates over the use of Chloroform in childbirth.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *MOTHERHOOD AS CONSUMPTION*

Hoary-headed frosts  
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose.

Titania to Oberon, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* II, 1.

Stumbling on melons as I pass,  
Ensnared with flowers, I fall on grass.

Andrew Marvell, *The Garden*.

of 'mysterious consumption'. This myth, fed by the nineteenth century suppression of desire by duty and control of physicality by human will, was generated by the experience of tuberculosis and puerperal fever as frightening diseases which the emergent medical profession could not cure and for which they habitually prescribed large doses of opium: the side-effect of which was an addiction which caused loss of moral, physical and sexual control.

Before tuberculosis began to be understood late in the nineteenth century, it was feared as an intractable and capricious disease considered to be 'morally, if not literally contagious'. Fantasies developed in regard to tuberculosis visualised as a disease of passion wherein the body was mysteriously consumed by ardour - repressed energy seeming to dissolve human tissue. Febrile activity and passionate resignation were seen as the two sides of this metaphor of consumption - white pallor followed by red flush, languidness and euphoria alternating with hyperactivity and an increased sexual appetite. The symptoms of tuberculosis or 'consumption' were thought to be deceptive - disintegration as soulfulness, a 'galloping' towards death which spiritualised life, the blurring of normal distinctions between the supposed strength and self-containment of men and the supposed weakness and emotionality of women which in some mysterious way reclaimed the self. Because the medical treatment of tuberculosis conflictively revolved around the prescription of rest and the stimulation of appetite, tuberculars came to be seen as the 'undernourished fruitlessly attempting to nourish themselves'.<sup>5</sup> The myth of mysterious consumption generated by the eighteenth and nineteenth century experience of tuberculosis was therefore already in place when a terrifying condition which mysteriously consumed mothers in the first days or weeks after childbirth began to reach plague proportions.<sup>6</sup>

With the increase in the numbers of women who, largely as the result of the intervention of doctors in childbirth, died agonising and 'indelicate' deaths from puerperal fever,<sup>7</sup> the myth of 'mysterious consumption' came to express nineteenth century social anxieties in regard to inexplicable death, loss of spirituality, repression and expression of libidinal energies, gender stereotyping, and (most especially) motherhood. The medicalisation of

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<sup>5</sup> Sontag, 1977, pp. 29, 31, 32.

<sup>6</sup> Pat Jalland & John Hooper, *Women from Birth to Death: The Female Life Cycle in Britain 1830-1914*, Harvester Press, Sussex, 1986, pp. 187-203. Before they became aware of the need for asepsis doctors, who, unlike midwives used instruments to assist in difficult births, transferred fatal bacteria from woman to woman on their hands, clothes and medical instruments.

<sup>7</sup> Jalland & Hooper, 1986, pp. 121-2. Puerperal fever included almost any kind of streptococcal infection - which could lead to inflammation of the abdominal cavity, blood poisoning and death. In England the rate of puerperal fever increased from 1.72 per 1,000 live births for 1847-54 to 2.53 per 1,000 for 1855-94.

childbirth has been seen as part of a generalised mechanisation of the female body into a set of fragmented, fetishised and replaceable parts which are managed by the medical profession.<sup>8</sup> Because the early nineteenth century was a period which showed the medicalisation of childbirth in its earliest stage of development, a consideration of a myth inflated by an emergent medical profession's management of women's reproductive lives can give deep insight into the lives of colonial women.

In a period when birth control was rarely an option, women not only frequently died during, or soon after, childbirth, but frequently experienced themselves as 'consumed' by the work, responsibility and grief involved in rearing large families under colonial conditions. I have chosen the life of Georgiana Molloy to illustrate the effect of 'motherhood as consumption' because not only did she die as a result of multiple births and puerperal fever, but, at a time when there was no reference point, no language, for women to express their experience of motherhood as anything other than joyful and beautiful,<sup>9</sup> she wrote as if she felt motherhood was consuming her. Georgiana's experiences as a mother have particular relevance for this thesis in that the suffering she experienced in trying to be a 'perfect' mother under colonial conditions served to turn her toward the natural environment (mythed as female) firstly for nurturance and, in time, in an attempt to find 'in nature' an alternative prescription for womanhood to the one which - at some level - she knew was destroying her.

### **Marriage, the affectional family and migration.**

The factor which was most likely to affect the future happiness of emigrant women was whether or not they believed they had a genuine say in the decision to migrate.<sup>10</sup> When, in July 1829, the twenty-four year old Georgiana Kennedy wrote to accept the offer of marriage of the forty-eight year old Captain John Molloy, it was on the understanding that, once married, they would leave Britain and make a life together in the newly declared Swan River

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<sup>8</sup> Maria Mies & Vandara Shiva, *Ecofeminism*, Fernwood Publications, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1988, p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> Spender, 1990, p. 54.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Elizabeth Macarthur to her mother Mrs Veale, 8 October 1789, Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 1 September 1795, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, pp. 2, 39, 52. The 21 year old Elizabeth - the first married woman to accompany her husband to New South Wales - told her mother 'I have not now, nor I trust shall ever have one scruple or regret, but what relates to you'. In later years she consistently described herself as satisfied with her life.

Colony.<sup>11</sup> A career soldier with very little immediate prospect of further promotion, John Molloy was influenced in making his decision to marry his young friend and emigrate with her to the other side of the world by the favourable press coverage the colony was receiving at that time in the British press. As enticement to 'gentlemanly' prospective settlers regulations provided that those who made their way to the colony before the end of 1829 (if their party was made up of no less than five female to six male settlers) would receive land grants proportional to their investment of capital.<sup>12</sup>

Implicit then in the marriage relation of John and Georgiana Molloy was the understanding that they would leave Britain with its pollution and social dislocations arising from the Industrial Revolution and its post-Napoleonic war recession in order to create a rural paradise in a land which was being represented as ideal for that purpose. The Swan River Colony it was claimed, was British, 'free' (that is without convicts) and situated in a land which had 'one of the finest climates in the world, ... no wild beasts of prey or loathsome reptiles', wherein 'the hand of Nature' had prepared extensive plains 'ready for the ploughshare'. Allocation of land in exchange for capital invested, it was said, would ensure that a settler could establish a freehold estate which would 'descend to his assignees or heirs forever'.<sup>13</sup> For Captain John Molloy, an Anglican army officer who - though his family of origin is now obscure - was rumoured in the colonies to have connections with the British Royal family,<sup>14</sup> the establishment of a rural inheritance seems to have been of great importance.

Judging from subsequent events the kind of rural estate envisaged by John Molloy in the (largely unconscious) dreams which accompany emigration was different from that envisaged by his intended wife. Such discrepancy in envisioning arose in part from differences in age, temperament, gender, and experience.<sup>15</sup> When he decided to marry John

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<sup>11</sup> Britain took possession of The Swan River Colony on the 18 June 1829. The Molloyes were married on the 6 August 1829 and were originally to have embarked for the Swan River two weeks later. In the event the *Warrior* was delayed by provisioning difficulties until the 23 October 1829.

<sup>12</sup> Hasluck, 1966, pp. 17, 18. Lower middle class men, attracted by the thought of owning their own land, often signed on as 'workers' in order to get a free passage for themselves and their families. This could appal their wives. Jane Dodds in *Jane Dodds 1788-1844: A Swan River Colony Pioneer*, Lilian Heal, (ed.), Book Production Service, Sydney, 1988, p. 24. Jane Dodds, a publican's wife, dreaded embarking but claimed she did so to satisfy her husband's 'irresistible desire to farm his own land'.

<sup>13</sup> Hasluck 1966, pp. 19-20. An advertisement placed by H.C. Sempill, charterer of the *Warrior*.

<sup>14</sup> Hasluck, 1966, pp. 7, 256-7. Colonial gossip attributed John Molloy's (illicit) parentage to George IV's brother, the Duke of York.

<sup>15</sup> Beverley Kingston, *The Oxford History of Australia, Vol. 3, 1860-1900, 'Glad Confident Morning'*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1988, pp. 115-21. In the colonies, as in Britain in the nineteenth century, on average husbands were four years older than their wives.

Molloy had already seen eleven years of active duty in Europe with the 95th Brigade fighting the Napoleonic wars and ten years moving from garrison to garrison in the British Isles. These were years when Molloy both enjoyed independence, excitement and male camaraderie and suffered privations and danger for which he considered he never received adequate compensation.<sup>16</sup> It was shortly after his hopes of being sent to Canada with the 95th came to nothing that, encouraged by Georgiana's lady-like letter of dismay at the prospect of losing his emotional support if he were to leave Britain,<sup>17</sup> John Molloy proposed marriage. One of his fellow officers expressed alarm at the magnitude of John's sudden decision to marry and emigrate, writing:

It is with great pain I hear on my arrival in England of your intended project - you are too sensible and too little of an idle speculator to embark in any scheme without sufficient promises to justify the sacrifice you make of Profession, Country and Friends - but still thoughts of the difficulties you will have to encounter would make the boldest pause. It is now too late to dissuade you and I only hope, and hope most truly, that you may enjoy every happiness [indecipherable] that the Swan River can afford. I also congratulate you on your marriage and hope you will make Mrs Molloy acquainted with my name.<sup>18</sup>

Georgiana Kennedy, the daughter of a country gentleman, grew up on a rural estate in Cumberland, England, not far from the Scottish border. Two years after her husband's death Georgiana's mother moved her family of five to the town of Rugby in the industrial English midlands. It appears that Georgiana, who was eighteen at the time of the move, disliked town life, and, feeling at odds with her family, spent most of her time between the age of eighteen and twenty four staying with evangelical friends in the scenic Scottish midlands.<sup>19</sup> To evangelists such as Georgiana and her friends town was of a place where 'vanity' and 'vice' existed and where 'serious' Christians such as themselves stood in danger of being led into sin and frivolity. The country estate in Dumbartonshire and the country parsonage, Rosneath, where Georgiana was in the habit of staying, were set in parklike surroundings on the one hand, and wild 'natural' moors and lochs on the other - both of which prospects became part of Georgiana's inner landscape and hence, after she emigrated, a retrospective source of nostalgia.

<sup>16</sup> Edward Du Cane, [Molloy's son-in-law], 'The Peninsula and Waterloo: Memories of an Old Rifleman', *Cornhill Magazine*, Vol. 3, 1897 in Hasluck, 1966, p. 11. Molloy was badly wounded in battle twice.

<sup>17</sup> Georgiana Kennedy to John Molloy, December 11th 1828, BL 3278A/3/1. 'I always have and always shall consider you one of my greatest friends, I should be glad to retain you on this side of the Atlantic'.

<sup>18</sup> B.D (rest of name indecipherable), Gosport, 1 September 1829, BL 3278A/3. Davidoff & Hall, 1987, p. 323. 'For a man, settling into marriage often coincided with taking on new responsibilities in business or profession'.

<sup>19</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Mary Dunlop, 29 August 1829, BL, 3278A/2. Georgiana described London as 'This truly depressing London where I never dreamt of such dreadful vice'.



*PLATE 7. Georgiana Molloy. n.d. Private Collection. Reproduced in  
Portrait with Background.*

The poetry-reading Georgiana was deeply influenced, not only by evangelicalism - she was sufficiently 'enthusiastic' on her honeymoon to attempt the conversion of a Jewess -<sup>20</sup> but by the Romantic movement. Robert Burns was her favourite poet, gardens and landscape her great 'loves'. She thus had a cosmology of landscape which was split between the everyday and the spiritual. Though Georgiana described her family of origin as too 'worldly' she nevertheless chose to marry 'a man of the world' like her father and brothers. Her portrait (plate 7) shows a flowerlike prettiness which belies the intensity of her professed puritanism. Charles Bussell, her twenty year old future neighbour, when meeting her for the first time on the sea voyage to the Swan River Colony confided to his journal:

Mrs Molloy has all the air of a lady well born and well bred without having mixed much in the world ... She is rather inclined to the romantic and is delighted to have anyone with whom she can contemplate the sublimity of the night scene or expatiate upon the beauties of this or that piece of poetry ... Her husband is a gentlemanly good natured sort of man and that is all I believe I can say for him except that he is rather too *nestorious* for so young a wife.<sup>21</sup>

It seems that during the first months of her marriage Georgiana tended to share her enthusiasms with men who were more romantically inclined than her husband. Clearly, with her romantic view of landscape<sup>22</sup> and her already demonstrated determination to live in close proximity to nature, Georgiana had her own hopes in regard to the sort of life she hoped to live in the new world. For her belief in an Arcadian colonial landscape represented not just the hope of personal 'success' but belief in 'a lost paradise from which man had strayed and to which he must eventually return, purified by suffering'.<sup>23</sup> Although as the century progressed belief in the power of the historical and social tended to overlay belief in the immanence of God in nature, during Georgiana's lifetime (1805-1843) paradisaical fantasising informed not only views which saw 'nature' as an ineffable 'hieroglyph of divine order' but those which saw it as the inert subject of human husbandry, horticultural theory and empirical practice.<sup>24</sup>

The struggles of any new age; in this case one which encouraged the deepening of personal sensibility on the one hand, and a lessening of credence in the *power* of the

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<sup>20</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Helen Story 12 September 1829 BL, 3278A/2.

<sup>21</sup> Hasluck, 1966, p. 45, Charles Bussell's Journal, 1829, BL, 139.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas, 1983, pp. 267-8. Thomas described 'romantic' attitudes which expressed a lack of sympathy with the dominant materialist and anti-individualist trends of an industrialising age, as a form of social protest.

<sup>23</sup> Lansbury, 1970, p. 157.

<sup>24</sup> Schulz, 1985, p. 3.



personal and the spiritual on the other, are primarily fought out at the primary place of reproduction - the family. In the Australian colonies in the nineteenth century the newly emergent affectional family was artificially pruned by emigration of most of its servants and extended family relations. This was especially true for the isolated and self-contained family of John and Georgiana Molloy which, like many families in the Australian colonies, assumed many the characteristics of the modern family.

While the seeds of possible future discord can be seen in John and Georgiana Molloy's divergent religious beliefs and practices<sup>25</sup> and in the nature of their interaction with the natural world, they appear to have been at-one in their attitudes to the central importance of the family. Although a display of domestic affections within the companionate family was 'de rigeur for the reputation of a virtuous public man', John Molloy's choice of a much younger wife suggests he may have valued his 'unquestioned authority in the home'.<sup>26</sup> In John Molloy's case a desire for the comforts and authority he could enjoy in a marriage with the young and relatively malleable Georgiana would have been increased by his authoritarian (and relatively comfortless) years in the army; while in Georgiana's case the sudden death when she was aged sixteen of her father from a riding accident - and the consequent disruption to her whole way of life - may have predisposed her to try to reproduce the (in retrospect) idyllic conditions of her early life.

Three weeks into his marriage John Molloy wrote with fond paternalism of his young bride:

She is a very dear creature, Mary, and really seems happy altho she is separated from her dear friends at Keppoch. She is quite notable in the way of equipping herself and has accomplished the whole of her affairs in as quiet and easy a manner as if she were a wife of ten years standing.<sup>27</sup>

Four months after the above the now pregnant Georgiana wrote to her friends from Cape Town:

If they [another newly married couple] are as happy as Jack and I they cannot wish for more conjugal affection. Molloy is a dear creature and I would not exchange him for £10,000 per annum and a mansion in a civilised country.

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<sup>25</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Helen Story, 12 September 1829, BL 3278A/2. Some weeks into their marriage the enthusiastic Georgiana reacted to a sermon given by John's Anglican pastor on Ephesians 5:33, 'Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence *her* husband'. Georgiana wrote: 'dreadful was it to hear him ... to think of nothing but the *duties* of a matrimonial state...[this is] in my thinking ... a tissue of folly'.

<sup>26</sup> Hammerton, 1992. p. 2. Tosh, 1996, pp. 10, 12.

<sup>27</sup> John Molloy to Mary Dunlop, 29 August 1829, BL, 3278A/2.

It could be said - by both Freudians and linguists - that the removal of the one word *not* from the second sentence of Georgiana's effusion would leave the reader with a statement of what an adolescent Georgiana may have secretly desired in a husband and now needed to repress. To this letter John added the postscript: 'You, my dear Mr Story, spliced us so securely we have not had the least difference of opinion yet'.<sup>28</sup> While not much insight can be gained from letters whose form was dictated by the tenets of politeness and good form, this would seem to indicate that both John and Georgiana were determined to establish within their relationship at least a seemingly easy familiarity.

It also indicates that, while John was aware that Georgiana would miss her friends, as a conservative Anglican he did not at that time fully appreciate how psychically important the British countryside was for his wife, or how her conscience worked.<sup>29</sup> In the evangelical Presbyterian tradition of Robert Story and Henry Irving in which Georgiana had become immersed, individual conscience, passion, sincerity and spontaneity superseded doctrinal authority and the eighteenth century rational theology which praised conjugal duty.<sup>30</sup> It was during the period 1780-1820 that the Evangelical struggle to abolish slavery and reform manners and morals resulted in a passionate championing of married life and the joys of domesticity which had the evangelical poet Cowper describing 'domestic happiness' as 'thou only bliss of paradise that has survived the fall'.<sup>31</sup> Georgiana, who brought with her to the colonies a well-used copy of Cowper's poetry, fully accepted this view of family life.<sup>32</sup> Though supposedly based upon the mutual affection and respect of husband and wife, the ideal of the companionate family was riddled with contradictions for women. While a wife might enjoy greater influence within the family by being constructed as self-sacrificing and potentially redemptive<sup>33</sup> she could easily find herself imprisoned by a belief system which claimed she was her husband's moral superior while ensuring she was his legal, economic and social inferior.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Georgiana and John Molloy to Helen Story, 25 January 1830, BL, 3278A/2

<sup>29</sup> Georgiana and John Molloy to Helen Story, 25 January 1830, BL, 3278A/2. This was in spite of the fact that she wrote of how much the Scottish countryside meant to her.

<sup>30</sup> William J. Lines, *An All Consuming Passion; Origins, Modernity and the Australian Life of Georgiana Molloy*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted by Catherine Hall, 'The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology' in S. Burman, (ed.), *Fit Work for Women*, London, Croom Helm, 1979, p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> Neal, 1988, p. 40. Georgiana's books can be viewed at the WAHS, Perth.

<sup>33</sup> Marina Warner, *Alone of all her Sex: the Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary*, Vintage Books, New York, 1976, Ch 21. This Protestant assumption implicitly drew upon the largely submerged cult of Mariolatry where Mary as virgin / mother was believed capable of intervening with God to save souls from damnation.

<sup>34</sup> Carl N. Degler, *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present*, Oxford University Press, London, 1980, pp. 8, 9.

In an age which equated 'nature' with animals, and animals with the (brutish and uncivilised) 'lower' classes, middle class women in their 'natural' role as childbearers could find themselves caught in a contradiction wherein their obligatory reproductive role threatened to reduce them to the level of the 'animalistic'. The sentimental culture of the gentry thus employed music, flowers and other symbols of love to help construct family solidarity and female gentility. Although emigration could be liberating because it encouraged women to re-work notions of gentility into a form appropriate to colonial conditions and women's individual circumstances,<sup>35</sup> because in the colonies the need to sanction upward social mobility was even greater than in Britain, markers of gentility were considered to be extremely important. Femininity in the colonies thus developed into a 'genteel performance' wherein middle class women were at pains to demonstrate the 'true gentility of nature' which it was considered distinguished the upper from the lower classes.<sup>36</sup> When the role of women becomes strongly mythologised and 'an archetypal motive' for women emerges in society, it is said to indicate problems.<sup>37</sup> It is therefore significant to find the degree to which conditions of settlement caused the belief in woman as saviour (saint and mate) to intensify.<sup>38</sup>

After she arrived in the Swan River Colony where fruitfulness - of the land and women - were construed as all important, it was personal, familial and social reassertion of the wife / mother as saviour which was to exacerbate in Georgiana Molloy an overly powerful Christian impulse toward self-sacrifice.<sup>39</sup> Georgiana needed to believe in her 'true gentility of nature' to such a degree that when she discovered in herself resentment at a husband whose sexual attentions would very probably result in her death she found it difficult to find a place of psychic safety to which she could retreat. It is not all that surprising therefore to find that in her struggle to be a 'loving' wife and mother under the difficult conditions of early

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<sup>35</sup> Curtin, 1994, p. 652.

<sup>36</sup> Russell, 1994, p. 58. The 'Genteel Performance' consisted of 'a distinctive genteel appearance ... a common language and ... a shared knowledge of etiquette'.

<sup>37</sup> Marie-Louise Von Franz, *An Introduction to the Psychology of Fairy Tales*, Spring Publications, Dallas, Texas, 1978, p.18.

<sup>38</sup> Sandra L. Myres, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience 1800-1915*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1982. This can take various forms. In America woman as saviour tended to polarise into the Madonna and Calamity Jane archetypes. In Australia the Damned Whore / God's Police construction formulates the polarisation of women more negatively.

<sup>39</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 22 March 1841, in Frost, 1984, p. 47. Louisa Clifton, a fellow evangelist, wrote of her response to her demanding new environment as being 'I feel no desire to spare my self-indulgent nature, on the contrary I am only eager to humble it and to come down to the occupation most repugnant to it'. The occupation to which she was referring was washing clothes.

settlement Georgiana turned with extreme zeal firstly toward flowers and later towards the Australian natural environment.<sup>40</sup>

### **'Losing health and strength hourly'.**

Georgiana Molloy, by that time seven months into her first pregnancy, arrived in the struggling Swan River Colony 12th March 1830 - just nine months after it had been proclaimed a British colony. Perth, to which the Molloyes retreated, was in March a place of insects, heat, drought, melancholy and failed vegetable gardens.<sup>41</sup> The colony had grown too quickly, provisions were short, and scurvy, dysentery and conjunctivitis were rife. Three years later Fanny Bussell complained on her arrival that her 'first sensation was that of desolation',<sup>42</sup> while later in the century women expressed indignation that the first years of semi-famine in the colony - which they attributed to 'the want of common sense' - senselessly caused the death of many new-born and infant children.<sup>43</sup> Certainly after Georgiana and her husband had left Perth for Augusta in the south west Georgiana told her family in Britain that her reason for doing so was because in Perth she had found herself 'losing health and strength hourly'.<sup>44</sup>

Much of the land close to the Swan River settlement had proven to be very poor so that when the Molloyes arrived Governor Stirling was in the south in the Leschenault-Vasse area attempting to find suitable land. Upon his return Stirling encouraged those who had arrived on the *Warrior* to take up the country he had seen: half the passengers summed up the situation and left for Sydney or Hobart Town,<sup>45</sup> John Molloy however decided to stay. This may have been because Molloy felt his introductions would stand him in better stead with the naval governor of the Swan River than elsewhere; perhaps too - as Georgiana declared herself determined to follow him 'under all circumstances' - the nearness of his young wife

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<sup>40</sup> Alexander, 1989, p. 12. Not only was nature seen as female but women's procreative powers were thought to be 'intimately involved with and analogous to the cycles of birth, death and renewal visible in the landscape'.

<sup>41</sup> Mary Ann Friend, 30 January 1830 in Susanna de Vries-Evans, *Pioneer Women, Pioneer Land: Yesterday's Tall Poppies*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1987, p. 251. Friend, who was in the colony until 19 March 1830 wrote of the melancholy and lack of energy of the settlers.

<sup>42</sup> Fanny Bussell, Journal, 26 January 1833, in Clarke & Spender, 1992, p. 212

<sup>43</sup> Millett, 1980 (1872), pp. 317-8.

<sup>44</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Mrs Kennedy, August 1830, BL, CRO, D/Ken/3/28/9.

<sup>45</sup> Brian De Garis, 'Settling on the Sand: The Colonisation of Western Australia' in *European Impact on the West Australian Environment 1829-1979*, Brian De Garis (ed.) University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, WA, 1979, p.9.

to 'confinement' influenced his decision.<sup>46</sup> More importantly perhaps, as Molloy with his entitlement of 12,813 acres was one of the larger prospective grantees in the colony panic to acquire good land before it was allocated to others may also have been a factor.<sup>47</sup> Governor Stirling, determined to settle the colony as soon and as widely as possible, offered Molloy as enticement the position of government resident at Flinders Bay (Augusta) and gave him fervid assurances of future government support with Molloy, the Turners and the Bussells being promised the first choice of land in the South West. John Molloy, aware that he knew nothing about farming and eager to take a public role in the life of the colony<sup>48</sup> seemingly summed up the situation on the Swan and decided that the position offered him as Government Resident at Augusta would give him financial security and time to investigate the potential of the country at Augusta and the Vasse. The early period in the colony when military and naval officers compensated for lack of knowledge by means of 'trial and error' - tactics characteristic of the military and naval campaigns of the Napoleonic Wars - made life more difficult than it needed to have been for their wives.<sup>49</sup> For instance soon after Georgiana established a comfortable home and garden and had grown to 'love' Augusta she was forced to leave it for the Vasse.<sup>50</sup> Moving from a home and garden they had established with difficulty in the bush was heart breaking for women. Georgiana McCrae, who moved house many times in the colonies, uttered a cry from the heart when she wrote: '[t]hrice happy those who have never dwelt but in one dear home in their native land'.<sup>51</sup>

The 29th April thus saw Georgiana and John Molloy and their servants share the expenses with the Bussells and the Turners of a boat to take them and their goods to the unseen site of Flinders Bay. The Molloys and 52 others arrived at Flinders Bay 2 May 1830,

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<sup>46</sup> Georgiana Molloy to her family, 15 April 1831, BL CRO D/Ken/3/28/9. Georgiana Molloy to Mrs Kennedy, August 1830, BL, CRO D/Ken/3/28/9; Georgiana Molloy to family, 15 April 1831, BL CRO D/Ken/3/28/9. 23 year old Ellen Stirling, who had just lost her first child, aged 2 months, to dysentery advised Georgiana to go south. Meredith, 1853, pp. 20-21. Women often gave the health of their small children as the reason why they moved to a cooler climate.

<sup>47</sup> Hasluck, 1966, p. 69. De Garis, 1979, pp. 8-9.

<sup>48</sup> M. G. Cammilleri, 'Fairlawn', JPWAHS, NS vol. 3, part 8, 1946, p. 36. Molloy's position as Government Resident was confirmed 1 July 1830. Remuneration: £100 per annum. When (aged 81) he wrote to the Colonial Secretary, 15 March 1861, to resign from his position as Government Resident Molloy wrote 'nothing but failing health and strength and my advanced age would induce me now to withdraw from public service'.

<sup>49</sup> Hawkes, 1992, p. 246. Hawkes wrote of the 'self-imposed military sense of direction' of settlers as serving to ward off the 'dangers of debasement'. She believed they saw themselves as being on an 'offensive campaign to subdue the wilderness'. In these terms, regardless of the decade of settlement, 'the wilderness' was always beyond the last dwelling.

<sup>50</sup> Initially, when it was thought money was to be made from produce, the land at Augusta was considered to be better than that at the Vasse because it supported large trees. When, after some years it became clear that money lay in pastoralism, Molloy took up as his main grant the open grazing land at Vasse.

four days later disembarking from the *Emily Taylor* into tents erected on the western shore of the inlet. Almost at once the winter rains set in. Georgiana, who quickly discovered the mosquitoes she so hated - that symbol for fair-skinned British women of the way in which their new land seemed to absorb their very essence<sup>52</sup> - had not been left behind in Perth, had just eighteen days in which to familiarise herself with her new surroundings and prepare herself for the birth of her first child. Two years later she described Augusta to her sister: 'This is certainly a very beautiful place; but were it not for domestic charms, the eye of the emigrant would soon weary of the unbounded limits of thickly clothed, dark green forests'.<sup>53</sup>

In her first days at Augusta Georgiana did not have even 'domestic charms' to distract her from the wearisome 'dark green forests', the rain and the discomfort of her advanced state of pregnancy. In the winter of 1841 the Clifton sisters, Christina and Louisa, described their experience of tent life on the foreshore at Australind. After a particularly violent storm the 19 year old Christina wrote: 'every one of us [was] drenched to the skin and forced to sleep in damp beds ... the store is flooded ... the poor girls have done nothing but unpack and dry things out of their various boxes'.<sup>54</sup> Before the winter rains had started her older sister Louisa had written to their brother that though 'the nights are extremely cold and the sand underneath strikes damp and cold' [life in a tent was] picturesque and romantic'.<sup>55</sup> On the day after the storm however Louisa failed to see anything romantic in tent life, writing indignantly:

[T]he night has been a truly awful one ... I did not for one moment lose myself all night and rose soon after 7 ... No future settler can suffer what we do... Friends in England should be made acquainted with the dangers of this Australian coast in this season ... everybody and everything looks indescribably wretched; all work stopped... so much for tent life.

With the passing of the storms steady winter rain set in exposing further problems.

Louisa was miserable, confiding in her journal:

This is the heaviest settled rain we have had and it is very cold and damp and discomforting to a degree ... Usher tells me there is not the slightest prospect of our getting dinner the rain, as long as it continues so heavy, almost extinguishing the

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<sup>51</sup> Georgiana McCrae, Journal, 27 June 1845, in Niall, 1994, p. 180.

<sup>52</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 6 June 1841, BL, 398A. 'I passed a disturbed night in consequence of .. the violent irritation on my ankles from mosquito bites. The inflammation extends over a surface as large as a crown piece and a large blister often rises in the centre'. Lady Franklin to Sir John Franklin, 20 June 1839, Mackaness, 1947, p. 91. 'Everywhere my rest is more or less disturbed [by the mosquitoes]'.

<sup>53</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Eliza Besly, November 7, 1832, BL, 3278A/2.

<sup>54</sup> Christina Clifton, Journal, quoted in E. Clifton, 'The Founding of Australind', JPWAHS, vol 1, part 1, 1927, p. 42.

<sup>55</sup> Louisa Clifton to Waller Clifton, 5 April 1841, in Frost, 1984, p. 55.

fire.... I spent a disturbed night in consequence of the rushing noise of the water running on and through our tent.<sup>56</sup>

In similar circumstances to those experienced by the Clifton girls on the 24 May 1830 Georgiana went into labour assisted solely by her twenty nine year old servant Ann Heppingstone. At 5am on the next day, an umbrella over her to catch rain dripping from the tent, she was delivered of what appears to have been a full-term healthy baby girl. We are indebted to the nineteenth century habit of giving absent relatives minutely detailed accounts of traumatic events and death scenes for what followed, for Georgiana felt duty bound to give her mother an extended account of what was obviously a demoralising and heart-breaking experience. It seems clear from her account that Georgiana's first baby died of starvation. What was missing was an adequate milk supply and a midwife who had practical knowledge of how to care for the new born. Instead, all Georgiana had was the inadequate milk produced by a body suffering from scurvy and the advice of her husband and her two inexperienced maid-servants, one of whom, Anne Dawson, had one month previously lost her own first baby soon after birth.<sup>57</sup>

After delivery Georgiana's baby, Elizabeth Mary, was neglected for some time while her mother received attention. The baby then had her umbilical chord so poorly tied that for twenty four hours it leaked blood. Though initially the baby was lusty and eager to drink, her mother either could not, or did not, give her adequate nourishment.<sup>58</sup> Georgiana later wrote that when Elizabeth was three days old 'I fed her occasionally as she used frequently to suck her beautiful fingers'.<sup>59</sup> Before she emigrated Georgiana, having grown up in the tradition in which children of the upper classes were fed by wet nurses, had not expected to breast-feed her children. It was only after she had breast-fed her first living child for fifteen months that Georgiana could bring herself to tell her best friend: 'I need not blush to tell you I am, of necessity, my own nursery-maid'.<sup>60</sup> Georgiana, deprived of the usual systems of support would have been tentative and lacking in knowledge as to how to care for and breast feed her

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<sup>56</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 1-6 June 1841, BL, 398A.

<sup>57</sup> Clarke & Spender, 1992, p. 106. Georgiana Molloy to Elizabeth Besly, 18 May 1834, BL, 3278A/2. Although Georgiana's servant Ann Heppingstone had four children she had little knowledge of mid-wifery, and Anne Dawson was described by Georgiana as being 'perfectly inexperienced' as a midwife.

<sup>58</sup> Annie Baxter, Ellen Monger and Sarah Davenport in Frost, 1984, pp. 98, 36, 243. Scurvy was thought to result from uncleanliness. Considered to be a servant's disease, ladies resisted admitting they suffered from it - calling its symptoms 'rheumatism'. It could take up to three months for women to overcome the effects of scurvy contracted during the sea voyage. Millett, 1980 (1872), p. 317. Scurvy in the Swan River was especially bad because it took settlers some years to establish reliable vegetable gardens.

<sup>59</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Mrs Kennedy, August 1830, BL, CRO D/Ken/3/28/9, CRO D/Ken/3/28/3.

<sup>60</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Miss Margaret Dunlop, 12 January 1833, BL, 3278A/2.

first baby - and, very likely, reluctant to take advice in such delicate matters from her servants.

Given Georgiana's state of health her milk was evidently not sustaining and Elizabeth received insufficient of it to combat the cold, damp conditions. When she cried from hunger, instead of being given more or better food she was given castor oil - which further debilitated and dehydrated her. After a few days the baby developed 'white spots' on her lips and mouth - which may have been thrush - which would have further inhibited her feeding. At this point Elizabeth appears to have been starving to death. After 5 days Anne Dawson told Elizabeth's distracted mother that she 'perceived the child becoming thinner every day'. Such was Georgiana's distress that, despite the fact that she had a somewhat low opinion of her, she applied to her neighbour, Mrs Turner, for help.<sup>61</sup> Mrs Turner told Georgiana she thought Elizabeth was suffering from the cold and in response Georgiana made even greater efforts to keep her baby warm. Nevertheless after a week of inadequate nourishment, damp and cold conditions and poor nursing the baby's breathing became 'short' and she became 'indifferent to food'. It appears that she had developed a chest infection. Frantic, Georgiana administered the only thing she could think of - more castor oil - which she was dismayed to find did not improve her baby's 'malady'. Ten days after her birth Elizabeth's temperature became so high that she began to convulse and, before long, died. Georgiana wrote - 'I had very little sleep with her and she began to be very uneasy and cry much, about 2 in the morning she seemed instantly in the extremes of heat or cold so I gave her into Molloy's arms when she laid a little more still and quiet, but uneasily until about 6 she cried very much and seemed to twist her features and then cry her countenance was changed since the preceding night her eyes much fuller and her mouth projecting she shrieked. When she cried and refused any food I began to fear the worst'.<sup>62</sup>

There is no doubt that Georgiana experienced this demoralising way of losing her first baby as scarifying. Above everything in her first experience of motherhood Georgiana felt the absence of a woman who was her equal - later asking a friend in Scotland '[h]ow would *you* like to be three years in a place without a female of your own rank to speak to or be with you whatever happened?'<sup>63</sup> It appears that women in the colonies who had relatives or women friends with them in the first weeks after they were delivered were much more likely

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<sup>61</sup> Georgiana Molloy, letter, 8 December 1834, in Hasluck, 1966, p. 90.

<sup>62</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Mrs Kennedy, August 1830, BL, CRO D/Ken/3/28/9, CRO D/Ken/3/28/3.

<sup>63</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Margaret Dunlop, 12 January 1832, BL, 3278A/2.



to rear their babies.<sup>64</sup> Georgiana fiercely mourned the loss of her infant daughter and three years later wrote of the experience as if it had just happened:

I was indeed grieved to hear ... of the poor infant's demise for your sakes, not for its own. I could truly sympathise with you, for language refuses to utter what I experienced when mine died in my arms in this dreary land and no one but Molloy near me .. It was so hard. I could not see it was in Love. I thought I might have one little bright object left me to solace all the hardships and privations I endured, and have still to go through. It was wicked and I am not now thoroughly at peace.<sup>65</sup>

Under colonial conditions of food shortages and insanitary conditions settlers were very likely to lose children, especially first children, at birth or shortly after because of 'want of care and sustenance'.<sup>66</sup> In free colonies based on Wakefieldian utopian ideas of settlement such as Western Australia and South Australia, middle class families discovered that in the early years of settlement privation and death knew no social boundaries.<sup>67</sup> One of the reasons for this was the disruption in the system of wet nurse feeding which left middle class mothers without the food or mothering skills on which they had traditionally relied to rear their infants. For instance if Georgiana had known more about breast feeding, had become aware in time that her milk was not sufficiently sustaining and / or had known how to use a babies' bottle to supplement her milk supply, she may have been able to save her baby's life by obtaining cow's milk from the Turner household.<sup>68</sup> Women of childbearing years and small children paid a high price for the disjunction between the myth and the reality of settlement.

John and Georgiana Molloy may have made no provision for the birth of their first child because they hoped Dr Simmonds - who arrived in Augusta three months after the birth of Georgiana's baby - would arrive in time to deliver it. In the colonies middle class dependency on the medical profession developed quite early: by the middle of the century there were more doctors per head of population in the colonies than in Britain. This was often a mixed blessing as colonial women complained that doctors in country areas were

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<sup>64</sup> Mary Docker, Journal, Typescript, H15574, LTL, in Nance Donkin, *Always a Lady: Courageous Women of Colonial Australia*, Collins, Melbourne, 1990, pp. 109-110. Sarah Docker had her niece Jane Workman with her when she emigrated to Sydney in the 1830s. Jane looked after Sarah's new born babies while Sarah recovered her health.

<sup>65</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Helen Story, 1 October 1833, BL, 3278A/2.

<sup>66</sup> Jane Dodds in Heal, 1988, p. 45.

<sup>67</sup> Jenny Rich, *Gumleaf and Cowhide: W.V. Brown Family History*, Veritage Press, Gosford, NSW, 1986, p. 54. Harriet Brown, who arrived in Adelaide two weeks after it was declared a colony, told her grandson in 1879 that her baby died when aged 7 months because she could not provide her with sufficient milk - this despite the governor's wife having sent her cow's milk from the colony's only cow.

<sup>68</sup> Grellier, in Stannage, 1981, Ch 15. Babies bottles were seemingly not used in the Swan River Colony until the 1840s.

often poorly trained and / or overextended.<sup>69</sup> Consequently some middle class women who lived on country areas took it upon themselves to acquire basic midwifery and nursing skills.<sup>70</sup> However, as befitted people of their class and education, during their life in the colonies Georgiana and John Molloy chose to rely on the medical profession. The bad experiences they had with doctors did not appear to lessen their belief that the appropriate person to take notice of in times of ill-health and parturition was a male physician. Isolation, lack of personal knowledge and lack of the knowledge which in Britain would have been provided by family members and retainers combined to make middle class settlers feel helpless about medical matters. This sense of helplessness encouraged the development of independence and self reliance in some and an increasing dependence on the medical profession in others.<sup>71</sup>

Disruption of the social fabric which moving from one sort of environment to a very different environment - without having made adequate provision for the move - caused, required a period of adjustment during which traumatic experiences were bound to occur. Though at the time settlers did not necessarily blame these traumatic experiences on the natural environment, because it was common for families to rehearse memory of personal loss and tragedy, in later years these stories contributed to the development of myths which claimed that the early settlers universally experienced the colonial environment as aesthetically unpleasing, hostile, alien and oppressive.<sup>72</sup> For Georgiana, as for many female colonists, the grief and sense of loss caused by the fracturing effects of emigration and the lack of female companionship compounded the grief and sense of loss she felt at the death of her baby daughter.<sup>73</sup> Without female company Georgiana found herself dependent on her husband for the emotional support she had previously gained from women. This seemingly triggered ambivalence towards her (in terms of the unconscious, inexplicably missing) female relatives and compounded her impossibly high ideal of mother hood.<sup>74</sup> However, as

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<sup>69</sup> Ada Cambridge, *Thirty years in Australia*, New South Wales University Press, Sydney, 1990, (1903), p. 106.

<sup>70</sup> Eliza Brown, letter to her father William Bussey, n.d, (1847-8) Cowan, 1977, p. 76.

<sup>71</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Helen Story, 1 October 1833, BL, 3278/A, John Wollaston, March 17, 18, 1842, Wollaston Journals 1842-44, Vol. 2, Geoffrey Bolton, Heather Vose, Allan Watson, Suzanne Lewis, (eds) University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, WA, 1992. Mrs Bussell to Capel Bussell, April 1835, in Roger Jennings, *Busselton: Outstation of the Vasse*, South West Publishing Co., Shire of Busselton, WA, 1983, p. 108. Dr Alfred Green was the doctor at Augusta and Vasse (60 miles away) from September 1831 to 1851. Green married Ann Turner / Mc Dermott in August 1844 - during his years as a bachelor Green was given to bouts of heavy drinking and to what Georgiana thought was unseemly behaviour.

<sup>72</sup> John Rickard, *Australia: A Cultural History*, Longmans, London, 1996 [1988], pp. 41, 64, 70.

<sup>73</sup> Bird, 1989, p. 13

<sup>74</sup> Marion Woodman, *Addiction to Perfection: The Still Unravished Bride*, Inner City Books, Toronto, Canada, 1982.

was frequently the case with women, in time her sense of deprivation caused her to turn for comfort and support towards, rather away from, the natural environment.<sup>75</sup>

Georgiana's first reaction on finding herself marooned at Augusta with 'dear Jack' and without 'the one little bright object' to 'solace' her for her 'privations', was to try to make the land her own by the ritual way in which she buried her baby daughter.<sup>76</sup> Rituals are sites which reveal individual and collective unconscious psychic processes. While collective social ritual can be formalised and unenlightening, in a case such as Georgiana's where the social fabric has been suddenly ripped away individuals often employ highly emotive symbols which richly endow their rituals with unconscious content.<sup>77</sup>

Two of the most pervasive images which the settlement of Australia produced and which painters and writers at the end of the century mythologised, were those of the 'grave in the bush' and 'the child lost in the bush'.<sup>78</sup> While both images reflect settler experience - children did get lost in the bush and adults did die there - as it was *adults* who were most frequently *lost* in the bush and *children* who were most often *interred* there, it is clear that the two images interrelate to form a myth which venerates European toil and loss. It has been suggested that colonists attempted to 'materially and imaginatively' possess the Australian landscape by naming, by 'heroic deeds of suffering and endurance', and by 'dying and being buried there'.<sup>79</sup> Women commonly kept alive the memory of their dead children by tending their graves and by speaking and writing of them. Six years after the accidental death of her five year old son Eliza Brown begged her husband to allow her to put a railing around her 'dear Vernon's grave' before leaving the property on which he was buried.<sup>80</sup> A woman did not have to be married or have children to grieve at seeing a child's grave in the bush. Rachel Henning wrote of how it felt to see a:

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<sup>75</sup> Jacobs, 1993, pp. 126-139.

<sup>76</sup> Marian Aveling, 'Death and the Family in Nineteenth Century Western Australia', in *Families in Colonial Australia*, Patricia Grimshaw, Chris McConville, Ellen McEwen (eds.), Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985, pp. 32, 33. Death was experienced differently by men and women - the powerful and the powerless. Women attempted to structure reality and order emotion into meaningful forms so as to strengthen ideas of the self and the family.

<sup>77</sup> Von Franz, 1978, pp. 1,7,10.

<sup>78</sup> Elizabeth Webby, 'The Grave in the Bush' in *Tilting at Matilda: Literature, Aborigines, Women and the Church in Contemporary Australia*, Dennis Haskell (ed.) Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Western Australia, 1994, pp. 30-34. Hoorn, 'Mothers in Distress', 1994, pp. 104, 106. In these constructions Aboriginal trackers as 'saviours' found a part.

<sup>79</sup> Carroll, 1982, p. vii. This summary neglects to mention the killing of the land's original inhabitants.

<sup>80</sup> Eliza Brown to Thomas Brown, 23 November 1851, in Cowan, 1977, p. 130. Eliza completed her request with 'I know you will not deny me'.

[L]ittle, lonely nameless grave among the gumtrees, and think what it must have been to the poor mother to drive away that morning and leave her little child among strangers ... The grave is in a beautiful spot on a high bank shaded by trees, and the creek flowing beneath. It is fenced in most securely with whole trunks of trees so that it can never be disturbed. That is the first grave, I thought, who can tell whose the next will be?<sup>81</sup>

A child's death, a child's grave, stirred in settlers a sense of mortality and caused women either to repudiate the bush or to feel part of it. Mothers so often objected to leaving Britain or where they had settled in the colonies because they did not wish to leave behind the graves of their children, that in the 1850s Catherine Spence used it as a truism in her fiction.<sup>82</sup> By that time colonially born women were already expressing the wish to be buried in 'their native place' rather than in Britain.<sup>83</sup>

It could be said that the myth of being lost, or having one's grave, in 'the bush' expressed a fear of being homeless in a foreign land - and an attempt to neutralise this fear by asserting that 'belonging' could be established by burying ones kith and kin in the land. At this level the myth represented a disguised myth of ownership, of possession, which went hand in hand with the concept of *terra nullius*. At a deeper level however the myth seems to be saying that Europeans felt 'absorbed by' the primal landscape of Australia and that they came to believe that only the sacrifice of their inner 'child' to a tough and determined 'adult' self would ensure survival. In these terms burying one's flesh and blood in a new land was not only consciously *thought* to establish ownership and legitimacy, but unconsciously *felt* to do so through what was experienced as a form of sacrifice; the unwanted and unwarranted loss of one's children - precious offspring and the pre-migratory (childlike masculine or feminine) self. Emigrants *felt* that through personal sacrifice they were buying the right to inhabit the land - be that land the land of the Aborigines or the land of the psyche. Unfortunately, like all myths, this represented a socially unmediated 'magical' solution which failed to address difficulties relating to either race or gender.

To return to the Molloy's burial ritual: after Georgiana had placed some 'blue' native flowers in the coffin with the daughter whom, she claimed, had been 'like a little angel', she and her husband joined in tending their daughter's grave in the following way:

[D]ear Molloy went unknown to me and sowed Rye Grass and Clover over it and has recently put

<sup>81</sup> Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 18 April 1865, Adams, 1969, p. 196.

<sup>82</sup> Catherine Spence, *Clara Morrison: A Tale of South Australia During the Gold Fever*, in Thomson, 1987, p. 180. Eliza Whitelaw, *Reminiscences of her mother*, 1900, LTL, MN 9195.

<sup>83</sup> Sarah Wentworth to her daughter Thomasine Fisher, 20 December 1861, ML, A868, in *Sarah Wentworth: Mistress of Vacluse*, Carol Lister, Historic Homes Trust of NSW, Sydney, 1988.

some twigs across it to form a sort of trellis work with the surrounding creepers which in this country are very numerous. I have also sowed Clover and Hyacinth which are up and planted Pumpkin which will rapidly creep on the twigs over it and form a sort of dome.<sup>84</sup>

Despite their attempts to bind their child's last resting place to the soil and build a roof over it, three years later Georgiana was still to feel the exposure and solitariness of this grave in 'the wilderness', writing: '[The baby's] grave, though sodded with British clover, looks so singular and solitary in this wilderness, of which I can scarcely give you an idea'.<sup>85</sup> The 'blue' flowers which Georgiana placed in the coffin with her dead daughter could have been those of the perfumed purple flowered *Hovea trisperma* (plate 8), but was more likely to have been early flowers of the purple flowered native creeper, the wild sarsparilla or wild wisteria (*Hardenbergia comptoniana*) which at that time Georgiana commonly referred to 'the blue vine'.<sup>86</sup> Though her husband evidently sowed the baby's grave with clover and rye grass on his own initiative, it was probably at Georgiana's suggestion that he erected over it a trellis of sticks so that the nearby 'blue' and red flowered native creepers *hardenbergia comptonia* and *kennedia coccinea* - creepers which in the spring Georgiana considered made 'the Wilderness ... "blossom as [the] Rose"' - would grow over it.<sup>87</sup> The placing of flowers on the dead has a long history in which flowers represent not so much offerings as analogies - in this case the blue flowers symbolise the seeming impossible - life in death, the survival of the spirit. In Christian symbolism the red of the *Kennedia* flowers represented the blood of life and of sacrifice (the blood of Christ, the blood lost when children died, the blood lost in childbirth).<sup>88</sup> Flowers which served as symbols for nineteenth century women during moments of crisis could become so imbued with meaning that ever after they used them to invoke the earlier experience. Louisa Clifton wrote of the dried flowers she brought with her to the colonies from her home in England:

The faded flowers I gathered the last time I saw Wandle House.. fell also into my hands; how strange that such apparently trifling relics of the past should possess so magical a power as to give a tone, a colouring to every idea and thought during a succession of hours.<sup>89</sup>

Long before she knew its botanical name therefore Georgiana developed a special relationship with what she called the 'purple' or 'blue' creeper which she had encouraged to

<sup>84</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Helen Story, 1 October, 1833, BL, 3278A, Georgiana Molloy to Mrs Kennedy, August 1830, BL, CRO D/Ken/3/28/9.

<sup>85</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Helen Story, 1 October, 1833, BL, 3278A.

<sup>86</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Eliza Besly, 7 November 1832, BL, 3278A. The illustration was drawn by Georgiana Leake, a contemporary of Georgiana's who lived at the Swan River Colony.

<sup>87</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 21 March 1837, BL 479A/1.

<sup>88</sup> Cirlot, 1962, pp. 109-110.

<sup>89</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 30 March 1841, BL, 398A.



PLATE 8. *Hovea trisperma*, *Oxypodium capitatum*, Georgiana Leake 1854.  
Reproduced in Wildflowers in Art.

cover her daughter's grave. Hardenbergia was the only native plant which Georgiana domesticated, planting it in her garden at Augusta and allowing it to cover the posts of her verandah. As well as encouraging native creepers to grow over her baby's grave Georgiana also planted the grave with hyacinth bulbs; symbols since classical times of civilisation, cultivation, regeneration, beauty and hope. From the first Georgiana used symbols taken from nature to harmonise and synthesise the old and the new. One of the fascinating things about the way in which Georgiana planted her baby's grave is the multiplicity of the symbolism she used. It was as if that was the only way in which she and her husband could do justice to the depth and complexity of their reactions. For as well as clover, hyacinths and native creepers to decorate and shelter her baby's grave, Georgiana planted pumpkins.<sup>90</sup>

Semiotically speaking flowers and cucurbits (the class which includes melons, cucumbers, pumpkins) represent reproduction and the transitory nature of life. However while flowers represent fertility and ephemerality as refinement, ethereality, - even, at times, 'useless' decoration, the quick growing cucurbits represents fertility and ephemerality as vigour and earthiness - fecundity, rebirth, food, sex, even coarseness and stupidity. Pumpkins and melons feature in art and literature as the great reproductive joke of life, their fruit invoking the womb and the breast - not as decoration but as (plebeian) nourishment.<sup>91</sup> For them to be among the plants Georgiana put on her baby's grave would seem to reflect her country upbringing and that on this occasion she was prepared to lay aside her education and training as 'a lady'.<sup>92</sup> In this reading the body of Georgiana's baby daughter would *not* be wasted - it would be used to help nourish the next generation - for with pumpkins to eat the young mother would overcome her green sickness (iron deficiency anaemia) and scurvy (vitamin C deficiency) and be in a better position to nourish a living child.<sup>93</sup> While on a pragmatic level Georgiana was well aware that a fruit and vegetable garden was an essential prerequisite for settlers,<sup>94</sup> in terms of symbolism the inclusion of pumpkins in the planting on her daughter's grave is what is known as a 'chiasmic inversion' whereby something or

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<sup>90</sup> Grape vine cuttings and pumpkin seeds were often the first things that colonists planted. This was because they were easily transportable, grew quickly and were highly desired - the grapes for wine and the pumpkins for nourishment. They thus represented, like the bread and the wine of Christian symbolism, symbols for the spirit and the body. Burying a child in the bush clearly invoked ancient mythical connections between sacrifice and renewal.

<sup>91</sup> Ralf Norrman & John Haarberg, *Nature and Language: A Semiotic Study of Cucurbits in Literature*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1980.

<sup>92</sup> Clarke & Spender, 1992, p. 90.

<sup>93</sup> It took some time before Georgiana's health had improved sufficiently to enable her to bear a healthy child. In December 1830 Georgiana had a miscarriage. Her first surviving child was born 7 November 1831.

<sup>94</sup> De Garis, 1979, pp. 9, 10. The conditions of settlement in Western Australia left settlers with very little cash in hand. For years settlers such as the Molloys were little more than subsistence farmers.

someone is other than what it seems. For instance the pumpkin in *Cinderella* becomes a vehicle to help facilitate Cinderella's upward social mobility. In chiasitic inversion the message of the symbol is that the seemingly fantastic or absurd can be life affirming and vital.<sup>95</sup>

Georgiana responded to the death of her first baby by modifying her decorative femininity (which may have cost her the life of her first child): she adopted a more earthy womanliness by an act which yoked necessity with desire - beginning to garden by planting the first of her precious garden seeds on her tiny dead daughter's grave. Within two weeks of her baby's death Georgiana set about making her first colonial flower garden in the ground behind her tent and within three months she was described by others as being 'again blooming and beautiful'.<sup>96</sup> In the time which was to pass before the birth of her second child Sabina (born November 1831) Georgiana devoted herself to homemaking and gardening. Hence, by the time Sabina was twelve months old Georgiana could write with satisfaction 'I am sitting on the verandah surrounded by my little flower garden of British, Cape and Australian flowers'.<sup>97</sup>

### **Flowers die: the making of a botanist.**

The oppositions wild / civilised, urban / rural generally fascinate gardeners. Because of this and because the wild represents the ultimate source of garden plants most people who cultivate domesticated flowers show an interest in wild species.<sup>98</sup> In a period when if a married woman undertook activities other than home duties she was thought to be self-indulgent, Georgiana's 'passion' for flowers came in time to be what has been described as 'a secret vice'.<sup>99</sup> However initially - in December 1836 when Captain Mangles wrote from Britain to ask her to send him the seeds of native flowers from the south west of Western Australia - Georgiana felt constrained to tell him that she was not in a position to collect seeds

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<sup>95</sup> Norrman & Haarberg, 1980, pp. 118 - 123. Georgiana McCrae, *Journal*, 5 July 1845, H. McCrae, 1934, p. 167. Georgiana upon arrival in the bush to a 'few huts' at what in time would be 'Arthur's Seat' immediately set about planting 300 flower bulbs. This is another example of chiasitic inversion. Seemingly senseless behaviour to plant bulbs when there was not even sufficient flour for cooking. The bulbs as a symbol of fertility may have served as guarantee of healthful female reproductivity - Georgiana was at that time breast-feeding her seventh child.

<sup>96</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Mrs Kennedy, August 1830, BL, CRO D/Ken/3/28/9; Camfield, 8 September 1830, in Bassett, 1954, p. 265.

<sup>97</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Eliza Besly, 7 November 1832, BL, 3278/A. Bernice McPherson, 'The Verandah as a Feminine Site in the Australian Memory', in Hoon, 1994, p. 71. Verandahs have been inextricably involved with constructions of the feminine in Australian society.

<sup>98</sup> Goody, 1994, p. 24.



for him, any more than she had been for her brother when he had made the same request, because she was a gardener not a botanist and because the demands of three children and 'domestic drudgery' left her neither time nor energy for the task.<sup>100</sup> That Mangles should have written to Georgiana to make his request is not surprising - the flowers of the south west of Western Australia were much sought after in England and Mangles established many other female collectors in Australia, including Mrs Bull who lived not far from Georgiana. Both Mrs Bull and Georgiana were recommended to Captain Mangles by his cousin, Lady Stirling.

Georgiana initially regarded Mangles' request as just another fatiguing call upon her time, telling him: 'fond as I have always been of Gardening, I have always avoided the tedious operation of gathering seeds'.<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless, as Georgiana felt obliged to send Mangles something in return for his pre-emptive gift of garden seeds, the following Spring she used the excuse of collecting native seed for him as a reason to take the family picnicking - and in due course put aside some fresh seed and some dried plant specimens which she had collected some years before.<sup>102</sup> Whether this would have been the end of the matter cannot be known because on 11 November 1837 an event occurred which both gave Georgiana more free time and made the collection of the seed of native plants appear to her not as an activity she was obliged to undertake with her usual perfectionist zeal, but a psychological necessity.

On 11 November a variation of the dreaded 'child lost in the bush' occurred for the Molloyes.<sup>103</sup> Despite the bell he wore around his waist 'in case of his straying into the bush' nineteen month old John Molloy, whom Georgiana described as her 'darling infant and only son', climbed out of his 'cradle' where he had been put by Georgiana's only servant, the 14 year old Charlotte Heppingstone, and, unseen by his busy parents, (Georgiana claimed she was preparing to 'bake and churn') took himself to the family well where he fell in and was drowned. Georgiana afterwards claimed that when pulled from the well by Charlotte her son had been alive, though unconscious, and could have been saved if the Doctor had not been

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<sup>99</sup> Hosking, 1988, pp. 439, 446.

<sup>100</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 7 March 1791, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, p. 29. Elizabeth claimed she turned to the study of the Botany of NSW because she lacked female friends. Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 25 January 1838, BL, 479A/1.

<sup>101</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 25 January 1838, BL, 479A/1.

<sup>102</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 21 March 1837, BL, 479A/1.

<sup>103</sup> Georgiana McCrae, Journal, 27 September 1850, in Niall, 1994, p. 187. Georgiana McCrae's response to hearing of a child being 'lost in the bush' was to write 'I live in daily dread of snakes & accidents befalling the children - yet I know I ought to feel ... that there is One who can keep them in safety - amidst all dangers'. The fear of having a child 'lost in the bush' also partly grew out of the fear that the Aborigines would abduct white children.

absent from Augusta, writing: '[h]ad any medical man been near, I am fully persuaded my little Johnny might have been saved'.<sup>104</sup>

The drowning of small children in domestic wells - which were commonly situated close to the house - was a common occurrence in the colonies. Eighteen months after John Molloy drowned the widowed Ann McDermott (nee Turner), Georgiana's nearest neighbour, recorded the lucky escape from such a death of her son James: '[M]y dear boy most providentially escaped a watery grave. He fell into the well, no one knows how, for he was alone, but his screams were heard by Annie and Jenny'.<sup>105</sup> One of the reasons for the high death rate among small children in the colonies was that their parents were too busy to supervise them adequately and had too few servants to keep an eye on them.<sup>106</sup> At first glance then Georgiana would appear to have simply been less lucky than Ann McDermott in having had no adult female servants to watch over and rescue her child. However it was not by chance that Georgiana had no adult female help, for, although she claimed she could not be without a part-time female help, 'however bad' to assist her with the washing and heavy work, Georgiana had such extremely high moral standards in regard to servants who associated with her young children that, failing to attract from Scotland the 'plainest ever seen', young, single or widowed, 'sensible ... and pious' woman to teach her children 'good habits' and be her personal maid, she elected to take very young girls from 'respectable' working class families into her home to train them as 'servant-maids' who would know their Christian duty.<sup>107</sup> That the moral welfare of her children was what was uppermost in Georgiana's mind can be seen from her objection to her own sister visiting her home. Georgiana, who was outraged that her sister had an occasional drink, wrote to her brother: '[w]e should be quite appalled at the idea of Mary becoming our inmate, not only as regards our own respectability, but as an example to my children'.<sup>108</sup> It is interesting that in this sentence Georgiana changed from the plural pronoun 'our' respectability to the personal possessive 'my' children. One suspects, not simply that Georgiana may have been a somewhat possessive mother, but that she was disapprovingly aware that on his trips away from home her 'dear Jack' was also in the habit of taking an occasional drink.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 25 January 1838, BL, 479A/1.

<sup>105</sup> Ann McDermott (Turner), Journal, 10 May 1839 in J. McDermott, 'Augusta in 1833' - Selections from Ann McDermott's Journal, January - December 1839. JPWAHS, vol 1, part 5, 1929, pp. 17-29.

<sup>106</sup> Grellier, in Stannage, 1981, p. 504.

<sup>107</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Helen Story, 8 December 1834, BL, 3278/A.

<sup>108</sup> Georgiana Molloy to George Kennedy, 13 September 1835, BL, CRO/D/Ken/3/28/9.

<sup>109</sup> John Wollaston, 8 December 1841, Wollaston Journals 1840-1842, vol. 1, G. Bolton, H. Vose, G. Jones, (eds.), University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, WA, 1991, pp 159-160.

Charlotte Heppingstone represented the first and most successful of Georgiana's attempts to rear a young girl to be her 'servant-maid'. She had first known Charlotte when as a small girl she had accompanied her parents, the Molloy's indentured servants Robert Heppingstone - who had been John Molloy's batman in the army - and his wife Ann, to the colony. Before she had children Georgiana taught Charlotte bible studies, and when, some months after arriving at Augusta the Heppingstones left the Molloy's employ to take up land of their own, and the eight year old Charlotte stayed with Georgiana as her servant. Georgiana, wrote of the eight year old Charlotte 'she works very well, indeed better than her mother or Mrs Dawson [and I hope] will prove a reward to me in my riper years'.<sup>110</sup> Three years later Georgiana attempted to recruit a second servant-maid when she offered to take Mary Ann Smith, a motherless three month old infant, into her home: in this instance the baby was reclaimed by her father after a few months. While Mary Ann was with her Georgiana told her mother of her intention to rear her as 'a servant and especially as a handmaid... . Of course ... I have no great affection for so plebeian a child and have never yet kissed her'.<sup>111</sup> Georgiana's hope that Charlotte would stay with her for life was also not fulfilled for Charlotte, having been given to Georgiana's sister (who suffered intensely from seasickness) as a maid to accompany her on the journey back to England married the Captain of the boat in which she travelled and went to America to live.

It seems likely that Georgiana's relationship with Charlotte was a close but conflicted one - Charlotte was both family and not family, and, while no doubt Charlotte loved Georgiana's 'darling precious boy' with his 'flaxen curls', the sight of him that morning playing at breakfast with his parents and sisters; the centre of their affection and attention, may have triggered in her a long-smouldering dissatisfaction with her position. It seems strange otherwise that she should have put him to bed when he was, as his mother put it, 'vigorous and frolicsome' unaware or 'forgetful' of the fact that he was capable of climbing out of his 'cradle'. However as Georgiana was somewhat incoherent in her account of her son's death, anything is possible. Perhaps the very young Charlotte just had too much to do and neglected one responsibility for another. Whatever the truth of the matter Georgiana was left with a feeling that her best efforts to solve her domestic problems were unsuccessful, and that her intense pre-occupation with housewifery may have cost her her precious son.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Mrs Kennedy, August 1830, BL, CRO/D/Ken/3/28/9. Charlotte Heppingstone was born 1823.

<sup>111</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Mrs Kennedy, 22 December 1833, BL, CRO/D/Ken/3/28/9. Mary Anne Smith was born 2 January, her mother died 28 March.

<sup>112</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Mrs Kennedy, August 1830, BL, CRO/D/Ken/3/28/9. Neither Georgiana nor John Molloy had seen their son since breakfast.

You can hear the confusion, contradiction, self-accusation and self-justification in Georgiana's words '[t]he well is in full view of the windows, about a stone's cast off, concealed certainly by the virgillea and mimosa trees'.<sup>113</sup> It is as if Georgiana was defending herself from the accusation that her love of gardening was part cause of her son's death. It is not clear how much comfort Georgiana derived from her religious beliefs at this time. Eliza Marsden, a pastor's wife with strong religious beliefs, lost two of her infant sons to sudden accidental death - the first thrown to his death from a carriage in which his pregnant mother was also travelling. On that occasion Eliza, though she asked her mother to imagine her feelings in having her son 'in health and spirits and the next minute to behold him in the arms of Death', claimed that in her grief she turned to God for comfort. However, after the son with whom she had been pregnant at the time of the carriage accident died during the first year of his life from being scalded, she wrote that she felt 'dead and lifeless ... I think I have never been a child of God and doubt whether I shall ever enjoy those seasons of grace which have afforded me such real comfort'.<sup>114</sup> It is said that when nature is viewed as female, women's procreative powers become analogous to the cycles of birth, death and renewal visible in the landscape, with the result that 'maternal loss' and natural devastation are equated. For a mother this meant that rage at the loss of her child could 'tighten and twist into a vision of universal destruction'.<sup>115</sup> Tacey believed the colonial fear of 'the child lost in the bush', (fear that mother nature would not sustain her children) was not only the result of the number of deaths the colonists experienced among their children but of internalised images of landscape as an 'archetypal field' that would destroy them as 'white intruders'.<sup>116</sup> Yet even this was not the whole story. Elizabeth Fenton found that after her infant daughter Flora came close to dying she had dreams in which she was again a happy young single woman in Ireland. She claimed that suddenly seeing her daughter in such dreams caused her to feel:

[I]ndescribable terror of *what*, of *who*, was *that child*. Nor was it till after I sat up in bed, and by the lamp looked steadily at her and at Fenton, both sound asleep, that I regained a conviction of my identity; but with renewed consciousness came also a faint and giddy sickness. ... These dreams are truly terrible, they seem to let loose all the long pent up waters of affliction on the soul.<sup>117</sup>

In her dreams (which, as I show in Chapter 3, may have been intensified by the taking of laudanum) Eliza was terrified by the strangeness of her child-self revealed to her as alien,

<sup>113</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 25 January 1838, BL, 479A/1.

<sup>114</sup> Eliza Marsden to her Mother, 13 November 1802, 15 January 1805, ML, Marsden Papers, 719 CY 175, in Clarke & Spender, 1992, pp. 42, 43.

<sup>115</sup> Alexander, 1989, pp. 12, 13.

<sup>116</sup> Tacey, 1995, pp. 61-62.

other, and terrifyingly mortal. Women who found the frontier experience overwhelming tended to project their worst fears onto their children and / or onto the natural environment. On the other hand women who felt less fragile or had been reared to care more about the natural environment used the natural environment as a means through which they could come to terms with anxiety.

Clearly however, for women who experienced themselves primarily as mothers, the loss of a child or children was devastating. Ada Cambridge, who was so deeply affected by the death of her ten month old daughter that her husband received permission to move to a new parish in order to get his wife away from the house in which the death occurred, described her daughter's death as 'the first of these almost insupportable bereavements'.<sup>118</sup> A long poem written by Eliza Hamilton Dunlop and published in *The Australian* in 1838,<sup>119</sup> was presented as the song of an Aboriginal woman who had lost her husband and eldest son in a white massacre. The poem called 'The Aboriginal Mother' and structured as an Irish Lament, invoked aboriginal in the sense of European colonial as well as in the sense of indigenous people. It thus not only expressed outrage at the massacre of Aborigines but the loss felt by colonial women of their own children and husbands who, as a result of colonisation frequently 'died' - physically and / or emotionally. At an unconscious level the poem could also be said to lament the loss of women's sacrificed 'male' and 'child' selves, with 'Aboriginal' in this sense meaning the (black) repressed and / or disaffiliated side of the European mind.<sup>120</sup>

Oh! hush thee - hush my baby,  
I may not tend thee yet.  
...  
Or couldst thou know thy father lies  
Struck down by English steel;  
...  
I saw my firstborn treasure  
Lie headless at my feet,  
The gore upon this hapless breast  
In his life-stream is wet!  
And thou! I snatched thee from their sword,  
It harmless pass'd by thee!  
...

<sup>117</sup> Elizabeth Fenton, Journal, 5 May 1830, in Clarke & Spender, 1992, p. 124.

<sup>118</sup> Cambridge, 1903, p. 110.

<sup>119</sup> Elizabeth Webby, 'The Aboriginal in Early Australian Literature', *Southerly*, vol. 40, 1980, p. 45.

Webby found that during this period there were a number of poems published in the papers which expressed sympathy for the Aborigines as victims of European aggression.

<sup>120</sup> Webby, 1980, p. 58. Such poems were usually written by Irish people - Eliza Dunlop, wife of a Protector of Aborigines, was an Irishwoman.

Thy sire! ...  
My bold and stately mountain-bird!  
I thought he could not die.

...  
My child, my child he's gone!

...  
He [her sire] brings my slaughter'd boy:  
To show their God how treacherously  
The stranger men destroy.<sup>121</sup>

Eliza Dunlop received considerable criticism in the press for her poem. In a published reply she defended her stance by saying she hoped to awaken the sympathies of the English nation for 'a people rendered desperate and revengeful by continuous acts of outrage' and asked that greater consideration be shown to 'the ties stronger than death, which bind the heart of a woman, be she Christian or savage'.<sup>122</sup>

At a time when women could expect to lose some of their children and to struggle alone with unresolved grief, women felt they were psychically as well as physically consumed by motherhood. Penelope Selby suffered the loss of all seven of her new-born babies. Two months before her death from a 'fall from a horse' she wrote to her mother:

[M]y dear boy breathed a few hours, long enough to make my heart yearn towards him and to be deceived into hoping that he might be spared to us ... I do not think I should have felt so sorry, having been accustomed to the loss and not even this time allowing myself to be sanguine, but it makes a great difference when you have heard a feeble cry and have them with you in bed.<sup>123</sup>

Carelessness while riding, as a way of inducing miscarriage or death appears to have been one of the (usually unconscious) ways in which nineteenth century women handled their resistance to unwelcome pregnancy and unrecognised and unresolved grief. Women often looked at their mother's lives and wondered if they could bear to be married. The 25 year old Louisa Clifton, who had seen her mother struggle to rear sixteen children, confided to her journal:

As for marriage, I have always clearly seen there is a fatality which is insurmountable as to myself. In early life I had a strong prejudice against it, being persuaded that it is an unhappy state for a woman.<sup>124</sup>

The effect on colonial women of bearing and losing so many children has not been effectively evaluated. It has been suggested that because colonial women expected to lose

<sup>121</sup> Eliza Hamilton Dunlop, the *Australian*, 13 December 1838, in Grimshaw, Lake et al, 1994, pp. 32, 33.

<sup>122</sup> Eliza Dunlop, *Sydney Herald*, 29 November 1841, in Dale Spender, *Writing a New World: Two Centuries of Women Writers*, Pandora, London, 1988, pp. 61-2.

<sup>123</sup> Penelope Selby to her Mother 17 August 1851, in Frost, 1984, p. 186.

<sup>124</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 29 March 1841, BL, 398A.

some of their children they were inured to the loss. I have found no evidence to support this. If anything the fear that they might lose their children appears to have made nineteenth century colonial women over-protective of small babies and proportionally grief-stricken when they died. Mary Mowle was typical when she wrote:

Wednesday 14th. [February 1855] Alice very ill today ... Had a dreadful night with my poor baby.

Thursday 15th. Very tired when I got up this morning. ... Alice scarcely any better, she has hardly been out of my arms for three days & nights.

Friday 16th. Poor Alice very ill, never out of my arms.<sup>125</sup>

When in December 1855 the fragile Alice died at the age of twenty two months her mother, who claimed to 'idolise her', never fully recovered and died soon after the birth of her next child.<sup>126</sup> How women handled grief at the loss of a child depended a great deal upon their personal circumstances. Support offered by friends and family, religious belief and observances and contemporaneous or subsequent pregnancies could help a woman complete the grieving process, however each woman reacted in her own way to her loss and found her own ways of grieving. Frequently, although a woman may have appeared to have recovered, undealt with grief could affect her for the rest of her life.

Eliza Brown, was seven months pregnant when her five year old son Vernon accidentally drowned while playing near the river which ran at the foot of their property at York, Western Australia. His death was made all the worse because Eliza and her husband had taken their attention away from their two youngest sons in order to read long awaited mails from England: it was only when their youngest son - three year old Aubrey - returned to the house alone that they recognised something was wrong. Shortly after her young son's death Eliza wrote that she appreciated the concern shown by friends at the death of her 'poor adventurous little fellow', and that she gained comfort from the belief that in 'dying before the time of committing actual sin [he] is a blessed dweller with God and the Angels'.<sup>127</sup> Two months later, when she was delivered of a baby boy whom she called Vernon in his dead brother's memory, Eliza was described by her husband as being 'nicely recovered and as usual in great spirits'.<sup>128</sup> However Eliza never forgot her first Vernon and frequently rehearsed the means of his death with her other children. Six years later she wrote his story in a family poem she sent her father in England:

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<sup>125</sup> Mary Mowle, Journal, 14, 15, 16, February 1855, in Patricia Clarke (ed.), *A Colonial Woman: The Life and Times of Mary Braidwood Mowle*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1986, p. 252.

<sup>126</sup> Mowle in Clarke, 1986, pp. 268, 271. Mary Mowle died in August 1857.

<sup>127</sup> Eliza Brown to her father, William Bussey, 8 January 1845, in Cowan, 1977, pp. 55, 56.

<sup>128</sup> Thomas Brown to his father-in-law, William Bussey, March 1845 in Cowan, 1977, p. 57.

The bird sang sweetly on the bough  
That waved above the stream  
It's nest was not remote, and there  
Were young ones to be seen

I'll peep the little Vernon said  
And crept o'er branch and brake  
And soon his little life was gone  
He fell into the lake<sup>129</sup>

Eliza treated her son's replacement, whom she called 'the second Vernon', differently from her other children, describing him as:

[M]ore delicate than our other children but an extremely lively child and very much endeared to us. We have called him Vernon. I think he resembles our last boy and is more like me than any of the other children, at all events there is a great sympathy between us for I am particularly interested with this last born, and he takes particular notice of me.<sup>130</sup>

Later she was to describe Vernon II as 'the sweetest dispositioned little fellow... an embryo Poet and Philosopher.. brightly imaginative ... of rather a restless temperament which most intellectual children are'.<sup>131</sup> One could speculate that Eliza's idealisation of the dead Vernon and extra endowment of maternal interest in the living Vernon may have had a disturbing influence on the family; for despite coming from a very 'good' family the surviving Brown boys were considered to be 'wild' and the eldest of them, Kenneth - described as a boy by his mother as 'hardy, impenetrable.. [and] not likely to bow much to human opinion', was later hanged for murdering his wife.<sup>132</sup>

Given the amount of unresolved grieving and smothered discontent among women it is no surprise to find that, six weeks after the death of her son, Georgiana - though fully aware of the impropriety - felt the need to share her anguish at the loss of her son with Captain Mangles - a man who twelve months previously had simply written to her to make the most formal of requests. Georgiana may have been encouraged to do this by knowing Captain Mangles was the same age and from the same background as her husband. Like Captain Molloy, Mangles was a conservative Anglican and a veteran of the Napoleonic Wars; unlike

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<sup>129</sup> Eliza Brown to her husband, Thomas Brown, 23 November 1851, in Cowan, 1977, p. 130. 'I took Matilda and the rest to the 1st Vernon's grave. Matilda had often been inquiring and had not the story only by heart but at heart about the bird's nest and fatal catastrophe attending it'. Eliza Brown to her father William Bussey, 4 November 1850, in an enclosure to the letter entitled 'A Family Portrait', Cowan, 1977, p. 102.

<sup>130</sup> Eliza Brown to her father, 20 June, 1845, Cowan, 1977, p. 59.

<sup>131</sup> Eliza Brown to her father, 4 November 1850, Cowan, 1977 p.103.

<sup>132</sup> Eliza Brown to her father, 4 November 1850, Cowan, 1977 p.102.



him he was a wealthy unmarried man who resided in Britain and devoted his life to botany and horticulture. From the time of her son's death Georgiana viewed Captain Mangles, whom she never met, as someone who would perfectly 'sympathise' with her in her 'passion for flowers'. As such Mangles became Georgiana's closest confidant and the focus of her psychic life. Bewailing the fact that they had failed to meet when Mangles visited the Swan River Colony in 1831, Georgiana asked Mangles if he would send her a lithographic likeness of himself so she that could see:

[F]ace to face the person whom Fate has so capriciously veiled from sight, but made so instrumental in bestowing kindness and gratification at so remote a part of the Globe. Our acquaintance is both singular and tantalising, and somewhat melancholy to me, my dear Sir, to reflect on, we shall never meet in this life; we may mutually smooth and cheer the rugged path of this World's Existence, even in its brightest condition, by strewing Flowers in our way, but we can never converse with each other, and I am sincere when I say, I never met with any one who so perfectly called forth and could sympathise with me in my prevailing passion for Flowers.<sup>133</sup>

For Georgiana, who bitterly resented the lack of serious and absorbing mental exercise available to women in the colonies, contact with Captain Mangles represented contact with the broader world of mental activity which she had known prior to emigration. The death of her only son helped turn Georgiana's inner life away from her husband - a man who had little interest in flowers and who had failed to save her son's life - and directed it towards a man who, by her own confession, was virtually a 'stranger'. In establishing a relationship with Captain Mangles Georgiana re-created the relationship she had had with John Molloy before marriage - that is, one which was 'sympathetic' but distant, sexualised but not sexual. For Georgiana Captain Mangles served not only as someone with whom she could share her interest in flower propagation but someone to whom she could (obliquely) complain about her husband and (openly) complain about her life as a colonial wife and mother.<sup>134</sup>

Under the demanding conditions of settlement commitment to a form of continuous reproduction which undermined her health made it difficult for Georgiana to maintain her faith in her husband as patriarch. Though at that time women usually refrained from criticism of the patriarch in even the most private of journals, in her letters to her sister and to Mangles Georgiana came very close to openly criticising John Molloy. When her husband was absent in Perth for several months early in 1834 Georgiana acted as Government representative at Augusta; a responsibility which she found overwhelming. She wrote distractedly to her sister:

<sup>133</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 1 November 1838, 31 January 1840, 1 February 1840. BL, 479A/1-2.

<sup>134</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 1 November 1838, 31 January 1840, BL, 479A/1.

[Molloy's] absence is agonising .. the colonial schooner arrived one day when I was almost dead with expectation ... Molloy had been prevented leaving Perth. ... True we have drunk many dregs since we embarked on this fatal Swan River expedition, fraught with continued care and deprivations.<sup>135</sup>

Nevertheless when her husband eventually returned she compressed her resentment into the ironic statement - '[Molloy arrived] in his rifle jacket looking quite fat from the gentlemanly life he had been leading in Perth'.<sup>136</sup> Her unconscious response to such repressed resentment, allied to her need to (magically) contain and displace her own fecundity, was to establish a distant 'safe' relationship with Mangles, a patriarch in whom she could continue to believe. The collecting of seed and flowers for him thus became a ransom for her life, while at the same time it served as a way of embracing 'lost' masculine rights - such as the physical freedom to 'escape' from the house and household responsibilities - which she unconsciously envied in her husband. Georgiana was initially driven to find this 'solution' - wildflower collection and a 'shadow marriage' with Captain Mangles - to the dissatisfactions inherent in her life by the despair she felt at her son's death. Newly pregnant when he died, Georgiana suffered a bout of deep depression from which she did not emerge until she resolved to write to Mangles and use the leisure which she had acquired as a result of 'my dear Boy's death' to collect wildflower seeds. She later thanked Mangles from the heart for being:

[T]he cause of my more immediate acquaintance with the nature and variety of those plants that we have exchanged ... as from necessary avocations but, for your request, I should have bestowed on the flowers of this wilderness any other idea than that of only passing admiration.<sup>137</sup>

What could have served better as bond for such an ambiguously desirous relationship than a mutual interest in the collection of wildflower seed? Though the concept *wild* flower is seemingly that of nature and woman as natural / unrestrained, in reality in the nineteenth century wildflowers were traditionally the play things of children.<sup>138</sup> Even the extremely protective Georgiana encouraged her children to venture into 'the bush' to pick wildflowers, at one time writing:

I lamented not being able to gather the flowers as they came out; and little "Mary Dorothea" was desired in her rambles with Amelia (not two years old) to bring in the first flowers; *which she did.* <sup>139</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Eliza Besly, 21 February 1834, BL, 3278/A.

<sup>136</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Mrs Story, 8 December 1834, BL, 3278/A.

<sup>137</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 25 January 1838, BL, 479A/1.

<sup>138</sup> Goody, 1994, p. 292.

<sup>139</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, June 1840, June 22, 1840, BL, 497A/2. All Georgiana's children were encouraged by her to collect wildflowers and wildflower seed 'for Captain Mangles'.

Many Australian wildflowers are small and relatively scentless. Georgiana contrasted cultivated flowers and wildflowers by claiming the former were 'rich and full of blossom' whereas the latter were 'single, simple, elegant and unadorned'.<sup>140</sup> 'Modest' flowers as the traditional symbol for Mary, the virgin mother - herself a symbol of pre-sexuality and immaculate conception - served women as icons of 'feminine perfection' which equated motherhood with goodness, purity, gentleness, submission and *self-sacrifice*. In Catholic mythology the tears Mary shed (known as Mary's 'flowers') were considered to 'give life and make whole'. It was for this reason that when a woman was 'de-flowered', that is, became a sexual rather than a virginal being, that she was no longer associated with Mary, the Mother of God, but with Mary Magdalen, the redeemed 'whore' who, if she wished to save her soul, was told to anoint herself with the saving tears (flowers) of Mary, the Mother of God.<sup>141</sup>

When adult sexuality and self-assertion are denied or repressed they tend to co-exist with, and feed on, their own denial.<sup>142</sup> When Georgiana discovered a plant with 'very small neat white blossom' in the bush she told Captain Mangles: 'I discovered a plant I have been almost panting for'.<sup>143</sup> Elsewhere she told him of 'small white pendulous blossoms lipt with red [which are] particularly beautiful ... like the flower of a dream' - imagery strongly evocative of a virginal breast.<sup>144</sup> It was the habit of adult nineteenth century women to pick wildflowers to dry between the leaves of books - an act of 'preservation' which brought together nature and culture, civilisation and the wild, restraint and (a symbol of) pre-pubescent freedom. Georgiana sent Captain Mangles not only wildflowers which she had dried, but wildflower seed - that is, in terms of the metaphor, potential children. She thereby metaphorically fulfilled the duties as a 'wife' without undergoing childbirth - which at that time was threatening to end her life. In other words, in terms of symbolism, the collection of native flowers and seed for Captain Mangles saved Georgiana's life by transforming her into a virgin mother.

Although there was a feverish quality to Georgiana's letters to Mangles in this early period, it was not until the birth of her daughter Amelia in June that Georgiana fell into a

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<sup>140</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 18 October 1840, BL, 479A/2.

<sup>141</sup> Warner, 1976, pp. 221, 335.

<sup>142</sup> Kaplan, 1991.

<sup>143</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 1 August 1840, BL, 479A/2.

<sup>144</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 21 November 1838, BL, 479A/1.

'dangerous illness' (puerperal fever) which she explained to herself as having been 'occasioned by the mournful event of my darling boy's awful death'.<sup>145</sup>

### **Leaving Paradise: motherhood as a death sentence.**

Although Georgiana refused to recognise or accept it, from the time of her son's death she lived under a (for six years deferred) sentence of death. This was because of her obstetric history and her advancing age which made each of her consecutive births ever more dangerous. Because each pregnancy causes the uterus to become more fibrous and atonic, multiparity in women seriously increases the risk of retention of the placenta. With every birth that Georgiana recorded she suffered a delayed placental expulsion. This probably resulted from the state of her health, her doctor's administration of opium (given for pain relief, opium inhibited contractions of the uterus), and because - as was the habit of the time - after delivery Georgiana was compelled to lie flat on her back.<sup>146</sup> If - as was the case in Georgiana's first delivery - a woman or a mid-wife assisted at the delivery the expulsion of the placenta was left to nature. The medical profession however advised its members that if the placenta was not passed within three to four hours of delivery the 'heroic procedure' of manual removal should be performed.<sup>147</sup> Male physicians in the nineteenth century effected manual removal of the placenta by inserting instruments or their hand and arm into the uterus to pull the placenta away from the wall of the uterus. It was because this procedure was performed almost routinely that, in the medical debate about the supposed rampant sexuality of parturient women, objections were raised against the speculum because it was feared it gave women sexual gratification.<sup>148</sup>

As there was at this time no awareness of the need for asepsis the insertion of unsterilised instruments and ungloved and unwashed hands / arms into the susceptible and bleeding uterus risked the introduction of infective organisms acquired at previous deliveries. As well as this the procedure of manual removal of the placenta from the wall of the uterus caused haemorrhage and / or left fragments of the placenta behind to putrefy. The most common

<sup>145</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 8 September 1838, BL, 479A/1.

<sup>146</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Mrs Kennedy, 1838, BL, CRO D/Ken/3/28/9. Georgiana complained of 'bilious headaches' as if they had long been part of her life. Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 28 December 1840, BL, 479A/2, 'stooping affects my brain so much - the necessary exertion of mind and body is quite excruciating'. Her 'paleness' had always been considered part of Georgiana's charm. 'Chlorosis or Green Sickness' - that is iron deficiency anaemia - was a fact of life for most women in the nineteenth century.

<sup>147</sup> Henry Prinsep, Journal, 17 June 1869, in Northover, 1993, pp. 507-8. In the absence of the doctor Prinsep, his mother-in-law and the midwife felt they could not perform such a procedure on Prinsep's wife Josephine. Dr Lovegrove was sent for and carried out the procedure.

result of such 'heroic' medical intervention however was puerperal, or, as it was called in Georgiana's time, 'Fatal Child Bed', fever. The medical treatment for puerperal fever was complete bed rest, 'copious depletion' (bleeding) and opium - all of which weakened the 'patient' without curing her condition. Not surprisingly doctors came to believe that treatment of 'child bed fever' was pointless because, despite everything they could do, 'three out of four' women who contracted Child Bed Fever died.<sup>149</sup>

If tuberculosis was seen in the nineteenth century as a disease which manifested itself as 'intense desire; that discloses, in spite of the reluctance of the individual what the individual does not want revealed', how much more would women have experienced childbed fever - that debilitating and usually fatal illness which followed the insertion of the arm of a man not her husband into her uterus following childbirth - as mysteriously connected with her desire for, and fear of, sexuality / reproduction.<sup>150</sup> Under such obstetric conditions, the myth of 'mysterious consumption' intensified in women an already existent fear of sexuality, childbirth and motherhood.

When, with the birth of her second child in November 1831, Georgiana retained the placenta she refused to let Dr Green touch her, claiming she had no faith in him and found his touch 'disagreeable to her feelings'. As Dr Green was a handsome and playful bachelor of exactly the same age as Georgiana whom Georgiana had been distressed to see in a drunken state more than once, he was unlikely to have filled her with confidence in his obstetric knowledge and was ideally suited to outrage her modesty. On this first occasion when Georgiana had a doctor attend her in delivery she was allowed to sleep and 12 hours later passed the placenta naturally.<sup>151</sup> With the birth of her next child in June 1834 Georgiana was not so lucky. Because she remained adamant that Dr Green was not to touch her, after the placenta had not come away after 12 hours, the inexperienced Anne Dawson was instructed by Dr Green on how to effect its manual removal.<sup>152</sup> No records remain of the birth of John Molloy in April 1836 but with the birth of Amelia in June 1838 Georgiana haemorrhaged (probably as the result of a manual removal of the placenta) and developed 'a child bed fever' from which it took her more than three months to recover. As stated

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<sup>148</sup> Poovey, 1988, p. 48.

<sup>149</sup> Dr Michael Ryan, *A Manual of Midwifery*, 1831, pp. 635 - 41, in Jalland & Hooper, 1986, p. 187.

<sup>150</sup> Sontag, 1983, p. 49. Despite recognition of its cause and the development of aseptic techniques late in the nineteenth century, 'Puerperal Fever' continued to kill women in childbirth until the development of chemotherapy in the 1930's.

<sup>151</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Mrs Kennedy, 4 December 1831, BL, CRO D/Ken/3/28/9.

<sup>152</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Mrs Kennedy, 26 June 1834, BL, CRO D/Ken/3/28/9, Georgiana Molloy to Elizabeth Besly, 18 May 1834, BL, 3278A/2.

previously, Georgiana chose to consider that this 'dangerous illness' - which she said left her 'scarcely able to exert myself in either body or soul' - was 'occasioned by' her son's death. Georgiana's recovery from this infection was very slow. As she told her confidante, Captain Mangles, so intense and protracted was her weakness that for some time even her precious gardening magazines were 'laid aside' and her flower garden 'quite neglected'. As late as mid-November when she sent off a box of specimens to Mangles she claimed she felt 'so unwell as to be hardly able to pack it'.<sup>153</sup> Georgiana's response to a (largely unconscious) recognition that should she again fall pregnant she might well die was to throw herself into her garden, her epistolary relationship with Mangles and the collection for him of the flowers and seeds of native plants.

### Leaving paradise.

Though Georgiana did not openly express dissatisfaction at the frequency of her pregnancies, she did express considerable dissatisfaction at having to leave her home at Augusta. Georgiana had known since 1832 when her husband selected his main grant at the Vasse rather than at Augusta, that it was 'decreed' that she would one day have to leave 'her pleasant retreat'.<sup>154</sup> However, because the Molloy's removal to the Vasse was put off again and again because John Molloy had to fulfil his duties as Resident Magistrate at Augusta, she came to disbelieve in its reality. When finally forced to leave her home at Augusta with 'much regret on the 5th May 1839' she told Mangles she experienced it as:

[I]n those beautiful lines of Milton, when he represents Eve driven from the garden of Paradise ... I was reluctant to leave it, but would gladly return, only prudence forbids ... we arrived at the Vasse, a *terrible change*. After dinner I sought out a moist situation where I might deposit my poor Plants, torn from their native soil, they seemed to participate in the feelings of their mistress trying through the aid of water to keep up their natural vigour, but evidently had met with some terrible reverse.<sup>155</sup>

However sad they might feel about leaving their homes it was usual for women in the nineteenth century to accept without demur a male relative's decision to move when that decision was associated with the making of a living.<sup>156</sup> Although like Georgiana she had grown to love Augusta, in 1834 Georgiana's neighbour Bessie Bussell unquestioningly

<sup>153</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, September 1838 in letter dated 25 January 1838, 1 November 1838, 21 November 1838, BL 479A/1.

<sup>154</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 1 November 1838, BL 479A/1.

<sup>155</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 31 January 1840, BL 479A/2.

<sup>156</sup> Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 27 November 1864, Adams, 1969, p. 186.

accepted her brothers decision to 'commence colonisation anew on the banks of the Vasse which from all accounts must be far preferable to our beautiful Augusta'.<sup>157</sup>

Georgiana Molloy however, like Georgiana McCrae who wrote 'sorrow has fastened at my heart, since the time has now arrived when I must say goodbye to my mountain home, the house I have built and lived in, the trees I have planted, the garden I have formed',<sup>158</sup> went reluctantly from Augusta to which she hoped she would one day return to make her garden 'more beautiful than ever'. Although she accepted her husband's assessment that the Vasse was 'fine country, very rich' she made no secret of the fact that she would have preferred to stay in her 'lowly "thatched cottage"', with her 'sweet flower Garden on the magnificent Blackwood' than move to the 'poorly situated' Fairlawn on the banks of the 'very small sluggish stream', where, she claimed, she was 'scarcely able to see the clouds and never able to see a sunset'.<sup>159</sup> She wrote with some irritation:

I do not think we shall be long at Fairlawn, as I think it by no means well situated, and had I previously seen it never would I have built on that part of Molloy's grant it is so hot in Summer, all the labours of Winter in the garden are burnt up.<sup>160</sup>

Augusta had become for Georgiana - who made sure before she left it that she planted her son's grave with a 'dark crimson China rose' which Mangles had introduced into the colony<sup>161</sup> - a Garden of Eden from which she felt herself forcibly expelled by a God-like patriarch. In memory 'dear Augusta' would become a heavenly place where Georgiana used to take her organ-piano:

[O]ut on to the grass plot, and play till late by moonlight, the beautiful broad water of the Blackwood gliding by, the roar of the bar ever and anon; the wild scream of a flight of swans going over the fresh water lakes, the air perfectly redolent with the powerful scent of Virginia Stock and *Oenothera biennes*, Clove Pinks and never fading Mignonette.<sup>162</sup>

A red rose in religious symbolism stood for agape, represented by Christ's offering of his life; in civic symbolism for eros, represented by Venus, Aphrodite and romantic love. In the nineteenth century meanings from the two symbolic domains were comfortably accommodated in the same psyche. In leaving Augusta, birth and death, her dead son and Mangles, love and sacrifice, flowers and paradise came together in Georgiana's imagination.

<sup>157</sup> Bessie Bussell to Elizabeth Capel Bussell, 12 April 1834, BL, Bussell Papers, 337A/266.

<sup>158</sup> Georgiana McCrae, *Journal*, 6 October 1851, H. McCrae, 1934, p. 184.

<sup>159</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, March 14 1840, 6 February 1841, BL, 479A/2.

<sup>160</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 20 January 1841, BL, 479A/2.

<sup>161</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 10 April 1841, BL, 479A/2.

For, although Georgiana never explicitly wrote of this, she not only experienced Augusta as prettier than the Vasse, but as safer from Aboriginal attack. Georgiana moved to the Vasse shortly before a respected settler, George Layman, died as a result of being speared by Aborigines. Discord and violence between Aborigines and white settlers broke out at the Vasse over the 'parklike' land; land which had been rendered suitable for European cattle by centuries of Aboriginal fire practice. It was John Molloy's job as magistrate to restore peace. Georgiana had originally believed that the Aborigines at Augusta were 'very fond of all the settlers'. She had been disabused of her belief by an incident which had taken place in 1833 when her husband and the soldiers were away from Augusta. On that occasion she was threatened by adult male Aborigines who saw her weakness as an opportunity to redress grievances they held against her husband. It was an experience she had no wish to repeat.<sup>163</sup> It not surprising therefore that after she moved to Vasse where there was considerable violence between Aborigines and settlers, that Battap, who had assisted her to collect seed, and allowed her to place wildflowers on his head, at Augusta, became in her memory a 'romantic savage' - that is one who was thought to gain spiritual sustenance from a 'simple life of nature'.<sup>164</sup> Fear lay behind Georgiana's need to construct adult male Aborigines as 'playful children'.<sup>165</sup>

In Christian cosmology the utopic garden comes before man knows sin (the Garden of Eden) and after he dies (the garden of Paradise). With the worry of finding herself again pregnant, bereft of a physical garden, and in what she experienced as a dangerous environment, Georgiana, unconsciously or consciously fearing the end was near, began to construct the landscape at Vasse as a Paradisiacal garden. In March she wrote that the golden flowered Christmas tree or Nuytsia:

[L]ooks so rich among the sombre Eucalypts... it represents to my mind the rich and luxurious trees which adorn Paradise. How many years these treasures have blossomed in this country without one eye to appreciate them, it strikes me so forcibly in riding through the surrounding wilderness, that "the hand of God" is indeed impartial, for the uncultivated parts of the earth are as much loaded

<sup>162</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 29 June 1840, BL, 479A/2. Georgiana wrote that the 'incoherency and wild strain in which this is written' served as evidence that her 'reflective powers' were in abeyance.

<sup>163</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Elizabeth Besly, 20 November 1833, Georgiana Molloy to Helen Story, 8 December 1834, BL, 3278/A.

<sup>164</sup> Smith, 1969, p. 318. Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 31 January 1840, 4 June 1841, BL, 479A/2. Goody, 1994, p. 75. Garlands on the head were a pagan rite which was transformed by the church into Christ's 'crown of thorns'.

<sup>165</sup> Georgiana Molloy, Diary, c1833, BL, 3278A/1. This was in contrast to her earlier efforts to get to know Aborigines more objectively by keeping a record of Aboriginal words. Gibson, 1984, p. 181.



with his bounties as the most frequented parts.<sup>166</sup>

The new varieties of flower Georgiana found at the Vasse so excited her that between December 1839 and January 1840 Mangles listed 106 specimens which Georgiana collected for him.<sup>167</sup> Georgiana was right to worry about her pregnancy however. When, in May 1840, she gave birth to her sixth child - whom she called Flora after the Goddess of flowers and the 'floral passion' which she hoped would sustain her - she was helped in the delivery by her sister Mary (visiting from England) and by Ann McDermott. Dr Green, although not mentioned, was probably also in attendance. It appears that once again the placenta had to be delivered manually; possibly by Ann who, three years later, married Dr Green. However, on this occasion a fragment of placenta must have been left behind for, after seemingly recovering from the initial infection which kept her in bed for a month, on 5 June Georgiana haemorrhaged and became delirious. Once again Georgiana's 'puerperal fever' debilitated her and threatened her life. Week after week she lingered on her sickbed, fortified by opium, kangaroo soup, porter, port wine, gifts of wild flowers and the sight of her husband preparing beds for her flowers outside her bedroom window. In her fevered state flowers were never far from her thoughts. From her bed Georgiana wrote to Mangles of *Isopogon* and *Petrophilla*, 'such flowers of imagination I am now in raptures when I think on them, in searching to come suddenly on such gems ... makes you for a time think you are in Fairy Land'.<sup>168</sup>

Georgiana's sister formed an alliance with John Molloy and took over Georgiana's 'management' - alternately humouring and coercing her. The coalition of nurse, doctor and husband was normal practice with post partum women who were given rest, nourishment, isolation and opium - and treated like confined children who were expected to exhibit a grateful womblike dependence. It has been claimed that such 'confinement' constituted a post partum re-education of the 'patient'.<sup>169</sup> Despite her head feeling 'weak and light' from the effects of the infection and opium, and despite the expressed 'amusement' of her husband and sister at her 'unparalleled devotion [to the] all engrossing concern [of Mangles] cause', Georgiana insisted on writing to Mangles to assure him that '[i]n all my sickness and real suffering I did not forget you'. Georgiana, who was in pain and low spirits at her

<sup>166</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 14 March 1840, BL, 479A/2.

<sup>167</sup> Education Dept. Pub., History Series No. 9, 'The Flowers of Georgiana Molloy', BL, PR 8517/ NAT.

<sup>168</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 30 June 1840, BL, 479A/2.

<sup>169</sup> Showalter, 1987, pp. 57-59, 73.

'unpropitious illness' prayed that God would give her back her 'strength and health', this time saying her illness was caused by the unhealthiness of the Vasse district.<sup>170</sup>

Georgiana told Mangles she hoped her health would be sufficiently 'recruited' to allow her to turn from her 'stern duties of united Mistress, Servant and Mother' to make:

[T]hose much enjoyed Floral Excursions, when I sally forth either on foot or on horseback. I feel quite elastic in mind and step; I feel I am quite at my own work, the real cause that enticed me to the Swan River.<sup>171</sup>

Georgiana's prayers were answered. In August she could tell Mangles:

To-day I have been employed in your service, after breakfast the children and I went in search of *Flowers*. It has been a beautiful day and I have not been so long a walk in months.

Two weeks later she was writing to say how she would like 'nothing better than to 'kindle a fire and stay out all night as I should be ready for my work early in the morning without again coming so far'.<sup>172</sup> Being in the outdoors gave Georgiana freedom and mobility which seemed all the sweeter after her long period of confinement. Penelope Selby too felt this when she rose from her seventh and final confinement from which she had taken 'many months' to recover. Penelope told her mother:

My dear Mother, I thought of you this morning ... in the clear sunshine and such a pretty view beyond ... Indeed everything looks well to a person that has been almost chained to one spot for many months.<sup>173</sup>

For the time being Georgiana continued to be confined in that, her sister having returned to England in the company of her only servant, whenever her husband was away she 'could not go beyond the gate' because she had no-one to mind her children.<sup>174</sup> Nevertheless in January she accompanied her husband on a 'delightful' week-long excursion to Cape Naturaliste. This was the first time Georgiana had slept in a tent since her arrival at Augusta and this time she found the experience wholly pleasurable. Georgiana was now to enjoy two and a half years before the birth of her next baby. Apart from the two year seven month gap she had between her first and second living children when she extended the breast-feeding of Sabina,

<sup>170</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, June 1840, BL, 479A/2.

<sup>171</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 29 June 1840, BL, 479A/2.

<sup>172</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, August 1, 14, 1840, BL, 479A/2.

<sup>173</sup> Penelope Selby to her Mother, 17 August 1851, in Frost, 1984, p. 186.

<sup>174</sup> Mrs Bull to Captain Mangles, 1 February 1840, Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 6 February 1841, BL, 479A/2.

this was the longest period between births Georgiana had in her marriage - the rest of her children being born at intervals of twenty months.<sup>175</sup>

It is impossible to know if Georgiana and her husband discussed the matter of birth control. Given that in England in the 1840s birth control was used among 'respectable people whose income was small' - such as the Molloy's<sup>176</sup> - and given John Molloy's experience in the army, it is possible that he may have initiated discussions in this matter. On the other hand because of 'delicacy', because contraception would have been contrary to Georgiana's religious beliefs and moral convictions - and possibly - her psychic needs, it is probable that he worried about the matter but did not discuss it with his wife. No doubt too they both desired to have a son. Also, although in Britain artificial forms of contraception such as condoms and chemicals were becoming available it is probable they would not have been obtainable in the Swan River Colony.<sup>177</sup> In the colony therefore when women such as Georgiana Molloy and Eliza Brown extended breast feeding and slept with their infant children it probably represented a conscious attempt to space their children.<sup>178</sup> The limitation of families which occurred in Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century - in which people who lived in the country were not far behind those who lived in the city - has been associated with rising standards for parenting.<sup>179</sup> At a conscious level Georgiana would no doubt have accepted that her role in life was to raise as many serious-minded Christians as God chose to give her.<sup>180</sup> Nevertheless Georgiana does seem to have attempted to space her pregnancies by sleeping with her babies and prolonging the breast feeding of Sabina, her first living child. After losing weight in feeding Sabina however Georgiana became afraid that extended breast feeding would jeopardise her health and fed her subsequent children for shorter periods.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Davidoff & Hall, 1987, pp. 335-336. In Britain in the 1840s the average interval between births was twenty three months for the first seven years of marriage after which the interval became longer. Margaret Anderson, 'Marriage and Children in Western Australia 1842-49', in *Families in Colonial Australia*, Patricia Grimshaw, Chris McConville, Ellen McEwen, (eds.) George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985, p. 50. In Western Australia in the 1840s the average birth interval appears to have been considerably shorter.

<sup>176</sup> Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality*, Oxford University Press, London, 1994, p. 54.

<sup>177</sup> Grellier, in Stannage, 1981, pp 290-291. Georgiana was typical of colonial women in that she married young and hence had she lived until menopausal would probably have had 2 or 3 more children than her British counterpart.

<sup>178</sup> Grellier, in Stannage, 1981, pp. 487-9. Georgiana Molloy to Helen Story, 8 December 1834, BL, 3278A/2. When breast feeding Georgiana claimed she slept with her babies, 'all night on [her] arm'.

<sup>179</sup> Ann Lawson, *Growing up in Melbourne: Family Life in Late Nineteenth Century*, Highland Press, Australian National University, Canberra, 1994, p. 32.

<sup>180</sup> Davidoff & Hall, 1987, p. 335.

<sup>181</sup> Showalter, 1987, p. 54. It was well known that poor women who breast fed for extended periods could develop 'lactational insanity' from anaemia and malnutrition. Georgiana McCrae, Journal, undated, H. McCrae, 1934, p. 197. Georgiana McCrae, who described herself as a 'famous medicine woman', seemed

Which left the ball in John Molloy's court. Abstinence, reduced frequency of sex and withdrawal<sup>182</sup> were means John Molloy could have employed to safeguard the life of his debilitated 35 year old wife by delaying her eighth pregnancy. It may well have been choice rather than accident which kept John Molloy away from home a great deal in the two and a half year period before Georgiana had her final fatal pregnancy. With women having so little control over their own reproductivity it is not surprising that some women chose to stay single, others to turn a blind eye to their husband's sexual adventures, and yet others to respond to dilemmas such as that facing Georgiana with denial of the danger of their position.<sup>183</sup>

For the present Georgiana tried desperately to reconcile her wish for a life 'beyond the garden gate' - a life richer than her resented role as 'Mistress, Servant and Mother' - with her desire to be 'good'. The Molloy's move from a town allotment at Augusta to an estate at Fairlawn precipitated an inner crisis for Georgiana. With high standards and four children to care for Georgiana did not wish to have the demands upon her time and energy which an estate entailed. John Wollaston, the Anglican minister attached to the Western Australia Company who arrived at Australind in May 1841 stayed with the Molloys for three days in December 1841. Impressed by Georgiana's hospitality and good housekeeping, he was shocked to find people of 'genuine good breeding and gentlemanly deportment' living in a house with clay floors, unlined thatch and no windows, and 'distressed' to see a genteel woman such as Georgiana relying exclusively on the help of her ten year old daughter. He wrote 'the parties... evidently felt, and felt deeply, their position'.<sup>184</sup> Though part of Wollaston's concern stemmed from his own and his wife's dissatisfactions with the colony, there is no doubt that in emigrating the Molloy's had envisioned better things for themselves. Discontented with the large grant on the Vasse Georgiana dreamed of having a cottage in 'the enchanted valley' she had discovered at Castle Bay or a 'thatched cottage and garden' five miles closer to the inlet at the Vasse, or of returning to her 'cottage' at Augusta.<sup>185</sup> Meanwhile she somehow found the time to continue with her collection of flowers and seeds for Mangles, writing to him that she was 'happily employed' in his service. There is contentment in her '[i]t is a lovely luxurious morning, Cloudy and gently falling showers,

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better able to care for her health than Georgiana Molloy - she breast-fed her eight children until they were over two years old.

<sup>182</sup> In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries withdrawal and anal intercourse were contraceptive measures which were sometimes used by the poor.

<sup>183</sup> Davidoff & Hall, 1987, p. 342.

<sup>184</sup> John Wollaston, Journal, December 1841, Bolton et al 1991, pp. 157-158.

the beautiful and gigantic Peppermint Trees in front of where I write drooping their graceful form.<sup>186</sup> As payment for his having christened Flora in January Georgiana sent Wollaston a 'jar of preserved Vasse apples' (Quandong jam) and an invitation to Wollaston's twenty year old son John, who was interested in botany, to stay at Fairfield and help her collect the elusive seed of the *Nuytsia Floribunda* or 'tree in Paradise' for Mangles.<sup>187</sup> Wollaston senior told his journal 'I shd prefer Cap and Mrs Molloy for neighbours to any persons I have yet become acquainted with. There is more right, well-bred English feeling about them, & less *Colonial*'.<sup>188</sup>

Georgiana had made plans to begin 'the flower garden that is to be' at Fairlawn when in March 1842 she found she was again pregnant. Some indication of the alarm this caused the Molloyes can be seen from the fact that in April John Molloy at last overrode his financial, and Georgiana her moral, quibbles and obtained 'new domestics'.<sup>189</sup> In the same month Georgiana wrote a brief note to Mangles to inform him she had only been able to obtain a 'small, small, harvest' of *Nuytsia* seed.<sup>190</sup> In November John Wollaston junior visited the Molloyes on his way back from Augusta, giving Georgiana a last picture of her 'deserted garden' in which, she told Mangles, 'all sorts of things introduced were growing wild, but rapidly giving way to the exuberance of growth in the Native Plants'.<sup>191</sup> Women who had previously nearly died in childbirth dreaded further pregnancies. Mary Mowle in the weeks that led up to the birth of her fifth child (she died having her sixth) wrote that she was 'more desponding & alarmed about [her] approaching trial than usual', and that she felt 'dreadfully depressed in spirit & full of trouble'. In her depression she took to walking in graveyards and 'pondering on the uncertainty of life': she was not reconciled to her fate until she began sitting each day to watch the breakers beat on the seashore, a scene, which she wrote:

[Made] all petty troubles & annoyances ... fade from my mind & my thoughts rested with calm delight in Death, Eternity & that great Being who fills heaven & earth with the Majesty of His Glory.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>185</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 10 April, 4 June 1841, BL, 479A/2.

<sup>186</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 10 April 1841, BL, 479A/2.

<sup>187</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles 11 April 1842, BL, 479A/2, John Wollaston, *Journal*, Bolton et al, 1991, p. 173.

<sup>188</sup> Wollaston, January 17 1842, *Journal*, 1991, pp. 173- 174.

<sup>189</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 4 June 1841, BL, 479A/2.

<sup>190</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 11 April 1842, BL, 479A/2. Georgiana's last letter.

<sup>191</sup> Wollaston, *Journal*, 1991, p. 260.

<sup>192</sup> Mary Mowle, *Journal*, 21, 28 November 1853, 1, 11 January, 10, 25 May 1854, in Clarke, 1986, pp. 197, 200, 203, 206, 207, 213. Mary's daughter Alice, whom she described as 'her precious trust' was born 21 January 1854.

Mary Mowle had been right to worry. She was dangerously ill for four months after the 'dreaded ordeal' of the birth of her fifth child and continued to be 'dreadfully dull & miserable [that she] scarcely knew what to do with [herself]' for many months. A year later - perhaps because she feared she was again pregnant - she became so depressed that she contemplated throwing herself over a cliff into the sea.<sup>193</sup>

On 7 December 1842, Georgiana's last daughter, named Georgiana after herself, was born with the help of Dr Green. Georgiana, who may have been undernourished in the same way as she had been before vegetable gardens were established at Augusta,<sup>194</sup> was exhausted, causing Wollaston to express alarm at the way in which conscientious people such as Georgiana Molloy and Dr Carpenter fell victims to 'desperate weakness' in the colonies in the summer months. He claimed Dr Carpenter told him that the loss of women in the colony following childbirth resulted from 'the extreme difficulty of regaining bodily strength, in an enervating climate, where nourishing diet is so difficult, sometimes impossible to procure when wanted'.<sup>195</sup> Though this was an important factor, colonial women who underwent 'confinement' had to contend not only with bodily weakness but inappropriate medical treatment - such as the poorly regulated administration of opium, the cause of Dr Carpenter's own death.<sup>196</sup>

On the 14 December Georgiana was seized with 'shiverings and other dangerous symptoms'. Alarmed at his wife's condition and unhappy with Dr Green who, it seems, had been drinking, John Molloy sent Alfred Bussell 48 miles to Australind to obtain the assistance of doctors employed by the Western Australia Company.<sup>197</sup> At Australind Louisa

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<sup>193</sup> Mary Mowle, *Journal*, 23 February 1855 in Clarke, 1986, p. 254.

<sup>194</sup> Wollaston, November 17 1842, *Journal*, 1991. At the Vasse and Australind the potato and vegetable crops had almost failed in the winter and spring of 1842. In the summer of 1843 Wollaston often referred in his journal to food shortages.

<sup>195</sup> Wollaston, 17 February, 18 March, 19 November 1842, *Journal*, 1991. Dr Carpenter died in March 1842 from what Wollaston considered was exhaustion brought on by 'gratuitous overwork', followed by poor nursing. Wollaston claimed Dr Carpenter's 'aberration of intellect' had pre-dated his emigration. Marshall Walter Clifton, BL, 698A/4 in Northover, 1993, p. 229, considered Carpenter died by overdosing himself on opium. His official cause of death was dysentery. Northover believed his symptoms, behaviour and gradual decline pointed to opium addiction.

<sup>196</sup> Wollaston, March 18 1842, *Journal*, 1991. The doctor's symptoms included 'aberration of intellect'. Seemingly oblivious to its addictive qualities, Doctors often over self-prescribed opium which at that time was used as a pain killer (without the need for a prescription) in the way Aspirin was in the 1950s.

<sup>197</sup> Wollaston, 15 December 1842, *Journal*, 1992, p. 7. Mrs Bussell to Capel Bussell, Easter 1835, BL, 139/8/16. Though Mrs Bussell treated Alfred Green as one of her family and found him agreeable she would not let him court her daughters because 'He has an infirmity which must be an insurmountable objection'. Green was so well known to be a heavy drinker that Wollaston had no time for him. Bolton, *Wollaston Journal*, 1991, p. 195, f.n. Claimed Dr Green was thought to have had 'dubious medical qualifications'.

Eliot (nee Clifton) was in grave danger after having been delivered of still-born twins, with the result that a doctor could not be found for Georgiana until the following day. According to Wollaston 'Dr Allen, an experienced Accoucheur' reached Georgiana on the 15 December 'just in time to save her, from the wrong treatment she had experienced'.<sup>198</sup> The medical treatment at that time for post-partum haemorrhage was exploration of the uterus to search for and remove retained placental fragments - a procedure recommended in a contemporary medical manual in these words:

[H]eroic treatment may be required to reach the remotest part of the genital tract in search for decomposing matter, or to ascertain that there is nothing but putrid lochia in the case.<sup>199</sup>

An 'experienced Accoucheur' like Dr Allen would have been even more likely to have introduced infection into Georgiana's reproductive system. Whatever Dr Green's faults, he appears to have been prepared to respect his patients preferences and to let nature take its course wherever possible. Whatever the cause, it is clear that Georgiana again contracted puerperal fever. On 26 December Wollaston conceded that although Georgiana had been saved from 'immediate danger, she has continued in a very weak & precarious state'.<sup>200</sup> Georgiana's bedroom, in which she was to lie for four excruciating months through an extremely hot summer, was 'small and close' and, in facing towards the river, cut off from the sea breeze.<sup>201</sup> It is not clear who nursed Georgiana - whether the servants she had obtained in April stayed with her and helped or whether this task fell to John Molloy and his 11 year old daughter Sabina. One supposes that in the Molloy household much time and effort was spent in keeping baby Georgiana alive - one can only hope a debilitated Georgiana senior was not expected to feed her, but this cannot be relied upon: Wollaston believed Georgiana died for 'want of nursing'.<sup>202</sup>

By February Georgiana was distraught.<sup>203</sup> She must have felt her fate was sealed. Confined to a tiny room without the consolation of her beloved 'nature', dreadfully ill, heavily sedated with opium, worried about the future of her five daughters and unwilling to confide in an Anglican minister such as Wollaston, she had every reason to feel despairing.

<sup>198</sup> Wollaston, 15 December 1842, *Journal*, 1992, p. 7

<sup>199</sup> Dr Mathews Duncan, 'An Address on the Treatment of Puerperal Fever', *The Lancet*, 30 October, 6 November 1880, pp. 683-4, 721-3, in Jalland & Hooper, 1986, p.197.

<sup>200</sup> Wollaston, 26 December 1842, *Journal*, 1992, p. 15.

<sup>201</sup> Hasluck, 1966, p. 244.

<sup>202</sup> Grellier, in Stannage 1981, p. 487. As the Molloy's had cows in milk at the time and feeding bottles were beginning to appear in Western Australia, it is likely Georgiana did not feed her baby for long.

<sup>203</sup> Wollaston, *Journal*, 1992, pp. 6, 38, 63.

Because he had failed to 'draw her out' Wollaston became annoyed at Georgiana's recalcitrance, which he considered resulted from '(t)he entire suspension, or rather deprivation, of all public Ordinances, for many years [which] has wrought incalculable evil on many minds in this country, almost obliterating the knowledge, once possessed and in force, of the common principles of Xtianity'.<sup>204</sup>

Part of Wollaston's annoyance would have come from the fact that, because of opium, Georgiana's 'genteel' manner, which he had previously so admired, may have changed. At the time medical practitioners expressed concern about the way in which puerperal mania caused 'obscenity of thought [to break] forth from the most modest and well nurtured woman'.<sup>205</sup> Doctors were seemingly oblivious that they were causing in their patients not only suppressed rage at the 'confinements' of motherhood, but the side effects of opium addiction and its withdrawal symptoms.<sup>206</sup> De Quincey claimed that while moderate and uniform daily doses of opium heightened perception to the point where it gave the recipient 'the keys to Paradise', large or irregular doses caused an individual to 'lose all moral sensibility' and become as 'powerless as an infant [who] cannot even attempt to rise'.<sup>207</sup> In the nineteenth century when opium was considered by the medical profession to be the appropriate treatment for all 'women's' conditions - hysteria, menstruation, parturition, post partum recovery, puerperal fever, and menopause,<sup>208</sup> the side effects of continued use of the drug - depression, habituation, behaviour changes, physical weakness, sweating and poor breathing - were attributed to women's 'hysterical' female temperament. In an environment where women commonly suffered from anaemia caused by multiparity and iron deficiency - the symptoms of which are breathlessness, tachycardia, headaches and lassitude - women's dietary insufficiencies interacted with the widespread use of opium to re-inforce patriarchal assumptions about the 'nature' of women.

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<sup>204</sup> Wollaston, 17 February 1843, Journal, 1992, p. 38.

<sup>205</sup> Poovey, 1988, p. 208, fn 53, quoting 'Insanity produced by Seduction', 1866. Showalter, 1987, pp. 51-59. The symptoms of 'puerperal insanity' or 'puerperal mania' - probably mostly what would now be called post-partum depression - were aversion to husband or child, explosions of anger, vociferous and violent gesticulations, oaths and imprecations and the loss of previous modesty. At the time it accounted for 7-10% of female asylum admissions.

<sup>206</sup> Alethea Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*, Faber and Faber, London, 1968, pp. 25, 26. The side effects of opium were a dull, mopish and heavy disposition, weakness of memory, and physical weakness; the symptoms of withdrawal were intolerable distresses, anxieties and depressions of spirits, strange agonies and even death.

<sup>207</sup> Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, Facsimile edition, Woodstock, Oxford, 1989 (1822), p. 155. Doctors, unaware that De Quincey was an opium addict, diagnosed him as having TB.

<sup>208</sup> Jalland & Hooper, 1986, pp. 103, 178, 183, 197, 290-291.



In early March Captain Molloy, who has been described as a 'good natured and kindly' man,<sup>209</sup> distressed by his wife's distress, again asked Wollaston for help. What was needed was something to allay Georgiana's physical suffering and something to relieve her mental distress. It wasn't until 21 March that Dr Ferguson from Australind went to Georgiana's aid. Though convinced nothing would save her life he attempted to lessen her discomfort by unsuccessfully trying to make her a water bed. With this failure Georgiana appears to have given up hope of life and (possibly) the reservations she had harboured in regard to Reverend Wollaston who on the 24 March received a message from John Molloy that Georgiana should receive the 'Lord's Supper'.<sup>210</sup> Wollaston, who made it to the Molloy's in the last days of March, wrote his visit to the Molloys was:

[P]rolonged by the exhausted & melancholy state of poor Mrs Molloy. The Sufferer being under the influence of repeated opiates, I had to watch my opportunity for conversation and prayer & happily succeeded in drawing her mind to the consideration of the great change wh to all appearance awaited her, & the all important duty of "setting her house in order". ...The day before I left she recd the Sacrament, & her husband, for the first time with her. Her bodily sufferings were greatly relieved by our success in contriving a Water bed.<sup>211</sup>

Georgiana 'lingered on' until 8 April. Like many another colonist the 37 year old Georgiana lost her life prematurely and excruciatingly. Before and during her last pregnancy Georgiana's restless spirit had increasingly sought to find release from her constrained life through exposure to the world of nature. However, though her love of nature gave her some comfort, it could not prevent her becoming pregnant and thereby meeting a miserable death. While women were enmeshed within a social world constructed on patriarchal principles - and affected by patriarchal practices within the family, the medical profession and the church - they were not in a position to re-think the foundations upon which their lives depended. As was usual at the time, after Georgiana died her eleven year old eldest daughter, well trained by her mother, looked after the Molloy family. Initially Georgiana was buried in a paddock at Fairlawn with yews planted in a square around her grave. This she would have enjoyed. However patriarchy had its last laugh and in time her body was disinterred and reburied - along with the two children she had left in the soil at Augusta - under the font of the Anglican church of St Marys at Vasse.<sup>212</sup> At her beloved Augusta all that remained as a memento of Georgiana were not the 'flowers' who had issued from her body but the wildflowers from South Africa she had introduced which had invaded the Australian bush.

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<sup>209</sup> Jennings, 1983, p. 112.

<sup>210</sup> Wollaston, 21 March 1843, *Journal*, 1992, pp. 66, 67.

<sup>211</sup> Wollaston, 1 April 1843, *Journal*, 1992, p. 69.

<sup>212</sup> M. G. Cammilleri, 'Fairlawn', *JPAHNS*, NS, vol. 3, part 8, 1946, p. 35.

## Summary.

In Georgiana's time it was common to mythologise tuberculosis as a passion which consumed, and tuberculars as passionately repressed. Finding one had TB in the nineteenth century was tantamount to a sentence of death, hence the middle classes, who believed Tuberculosis was a disease of poverty and deprivation, tended to be secretive in regard to it. It is possible that as a young woman Georgiana was sent to Scotland because it was suspected she had Tuberculosis. This would explain her need to embrace a millenarian religion which gave comfort in death,<sup>213</sup> why she agreed to emigrate, and why she worried when she lost weight when she breast-fed her children. It may be however that it was not Georgiana but some near relative who suffered from the disease. Two of Georgiana's siblings died in their twenties; Eliza whose 'steps' Georgiana described as having been 'prematurely and suddenly arrested... her death .. unexpected ... even to herself', and George whom, before he died at the age of 25 years, Georgiana had encouraged to come Augusta to cure his ill-health.<sup>214</sup>

In the early period at Augusta when Georgiana was breast feeding her first child and food supplies were in short supply she lost weight and became tired. This alarmed her in the same way as it did many colonial women.<sup>215</sup> She wrote of herself as 'confined to bed from over-exertion'<sup>216</sup>, described herself as 'poor worn out Mrs Molloy'<sup>217</sup> who had stitched 'her fingers to the bone', and noted that Molloy had ordered Porter for 'his poor wife, who is now skin and bone'.<sup>218</sup> These complaints about losing weight continued during the period when she was feeding Mary, her second living child. Mary was five months old when she wrote - 'I have not only to nurse and carry her about, but all my former occupations to attend to ... I am overwhelmed with too much labour, and indeed my frame bears witness to it, as I

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<sup>213</sup> Lines, p. 35. In 1827 Georgiana's great friend the Reverend Story wrote a tract called *Peace in Believing*, which was the 'true-life' story of a tubercular named Isabella Campbell who died at the age of 20. The tract constructed Isabella totally within the terms of the TB myth - lauding her spirituality, her 'holy living' and her 'triumphant dying'.

<sup>214</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 25 January 1838, BL, 479A/1, Georgiana Molloy to Helen Story, 8 December 1834, BL, 3278A/2. Later in the nineteenth century Western Australia was considered a healthy place for those suffering from Tuberculosis.

<sup>215</sup> Jane Dodds, 29 May 1831, in Heal, 1988, p. 57. During the early years of privation in the Swan River settlement Jane Dodds complained bitterly of weakness due to her 'bread and water diet'.

<sup>216</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Margaret Dunlop, 12 January 1832, BL, 3278A/2.

<sup>217</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Margaret Dunlop, 12 January 1832, BL, 3278A/2.

<sup>218</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Eliza Besly, 13 November 1833, BL, 3278A/2.

have everyday expected to see some bone poking through its epidermis'.<sup>219</sup> At that time Georgiana had good reason to experience herself as being physically 'consumed' by motherhood for she was clearly undernourished and probably anaemic, the symptoms of anaemia - palpitations, anxiety, breathlessness, giddiness and headache - resembling those of tuberculosis. It was well known among women that poor nutrition allied to constant childbirth and breast feeding could result in what women called 'consumption'. Georgiana McCrae described a visit to a 'respectable' working class woman who had wet nursed to supplement her family income - which she made the day before the woman died - in these words:

Found the poor woman in the last stage of consumption; beside her a dead homunculus - her long arms and drawn features most painful to look upon. She had been a bright-eyed bonnie lass; but from too-long nursing Mrs Eddrington's sucklings (and probably not on a sufficiently nourishing diet) she is so exhausted as hardly to be able to speak above her breath... it behoved Mrs Eddrington, more than ourselves, to see to this poor woman's dying wants.<sup>220</sup>

It is hardly surprising that Georgiana lost weight when caring for young children for she made heavy work of mothering - constantly carrying her children before they could walk and sleeping with them in her bed.<sup>221</sup> It is now impossible to determine whether Georgiana feared she had Tuberculosis or used a powerful myth of motherhood as a form of consumption which was to hand to describe her colonial experiences where her high self-expectations in regard to mothering, poor food, primitive conditions and lack of servants made her feel she was being 'consumed' by a mysterious, powerful and frightening dis-ease. When writing to friends and family in Britain Georgiana so consistently described herself as being consumed that her twentieth century biographers adopted her terminology and frame of reference.<sup>222</sup>

Georgiana's anxiety about motherhood being physically and emotionally debilitating was exacerbated by the fact that the treatment prescribed for the 'exhaustions' of motherhood - rest, nourishing food and opium - were the same as those prescribed for tuberculosis, and because tuberculosis was traditionally associated with the feminine - the sensitive, the creative and the passive. The symptoms of tuberculosis served as a mythical index for female

<sup>219</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Helen Story, 8 December 1834, BL, 3278A/2.

<sup>220</sup> Georgiana McCrae, 16, 17 May 1843, H. McCrae, 1934, pp. 82-3.

<sup>221</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Helen Story, 8 December 1834, BL, 3278A/2. Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 20 July 1861, 19 September 1861, Adams, 1969, pp. 70, 80. Being over-protective of very young children and taking risks by sending slightly older children outside to play by themselves was the norm with colonial mothers.

gentility, delicacy and spirituality and, in a society in which illness was an acceptable way for 'genteel' women to obtain rest or leisure, as a potential vehicle for the expression of feminine discontent.<sup>223</sup> The myth of mysterious consumption legitimised ill-health while representing women as victims of a condition which yoked passionate and perfectionist overactivity with self-consuming resignation. If, as in the myth, motherhood was conceived as mysteriously saving the person it consumed, instead of limiting fertility in the ways which (even then) were available to them, women such as Georgiana Molloy were more likely to accept the 'need' to reproduce and suppress the knowledge that reproduction could cost them their lives.<sup>224</sup>

A parallel has been made between the way in which tuberculosis and insanity were mythologised in the nineteenth century: this could be extended to include motherhood. It was believed that during pregnancy and the post-parturient period and while lactating, women had strange thoughts, extraordinary feelings, unseasonable appetites and criminal impulses - that they stood in danger of becoming 'mad'.<sup>225</sup> Tuberculosis, insanity and motherhood were all treated by 'confinement'; the post-parturient woman, like tuberculars and 'the mad', being directed to:

[P]lace the fullest confidence in the advice of her medical attendant; ...strictly follow his directions, have no opinion of her own, and pay no attention to contrary advice that may be proposed by her nurse or others.<sup>226</sup>

The new mother was kept an inactive exile in bed - for two to three weeks if all went well; for much longer if complications arose. Although invalidism resulting from gynaecological disorders was common in a century of inappropriate medical treatment, inadequate diets, restricted exercise and multiple births, the propagation by the male medical profession of an 'infirmary theory' of women's health, whereby 'women's reproductive destiny' was identified as a peculiar source of ill-health, encouraged the parallelism in women's minds between motherhood and tuberculosis and laid the ground for women's perception / acceptance of motherhood as consumption.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Hasluck, 1966, p. 81. Lines, 1994, in titling his biography *An All-Consuming Passion* lines quoted Georgiana writing to Mangles.

<sup>223</sup> Russell, 1994, p. 126.

<sup>224</sup> Degler, 1980, Ch. 19.

<sup>225</sup> Poovey, 1988, p. 37.

<sup>226</sup> Dr Michael Ryan, *A Manual of Midwifery*, 1841 pp. 185-6, in Jalland & Hooper, 1986, p. 151.

<sup>227</sup> Jalland and Hooper, 1986, pp. 6, 7.

Georgiana's fear that motherhood would 'consume' her was greatly exacerbated by her belief that, in a colony which suffered from a shortage of servants, she was expected to do demeaning work.<sup>228</sup> Georgiana believed her role as an educated woman should include reading, cultivated talk and music, supervision of the household, the moral and intellectual education of her children and the pursuit of 'interests' such as the garden, theological inquiry and botanical studies. Her resentment at finding herself in a situation where her time was taken up by 'household drudgery' was fierce and total. She wrote: 'my head aches. I have all the clothes to put away from the wash; baby to put to bed'.<sup>229</sup> 'I am overpowered with work and expect an addition to my family in the Spring, and have not a cap to put on the child's head'.<sup>230</sup> 'Molloy and I have to work as hard and harder than servants will...I cannot do without a woman servant ... especially when there is no one to be got to wash, even, and I have to carry baby. So fat she is, she makes my back quite ache'.<sup>231</sup> When Sabina was taken ill Georgiana agonised: 'I had for some time, been lamenting my total inability to look after her...I wish now I had a proper person to take care of her.. I wish we were nearer good instruction ... the welfare of my uninstructed child goes near my heart, and instead of being able to direct and look after her I am obliged to perform the most menial offices'.<sup>232</sup>

After Georgiana began collecting wildflower seed her resentment at what she experienced as the drain on her time and energy of household tasks was, if anything, greater. She complained to Mangles 'All my former pursuits have been thrown aside (by the peremptory demand of my personal attention to my children and domestic drudgery)'.<sup>233</sup> 'I much fear I shall be so much employed in the odious drudgery of Cheese and Butter making that I shall not be able to attend to the formations and culture of my flower garden, for I am my children's sole instructress and seamstress, and that in conjunction with innumerable other peremptory duties'.<sup>234</sup> 'I often, after a day spent in Servile drudgery, from the want of Domestics, sit down quite exhausted with one of your beauteous presents [of books] in my hand, when I receive great refreshment and great relaxation'.<sup>235</sup> It was partly because collecting seeds in the 'the bush' represented legitimate escape from such 'drudgery' that Georgiana enjoyed botanical collection. She wrote:

<sup>228</sup> De Garis, 1979, pp. 11,12.

<sup>229</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Margaret Dunlop, 12 January 1832, BL, 3278A/2.

<sup>230</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Eliza Besley, 20 November 1833, BL, 3278A/2.

<sup>231</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Helen Story, 8 December 1834, BL, 3278A/2.

<sup>232</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Helen Story, January 1835, BL, 3278A/2.

<sup>233</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 21 March 1837, BL, 479A/1.

<sup>234</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 25 January 1838. BL, 479A/1.

<sup>235</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 31 January 1840, BL, 479A/2.

I would with all my heart have ridden over myself for them, [seeds from Augusta] and really have liked nothing better, as being in the bush is to me one of the most delightful states of existence, free from every household care, my husband and children about me.<sup>236</sup>

Although Georgiana received little recognition for her botanical work, she not only gained exercise, fresh air, intellectual challenge and companionship, aesthetic and religious satisfaction, a sense of freedom and a welcome relief from household responsibilities from her activities, but the chance to re-think nature as not simply 'beautiful' and 'sublime' but as ingenious, complex, many-sided and whimsical. Botanical collection, like gardening, gave Georgiana an opportunity to absorb the notion that within nature destruction had its place. This recognition, however unconsciously perceived, to some extent off-set the perception Georgiana had of women as wholly loving, self-sacrificing and good - that is as exclusively nurturant.

Manning Clark described Georgiana Molloy as 'the Madonna of the Bush',<sup>237</sup> and, in mythical terms, in some ways she was. The Garden of Eden was equated in Britain in the early modern period with the enclosed garden of the Virgin Mary: Georgiana experienced her isolated life in the south west of Western Australia as being enclosed in her own garden, the parameters of which she gradually extended to include an Edenic landscape.<sup>238</sup> When free settlers conceive the land as a female source of gratification it could be said to represent a regression to a state of innocence which the adult is normally forced to abandon when they join the world of competitive self-assertion. It could be said that Georgiana was never forced to join the adult outside world. In these terms her retention of the placenta could be construed as an unconscious refusal to part with that which nourishes the child within and as a sacrificial compulsion to return to / stay in, the womb.<sup>239</sup> Given that opium gives free reign to the unconscious it is perhaps no accident that, under a patriarchal medical profession which considered opium would make women quiescent and productive like flowers, in the colonies 'fantasies' of themselves and their children becoming involved in a childlike, redemptive sense with the natural environment should have become an integral part of the lives of women.

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<sup>236</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 31 January 1840, BL, 479A/2.

<sup>237</sup> Ann Moyal, *A Bright and Savage Land*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria, 1986, p. 90.

<sup>238</sup> Schultz, 1985, p. 3. Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 31 January 1840, BL, 479A/2. As some of her letters on the subject of Augusta as paradise were written when she was in bed recovering from childbirth, some weight must be given to the effect of opium on Georgiana's paradisiacal constructions.

<sup>239</sup> Kolodny in Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996, p. 171. Hillman, 1975, pp. 70, 79, 99-101. Spontaneous unconscious fantasies such as this are created ceaselessly and autonomously within the human psyche.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### ***DESIRE AS MADNESS***

Women are Angels Wooing.

Troilus and Cressida, 1: 2. Cressida to herself.

If you were to meet her in the bush ..  
you might call to your imagination  
that a second Eve had arisen in these parts.

A male 'admirer' writing of and to Annie Baxter, 19 January 1845.

Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

W. Shakespeare, Sonnet 94.

If Georgiana Molloy's short life embodied the cost to 'ladylike'<sup>1</sup> women of embracing one aspect of the ideal companionate marriage - submissive self-sacrificing motherhood - the long, troubled and peripatetic life of the twice married Annie Baxter / Dawbin embodied the cost to women of attempting to embrace another of its aspects - what Annie called the 'ecstasy' of 'earthly and Heavenly' love between a husband and wife.<sup>2</sup> I have based this chapter on Annie Baxter's life and the diaries she wrote during the period of her first marriage (1834-1855). Just as traditionally patriarchal and companionate marriage 'were never stark opposites' - within companionate marriage a husband's authority, and a woman's challenges to it, continuing to operate within a framework which emphasised the value of patriarchal attitudes and structures<sup>3</sup> - so too romantic and reproductive expectations of companionate marriage were complementary. Most women recognised that men had the real power within marriage and that 'love' was women's only real weapon against tyranny; nevertheless as the century progressed a number of women challenged the contemporary belief that a woman's dislike of her husband was no excuse for her to stop loving him.<sup>4</sup>

The linking of sexuality with motherhood gave marital sexuality a 'respectable glow' and made knowledge of the body and its functions privately, though not publicly, acceptable in women.<sup>5</sup> Childless women such as Annie Baxter and Rachel Henning were critical of women who had large families; while women who had large families both envied and pitied women who were childless.<sup>6</sup> What began as romanticism in Annie Baxter became in her middle years a desire for a passionate and sexually fulfilling relationship. At the age of 48 she wrote: 'I have outlived all that silly belief in Platonics ...[and] I am quite as impassioned as I ever was in my life'.<sup>7</sup> In coming to believe that married women could have sexual desires women like Annie Baxter attracted the disapproval of society - which feared sexuality

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<sup>1</sup> Reverend Wittenoom quoted in J. Cowan, 'Some Pioneer Women', JPWAHS, vol. 1, part 10, November 1931, pp. 44-51. Wittenoom was reported by Bishop Hale as having described Georgiana Molloy as 'the best informed, the most accomplished, the most elegant, and the most ladylike woman that ever came into the colony'.

<sup>2</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 15 August 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 108. Degler, 1980, p. 18. Marriage for love only was the ideal which many young women attempted to put into practice.

<sup>3</sup> Hammerton, 1992, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Penny Russell, ' "For Better and for Worse": Love, Power and Sexuality in Upper Class Marriages in Melbourne 1860-1880' in *Australian Feminist Studies*, 7 & 8, Summer, 1988, pp. 11-26.

<sup>5</sup> Russell, 1988, pp. 19-22.

<sup>6</sup> Rachel Taylor to Henrietta Boyce, 18 March 1870, in Adams, 1969, p. 240. Rachel wrote: 'It always seems to me rather a miserable life when people go on, year after year, constantly having children .. never knowing what health is, but I suppose they get used to it, like the cels'.

<sup>7</sup> Annie Maria Dawbin, Journal, 28 February 1864, MS 7648, MF 38, LTL, in Russell, 1988, p. 16.



in women would lead them to commit adultery and / or betray the family.<sup>8</sup> If Georgiana and John Molloy's somewhat prosaic marriage epitomised companionate marriage fulfilling - at the cost of Georgiana's life - its primary function of propagation, the marriage in February 1834 of seventeen year old Annie Hadden, daughter of a Major, and Andrew Baxter, the impoverished twenty year old son of a Quartermaster, would appear to have promised Annie romantic (and possibly sexual), rather than pragmatic and material satisfactions.<sup>9</sup>

In the event it was not lack of social standing or money which put the Baxters' marriage at greatest risk but Andrew Baxter's roving sexuality and his wife's desperate ongoing search for romantic 'love'. It could be said that if Georgiana Molloy epitomised the nineteenth century stereotype of the gentlewoman as Madonna, then the 'pretty and fascinating'<sup>10</sup> Annie Baxter / Dawbin came very close to epitomising the nineteenth century stereotype of the gentlewoman as Magdalen. Unhappily married and childless in a society where the 'hopeless sexual imbalance .. quite simply made marriage impossible for the greater part of the male population',<sup>11</sup> Annie was sorely tempted to break her marriage vows. Though it is now unclear whether or not Annie Baxter committed adultery, she certainly came close to it. During the nineteenth century female adultery was seen as the most transgressive sexual 'deviancy' because it was thought to violate a woman's femininity and betray a woman's father, husband, home and family. As such it was thought to be not only unnatural, but irrevocable - a fall from virtue so final that it transformed a respectable woman into a 'fallen' woman or prostitute.<sup>12</sup>

As the nineteenth century progressed the medicalisation of female sexuality led not only to the medical profession's control of women's reproductive function but control of prostitution. Anxieties by a repressed sexuality / physicality were reinforced by fear of venereal disease: consequently 'deviant' female sexuality was constructed as a disease which caused social pollution and death - that is, 'consumed' British society. Such beliefs gave rise to the purity campaigns which sought to control prostitution which in time led in Britain to state intervention in the form of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 which made incest, prostitution and male homosexuality criminal offences. Attitudes and the enactment of

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<sup>8</sup> Russell, 1988, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> Tosh, 1996, p. 11. The nineteenth century belief that marriage expressed 'the highest form of love' contributed to resentment if sexual and emotional disappointments were experienced in marriage.

<sup>10</sup> Tom Brown (Brown later added an 'e' to Brown and later still called himself Rolf Boldewood) quoted in Frost, 1992, p. 303.

<sup>11</sup> J.W.C. Cumes, *Their Chastity was not too Rigid: Leisure Time in Early Australia*, Longman & Cheshire, Melbourne, 1979, p. 89.

<sup>12</sup> Neal, 1988, pp. 48-49, 94-95. A prostitute was anyone who transgressed the bourgeois code of morality.

law followed the same pattern in the colonies as in Britain. To sum up: during this period 'excessive' or abnormal female sexual desire was the explanation given for female 'adultery' and in many cases the one used as a basis for the diagnosis of 'madness'.<sup>13</sup>

It needs to be remembered that 'adultery' had a different connotation in the first half of the nineteenth century than it has today. This was because, divorce being an option available only to the very wealthy, serial monogamy in which partnerships formed and dissolved without the sanction of church or state was not uncommon.<sup>14</sup> It was the 'adultery' of clandestine serial monogamy which Annie seemingly had in mind when she sought to establish relationships with men other than her estranged husband at a time when she and her husband still lived under the same roof. In seeking to establish a bond with a man while still legally married Annie found herself up against powerful personal and social prohibitions. By the middle of the nineteenth century in the colonies any attempt to establish a second, non-sanctioned marriage had become impossible for those who wished to retain their social standing. Working class men and women might continue to flout convention but the middle classes could no longer risk doing what Annie appears to have thought possible - that is form a bigamous union and begin a new life elsewhere. Given that Andrew Baxter threatened to sue any man who attempted to take his wife and her access to income away from him, every bachelor Annie grew to 'love' quickly came to feel that they could not afford to sacrifice everything - money, social standing, job, and, given the attitudes of the time, possibly their self-respect - for love.

Even as a young woman Annie saw her 'love' of men other than her husband as evidence of 'madness' in herself.<sup>15</sup> Later she became concerned at what she called her hysteria - times when she raged or became violent,<sup>16</sup> and later still suffered from what the medical profession was beginning to call hysteria - the translation of emotional disturbances into physical symptoms.<sup>17</sup> 'Hysterical' physical symptoms in nineteenth century women have been described as 'the systematic presentation on the surface of the alienated and objectified female

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<sup>13</sup> Neal, 1988, p. 50.

<sup>14</sup> Quartly in Grimshaw, Lake, McGrath, Quartly, 1994, pp. 56-7. Cumes, 1979, pp. 90, 218-9. In the Australian colonies in the nineteenth century when divorce was impossible, desertion common and people could not be traced, illicit unions, illicit sexual intercourse and bigamy were the cause of considerable social concern.

<sup>15</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, January 1838, Frost, 1992, p. 7. After writing of her love for Richard Dry Annie wrote: 'I could almost fancy my present existence a dream - it's too pleasing for reality - I think I'm going mad'.

<sup>16</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, February 1845, 7 May 1849, Frost, 1992, pp. 77, 122. 14 May, 1845, Frost, 1984, p. 72.

<sup>17</sup> Frost, 1992, p. 131.

body of mental distress' - in Freudian and post modern terms, sexual desire constituted into a passive form and expressed through the specularised and fetishised female body.<sup>18</sup> In the nineteenth century hysteria in women evoked considerable hostility from the medical profession - seemingly because it 'mandated retaining moral categories' at the same time as its physiological symptoms 'both solicited and defied medical expertise'.<sup>19</sup> It could be said that hysteria was a problematic response to the contradictory images contained in the domestic ideal which had been intensified when the medical profession constituted women's reproductive capacity as the basis of femininity - an act which had inadvertently foregrounded women's sexuality along with their supposedly 'moral and maternal nature'.<sup>20</sup>

Given that companionate marriage failed to fulfil its promise for Annie, she attempted to interact with the natural environment in both similar and oppositional ways to those enacted by Georgiana Molloy. Like Georgiana she developed a 'ladylike' love of landscape and gardens. Unlike Georgiana she converted herself into a genteel version of the Calamity Jane stereotype of the American frontier; that is she (discursively, if not actually) created a persona for herself as a cattle drover / dingo hunter who enjoyed escaping into 'the bush' with a horse and a gun. This persona blended characteristics of a lady from the British counties who enjoyed horse riding and fox hunting with some of the characteristics of frontier 'masculinity'.<sup>21</sup> In this she was responding not only to contradictions within the domestic ideal associated with the balance between authority and affection, homely and homosocial pursuits, security and adventure,<sup>22</sup> but to the physical conditions of settlement and 'the intensified masculinity of the colonial cultural ethos'.<sup>23</sup>

Before I undertake a consideration of Annie Baxter's life, given that there are thirty-two (very creative)<sup>24</sup> volumes of her journal which have survived, it is necessary to look at the way in which Annie wrote about herself. Much has been written in recent years of the

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<sup>18</sup> Stratton, 1996, p.105.

<sup>19</sup> Poovey, 1988, p. 46.

<sup>20</sup> Poovey, 1988, p 11.

<sup>21</sup> Myres, 1982, p.107. Myres considered that images of women on the American frontier fell into two stereotypes - the 'Madonna of the Prairies' and 'Calamity Jane' - that is, the 'good' middle class woman / helpless heroine and the 'bad' working class woman / hardy heroine. The former were represented as domestic, submissive and moral and the later as crude, 'masculine', but with a 'heart of gold'. The Australian mythological equation of women as Damned Whores / God's Police is more negative.

<sup>22</sup> Tosh, 1996, pp. 14-15.

<sup>23</sup> Tacey, 1995, p. 52. Such women were also portrayed in Australian literature. Tacey believed that 'crossing the gender border' enabled women to enter the 'psychosocial condition' of their time.

<sup>24</sup> Nicholas Rothwell, 'Review of Books', the *Australian*, April, 1997, p. 13. Rothwell described Annie's journals (1834-68) as 'one of the great creations of Australian writing'.

importance of journal writing to the self-identity of nineteenth century gentlewomen.<sup>25</sup> For women on the frontiers journal writing served not only as mediation between the past and the present and as a way to commemorate important events, but as a way to order - that is, release or control - emotion.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, despite the fact that the potential to go public with their journals lurked in many journal writers, in this seemingly private space at the time of writing women like Annie sometimes expressed themselves quite freely.<sup>27</sup> Women also kept journals in order to maintain a sense of self-importance, to ensure they were not forgotten / abandoned and to provide themselves with a substitute for intimate relationships. Hence journal writing served to sustain a woman's emotional and mental equilibrium and sometimes helped her construct an identity when living in the 'wild'.<sup>28</sup>

Lucy Frost called her edited transcription of Annie's journals *The Face in the Glass* because she believed Annie wrote her 845,000 words with posterity in mind - creating an exciting Romance in which she played not simply the 'striving sufferer' who featured in many colonial women's diaries, but a 'courageous heroine'. Frost, who saw Annie as 'a passionate, articulate woman [who] remained in control' of what she wrote, described her own research methods in this way:

As I absorbed the journals, I read for Annie's face in her looking glass, and for the shadow of that face, off to one side. Sometimes only the shadow was there, blurred. I searched for other ways to know Annie. Personal papers turned up here and there haphazardly.<sup>29</sup>

And this is the secret of Annie Baxter's fascination. Her candour, her intimacy - can it be trusted? So much has been left unsaid, so much has been veiled - yet also, more than almost any other nineteenth century colonial woman - so very much has (seemingly) been revealed. In the act of recording her life experiences Annie acknowledged that they would appear to others as a 'complete Romance'.<sup>30</sup> One is reminded of Louisa Twamley and her narcissus. The question the researcher feels the need to ask is the extent to which Annie reflected her inner self when she looked into her mirror and the extent to which she reflected socially

<sup>25</sup> For example: Gayle R. Davis, 'Women's Frontier Diaries: Writing for Good Reason', *Women's Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1987, pp. 5-14; Lensink, 1987, pp. 39-53; Sarah Gristwood, *Recording Angels: The Secret World of Women's Diaries*, Harrap, London, 1988.

<sup>26</sup> Davis, 1987, pp. 10-11. Women diarists usually used their diaries *either* as a means of emotional self-disclosure / catharsis; a way to explore their full potential, *or* as a way of maintaining control and establishing order by avoiding self-analysis and the expression of feeling. Annie Baxter did both.

<sup>27</sup> Lensink, 1987, p. 47. This type of expression in nineteenth century women's diaries was often later censored by either the author or their relatives.

<sup>28</sup> Davis, 1987, pp. 5-14.

<sup>29</sup> Frost, 1992, p. x.

<sup>30</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 16 December 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 131.

constructed images of herself as morally frail and flower-like, as 'bad' and depraved, as brave and heroic. The personality Annie constructed in her journals was transitional between a notion of the personality as horizontal, that is consistent over time, and a notion of the personality as potentially maturational - as time went the amount of evaluative commentary Annie included in her journal increased and the personality she presented appeared to mature.<sup>31</sup>

The enterprise of creating the picturesque - in terms of landscape and in terms of women as spectacle - was one which deeply engaged the imagination of nineteenth century writers and painters.<sup>32</sup> Bermingham described the picturesque aesthetic as one in which 'appearances were construed as essence and commodities were sold under the signs of art and nature'. As such it was one which coded the feminine as an appearance which 'embodied and responded to variety and change'.<sup>33</sup> Because the picturesque enterprise demanded of the viewer the performance of close analysis of the details and changing aspects of 'the view' - of landscape or of woman - Annie put herself at the centre of 'the view' she constructed and then offered her writing / life to others as a spectacle to be consumed. It could be said that as a female picturesque writer Annie desired to be seen seeing.<sup>34</sup>

Annie's autobiographical writing was influenced by women's contradictory prescribed role. This made women's personal writing seem diverse and diffused and gave their self-portraits an irregular, disconnected and fragmentary quality. At a time when it was unusual for women to write sustained, coherent autobiographies, women's autobiographical writing generally consisted of disconnected excerpts in which (for instance) intensity of experience could be signalled by quantity of language rather than direct expression.<sup>35</sup> However, although Annie's autobiographical writing conformed to the contemporary fragmented picturesque model, it also incorporated aspects of both women's romantic fiction writing and women's justificatory polemic.

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<sup>31</sup> Lensink, 1987, p. 50. This can be expressed through the oppositional questions - 'How well was I myself today?' and 'Who am I today, compared with myself two years ago?'

<sup>32</sup> Bermingham, in Copley and Garside, 1994, [p. 81-91.

<sup>33</sup> Bermingham, in Copley and Garside, 1994, p. 81.

<sup>34</sup> Bermingham, in Copley and Garside, 1994, p. 93. Annie communicated with her lovers by showing them excerpts from her journals.

<sup>35</sup> Cynthia S. Pomerleau, 'The Emergence of Women's Autobiography in England', in *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism*, Estelle C. Jelinek, (ed.), Indiana University Press, London, 1980, p. 17. Lensink, 1987, p. 42.

The construction of the 'Romantic feminine' by male writers in the nineteenth century introduced tension into the writing of women writers who found themselves torn between restrictive 'feminine' conditioning and the expression of a visionary freedom: attempts made by women socially defined as 'self-less' to construct the self-contained 'I' of romantic writing involved a tormenting contradiction.<sup>36</sup> This, added to the difficulty women experienced in getting published, could reflect in women's writing as despair or 'lack of mothering'. While it is believed that embracing themes of 'orphanhood and displacement' may have been cathartic for nineteenth century women writers - permitting them to achieve 'a momentary poise' - many projected a sense of insecurity.<sup>37</sup> It is no surprise then to find that as well as being self-deprecatory about her writing, the spectacle of her life which Annie constructed was fragmented and conflicted and, at times, distressed, even sombre.<sup>38</sup>

By the beginning of the nineteenth century growing awareness of the double standard encouraged women to feel hostility toward men which was expressed in their autobiographical writing. A popular genre developed in women's writing in which injured married women represented themselves as 'the Christians and their husband the lion'.<sup>39</sup> In her struggle to separate from her husband Annie Baxter's construction of herself was similar to that of the British writer Caroline Norton who appropriated the identity of a wronged woman - 'the victim in a familiar Victorian genre, the melodrama' - when she waged a public battle with her husband over women's property rights.<sup>40</sup> It has been claimed that in her published defence of 1854 Caroline created the trio of an innocent lady-in-distress (herself), a villain (her husband) and a selfless avenger (Lord Melbourne).<sup>41</sup> The main point in Caroline's public test case was her assertion that in relations between men and women, '[p]roperty .. not morality [was] the thing held sacred'.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Alexander, 1989, p. 18.

<sup>37</sup> Alexander, 1989, pp. 5, 9, 11, 13, 14.

<sup>38</sup> Ann Baxter, *Memories of the Past*, 1873, in Webby, 1989, p. 131. 'I feel my small journal is so poor and uninteresting that few will give themselves the trouble of buying and reading it'.

<sup>39</sup> Pomerleau, 1980, pp. 33-35. Lensink, 1987, p. 49. Poovey, 1988, p. 55.

<sup>40</sup> Lensink, 1987, p. 49. In 1836 when Caroline Norton refused to let her husband raise money against a trust settled on her he retaliated with a lawsuit brought against Lord Melbourne for 'criminal conversation'. When a man decided to divorce his wife he began by bringing a suit for monetary damages against a (supposed) correspondent in his wife's adultery. Hence, though a wife's alleged adultery was made public by the charge of 'criminal conversation', she was not represented at a trial conducted between two men over her as contested property.

<sup>41</sup> Poovey, 1988, pp. 66, 67.

<sup>42</sup> Caroline Norton, *Caroline Norton's Defence: English Laws for Women in the Nineteenth Century*, Academy Press, Chicago, 1982 (1854), pp. 152, 160.

Annie Baxter found herself in a very similar position to Caroline Norton and in her writing defended herself in much the same way. As with the Nortons, the Baxters' ongoing marital disputes - which seemed to be only about romance and sexuality - at a deeper level constituted a struggle over the right to property. At that time, though common law placed married women in an indirect relation to property, the law of Chancery enabled a married woman to possess property separately from her husband by having it held in trust for her by a male trustee. Under the law of equity a man (in Annie's case her deceased father) could settle property on a woman in the form of a trust. The agent or agents who oversaw this trust (in Annie's case her father's brother and, after his death in 1846, her brother) could raise money and make contracts upon property held in trust for a woman and sell or rent its title. Such trusts, which became increasingly common in the nineteenth century in Britain and the colonies, became an important source of liquid capital for middle class men, and hence a powerful reason for them to oppose divorce and property rights for women.<sup>43</sup>

As long as women confined themselves to expressing their discontents through literary discourse, marital discord as documented by Caroline Norton and Annie Baxter was dismissed as fictive. However, though they adopted a melodramatic style, women such as Caroline Norton and Annie Baxter increasingly insisted their writing was *not* fictional; that they wrote of *their* lives, *their* experience, thus discursively defying society while, in retaining the persona of 'woman as victim, endorsing the ideology of gender whose rules they violated.'<sup>44</sup> For Annie, as for most women in her position who could not hope to have their writing published, journal writing served as a means of self-justification and of re-asserting control over, delineating and shaping their world.<sup>45</sup>

Annie Baxter thus compulsively wrote her history during the period of her first marriage - in language sometimes 'bristling with metaphorical violence' - to overcome her isolation and confusion and express outrage at her male 'oppressor'. In the same way as Caroline Norton, in order to intensify her position Annie took up the cause of a woman even more badly treated than herself - an Aboriginal woman who had been fatally infected with syphilis by a European man and left to die a painful and ignominious death. In this way Annie and Caroline embodied themselves in 'lower class' women in order to evoke support from others for the way in which their husbands had violated the domestic ideal.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Poovey, 1988, pp. 71, 72.

<sup>44</sup> Poovey, 1988, p. 83.

<sup>45</sup> Rosenblatt, 1983.

<sup>46</sup> Poovey, 1988, p. 87. Norton used the case of a working class woman who had been murdered and dismembered by her husband to illustrate injustices done to herself.

Given that what has been preserved of Annie Baxter / Dawbin's writing was produced over a thirty four year period during which Annie changed from a confused and headstrong young woman to a shrewd and determined (though still 'romantic') middle aged one, it is not surprising to find that the use she made of her journal changed over time. Initially Annie used her journal to communicate with her husband and male friends and lovers or in order to comfort or unburden herself; later she wrote (with posterity seemingly in mind)<sup>47</sup> in order to justify herself. However, despite the variety of purposes which writing served for Annie over the years, as Frost observed, whatever her intention, she always wrote 'with herself as the only heroic figure on the stage'.<sup>48</sup> It seems that Annie was perceived by at least some of her contemporaries as a well travelled, charming and accomplished woman who combined gentle feminine wit and romantic heroism.<sup>49</sup> That Annie constructed herself as heroic to the point of caricature in her journals probably reflected changing and conflicted conceptions of what represented female heroism.<sup>50</sup> It would appear that when Annie finally looked beyond a construction of herself as a heroic sufferer and began reflecting on the social structures which helped determine her life that she ceased keeping a journal.

It has been convincingly argued that diarist's language incorporates unconscious metaphor.<sup>51</sup> There is hence a second self-construction in Annie's journals - not victim, but Damned Whore. Annie's hysterical episodes occurred when she was particularly frustrated in her desire for independence and mastery of her environment. By the mid-nineteenth century doctors were interpreting such behaviour in - usually strong minded - women as evidence of the animalism inherent in the female life cycle and reproductive system. This interpretation caused women to turn a legitimate desire for personal and social potency back upon themselves as fear that they were sexually depraved and / or mad. It is not uncommon to find in nineteenth century women's texts a 'deranged woman' on the margins. This has been interpreted as the symbolic representation of the female author's 'anger against the rigidities

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<sup>47</sup> Annie Baxter, 'Letters to Henrietta', 1840, Sketchbook, NL, 3276, were clearly written for publication while *Memories of the Past, by a Lady in Australia*, W.H. Williams, Melbourne, 1873 - a highly censored version of Annie's experiences during her first marriage - was printed at Annie's expense. Frost, 1992, p. x. During her second marriage Annie unsuccessfully sent pieces to the editor of a weekly magazine in London and later she made sure that after her death her journals would be well cared for.

<sup>48</sup> Frost, 1992, p. 27.

<sup>49</sup> Tom Brown (Rolf Boldrewood), 'Yambuk' in Webby, 1989, pp. 134-141. William Learmonth quoted in Frost, 1992, p. 82.

<sup>50</sup> Cora Ann Weekes, 'Female Heroism in the Nineteenth Century' in Webby, 1989, pp. 319-320. While Annie continued to conceive female heroism in terms of male bravery, by the middle of the century a heroic woman was considered by younger women to be someone who demonstrated 'immaculate purity; indefatigable energy; and strength of mind and purpose'.



of patriarchal tradition': the mad woman the incarnation of the author's 'anxiety and rage' through which she enacted her need to escape 'male houses and male texts'.<sup>52</sup>

If a balanced account of Annie's life is to be gained from her writing the realisation that she projected two equally distorted 'shadows' - heroine and madwoman / whore - needs to be kept in mind. In her day to day life Annie appears to have mostly fulfilled middle class dictates of what constituted 'a lady': this included elements of the coquette, the victim, the heroine, the horsewoman and the moral guardian of society.<sup>53</sup>

### **The Baxters; a different sort of military marriage.**

At the age of seventeen Andrew Baxter bought a commission as ensign in the British army. Hence, when less than three years later he chose to marry, he did so when he still had his way to make in the world. Annie's father died when she was five, leaving her mother with three young children. According to Annie, who after her mother's death regretted that she could not recall her mother's memory with 'true affection' or to wish 'to have had her with me longer', her mother had been a 'beautiful' but 'worldly' woman who had married her father for his 'birth'. This account, which was written when Annie had had a number of 'lovers' and was facing probable separation from her first husband, was very probably projective.<sup>54</sup> Mrs Hadden remarried soon after her first husband's death and had a son by her second marriage who appears to have been handicapped.<sup>55</sup> Annie's claims that her mother was overly fond of her second husband who had turned her head 'with flattery and adulation', suggests that during the period of her first marriage, when her husband was often away, Annie's mother may have made an indulged 'pet' of her youngest daughter in the same effusive way as the childless and lonely Annie, in the physical and emotional absence of *her* husband, alternately petted and punished her 'beloved' horses and dogs.<sup>56</sup> Hence when her mother remarried and had a handicapped child Annie probably found herself excluded from what had previously been an overly close but ambivalent relationship - and rebelled against the exclusion. It may have been because of the disruption her rebellion caused her family that Annie was sent to boarding school to be educated. Though usually

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<sup>51</sup> Lensink, 1987, p. 43.

<sup>52</sup> Showalter, 1987, pp. 4, 18, 132 quoting Sandra M. Gilbert and Sandra Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination*, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 1979, p. 85.

<sup>53</sup> Summers, 1975. Annie - especially in later life - was perfectly capable of acting as God's Police. Fearing she was a 'damned whore' made her all the more judgemental of 'fallen' respectable women.

<sup>54</sup> Neal, 1988, p. 50. At the time when female infidelity (which Annie was guilty of in mind if not in body) was defined as a hereditary medical disorder which was passed on from mother to daughter.

<sup>55</sup> Frost, 1992, p. 309.

Annie looked back on her boarding school days with happy nostalgia, when depressed she claimed that her early separation from her mother meant that her mother 'never did, or could love' her. Because Annie came to believe that her misfortunes stemmed from what she experienced as a disastrous first marriage, she blamed her mother for not having given her the 'control and counsel' which would have prevented her from committing herself to an unacceptable partner.<sup>57</sup> In reaching this position Annie was embracing the social judgement that, because the moral responsibility for raising 'successful' children lay with mothers, her own 'disgrace' must be the result of deficient mothering.<sup>58</sup> Annie's reaction would appear to confirm Dinnerstein's thesis that an individual's negative judgement on its primary care-giver originates from a personal perception of childhood loss which has later been reinforced by social judgements. The personal and the social thus work together to judge mothers deficient.

Though the truth of the matter cannot now be ascertained, it is likely that when Annie wanted to marry the 'unsuitable' Andrew Baxter her mother did everything in her power to prevent the marriage: Annie probably used her influence with her twenty year old and equally headstrong brother William, recently married himself and - with the demise of his mother's second husband - temporarily head of the family, to over-ride her mother's objections. Judging from later events it is probable that Annie, excited at the prospect of marriage and convinced that the physical attraction she felt for Andrew was 'love', saw her first marriage as a 'heroic' and romantic act which had the secondary satisfaction of alarming her mother and drawing attention to herself. In after years Annie claimed her marriage to Andrew resulted from her desire to 'pique' another man.<sup>59</sup>

Seven months after their marriage, in September 1834, Andrew and Annie Baxter took ship for Van Dieman's Land on the convict ship the *Augusta Jessie* with Andrew as one of the two lieutenants in charge of convicts. Though Annie wrote little of the discomforts of this journey she complained that: 'I must be a very very discontented person, for I am miserable with a good man, who says that he loves me'. Two and a half months later with Hobart Town only two weeks away however she asked in her New Year supplication: that God ... continue his great goodness to the person, whom I love more & value more than myself - my

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<sup>56</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 8 February 1844, 17 September 1843, in Frost, 1984, pp. 114, 144.

<sup>57</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, December 1843 in Frost, 1992, p. 50, Annie Baxter, Journal, 24 October 1843, 26 November 1843, in Frost, 1984, pp. 116, 126.

<sup>58</sup> Davidoff & Hall, 1987, pp. 348-351.

<sup>59</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 4 March 1844, in Frost, 1984, pp. 116, 147, Annie Baxter, Journal, 1 January 1839, in Frost, 1992, p. 17.

belov'd husband.<sup>60</sup> During these months it was common for Annie to refer to her husband as 'her little boy'. In psychic terms loving as infantilisation of an adult male by an adult female served to reverse power relations inherent in prevailing gender stereotypes by magically rendering a husband incapable of sexual congress and placing him under his wife's 'mothering' control. At a time when Annie felt more powerless than ever before in her life, she attempted to reclaim control of her life and her body by means of a socially sanctioned 'femininity'.

Annie's judgement that her mother was too 'worldly', made when as a twenty seven year old she wished to separate from her sometimes violent husband, was one which Annie's behaviour as a flirtatious young married woman brought down upon her own head in the decorous Vandemonian society of the 1830s.<sup>61</sup> Having grown up in a military environment Annie practiced the flirtatious female behaviour which, under the influence of middle class evangelism, was increasingly deemed inappropriate in women.<sup>62</sup> This was particularly so in New South Wales and Van Dieman's Land where the shortage of 'respectable' women and the need for military garrisons to guard convicts intensified social dictates regarding decorous female behaviour. Military wives had a poor reputation in the colonies in this early period and were frequently ostracised by 'respectable' women such as Fanny Macleay.<sup>63</sup> Not surprisingly an attractive young officer's wife such as Georgiana Molloy who wished to be received in 'respectable' society, savagely distanced herself from other military wives who gave the slightest sign of being - as Georgiana put it - 'women of the world'.<sup>64</sup> Nineteenth century anxiety about military wives stemmed in part from fear of venereal infection. The

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<sup>60</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 9 October, 31 December 1834, in Frost, 1992, pp. 1, 2, Frost, 1992, pp. 2-3.

<sup>61</sup> Frost, 1992, p. 11. Meredith, 1853, in *Australian Women's Writing*, Dale Spender, (ed.), Penguin, Ringwood, Australia, 1988, p. 70. Louisa Meredith gave an example of the social ostracism of an indiscreet military wife in the Hobart of the time, writing: 'Not in the most moral circles of moral England herself is a departure from the paths of propriety or virtue more determinedly or universally visited by the punishment of exclusion from society, than in this "Penal Colony" '.

<sup>62</sup> Annie Henning, Journal, 22 August 1853, p. 20 in Curtin, 1994, p. 644. With the straightening of women's behaviour the question of what constituted 'ladylike' clothing became a minefield for women. In her shipboard journal Annie Henning wrote that although initially she had been the only one to wear a 'low dress' at dinner in time her example encouraged other women to dress similarly.

<sup>63</sup> Fanny Macleay to William Macleay, 25 March 1827 in Beverley Earnshaw, Joy Hughes & Lindy Davidson, (eds.) *Fanny to William: The Letters of Frances Leonora Macleay 1812-1836*, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, Sydney 1993, p. 77. Fanny considered 'officer's wives' in Port Jackson to be 'a very poor set'.

<sup>64</sup> M. G. Cammilleri, 'Fairlawn', JPWAHS, NS, December 1946, vol. 3, Part 8, pp. 33-34, Hasluck 1966, p. 34, Lines, 1994, pp. 88, 91-92. Georgiana Molloy, who enjoyed men's company and was considered to be a 'delightful conversationalist', caused a split between her husband and Captain Byrne on the grounds that his wife was flirtatious and did not have a 'steady and sedate aspect'. Later Georgiana ignored Captain Mangles' request that she contact her fellow botanical collector Mrs Bull - who was later sent back to England in disgrace by her husband for flirtatious behaviour - for the same reason.

public associated prostitution with the military: this helped to generate the oppositional images of the profligate military man and the benevolent family man or 'patriarch moralised to carry the significations of goodness, health, and social harmony integrated through social procreation'.<sup>65</sup> In the colonies it was precisely during the period that Annie was a young married woman - the 1830s-1840s - that handbooks on how to be a 'good' wife and mother' proliferated and military wives in the colonies stood in most danger of being judged frivolous and / or promiscuous.

Social judgements of middle class women were complicated by it being considered that a 'good seat on a horse' was an essential part of a genteel Englishwoman's accomplishments. Women riders were not only expected to dress sedately and ride decorously in a side saddle, but to demonstrate that they were 'obeyed' rather than 'mastered' by their horse.<sup>66</sup> This was because women were expected to be able to 'master' servants and children and to demonstrate a physical fitness for maternity. With the growth of the sensualised and eroticised viewing of women, in Britain women on horseback became a picturesque specular activity which exhibited women's libidinal energy.<sup>67</sup> The result of this was that by the middle of the nineteenth century the line between what constituted respectable and disreputable women, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour on a horse, became finely drawn.<sup>68</sup> Though in the Australian context - where horse riding for women was a necessity rather than a luxury - it was less likely to be eroticised, in her search for a heroic identity Annie Baxter plugged into these contradictions relating to the way in which women rode, and in doing so flirted with impropriety.

Upon arrival in the convict colony of Van Dieman's Land Annie and Andrew's youth and emotional immaturity - coupled with the difficulties inherent for married couples in garrison life - ensured that within a short time their relationship became troubled. Annie either treated Andrew as her baby (while continuing to flirt with other men) or rejected him completely. The jealous and rebellious Andrew alternately indulged his wife or responded to her activities with outbursts of jealous rage and retreat into the 'wild' activities - drinking, gambling,

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<sup>65</sup> Frank Mort, *Dangerous Sexualities : Medico-Moral Politics in England since 1830*, Routledge Kegan Paul, London, 1987, p.156.

<sup>66</sup> Rona Randall, *The Model Wife Nineteenth Century Style*, Herbert Press, London, 1989, P. 63.

<sup>67</sup> Block, 1958, p. 486. Stratton, 1996, p 97. Birmingham in Copley and Garside, 1994, p. 93, claimed the repression of male exhibitionism in the late eighteenth century encouraged the 'picturesque' aestheticising and specularising of women.

<sup>68</sup> Trudgill, 1976, pp. 180-1. In Britain high-class courtesans - who were praised for their intelligence and 'wisely skills' figured prominently in Hyde Park and the hunting field where their expertise in driving and riding earned them the title 'pretty horsebreakers'.

hunting and consorting with 'low' women - which he had pursued during his truncated bachelorhood. The disintegration of the couple's relationship could only have been exacerbated by the three miscarriages Annie suffered during the first eighteen months of her marriage. Spontaneous abortion was greatly dreaded by women, causing them not only ill-health but feelings of guilt and self-judgement. Before she became aware of her husband's medical condition and its effects upon herself, Annie guiltily concluded that her miscarriages were due to her having danced and ridden too vigorously.<sup>69</sup>

By the end of 1835 Andrew and Annie had become so alienated that Annie recorded their feelings in the form of dreams. Andrew, she wrote, had dreamt he had murdered his mother, while she, who claimed she felt 'queer' and in emotional pain, suffered the first of the sexually charged dreams about 'other' men which were to 'torment' her during the remaining fifteen years of her marriage.<sup>70</sup> Although, like her decorous contemporary Georgiana Molloy, Annie was a romantic, the nature of her romanticism was wilder, more abandoned. Lord Byron rather than Robert Burns was Annie's favourite poet. On occasions Annie would read Byron's poetry to a favoured admirer; when depressed she would comfort herself through long sleepless nights by repeating to herself what she called his 'exquisite language'.<sup>71</sup> Annie thus admired what she called 'wild' landscape and gloried in evidence of the 'very grand...[of] turbulence in Nature' such as the 'roaring' of the sea, or the sound of thunder - manifestations which reminded her, she wrote, of her 'own [rebellious] disposition'.<sup>72</sup> The daughter, sister and wife of military men, Annie prided herself on being an 'old Soldier' who could be expected to be brave in the face of physical, moral and emotional danger / suffering. Hence when threatened by the social ostracism which her behaviour aroused in others, Annie resorted to bravado, writing that she could 'tame any animal except herself', and no matter what happened she intended to remain 'the same wild, untamed creature to the end'.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Jalland & Hooper, 1986, p. 119. Annie Baxter, Journal, 16 December 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 130.

<sup>70</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 6 October 1835, 1 December 1835, 31 March 1845, 13 May 1846, Frost, 1992, pp. 3, 4, 80, 84-85. On one occasion (13 May 1846) Annie's guilt would have been increased by seeing herself in her dream as a widow.

<sup>71</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 3 May 1840, 11 May 1846, Frost, 1992, pp. 41, 84, 16 November 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 120. The search for individual autonomy and liberty in Byron's heroes strongly appealed to people who saw themselves as carving out a destiny in a new land.

<sup>72</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, December 1843, January 1846, May 1844, Frost, 1992, pp. 50, 76, 62.

<sup>73</sup> Annie Baxter, Letters to Henrietta, May 1840, 'You remember Henrietta, that you used all to say, I never knew fear! no more I do - it must be a terrible thing', Annie Baxter, Journal, 24 February 1844, Frost, 1984, pp. 94, 147.

It was Annie's love of animals and hence her embracing of the 'animalistic' in herself which put her in opposition to the 'civilising' moral trend of her time. At a time when a woman's education as 'feminine' stressed the value of the 'highest' part of human nature - the soul or duty or reason - over the 'lowest' part - the body or appetite - Annie stood in direct opposition to the social prescriptions for women of her time.<sup>74</sup> A dual model which strongly separated 'mind' and 'duty' from 'body' and 'desire' - and ambiguously encouraged both - split the individual female psyche: the result was that some women self-sacrificially intensified their feminine conditioning in the way in which Georgiana Molloy did - 'ask me to walk a mile and I will go two miles further' - while women like Annie Baxter began to 'buck' against their feminine conditioning.

Andrew did not stay an army officer for long, resigning his commission as Captain in July 1839. In September 1838 Andrew received orders to leave Hobart Town for Sydney and it was thus in Sydney in January 1839 that Annie, having on that occasion carried her baby for at least six months, had her fourth miscarriage. During this period Andrew was already showing symptoms (which were unrecognised by Annie) of the syphilis which may have pre-dated his marriage and, in being passed on by him to his wife, was probably what rendered her incapable of carrying a baby to term.<sup>75</sup> In February the Baxters travelled up the coast to Port Macquarie in order to inspect land for a cattle run. After riding through the 'wild' country along the Macleay River Annie decided it was 'beautiful country ... the foliage is so very various & pretty - thro' every scrub I can fancy to myself something enticing!' When her husband decided he would like to settle in the area she wrote 'I've not the slightest objection to it - on the contrary I'd like it'.<sup>76</sup> This attraction to the *idea* of being a pioneer squatter on what she thought of as the 'wild' and 'picturesque' Macleay did not of course prevent Annie from afterwards complaining that she 'disliked the bush'. Like most middle class women Annie at times found the primitive conditions, the heat, the insects, the drudgery of household work, the isolation, the lack of culture and the erosion of civilised

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<sup>74</sup> Cominos in Vicinus, 1973, p. 156, 'animalistic' behaviour in women included sexuality, uninhibited physical activity and personal and social potency.

<sup>75</sup> Richard Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment: Attitudes to sex and sexuality in Britain since the Renaissance*, Collins, London, 1990, pp. 24, 33, 38, 45. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries young men - especially those in the army - were admired for 'sexual exuberance', with V D spoken of as the 'cavalier's' or 'gentleman's disease'. In the nineteenth century the problem of diagnosing syphilis was complicated by the 'protean' nature of its symptoms, by the course of the disease being different in each individual, and by the frequency with which Gonorrhoea was contracted simultaneously. The incubation period of syphilis is 1-5 weeks after which a primary ulcer may appear. Secondary symptoms of painful joints, a rash and possible ulcers appear 3-6 weeks later, after which the disease may become latent for between 1-30 years before tertiary symptoms - which can include General Paralysis of the Insane - make an appearance.

manners of frontier life depressing. Margaret Menzies settled to the south of Annie near Kiama in New South Wales. She put the fears of women who suddenly found themselves living virtually alone in dense bush - such as herself and Annie - succinctly when she wrote:

[T]here could not be a more romantic country - you may lose yourself amidst the vines and creepers of an interminable forest ...[but] 'There is no society here & I sometimes feel that we have left a great deal behind us there is some chance of us becoming savages...'<sup>76</sup>

The pastoral boom of the 1830s and 1840s which saw half New South Wales settled meant that the period when Annie lived in the MacLeay River area was one of intense conflict between squatters and Aborigines.<sup>78</sup> It was only on rare occasions when she felt imprisoned by her marriage that Annie expressed herself as 'perfectly miserable in this vile bush' or as 'caged in the bush'.<sup>79</sup> Despite this however, once she and her husband took up land, firstly along the Macleay River and later in the Port Fairy district of New South Wales, Annie threw herself into the life of a squatter's wife with a will, and seemingly, despite at times experiencing real hardship, few complaints.

Annie gave every appearance of having come to love each of her stations, writing in 1843 of 'Yesabba' on the Macleay that:

Somehow this country with all its disagreeables has become endeared to me - Every tree almost about here has its association - and as to the hut, oh! I do love it.

Having been forced by financial considerations to leave 'Yesabba' for 'Yambuck' on lake Yambuck at Port Fairy, she wrote the nostalgic comment that:

Yesabba, my pretty station, how often do I think and dream of you! Yambuck with its fine lake, and green grass can never be in my eyes as pretty & romantic as Yesabba was with its humble creek.<sup>80</sup>

Later Annie was to feel equally nostalgic at having to leave what Tom Brown, her young bachelor neighbour at Yambuck, described as 'Yambuk [the Baxter's] extremely picturesque station ... a kingdom by the sea', and still later in life convinced her second husband to help her make a final attempt to establish a cattle station in Australia. Annie was adept at turning a

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<sup>76</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 12 February, 2 March 1839, Frost, 1992, pp. 18, 19.

<sup>77</sup> Margaret Menzies, Journal, 29 February 1839, MS 3261, NL, in Clarke and Spender, 1992, p. 171.

<sup>78</sup> Barry Morris, 'Frontier Colonialism as a Culture of Terror', in *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*, Bain Attwood, John Arnold, (eds.), La Trobe University Press, Melbourne, 1992, p. 75. The frontier was controlled by groups of squatters and their employees who made killing or punishing raids on small groups of Aborigines. Though Annie did not mention it, Andrew Baxter would have taken part in such raids.

<sup>79</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 28 June 1841, Frost, 1992, p. 45, July 1843, Frost, 1984, p105.

<sup>80</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, , 7 November 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 118, April 1844, Frost, 1992, p. 62.

slab hut into a home, furnishing it with whatever came to hand and, until such time as she had established a flower garden, transforming her hut into a home with 'nosegays of bush flowers'. Annie kept poultry, made cheese, butter and jam, grew vegetables, planted fruit trees, hedges of roses and other cottage garden plants, cooked, cleaned, laundered and sewed as was expected of a good settler's wife. Brown, who when young was clearly infatuated with Annie, was so enchanted with her projection of herself as the model settler's wife that he never afterwards forgot her hospitality. In 1884 he described the tenderly remembered Yambuck as 'a choice and precious exemplar of an old-fashioned cattle station ... a haven of peace .. a joyful restful Elysium'. According to him although the Baxter's cottage was not imposing, neighbours and travellers would not have 'exchanged it for a palace' because there they were 'always sure of receiving sympathy and society'.<sup>81</sup>

Because Annie kept the stations running when Andrew was ill or away from home she became accustomed to keeping an eye on the men and doing a great deal of horse riding. Also, because she had no children and was happy to have female convict servants to assist her in the house, Annie found time to enjoy outdoor leisure activity. Annie claimed she was 'fond' of flowers. Like most colonial housewives she enjoyed not only flower gardening but wandering in the bush collecting seeds of wildflowers for her garden and wildflowers to press as keepsakes.<sup>82</sup> Annie also found time to entertain, read, write and make naive 'plein air' topographical sketches of her homes and the surrounding landscape, (plates 9, 10) having a special bower built in her garden at Yesabba where she and her guests could sit, talk, read and draw in comfort. That most of Annie's visitors were unmarried males was partly due to the lack of women in the communities in which she lived and partly due to her personal preferences.<sup>83</sup>

Unlike most married colonial women, Annie also spent long hours taking 'bogys' (swims) in the creek, riding her horses in 'the bush' and hunting with her beloved kangaroo dogs. Annie greatly enjoyed what she saw as the beauties of nature, taking a sense of freedom, well-being and inspiration from them. Although not strongly religious, and, at times, thinking of herself as 'a rebel to my Saviour, my God!',<sup>84</sup> Annie shared with many people of her time an almost pantheistic sense of God as manifest in the natural environment.

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<sup>81</sup> Rolf Boldrewood, 'Yambuck' in Webby, 1989, pp. 134-141.

<sup>82</sup> Annie Baxter, *Journal*, 15 December 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 131.

<sup>83</sup> Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 18 April 1865, in Adams, 1969, p. 195. Single women such as Rachel Henning claimed they preferred men's company because: 'Gentlemen visitors are different [to women], as they entertain themselves or you'.

<sup>84</sup> Annie Baxter, *Journal*, 31 December 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 134.





PLATE 9. 'Lake Yanduck'. Annie Baxter. c 1890s. MS 3276. NL.

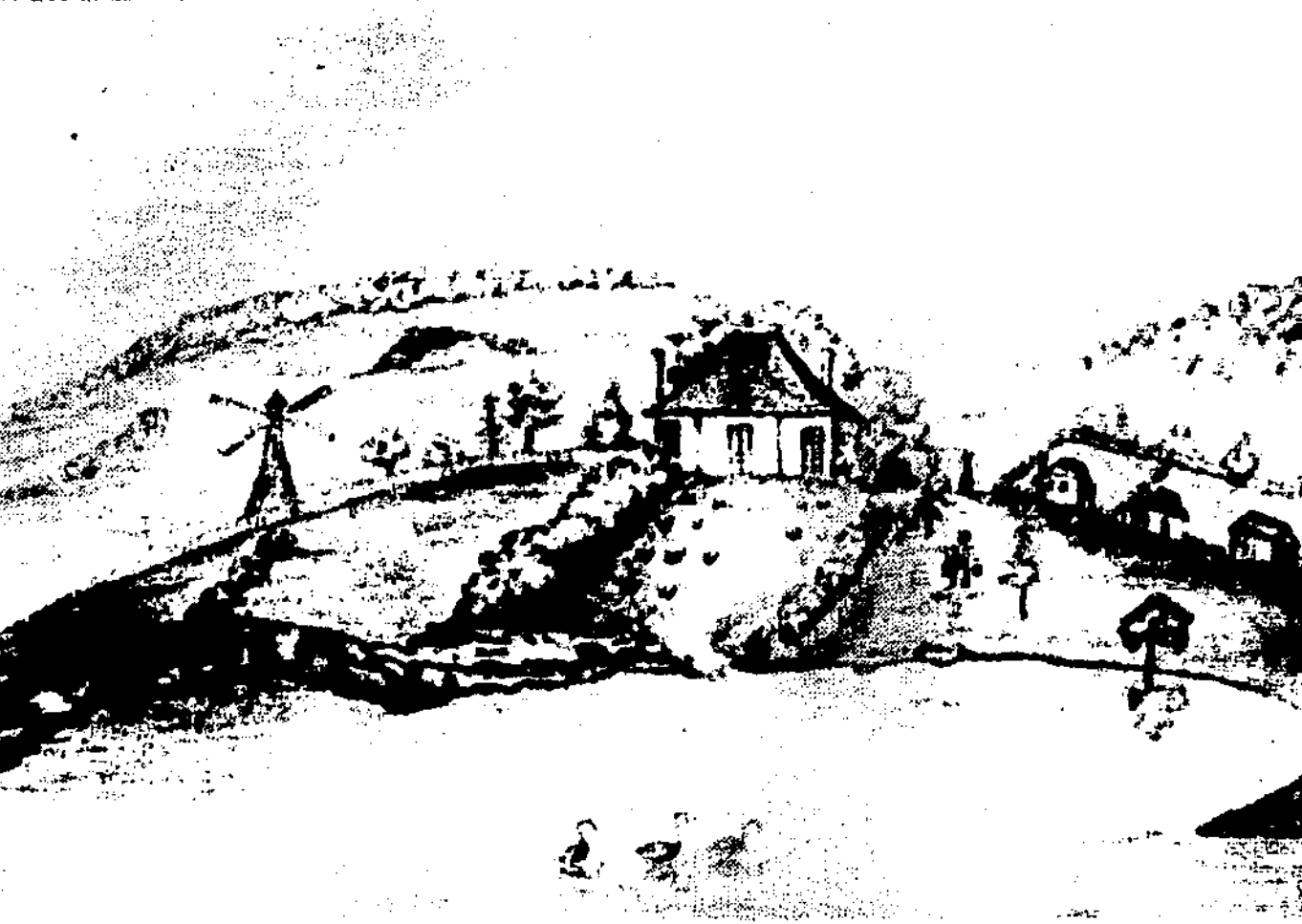


PLATE 10. 'Nesabba'. Annie Baxter. c1840s. MS 3276. 7LL.

She especially liked to see the sun rise, making a habit in summer of rising early and watching it appear above the horizon before she had her long and languorous swim. Sunrise, she considered, was 'a most beautiful sight - [which] inspires one with love for the great and good Creator of it'. For Annie outdoor activity, interaction with 'God's creatures' and observation of nature - especially 'picturesque' natural phenomena such as moonlight or sunrise - gave her a sense of freedom, belonging, potency and participation which restricted to her a sense of wholeness which her restrictive gender role and unsatisfying marriage denied her. Of the lake at Yambuck she wrote in the picturesque style of her time:

This most beautiful sheet of water is completely covered with Birds of all kinds, and the various notes emitted by them produce a sound so harmonious and sweet that astonishes, and together with the whole harmony of the scene tends greatly to produce reverie of the most soothing and lulling description.<sup>85</sup>

However, although this idyllic aspect of Annie's life had its own reality - that is, was not *just* a picturesque construction - her contented and idyllic moments occurred within the context of deep personal confusion and considerable domestic violence and despair.

### 'He is my love'.

The busy wife and mother Georgiana Molloy, who loved getting out and about in the Australian bush just as much as Annie Baxter, sublimated her subversive wishes for a romantic relationship by writing long intimate letters about flowers and herself to an unmarried man - who resembled her husband before *he* married - who lived on the other side of the world. On the other hand, finding herself childless and surrounded by eligible bachelors, Annie moved closer and closer towards the border between what she called 'platonic' - and therefore in her terms acceptable or 'romantic' relationships with men, and sexual - and therefore absolutely forbidden - ones. During her first marriage Annie recorded nine long-term relationships which she had with bachelor admirers with whom she took walks and rides, corresponded, shared *tete a tetes*, and fancied she was in love. Though she was happy to accept presents, declarations of love and minor physical endearments from these men, in all but one case she seems to have successfully avoided what she called 'passion' - which may or may not have meant explicit sexuality. Some of her admirers became angered at such dalliance: Annie noted in her journal that both Mr Learmonth and Mr Massie took her to task (seemingly with some venom) for being a 'cold and heartless coquette'.<sup>86</sup> That Annie could continue to act in such a way when she was married partly

<sup>85</sup> Annie Baxter, attribution on the back of a sketch, in Frost, 1984, p. 117.

<sup>86</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 11 May 1846, Frost, 1992, p. 84.

reflected the shortage of women on the frontiers of settlement and partly reflected the freedom which Annie claimed as a childless, but young and attractive, woman whose husband frequently left her in an unsupervised environment. Her behaviour was that of a young, daring and flirtatious single woman who had managed to evade the supervision of her chaperone. No matter how much she may have wished it however Annie was *not* single, so, in order to continue on such a hazardous path she was forced to deceive herself about the strength of the erotic in her 'romantic' relationships - something which became increasingly difficult during the ten years in which Annie lived with her husband as if he were her brother rather than her husband.

Despite the unsettling dreams she had about the men with whom she became romantically involved, it was not until Annie became interested in the well-bred colonial surgeon Dr Patrick Mollison - whom she met in March 1840 when she was aged 24 and he 33 - that she began to *consciously* recognise the danger in her position. It was the cultivated Dr Mollison who invited Annie and her husband to stay with him when they visited Port Macquarie and introduced them to a higher level of society. By May 1841 Dr Mollison had become a frequent visitor to Yesabba. Given Andrew's jealous nature and Annie's 'interest' in Dr Mollison it is not surprising to find that it was the day after Dr Mollison had been for what was turned by inclement weather into an extended six day visit to Yesabba that Annie's maid took Annie to see Andrew, as Annie later described it, 'making a Lubra his mistress'.<sup>87</sup> For some time Annie had been aware that when her husband had been drinking he propositioned her female servants. She thus used this occasion as an excuse to break off all conjugal relations with her husband, and - if she is to be believed - despite Andrew's attempts over the years to wear down her resistance in this matter, never resumed physical relations with him during the ten years they continued to live under the same roof. Annie would have been fortified in this decision by the power which access to family funding gave her in her marriage, and by the fact that in September 1840 Andrew was again taken ill and this time, having been forced to confront the reality of her husband's extra-marital activities and thus having good reason to suspect the cause of his ill-health, Annie sent a male friend to ask Dr Mollison 'what he really thinks of him'.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Annie Baxter Journal, 30 May 1849, Frost, 1992, p. 124. Paula M. Humfrey, ' "I saw, through a large chink in the partition" ... What the servants Knew', in Frith, 1995, pp. 54-55. Servants often had little other option than to attempt to manage their working life by taking advantage of privileged private information in this way. Frost, 1992, p. 88. Andrew died from suicide brought on by 'cerebritis' (GPI) in 1855. After Annie became aware in June 1846 that her husband's condition would prove fatal, it firmed her resolve to have her husband sign a water tight financial agreement before she returned to England.

<sup>88</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, November, 1840, Frost, 1992, p. 37.

It seems likely that Dr Mollison confirmed Annie's fears that Andrew was suffering from a fresh venereal infection (probably Gonorrhoea) and that it was this knowledge which stiffened Annie's determination to have no further conjugal relations with her husband.<sup>89</sup> However, judging from her suicidal reaction at that time, it was probably not until June 1846 when Dr Ritchie told Annie that Andrew had also had Syphilis for some time that she began to recognise the full implications of this in relation to her own health. During the 1830s and 1840s it was very difficult for wives to obtain accurate information about their husband's state of health and about the symptoms, means of transmission, development and prognosis of venereal diseases. Not only was it considered an 'indelicate' subject for women to discuss, but at that time doctors, who continued to confuse the symptoms of Syphilis and Gonorrhoea, were likely to enter into a conspiracy of silence with their male clients which kept wives dangerously 'in the dark'.<sup>90</sup> In 1845 Annie wrote the following defence of her refusal to sleep with her husband which implies that by that time she believed her husband had infected her with some form of venereal disease:

I am given to understand that Mrs Cox pities my husband very much on account of us having separate beds - What would she have done in my case I wonder? Had her husband visited houses of Ill Fame - associated with blacks and Whites of the commonest description - to her injury - Making her in that state that I am in.<sup>91</sup>

In June 1846 when she learned that Andrew had an advanced case of Syphilis (in her journal she wondered if she had the courage to ask Dr Ritchie when Andrew was likely to die) with which she may well have become infected quite early in her marriage, she was furious, despairing and suicidal, writing:

Can it be wondered at, that I hold Mr Baxter in such thorough contempt, when I see daily what I now do? Of course, he is quite ignorant of [my knowledge], and thinks I imagine he is suffering from lumbago! ... [Dr Ritchie] said very quaintly to me "It is just what I fancied, from your description"..... As to me, I'm almost hardened enough to put up with all I may meet - altho' it would not seem so, by the way in which I was about to act the day before yesterday. I cannot imagine what possessed me - never in my life have I contemplated such cowardly wickedness.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> That she did this rather than leave her husband is not surprising given the way in which women who - for whatever reason - left their husbands were treated by society and the press. See 'The Tale of an Errant Wife' in *The Push from the Bush*, no. 16, October 1983, pp. 71-7; an account of a woman who attempted to leave her violent husband which was originally published in the *Sydney Gazette*, 24, 25 February, 1838.

<sup>90</sup> Syphilis and Gonorrhoea often occurred together in the same person: hence they were only gradually distinguished from one another in the late 1830s, early 1840s.

<sup>91</sup> Annie Baxter, April, August 1845, Frost 1992, pp. 70, 71. In August Annie wrote of a man she knew who slept with black women whose health was 'affected by his dissipation' claiming that his wife would 'suffer too!'. Annie's young age (30) and childlessness left her open to criticism.

<sup>92</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 10 June, 1846, Frost 1992, p. 88.

Certainly by 1849 Annie was aware of the whole story - she had overcome her 'delicacy' sufficiently to become fully informed. She wrote:

My illness... I know too well what the origin was, and know very well there is now no cure for it - and all caused from over delicacy (Shall I say False?)<sup>93</sup>

Although the effects of General Paralysis of the Insane were not attributed to syphilis until late in the nineteenth century, it had been recognised in the eighteenth century that children could contract venereal disease congenitally and through infected wet nurses, and, after syphilis and gonorrhoea were distinguished in the 1830s and 1840s, syphilis was described by doctors as 'the worst of diseases'; its presence in one marital partner thought to infect the rest of his or her family with the 'seeds of premature death'. Represented in nineteenth century literature as the 'Vengeance of God', syphilis caused a re-vivification of the medieval myth of 'Feminine Evil' which - as a crude defence against anxiety - split women into the polarities 'good' and 'bad'.<sup>94</sup> As the only treatment doctors used in the 1840s to treat syphilis was baths, rest and enemas, the prognosis for those who contracted the disease was extremely poor. Many nineteenth century moral prohibitions in regard to sexual promiscuity - and health regulations introduced to control and isolate prostitutes - stemmed from a wish to prevent the physical consequences on families and the army of this fear-invoking, debilitating, and often fatal disease. Given the effects of syphilis on the family it is hardly surprising to find that in the nineteenth century women who had private means often chose not to marry. Unmarried by choice, Rose Scott worked to protect the bodies of Australian women whom she considered to be less fortunate than herself, writing: 'Oh woman, men are but as tepid sewage or a drain under our house'.<sup>95</sup> Fear of sexuality as a probable source of contagion also partly explains the nineteenth century obsession with the Madonna as virgin wife and Mary Magdalen as penitent prostitute.<sup>96</sup>

It is clear that Annie was not only terrified of the physical effects on herself of venereal infection but of the moral effects on herself of her husband's sexual promiscuity. Because a woman was considered to be the moral saviour of her husband, a wife felt strongly implicated in what she perceived as the moral degradation of her husband. Annie's anxiety

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<sup>93</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 10 November 1849, Frost, 1992, p. 113. Annie often justified her refusal to sleep with her husband. 25 March 1848, Frost, 1992, p. 101. 'He bribed my own servants, and the black women on the station - not to mention all I suffered - and last of all the intense disgust I always felt at remaining in the same bed'.

<sup>94</sup> Davenport-Hines, 1990, pp. 45-8. Women who desired sex were thought to be contagious / 'bad'.

<sup>95</sup> Rose Scott, undated notebook entry in Scott Family Papers, 38/22/8, ML in Allen, 1988, p. 74.

and rage can be deduced from the sympathetic and impassioned descriptions which she recorded from this time of sick Aboriginal women who had contracted syphilis from European men - women who, she said, 'scarcely remind me of human beings .... neglected, untended, almost starved at times'. Of one syphilitic Aboriginal woman whom Annie cared for before she died a painful and ignominious death, Annie wrote:

Is this soul to go to Purgatory, or is she in our Creator's bosom? ... Man (I mean white men) in this instance as in many more, has been only the means of making this poor woman's condition worse than it originally was; all she knew of him was to bring her to that fearful state in which she suffered & eventually, died! She was originally, they tell me, very stout and good-looking ... Which will God judge, the civilised, enlightened, Christians, or the unfortunate and despised Heathen? I have entered into this perhaps too fully - but it has cost me a tear, and at this moment my eyes are full! For White, or Black - in Sickness or health - we are Sisters in God! <sup>97</sup>

As Annie, who at the time of writing was doing all she could to leave her husband, had vowed before God to care for her husband in 'sickness or health', it is significant that she chose to replace the conclusion of the Anglican marriage service - 'till death do us part' - with 'we are Sisters in God'.<sup>98</sup> Annie's justification for refusing to stay with and nurse her husband in the terminal years of his illness - an action which would have fulfilled her prescribed role of wife as 'ministering angel, guardian of her household's health'<sup>99</sup> - was not simply her husband's infidelity but his having infected her with a potentially disfiguring and fatal disease which, even if it did not lead to her death, had an on-going detrimental effect on her health, prevented her from having children, and, as with the Aboriginal woman with whom she identified, labelled her in her own eyes and (potentially) the eyes of society as a prostitute.

Annie had good reason to be worried about her social position - it was not until late in the nineteenth century in Britain that Alfred Fournier took up the cause of wives who had contracted syphilis from their husbands. Because syphilis was viewed as 'a corrupting irruption' (in every sense of the word) it was thought necessary to defend the purity of wives who had been infected by their husbands as having acquired syphilis by 'unmerited contagion'. Despite his sympathy for their cause however, even Fournier used the moral

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<sup>96</sup> Claude Quétel, *History of Syphilis*, Judith Braddock & Brian Pike, (trans.) John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1990, (1986) pp. 103-105, 122, 124.

<sup>97</sup> Annie Baxter, *Journal*, 6, 16 April 1847, Frost, 1992, pp. 96-98. Annie Baxter, *Journal*, 13 May 1849, in Jan Critchett, *A Distant Field for Murder: Western District Frontiers 1834-1848*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1990, p. 31.

<sup>98</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 7 March 1791, Elizabeth Macarthur (Junior) to Miss Kingdon, 8 March 1817, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, pp. 37, 311. Some white women identified with Aboriginal women in a sisterly way; an attitude often passed on from mother to daughter.

<sup>99</sup> Randall, 1989, p. 63.

contagion theory which divided women into 'good' and 'bad' when he claimed that in giving his wife syphilis an infected husband forced 'her into contact with a streetwalker'.<sup>100</sup>

To return to 1840 - Andrew's illness, his money worries, his troubles with Aborigines, his increasing reliance on alcohol and his enforced sexual abstinence within his marriage did not improve his already volatile temper and Annie found herself increasingly occupied by dislike of her husband, anxiety about her future, and desire for union with Patrick Mollison. Such thoughts were extremely unsettling and in early April of the following year Annie recorded having a 'horrible' dream in which she 'saw her [mother] dying in the street - starved to death!' However this did not stop her from disingenuously recording:

[W]hat a kind, gentlemanly, confiding person Dr Mollison is! I have not met so nice and agreeable (sic) a companion since I left my pet country V.D.L. - I could love him so dearly! and I really hope we may go to Blackman's Point, if only for the purpose of seeing him very, very often.<sup>101</sup>

Annie, thinking of Andrew's ill-temper and Patrick's promise to visit her while her husband was inspecting land in the Port Phillip district, wondered if her refusal to have sex with her husband was justified. She concluded: 'I cannot give my soul, where my heart is not - how some women would laugh at this! but to me it allways seemed like prostitution'. Nevertheless with her husband away Annie found herself wishing she:

[W]as not quite alone! for I allways then long more for something to love - and that to my temperament is inclined to become dangerous! I meet with such nice persons, sometimes, and they are such a contrast to ---- I positively was going to commit an error in black & white!<sup>102</sup>

Annie's longings and indiscreet thoughts brought on insomnia, made her feel 'ill' and caused her to 'abuse the bush' for 'having no Doctor in it'. She decided she really must settle closer to town. On Monday 10 May 1841 however Dr Mollison arrived for his promised visit and the couple exchanged mutual declarations of love. Annie was overjoyed and wrote triumphantly - '[h]e is my love'. Annie chose men in positions of social or political power to be her admirers and lovers - this was the way women who were expected to live vicariously through men (consciously or unconsciously) appropriated the power denied them by society.

After Andrew Baxter's return Dr Mollison continued with his frequent visits to Yesabba and tensions in the Baxter household continued to mount as a consequence. It is probable that, at a period when the medical profession considered opium an appropriate treatment for

<sup>100</sup> Quétel, 1990, p. 137.

<sup>101</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 22 April 1841, Frost, 1992, p. 39.



all physical and psychological female ailments - including 'hysteria' and 'menopause' - that during this period Dr Mollison provided Annie with the laudanum on which she had become dependent.<sup>103</sup> Laudanum taken as indiscriminately as Annie took it had dire side effects. Hence, when not having what she called 'hysterics', Annie, who by this time seemingly hoped to be able to leave her husband, declared herself determined to 'realise an independence' by means of her poultry and by writing and editing what she called 'Letters to Henrietta' which she hoped to get published.<sup>104</sup> The journal recording these events ended in July 1841 and the next one is missing so, although there are several tender reminiscences of Doctor Mollison in later journals, it is not known how Annie reacted to his death in April 1842 - officially as the result of 'rheumatism, fever and dysentery'.<sup>105</sup>

Although by her own admission Patrick Mollison stirred in Annie dangerous levels of repressed desire, their relationship was clearly not a sexual one. At a time when the middle classes expected sex to be confined to married couples at night and in bed,<sup>106</sup> neither Annie nor Dr Mollison would have had defied social prescription to that extent. Also, apart from the very real dangers associated with becoming involved with another man's wife - especially when that man was known to be jealous and violent - Dr Mollison, in being aware of Andrew's infection, would have been loathe on physical as well as social and moral grounds to sleep with his wife.

Despite the inhibitory effect of her real fears of social ostracism and penury, Annie's problem of what to do with her unfulfilled needs grew greater with her attempts to repress them. Four months after the death of Patrick Mollison, that is in August 1842, Lucy Frost claimed (ambiguously) that Annie Baxter and Robert Massie, the newly arrived Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Macleay district, 'became lovers' while on a trip to New England to attend the Armidale races.<sup>107</sup> Andrew, who accompanied Annie on the trip to Armidale in early 1843, appears to have been made sufficiently suspicious of his wife's

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<sup>102</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 23, 24 April, 1841, Frost 1992, pp. 40, 41.

<sup>103</sup> Like many women Annie had trouble with her teeth. It seems from her journals that she first started taking laudanum - which is opium in a suspension of alcohol - for toothache, insomnia, dysmenorrhoea and in order to 'calm' herself. Laudanum did not need a doctor's prescription but Annie's isolation from town meant she often ran out of supplies.

<sup>104</sup> Frost, 1984, p. 88. At the time there was a ready market in England for colonial ladies' 'reminiscences'.

<sup>105</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 10 May 1841, Frost, 1992, pp. 42, 45. Dr Mollison, like Dr Carpenter of the Swan River Colony, appears to have had an opium addiction and hence probably died as a result of over-prescribing laudanum for himself in the treatment of dysentery.

<sup>106</sup> Russell, 1988, p. 19.

feelings to invade the privacy of her journal during the week in April 1843 when she was in Port Macquarie enjoying Massie's company. As Annie gave the three journals which cover these events to Massie who never returned them, and as Andrew tore out some pages of Annie's journal which referred to her relationship with Robert Massie to use against Massie in court, all the historian has to go on for evidence of the nature of Annie's relationship with Robert Massie are her life stances and her journals covering the period July 1843 - three months after she returned from her fateful visit to Port Macquarie - and March 1844 when she left the MacLeay region for Port Fairy.

Men and women were not rigidly chaperoned until quite late in the nineteenth century: despite this there is little documented evidence of middle class women having indulged in pre or extra-marital sex in the nineteenth century.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless - as a way of testing the inscrutability of women's written documents - I will make a hypothetical case that Annie had sex with Massie during her unescorted visit to Port Macquarie in April and raise the possibility that on that occasion she may even have conceived Massie's child, which child - as was usual with Annie - she subsequently lost in the last trimester of her pregnancy. Despite the fact that much of what Annie wrote on the subject is missing and that much of what remains is unreliable, fragmentary and oblique, I believe there is sufficient evidence documenting the *actions and reactions* of the three protagonists, to make such a reading possible. This becomes more convincing if the reader succeeds in penetrating Annie's conscious construction of herself as a 'romantic heroine' and her unconscious projection of herself as 'damned whore'.

Under the prevailing ideology of the time a prostitute's paid sexual work closely resembled that of a wife receiving her husband's economic support in exchange for fulfilling her marital sexual duty. In terms of work the principal difference between the two roles lay in the nature of the contract undertaken - prostitution usually (but not always - 'mistresses' were mediatory) being considered to be a short lived contract made with many men which gave immediate monetary return, while marriage represented a life-long contract made with one man which gave diffused and honorific financial benefits. However, whereas a wife was considered to have social status, a prostitute was socially despised to such an extent that by

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<sup>107</sup> Frost, 1984, p. 101. Given the different connotations put upon the term 'lover' in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is a description which both suggests and evades the question of whether Annie's relationship with Massie was ever sexually consummated.

<sup>108</sup> Degler, 1980, p. 20.

the middle of the nineteenth century the mythology of the tragic life and death of the 'fallen woman' and / or the prostitute served as an effective means of social control.<sup>109</sup>

The similarities between marriage and prostitution meant that a conception which distanced the marriage relation from prostitution by stressing the need for 'love' between married couples served to cement the power of the companionate family.<sup>110</sup> It also meant however that if the marriage relation did not provide this promised intimacy and 'love' then women might feel justified in looking outside marriage to find what they had been led to believe was possible and proper. Once Annie came to believe that she did not love her husband she began to search for an 'ideal' man whom she could 'truly love'. While consciously she seems to have (almost) managed to persuade herself that such action was justified, at an unconscious level she feared - and hence began to have nightmares which indicated - that she was a prostitute.

In recording her search for romantic love in her journals, Annie expressed herself through the idealising myth of romantic love in which she was a wronged and heart-broken, yet ever valiant, heroine at the centre of a 'spectacle of sensibility'. Because of this discursive strategy the danger exists of interpreting Annie's relationship with Massie as having been more romantic and 'platonic' than it actually was. Given that the nineteenth century prescription that 'modest' women did not desire sexual gratification was simply that - a prescription not a description - it is clear that much is still not known about marital and extra-marital sexual activity in the nineteenth century. Not only were women unlikely to write about sexuality but, if Annie is any indication, women who did break rules which related to sexual conduct disassociated themselves from their own 'unacceptable' actions to such an extent that they rarely fully admitted 'lapses from grace' to themselves. Though in her journals Annie constructed herself as both a 'chaste coquette' and a 'whore' the truth appears to have been rather sadder and more mundane.

I would argue that because of Annie's ability to be dissociative, once she had convinced herself that she did not love or respect the husband with whom she had had no children, had long ceased to sleep with him and had replaced him in her heart with Robert Massie - the man she believed she 'truly loved' - at one level she would have already (magically) viewed Massie as her husband. Once Annie viewed Robert Massie as her 'real' husband such was

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<sup>109</sup> Poovey, 1988, p.140. 'Fallen women' were middle class women such as Annie who had disgraced themselves 'for love'.

her repressed sexuality and her desire to have someone to love and protect her, that it is possible that she may have convinced herself that sexual intercourse with him was her wifely duty.<sup>110</sup> Such an action would have come not only from Annie's 'feminine' confusions and repressed desires, but, because of her 'masculine' persona as courageous hero, the fear which normally kept women from taking such 'imaginative' action would have served to precipitate rather than discourage daring action.<sup>112</sup> In Britain Annie's mother married four times; different conditions in the colonies and a confusion between an aggressive, masculine assertiveness and an acquisitive, dependent femininity may have made Annie lose her sense of perspective and act in a way which - at that time, in that society - was detrimental to her best interests.

When in April 1843 Annie travelled to Port Macquarie to spend a week in the company of the man she loved she believed that, as had happened before, her husband - no matter how he might fulminate about her behaviour in private - would refrain from making a scene in public. In this she was wrong. Andrew, in ill-health and facing the depressing probability of insolvency and the loss of Yesabba, took an extremely dim view of the wife whose uncle had advanced the money with which he stocked his property - a wife who nearly two years before had banned him from her bed - taking herself off for a week to be with her latest 'love'. Annie claimed that while she was away Andrew had a key made to the drawer in which she kept her journals and read them, tore out some pages, and replaced them 'in the meanest possible manner'. No doubt, in the same way as she had done earlier with Dr Mollison, Annie had written in her journal (now missing) effusive professions of love for Massie. Certainly, in later entries she described the trip she had made to New England in the company of Massie as the 'happiest tour she would ever make'. Whatever it was that he read in his wife's journal it inflamed Andrew Baxter sufficiently to make him confiscate written evidence of his wife's 'infidelity' and head for the settlement - where according to Annie she

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<sup>110</sup> Jill Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: The Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth Century Australia*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984, pp. 125-126.

<sup>111</sup> Annie Baxter, *Journal*, 7 January, 7 February 1844, Frost 1984, pp. 135, 144. After they separated Annie needed to construct Massie in her journals as a roue. She attributed to him the words 'a man cannot be too dissipated in some ways before marriage' and, in the week after she parted from him for good, quoted her brother William as having said '[for a man] "to be wild and a roue is only *natural* "', after which she added - "He appears to coincide with another person I once knew".

<sup>112</sup> Peter T. Cominos, 'Innocent Femina Sensualis in Unconscious Conflict' in Vicinus, 1973, p. 170. Cominos claimed that in the nineteenth century 'unimpassioned' women (chaste flirts) 'failed to express both libidinal and aggressive impulses in the same activity and within the framework of the same relationship'.

and Massie had been having a 'heavenly' time - in order to confront his wife and bring her home.<sup>113</sup>

Annie wrote that, although she and Andrew argued bitterly on the way home it was not until they reached Yesabba that 'the most terrible disturbance I ever witnessed' broke out. These scenes in which Annie claimed her husband verbally abused her in 'dreadful language' - worse than that used on women of 'the lowest description' - struck her, forcibly attempted to reclaim his conjugal rights, and, 'even threatened & attempted to cut [her] throat', appear to have continued throughout the whole of the month of June.<sup>114</sup> During this strife-torn month Annie, in fear for her life, wrote to her brother and her uncle in England requesting her passage money home, and Andrew wrote to Massie threatening him with a court action if he did not stay away from his wife. As Annie claimed Massie had told her he had taken the job of Commissioner in order to 'pay off his debts', this was a very real deterrent which succeeded in convincing Massie he should stay well away from Andrew Baxter's wife.<sup>115</sup>

Unaware of Massie's decision to keep away from her, in July 1843 Annie arranged to spend a week in the settlement with Mrs McLeod in the hope of seeing Massie, the 'dear friend and one whose advice I would take sooner, than anyone else in the world', only to find - as Andrew had been well aware - that Massie was elsewhere. She wrote on her return home: '*Everybody* tried their persuasive powers [to prevent her from returning to her abusive husband] .. Fool that I am, without advice from one quarter, I have returned!'<sup>116</sup>

Given that Annie had had many romantic love relationships before which had not caused Andrew to become violent, it would appear that Andrew believed that during the period when Annie visited Port Macquarie that Annie and Massie as well as having what Annie described as 'nice walks & such a ride!' may also have had sexual relations. Either that or he believed that Annie and Massie intended to make a life together - and that was something which he had no intention of letting happen. Prior to 1852 the law in New South Wales gave a husband the right to force his wife to cohabit with him by the simple means of issuing a writ of Habeas Corpus against anyone who gave her shelter. As she was slowly and painfully to

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<sup>113</sup> Frost, 1992, p. 74. If Andrew Baxter had sued Robert Massie for 'criminal conversation' the pages of Annie's journal would have served as evidence against him in court. In 1845 Annie claimed that the fear of being charged with C. C. was causing men to shun her when Andrew was away.

<sup>114</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 28 January 1844, Frost 1984, p. 143. Just at this time .. (June 1843) I was out in this Wilderness, enduring tortures'. Annie Baxter, Journal, July 1843, Frost, 1984, pp. 101, 102.

<sup>115</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 27 October, 17 November 1843, Frost, 1984, pp. 118, 121.

<sup>116</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, July 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 103.

realise, Annie's hope of making a better life with another man were dependent upon her husband being prepared to let her go and her lover being prepared to sacrifice everything for her. If Annie had wished to divorce her husband she would have needed a great deal of money, self-confidence and incontestable proof of his guilt in rape, bestiality, sodomy, or in adultery linked with incest, bigamy, cruelty or desertion.<sup>117</sup> Andrew was well aware that Annie could not and would not divorce him; that he had the law and society on his side.

The antagonism Andrew felt towards Massie was probably not only about jealousy. As Commissioner for Crown Lands Massie served as the local Protector for Aborigines and hence controlled the Border Police in the Port Macquarie area. This enlargement of the office of Crown Lands Commissioner had been instigated by Governor Gipps in 1839 following the Myall creek massacres in the hope of preventing squatters committing further violence against and exploitation of Aborigines in rural New South Wales. It could be said that the squatter Captain Andrew Baxter - who probably assisted in hunts against Aboriginal men and who definitely had sexual relations with Aboriginal women and sold illegal liquor on his property - and the 'friend to Aborigines', their official Protector, Robert Massie, were on opposite sides of the fence. Annie claimed she had known Massie when young so it is possible that like Andrew he had a military background. Her choice of Massie as lover was very probably related - in the absence of her brother - to her need to have an authority figure to help protect her from, and take her side against, her violent husband. This is confirmed by the fact that after she accompanied her husband to Port Fairy Annie continued to encourage the attentions of men in positions of authority until her brother, Captain William Hadden, gained a transfer to Tasmania - after which she increasingly put herself under his protection.<sup>118</sup>

Although the behaviour of both Andrew Baxter and Robert Massie would seem to point to something more serious than a romantic dalliance between Annie and her 'lover', it is Annie's reactions to Massie and to the events of this time, which, added to cryptic references about relationships and children which she made in her journals over the following months, makes such a reading a possibility. Because Andrew had proved himself capable of invading the privacy of her journals, at this time Annie either wrote especially for his eyes, or as became more usual, in an allusive form that only she or someone to whom she explained her

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<sup>117</sup> Randall, 1989, pp. 189 - 191.

<sup>118</sup> Margaret James, 'Not Bread But a Stone: Women and Divorce in Colonial Victoria', in Grimshaw, McConville, McEwen, 1985, p. 48. At that time in New South Wales although a woman could obtain judicial separation from her husband on the grounds of adultery plus cruelty or two years separation, within its terms she could not legally choose a domicile separate from him.

entries could readily understand. She claimed that writing in her journal was a relief to her feelings, and it clearly was, for during this difficult period Annie wrote a record of her life that she hoped would one day be read by Robert Massie, the man whom she loved.<sup>119</sup> Because her journal entries were written with an eye to gaining Robert's love, sympathy and admiration, in them Annie catalogued the woes inflicted upon her by what she represented as an unfaithful and excessively violent husband, veering between imagining a future for herself in Britain with her uncle, and one as her brother William's housekeeper living in the vicinity of Massie.<sup>120</sup> Although Annie fantasised about having a new life she was afraid it would never happen, possibly even seeing herself at her own or Andrew's funeral when she wrote: 'I am making my clothes to go ... but I often think that I shall never wear them for so happy a purpose'.<sup>121</sup>

Annie claimed Andrew responded to her threat to leave him by making counter threats of suicide and by 'annoying' her to 'sleep with him' before she departed. Annie declared she was outraged at Andrew's suggestion because:

He knows very well that after having had four miscarriages and not having for so long a time been in the way of having more - that I should naturally be *enceinte* immediately - He would then lay it to my conduct on board ship going home - But I had advice from one older party - on no account to humour him in this - There was no occasion for giving in - for I am not of a prostitute disposition - & this would be mere prostitution ... My mind frequently dwells on a lovely spot which we passed going to N. England - it was a beautiful bend of the McLeay - and Mr Massie & I had advanced before the rest of the party - I recollect saying, "How I would like to live here with my horse, my dog, & black boy to shoot and & fish for me!!" My companion's remark amused me considerably at the time.<sup>122</sup>

It would be a mistake to take these quite complex statements at their face value. Annie had begun the entry 'This he [Andrew] can see with all my heart - and I trust he will like it'. The first part of the entry could be a reply to a jeer which her husband had directed at her that if she was pregnant to Massie and went back to England she would have to live with the social disgrace of being known to have conceived a child outside her marriage.<sup>123</sup> It could also bear traces of a belief in Annie that it was because she had been deprived of sex for so long that she had fallen

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<sup>119</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 17 November 1843, 'I wonder if ever this will be read by the person to whom I gave my other notebooks? I hope so', 31 December 1843, 'I was going to send away my journal to the other three Vols'. Frost, 1984, pp. 121, 134.

<sup>120</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 26 October, 7 November 1843, Frost, 1984, pp. 115, 118. Because William's wife had tuberculosis during this period Annie allowed herself to hope that her brother would join her in the colonies as 'a bachelor'. In the event William's wife did not die until 1848, two years after she and William arrived in Hobart.

<sup>121</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, July 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 103.

<sup>122</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, July 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 103.

<sup>123</sup> Mason 1994, p. 67.

pregnant. The second part of her statement appears to have been included in order to inflame Andrew's jealousy, flatter Massie if he should ever read it, and rehearsing the belief that at one time Massie (metaphorically her 'black' boy) had enjoyed the thought of making provision for her.

As time slowly passed Annie, in dislocated and undated entries in her journal, recorded that Andrew was still given to sudden outbreaks of jealous rage, that he watched her every move and that he continued to offer her verbal and physical abuse. At that time Annie wrote less frequently in her journal than at any time since she had been in the colonies, claiming that she did not know what day it was and that '[s]omehow all the interest I took in this book is gone! I can scarcely find a word to put in it'. Nevertheless she did record that she feared she would not be able to leave her husband before October, and that she had declined invitations to stay in town because 'it would cause so much talk & there has been so much of that already'. She also stated that Andrew asked her:

[I]f I would not like to have *one* child? I said 'No, I would never have a child by a father I detested! 'Then whom would you like it to be?' said he - How often I think of the day in which it was said to me 'You would not mind having two children would you?'<sup>124</sup>

It is not clear how much of this was intended as marital warfare and how much reflects that Annie was living, and needed to live, in a fantasy world wherein, what had ever been highly unlikely, she and Massie would have a future together. Not having heard from Massie for some time made Annie oscillate between doubt, and the (magical) hope that if she stayed in the vicinity long enough they might end up together. She wrote:

William is going abroad again - I trust it may be here - for I should then return here & somehow I cannot endure leaving it - for "where the treasure is, there will your heart be also".<sup>125</sup>

In September a 'basket' arrived from Massie but as 'no word accompanied it' Annie began to fear the worst:

If I lose this one friendship, I am indeed wretched! Perhaps my Uncle may come to my aid - I hope so - Oh! that I had never come to this place! I will, if I go home, tell my Uncle that I would rather have 3,000 now, than 20,000 at his death - for then I can assist those I love and be comparatively happy - I shall never be entirely so again.<sup>126</sup>

Annie claimed in her journal that friends continued to beg her to leave her husband, but, she wrote 'I cannot'. Nor, she wrote, could she share with anyone the 'disagreeables' which had occurred between her and Andrew because she would be 'ashamed to name them'. She did however record

<sup>124</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, July 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 105.

<sup>125</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, July 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 105.

<sup>126</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, July 1843, 3 September 1843, Frost, 1984, pp. 104, 105.



that Andrew had destroyed presents which Massie had given her and that he said he intended taking a 'cherie amie' with him to Port Fairy. Andrew's fury was fuelled by the knowledge that if Annie succeeded in leaving him her uncle would expect back the money which he had invested in cattle on Yesabba - and it was cattle Andrew needed if he was to stock his new run. At a time when the economy was collapsing and Andrew Baxter felt forced to sell Yesabba 'for any money' the money loaned him by Annie's uncle was all that stood between him and bankruptcy.

Consequently, in order to preclude even the slightest contact between his wife and Robert Massie, Andrew watched Annie's every move, delaying leaving Yesabba for some time in order to be sure his wife remained confined on it. When eventually he found a trip away unavoidable Andrew instructed a male convict servant to make sure his wife did not have visitors or leave the property. In outrage at her confinement Annie mused on the 'ecstasy' that love between a husband and wife 'must be', denying that she thought that 'stolen sweets' were 'the sweetest' and claiming that she longed for the 'uninterrupted intercourse' of a happy marriage. The day after this entry, feeling 'broken hearted and alone' Annie made a last attempt to contact Massie by returning two of his books with an accompanying note. Not having had a reply Annie then cogitated on the fate of a 'dear girl idolised by more than one' whom she knew who had had a child outside of marriage. She wrote:

A man who would betray the trust of *such* a girl, does not deserve the name! ... From my very soul I pity & feel for her - and I don't love her one iota less! We are all subjected to trials in some way, and God help her, hers must be a bitter one indeed - She was the most remarkably ladylike woman, I have ever met - and all gentleness and placidity. <sup>127</sup>

During this period of her life this was Annie's way of recording events which happened to her - projecting her difficulties onto other women and discursively sympathising with, and defending those women. In sympathising with the girl who had been 'betrayed' by a man, Annie was recognising the unfairness of a system which condoned women sleeping with men they expected to marry and then ostracised them if the marriage plans went awry.<sup>128</sup> Still not having heard from Massie, in early October Annie who, had she conceived in April, would have been nearly five months pregnant, was at last allowed by Andrew - who, unlike Annie, was aware that Massie was elsewhere - to accompany him to the settlement. During her visit - which she survived with the help of laudanum - Annie wrote as if her gaiety was unimpaired. Once home however she could not keep dark thoughts from intruding. She began by pondering on an aborted foetus which she had seen in the settlement:

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<sup>127</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 30 September 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 111.

<sup>128</sup> Mason, 1994, p. 67. Illegitimate births among middle class women generally resulted from failed marriage intentions.

[T]he poor little creature - ... Its little hands and feet looked too large for the remainder of its body - Strange - what thoughts it engendered in me - I looked at it - and thought, supposing it had been the child of some idolised father; every hope centred on it - and then to lose it! My soul would have been bowed down to the grave - The bare idea made me wretched - All my warmest best feelings are smothered and lost - and so let them remain - God knows what is best for me - and to his Almighty power I daily pray for that peace which the world cannot give.<sup>129</sup>

Annie reported herself as having defended Massie from criticism while in Port Macquarie. She continued to mention him in her journal - cogitating on how she had heard that his garden was looking well - this led her to conjure up the wishful fantasy of her dog, 'dear Ada', soon having such a 'snug place of it' at her uncle's home in England where she fancied she saw her 'running about the lawns, and spoiled more than now'. This unlikely vision, added to the ride she had made, caused her head ache so badly that she was 'obliged to lie down'. Much to her husband's amusement, Annie had begun to read the bible:

[And] notwithstanding my prayers being inferior in words to those there expressed - still they are as fervent, and I trust my Heavenly Father will hear them and forgive my iniquities - We are all liable to sin - and my unfortunate disposition leads me astray where others would be safe - It has been my misfortune to have had no Mother to control and counsel me - but it is too late now - I'm wretched.<sup>130</sup>

Massie was away but Annie hoped for his return 'very soon', claiming people were saying she was 'becoming quite stout'. She was tearful and finding it hard to sleep at night, writing of the anguish she felt because she had seen a woman laughing at her child.

I began to feel the tears rolling down my face .. That a Mother should laugh at the want of intellect, or *any* failing in her child seems to me truly unnatural.<sup>131</sup>

To add to Annie's distress when Massie returned she heard gossip which related to her relationship with him and on 14 November her servants refused to work for her any more, giving her extra work which 'fagged [her] near to death'. To add insult to injury Massie, as magistrate - he might have been afraid to do more - contented himself with fining her servants for their defection: Annie expressed fiery indignation at his lack of consideration. Ten days later she had forgiven him:

[S]adly jaded ... I feel as tho' I could put my head \_\_\_\_ ch bien! What I said on the beach one day - but the answer! oh! when shall I hear those words again? Never - I cannot help being wretched - It is a terrible thing to be alone in the world!<sup>132</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 18 October, 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 114.

<sup>130</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 24 October, 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 116.

<sup>131</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 7 November 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 119.

<sup>132</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 17 November 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 121.

Her thoughts then turned to disgraced women she had known, beginning with a married woman who had a child to a man who was not her husband. Annie claimed scandal had it that the lady and her servant 'made away with it' and that after the lady had been shipped home to England in disgrace she, Annie, 'often took her part ... in Coteries of ladies'. Next she wrote a long account of a married woman who had had a relationship with a gentleman not her husband. 'We all thought they were talking "Platonics"', she claimed, until she herself surprised the couple having sex together and told the woman:

[O]ur relationship must end ... [for although] I pitied her from my soul - she must know how wrongly she had acted ... After that evening we never spoke - and altho' she called, I was not "at home"!

Two weeks after she found that Andrew had again been reading her journal Annie wrote in a way which inferred that she had only ever 'almost' wished to have had sex - or go away with - her lover.

I went to sleep and dreamed - Oh! what I would have given anything in the world to come true - part of it, was what has happened, and part what I almost wished - It was but a dream.<sup>133</sup>

In her journal Annie mused about whether or not she could love a child, reassuring herself that she would love her own - 'if'. It is clear that at this time Annie was under great strain. She reported her husband saying that 'my face would be well enough, if my eyes had not the expression they had - it must be a strange one'. She complained of feeling the heat of summer as never before and of being 'excessively tired'. It is at this point that Annie, who had refused more than once to go to the settlement, took to wandering 'a good deal alone in the bush around here' where, she wrote, she found the wildflowers to be '*simply* beautiful. We should love flowers and children; as they are so *fresh* from God!'<sup>134</sup> Encouraged by her husband to accompany him to a neighbour's in order to have her horse shod, Annie set out on 16 December but turned back because she felt unwell. On the following day she complained 'the pain in my stomach has amounted to agony at times today, and laudanum even has been unable to abate it'. The next day found Annie still in such intense pain that she asked a neighbour to 'bleed her'. She then wrote no more in her journal until the 31 December when she resumed with:

I am just recovering from a very serious illness - so much so, that for two days I considered I was never to rise from my bed again! I had but *one* inquiry for me - and that from Mrs Ducat.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 24 November, 1843, 12 December 1843, Frost, 1984, pp. 122-123, 128.

<sup>134</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 16 December, pp. 130, 131.

<sup>135</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 31 December 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 133.

It is possible that Annie was here obliquely describing a miscarriage. Whatever occurred it must have been fairly serious because when it was happening Annie claimed that not only did she think she would die but that she'd hoped that she would do so. After the event a female friend came to stay with her 'for some time'.<sup>136</sup> If Annie lost a baby conceived in April the infant would have been within a month of full term when she miscarried. It seems unlikely that Andrew would have allowed his wife to stay in his house if he thought she was carrying the child of another man. One possibility was that, despite the denials in her journal, Annie occasionally had intercourse with her husband. On the other hand Andrew consistently demonstrated a strong need for Annie and for the finances which he had access to through her - seemingly not even wishing to separate from her years later despite her increasingly overt expressions of contempt. Also Annie, who was no novice when it came to marital warfare, skilfully used not only her Uncle's money but Andrew's tarnished reputation and his guilt at having slept with Aboriginal women, white servants and prostitutes as ways of ensuring that she got what she wanted. Three weeks after her 'illness' Annie recorded in her journal that her female servant complained to her that when Annie had been in her bed 'hardly expecting to live' Andrew had offered her cattle if she would sleep with him, and that at Wollowbie Hill Andrew's 'love affair with the black woman [was] repeated as a fine joke'.<sup>137</sup> Doubtless she also said the same things to Andrew. All in all her husband might have decided that, provided Annie promised to stay with him, he would keep her affair with Massie private. Annie on the other hand, though she clearly hated having to rely on Andrew's 'protection', was aware that in the short term she had no other option.

Ever resilient, Annie, though still unwell, retained some hope that her relationship with Massie was not over. Though she began her journal entry for the New Year with 'Memory harrows my very soul ... I know I am very sinful', she quickly recovered herself sufficiently to write, 'I hope I may lose some of my *old* habits & follies - not all tho' - for I would not part with those for which I have been, and am loved - May the Almighty bless and protect all those I love'.<sup>138</sup> Apart from anything else Annie needed to believe in her love for Massie in order to retain her self-respect.

In February Annie agreed to leave Yesabba and accompany her husband to Port Fairy in order to help him establish himself there. For some time Annie had been having a vivid recurring (and probably opium induced) nightmare which threatened her waking sense of herself and made her

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<sup>136</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 31 December 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 134.

<sup>137</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 7 January 1844, Frost, 1984, p. 136.

<sup>138</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 31 December 1843, Frost, 1984, p. 134.

deeply depressed. In her dream she always found herself in a 'beautiful house, well furnished - but chiefly composed of bedrooms [with] large beds - always occupied by pretty women'.

[The] same old ugly woman, shows me first into the bath, and then into a handsomely furnished bed room - which she tells me is *mine* - I then begin to undress, and she retires - but all of a sudden seem to wonder *where* I am, and why? I then throw myself on a couch opposite to my bed; and while I am there I hear a voice lamenting so much to find *me* there - at the same time using the most passionate entreaties for me to return *home* - I look up and see - and then know *why* I am there - ("A man cannot be too dissipated in some ways, before marriage"!!) The house is one of Vice, and I am one of its votaries! And so finishes my "dream" - May it always remain one! <sup>139</sup>

It appears that Annie was here remembering something which Robert Massie had once said to her - that a man could not have too much sexual experience before marriage - and turning it upon herself as the prostitute who was judged by him for having satisfied his sexual needs.<sup>140</sup> A dream which, apart from reflecting her fears that she was a 'fallen woman', succinctly expressed both a desire for sex and self-judgement for having that desire. From this time there is a new note of bitterness and asperity in Annie's journal entries - she appears to have had no compunction in having her beloved Ada's puppies drowned, contenting herself with the terse comment 'she is in a sad way about them', and, on hearing of a 'poor girl ... in the family way', wrote:

[T]he horrible man will not marry her - now that he has gained what he desired - Oh! man! Where is the generosity in your composition? [Man's] are the feelings of a Sensualist - and so that he only obtains that which he wishes for, he cares not what ruin he may have been the cause of.<sup>141</sup>

The new Annie had decided that rather than go by sea to Port Fairy she would accompany her husband on the long trip overland. This, she wrote, was because the sea journey was expensive, because she little cared what became of her, because she wanted to see the country and because she believed a 'bush trip' might 'recruit' her. Having decided to accompany Andrew to Port Fairy Annie wrote to Massie asking him to return her journal and received from him what she judged to be a 'cavalier' and 'ill judged' reply in which she could detect 'neither common politeness, nor the smallest feeling on his side'. Worse was to come when, with Andrew 'very ill' with 'rheumatism', Annie spent an unsupervised week in Port Macquarie during which she saw Massie most days among the holiday crowd. On the 20 January she wrote that it was 'the first time that I have seen him *in public* for nine months .. [and] It would not pain me much if I never did so again! ... nine months have made a change in his cold, cold heart'. Massie continued to be polite but distant and when her last day arrived and she still had not had a chance to speak with him in private Annie expressed despair at the loss of her hopes:

<sup>139</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 7 January 1844, Frost, 1984, p. 135.

<sup>140</sup> Poovey, 1988, p. 139. It is interesting that Annie dreamed of herself as a prostitute rather than a 'fallen woman' - which would have been more appropriate. This may have been because fallen women were represented as powerless, dependent victims; a role Annie would have been loathe to accept.

All my thinking ended in wishing I had met with a good husband and then all of my heartaches would have been spared in a great measure - I cried myself nearly into hysterics ... [Marion] advises me not to go to Port Phillip - Only one person *could* have prevented me, & that one person takes no interest in me now - I knew so well it was mere Passion - but thought at least I had not been mistaken in a *true & sincere* friend - All my dreams are passed!<sup>142</sup>

However later that same night Annie managed to exchange a few private words of farewell with Massie and to shake his hand 'for the last time in this country or any other'. She wrote: 'Thus ends the Comedy, or Tragedy - for it has been both to me'.<sup>143</sup> Although Massie contacted Annie in 1849 when he heard that she and Andrew Baxter had separated and explained to her that he had avoided her in order to protect her, Annie never forgave her lover for what she experienced as his defection.<sup>144</sup> Perhaps Massie's relationship with Annie was a tragi-comedy for him as well - certainly he did not marry for some time after 1851 when Annie left her husband behind in the colonies and sailed for England - his first child being born in Port Fairy in April 1855, just three months after Andrew Baxter's death.<sup>145</sup>

**'I had my old dream last night, and woke in torments!'** <sup>146</sup>

Annie was relieved to find that, despite her sadness at parting from Massie, she only dreamt the dream which made her life a misery once while she was in Port Macquarie. On the 7 February however Annie, feeling low and suffering from prolonged uterine bleeding - for which, despite their dire prognostications of probable cancer, she would not allow Doctors to examine her<sup>147</sup> - made the mistake of thinking tenderly of the 'beloved' brother with whom she replaced Massie in her thoughts. She wrote:

William's 31st Birthday - May our good Almighty preserve him to see many more - How I do idolise him - it is almost sinful! I never did meet with such a man in my life. <sup>148</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 8 January 1844, Frost 1984, p. 137.

<sup>142</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 27 January 1844, Frost, 1984, p. 140.

<sup>143</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 27 January 1844, Frost, 1984, p. 142.

<sup>144</sup> Frost 1992, p137, Frost, 1984, p. 101.

<sup>145</sup> H. J. Gibbney & Ann G. Smith (eds.) *A Biographical Register, 1788- 1939*, vol. II, L-Z, p. 88.

<sup>146</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 31 March 1846, Frost, 1992, p. 80. 'I had my old dream last night, and woke in torments! ... the only difference was the principal Actor in the scene'.

<sup>147</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 19 February 1844, Frost, 1984, p. 146. '[The Drs] think to frighten me by saying I *shall*, or rather *have* a Cancer'. Randell, 1989, p. 200.

<sup>148</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 27 January 1844, 7 February 1844, Frost, 1984, pp. 142, 143 - 144.

Such 'almost sinful' thoughts brought on a return of her dreaded dream of becoming a prostitute which 'continued so long' it made her miserable. 'Oh!' she wrote, 'I must never be so low, as that comes to, surely? - I should never *doubt!*'<sup>149</sup>

At this time in her life Annie regretted ever having come to the colonies, writing 'I've endured enough misery in this colony, God Knows'.<sup>150</sup> It is clear from Annie's writing that although her husband's violent reaction to her relationship with Massie terrified her, what caused her most grief was the belief, formed when Massie treated her with a 'cold, cold heart' that he had never loved her.<sup>151</sup> Apart from the personal hurt of this - and her terror that she would be abandoned by both husband and lover - by Annie's own standard of sex without love constituting a 'sin', if she believed Massie had slept with her without loving her or intending to marry her she would be forced to see herself as a prostitute; the very thing she was afraid of becoming if she slept with a husband whom she no longer loved.

Annie's sad experience with Robert Massie left their mark, setting her against physicality and making her more inclined to project her self-disgust onto others. Five years after she parted from Robert Massie Annie wrote of Andrew's protestations of love for her:

Love! the feeling in me is so sacred, so pure, so carefully bestowed by me. And is this the hackneyed term for vile & disgusting Passion? How proud I feel within myself when I think how I have spurned such love! how I *know* that whatever I may have done wrong in the eyes of the World - my own love is still *my own!* ... Oh! nobody will ever know the bitter temptations & Trials I've had - the offers *sotto voce* that I've had - and refused. No! If I loved, I would give up heart & soul - but not because I merely had to contend with Poverty, unkindness, & even brutality.<sup>152</sup>

Annie left the Macleay River reluctantly, believing herself 'mad' to accompany an estranged and violent husband to Port Fairy; but with the defection of her lover, her brother in Britain, a general recession in the Australian colonies which threatened her husband with insolvency, no funds of her own, and a vision of the fate of abandoned wives foremost in her mind, Annie asked her imaginary audience 'but what, oh, what can I do?' Having made herself distraught thinking about the future, Annie despairingly concluded that her only hope lay in adopting the role of a 'good' wife in 'all but the *one* instance' (presumably 'the one instance' referred to her refusal to have sex with her

<sup>149</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 14 February 1844, Frost, 1984, p. 145.

<sup>150</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 4 March 1844, Frost, 1984, p. 148.

<sup>151</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 20 January 1844, Frost, 1984, p. 139.

<sup>152</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 30 May 1849, p. 124.

husband) and accompanying her husband to Port Fairy in the hope of helping him recoup their finances.<sup>153</sup>

It was no accident that Annie's fear of becoming a fallen woman was expressed through dreams - in the nineteenth century women's conditioning ensured that 'the battle between sensual desire and duty was waged at an unconscious level'.<sup>154</sup> Because in the nineteenth century uncontrolled desire in women was identified with the 'female malady' of madness, Annie's fear that she could not control her desirous dreams triggered the additional terror that she might go mad.<sup>155</sup> As part of the representation of female sexual desire as madness it was claimed that if women induced (or spontaneously had) a miscarriage they would suffer sterility, nymphomania, 'the evils' of galloping cancer, or mania leading to suicide.<sup>156</sup>

Representations of madness in women in the literature of the time commonly featured women who had been driven mad by their unrequited passion for men. Such representations tended to fall into three stereotypes: the sexually charged suicidal 'love melancholy' of the ladylike Ophelia, the docile deranged preoccupations of the abandoned servant girl or 'Crazy Jane', and the violence of the retaliatory 'Lucy' who openly expressed rage against the man who had spurned her. Such widely disseminated images of 'mad' women meant that while Massie continued to shun Annie and she continued to think of him to the exclusion of all else, she may well have seen aspects of all three stereotypes in her own behaviour.<sup>157</sup>

It was to stifle such fears that Annie threw herself into the work of helping Andrew establish Yambuck. Though Annie continued to have her male admirers at Port Fairy - including the twenty three year old Tom Brown who later claimed that he had been 'cheerfully' prepared to break his neck if it meant being 'pitied and petted' by her,<sup>158</sup> while at Yambuck Annie developed a new persona. This included wearing men's clothing and accessories - her husband's red shirt, straw hat and a black belt to hold balls, caps, cartridges and a pistol - and pantaloons so that she could help

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<sup>153</sup> Annie Baxter, *Journal*, 5 March 1844, Frost, 1984, p. 149, 30 May 1849, Frost, 1992, p. 124. Frost interpreted the 'in all but one instance' to mean her relationship with Massie. Both readings are possible, and, given how the mind works, do not have to be self-exclusive.

<sup>154</sup> Cominos in Vicinus, 1973, p. 156.

<sup>155</sup> Showalter, 1985, pp. 3, 74-75. The nineteenth century considered madness in men and women was caused by the 'feminine' - that is that which was irrational and close to the body and the earth, as against the 'masculine' which was represented as reasonable and close to culture and the mind.

<sup>156</sup> Randall, 1989, p. 200.

<sup>157</sup> Showalter, 1985, pp. 11-17. Annie Baxter, *Journal*, 14 May 1845, Frost, 1984, p. 72. When her husband had been drinking and was abusive Annie would fight back by boxing his ears or (on one occasion) hitting him across the face with his pistol.

<sup>158</sup> Boldrewood in Webby, 1989, p. 140.



with the running of the station.<sup>159</sup> This was partly because Andrew was often ill or away, partly because Annie wanted the station to be successful in order to make separation from her husband a possibility, partly because she enjoyed the work, and partly because she took pleasure in her 'heroic' image as a 'feminine' woman who invoked male admiration by invading 'masculine' territory.<sup>160</sup> She wrote: '[t]here is a great excitement in cattle hunting; and I glory in it'. Annie claimed she loved to be in the saddle for whatever reason, writing of riding home after long hours spent chasing recalcitrant cattle in the following terms:

How merrily I rode back! all annoyances forgotten, and singing as in days of yore! my Nag putting back his ears at each dog as he passed him, and then galloping up to them! It was such a bright beautiful morning; one that makes us feel the presence of God in all Nature - One such as we remember in our childhood - and like it, without a Cloud!

It must be borne in mind that to some extent Annie's construction of herself as a 'genteel' Calamity Jane was largely just that - a discursive construction which became integral to her self-identity - however it was also an identity which caused her to modify her actual 'feminine' behaviour during the many years in which she lived on cattle stations.<sup>161</sup> Annie claimed that on Yambuck she treated the station animals for their ailments, supervised the men in the running of the station, and, when it proved necessary - accompanying them, 'her black boys' or her male friends on forays to punish Aborigines for spearing stock. She did this partly for the excitement and partly because she saw it as part of her role / identity.<sup>162</sup>

Tacey considered that cross dressing and 'masculine' activity in colonial women represented not only a conscious attempt to exchange the restrictions imposed upon them as women for the freedom and advantages enjoyed by men, but as an unconscious response to the 'intensified masculinity of the cultural ethos of the time', that is to the increasing masculinisation of Australian society. To his mind the exaggerated attitude of strength and power which the 'masculine protest' demonstrated, served as a defence against the assault of the elements of pioneer existence and from a fear of being weak and dependent which such an assault triggered in the unconscious. In this reckoning a need to repress anxieties relating to weakness and dependency resulted in an

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<sup>159</sup> Annie Baxter, *Journal*, 24 September 1844, 25 April 1845, 4 June 1846, Frost, 1992 pp. 65, 70, 86.

<sup>160</sup> James Mallet, *The Casterton Times*, 1899 in Frost, 1992, p. 119. Mallet described having seen Annie in the forties as 'a lady riding a splendid horse and following her were three or four dogs, while she carried a brace of horse pistols and a big dingo's tail on her side ... [she] had been out hunting with her dogs and had caught the dingo'. This is clearly a myth in the making.

<sup>161</sup> Annie Daw'bin, *Journal*, 12 October, 7 February 1858, Frost, 1992, pp. 220, 221. Annie reported her second husband as saying after she'd helped him with the cattle: "I'm blessed if the Missus isn't as good and better than many men". Though it is doubtful that her husband ever said this, Annie clearly did do a lot of cattle work on Yambuck and on the station on which she lived with her second husband.

<sup>162</sup> Annie Baxter, *Journal*, 21 May, 4 June 1846, 7 June 1847, Frost, 1992, pp. 85, 86-87, 98.

intensified projection of negative psychic elements upon people, places and things.<sup>163</sup> Aborigines, in being associated in European thought with primordial human origins, were the most likely recipients of negative projections. Spectres of the inherent 'treachery' of Aborigines, of cannibalism and of mass Aboriginal uprisings were triggered by the (to Europeans) random and arbitrary nature of Aboriginal retaliative acts; intensified by the repressed anxiety and guilt of the colonists, and used to justify 'redemptive' acts of European violence such as the 'bushwhack'.<sup>164</sup> Despite the existence of a plurality of colonial discourses relating to Aborigines, in time the dominant mythologies became the inferiorising ones of the 'ignoble' savage or degraded specimen of humanity and the 'romantic' savage or 'grown up child' - both of which denied Aborigines a social reality and rendered them as 'other' - a knowable and recognisable totality under the semantic control of the colonisers.<sup>165</sup> Mary Thomas summed up the position most colonial women adopted when she described Aborigines as a 'harmless, inoffensive people ... extremely ignorant, [they] rank amongst the lowest of the human people .. [the men] are naturally indolent [and] leave what little work there is to do ..entirely to their women'.<sup>166</sup>

In colonial societies the idea of the 'wild man' (and to a much lesser extent wild woman) as a potential nemesis always present and threatening just out of sight, just over the horizon, in the nearby forest, desert, mountains or hills where he waited to carry off helpless women and children and do unspeakable things to them, embodied fear of the human potential for regression. The wild man of European thinking could be either a giant or a dwarf who - as desire incarnate - was thought to be as fast and cunning as the wolf and as devious as the fox. He represented the image of the human released from social control; the person in whom libidinal impulses had gained ascendancy.<sup>167</sup> Faced with a 'primitive' landscape in which wild animals and wild men in the form of Aborigines, bushrangers and convicts were thought to lurk, strongly feminised women with their limited experience of the outdoors and their repressed physicality and disowned 'masculinity' - such as Georgiana Molloy, Ellen Viveash and Louisa Clifton - could experience real terror.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Tacey, 1995, pp. 52-3.

<sup>164</sup> Morris in Attwood & Arnold, 1992, pp. 72-85.

<sup>165</sup> Smith, 1969, p. 326.

<sup>166</sup> Mary Thomas, letter to her brother George, 7 February 1839, in *The Diary and Letters of Mary Thomas: Being a Record of the Early Days of South Australia*, Evan Killin (ed.), W.K. Thomas and Co., Adelaide, 1925, p. 13.

<sup>167</sup> Hayden White, 'The Forms of Wildness: Archaeology of an Idea', in Dudley & Novak, 1972, pp. 20, 21.

<sup>168</sup> Kolodny, 1984, p. 206. Wolves had the same connotations as dingoes in American colonial history.

Ellen Viveash, May 1834, Statham, 1981, p. 73. As an insight into nineteenth century women's suppression of conscious recognition of the 'animalistic' in human behaviour, Freudians might be interested in the very 'genteel' Ellen's 'innocent' recording of her husband's use of instruments to dilate her anus as a regular and ongoing treatment of her chronic constipation.

Louisa Clifton wrote of her first night in a tent in the colonies when she felt an indistinguishable nebulous fear of wild men / wild dogs:

[T]o hear in the dead stillness of night a cry like a wild beast, and presently pat, pat, round the tent, then the canvas shook as the creature sniffed against it ... My heart beat as I attempted to allay Mary's terror, lest it was a native coming in ... [there was nothing] but the canvas between one of them and our faces, as we lay on the ground close to it; and when I think of how lonely we were, how easily it might have come in at the entrance of the tent ... I wonder that we were not more intensely frightened than we were.<sup>169</sup>

It may be that the re-appearance in the imagination of settlers of the wild man (or alienated self) coincided with the colonisation of indigenous peoples by those who had been taught to feel guilt at inducing suffering in others.<sup>170</sup> Given that physical wilderness and moral wilderness are equated the wild man frequently acts as a negative point of reference for a population which wishes to stress the superiority of its 'civilised' culture.<sup>171</sup> In the early periods of settlement Aborigines were known to kill not only European men and their stock, but (occasionally) European women and children.<sup>172</sup> Such savage reprisals were taken for this by European men that after a time in their retaliatory acts Aborigines commonly targeted male shepherds and stock. However although they rarely killed European women, in attempting to duplicate gender relations from within their own society, 'wild' Aboriginal men often attempted to brow-beat European women who had been left without male protection. This represented an attempt to get what they wanted and / or receive the respect from women that was their due.<sup>173</sup> Jane MacGregor claimed that on such an occasion she had felt terrified and in fear of her life.<sup>174</sup> Georgiana Molloy recorded that a similar incident gave her a 'great fright'.<sup>175</sup> In frontier situations European women's terror of 'wild' dogs and 'wild' men thus had some grounding in reality.

Yambuck bordered an area which saw the most violent and prolonged racial conflict of the Western District - and Annie was there in the mid to late 1840s when racial conflict and violence

<sup>169</sup> Louisa Clifton, Journal, 16 June 1841, BL, 398/A.

<sup>170</sup> White, in Dudley and Novak, 1972, p. 36.

<sup>171</sup> Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1978, p. 181.

<sup>172</sup> Henry Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People*, Penguin, Ringwood, Australia, 1995, pp. 64, 107.

<sup>173</sup> The debate over the nature and extent of the power which Aboriginal women enjoyed in traditional Aboriginal society goes on. While there is considerable evidence for women's power in terms of food distribution, child rearing, women's rituals and reproductive life, it seems few would deny that Aboriginal women were denied access to the power to make decisions which affected the tribe as a whole.

<sup>174</sup> Mary Jane MacGregor, reminiscences of the 1840s in outback Victoria recorded by her daughter, MS 8453, La Trobe collection, SLV, in Frost, 1984, pp. 272-275. Mary told her daughter she rebuked an Aboriginal 'king's' dog and that in return 'the king' slapped her so hard that she was knocked to the ground. In consternation at the probable severity of reprisals the tribe delivered up their 'king', asking that he be 'beaten' by Mary's husband, 'the master'.

<sup>175</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Helen Story, 8 December 1834, B L, 3278A/2.

were at their greatest. The arrival of settlers to the area not only caused inter-racial violence but an increase in violence between tribes as they fought over shrinking territories / resources.<sup>176</sup> There was an Aboriginal camping place opposite Yambuck which resulted in large numbers of Aborigines crossing the Baxter's station - for instance in February 1846 when over a hundred Aborigines crossed the station on their way to a ceremonial dance. In 18 months Annie recorded 21 incidents which reflected Aboriginal discontent - the spearing of cattle and shepherds, men hanging around the house at night, the lighting of large fires on the run, and confrontations with settlers.<sup>177</sup> As well as this - as is usual at such times - local talk had it that the Aborigines were killing and eating Europeans in order to ingest their strength. In the face of all this Annie, who unlike Jane McGregor and Georgiana Molloy claimed that when she had first been aggressively confronted by a group of 'wild' adult male 'blacks' at Yesabba she had felt 'no fear', contented herself by recording the laconic 'I do not admire the idea of being eaten by savages'. In 1847 Annie watched an Aboriginal man being whipped - and thought the whipping 'justly given'.<sup>178</sup> Annie had the same attitude to Aborigines as the Aboriginal Protector, Robert Massie - distancing them through the 'romantic savage' stereotype, wherein she professed admiration for Aborigines but did not trust them to know what was best for themselves. Because she constructed herself as a military heroine she saw Aborigines as defeated warriors, writing of a group of 'wild blacks' she had seen when on a punitive expedition on Yambuck 'they are far from Cowards in their wild state ... a fine set of men were there today'.<sup>179</sup>

The fear of being eaten by 'wild' dogs and of being raped, killed and eaten by 'wild' men, are classic projections from an alienated unconscious attempting to communicate to the conscious mind anxieties and libidinal energies which demand expression / recognition. One of the peculiarities of the Australian context was the degree to which the image of the seductive and subversive *wildwoman* was resurrected during the convict era.<sup>180</sup> In order to avoid being negatively constructed as a sexually seductive / destructive or 'wild' woman Annie's response to threat from her unconscious was to construct herself as a 'masculine hero'. To ride her horse 'like a man' and

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<sup>176</sup> Susanne Davies, 'Aborigines, Murder and the Criminal Law in Early Port Phillip, 1841-1851', *Historical Studies*, vol. 22, no. 88, April 1987, pp. 313-335. Between 1836-1850 ninety six Aborigines were recorded as having been killed in ritual retribution. As such killings were often accompanied by removal of the kidney fat and ceremonial corroborees rumours of this practice contributed to white colonist's fears of cannibalism.

<sup>177</sup> Critchett, 1990, pp. 30, 110.

<sup>178</sup> Annie Baxter, 'Letter to Henrietta', May 1840 in Baxter Sketchbook, NL, 3276, in Frost 1984, p. 94. Annie Baxter, Journal, 27 June 1845, 28 March 1847, in Critchett, 1990, pp. 28, 110.

<sup>179</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 21 May 1846, Frost, 1992, p. 86. Morris, 1992, p. 84. Massie's official reports described the 'wild' Aborigines in the MacLeay region as 'harmless' and 'inoffensive' and in need of governmental care and control.

'hunt' and 'kill' her fear in the form of 'wild' animals and 'wild' men. While at Yambuck, cognisant of the damage which 'native dogs' were inflicting on her horses and stock, Annie claimed she shot dingos or caught them alive for use as foxes in the hunt - in one of her stories claiming she had personally tied a dingo which she had caught for this purpose to a tree.<sup>181</sup> Annie claimed she also shot 'wild' ducks and hunted kangaroos on horseback, using her pack of kangaroo dogs to corner the kangaroos so that she could shoot them.<sup>182</sup> In wishing to accompany men on kangaroo hunts and be in at 'the kill' Annie was like many 'feminine' colonial women.<sup>183</sup> The difference with Annie was that she tended to represent herself as having taken both an active and a working class role in the hunt.<sup>184</sup>

Imaginatively and discursively speaking Annie represented herself as a 'colonial' woman who conjoined the behaviour of a lady from the British fox hunting set with some of the characteristics of the working class Calamity Jane stereotype. Her construction of herself was thus a shadow version of Andrew Baxter - the heroic British military man who became a daring 'Aussie' squatter capable of taking on all that the Australian 'bush' could throw at him - including wild dogs and wild men. In reinventing herself Annie incorporated a (cross gendered) construction which in 'native-born' young men was labelled the 'wild colonial boy'.<sup>185</sup> In other words Annie's self-construction sensitive to the conflict which existed between 'competing ideals of masculinity', endorsed the ideal of masculinity of the bachelor 'Bushman' over the ideal of the 'Domestic Man',<sup>186</sup> and grafted this idealised form of 'masculinity' onto an intensified 'femininity'.

When in 1846 Annie's brother, Captain William Hadden - who was transferred to Hobart Town in 1844 - became trustee of the £2000 legacy left to Annie by her uncle James Hadden,<sup>187</sup> Annie began a five year process of using her brother's authority to help her conclude a financial

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<sup>180</sup> Hawkes, 1992, p. 36. Ann McGrath, 'Colonial Gender Relations at Port Jackson', *Australian Historical Studies*, October 1990, vol. 24, no. 95, pp. 189-206.

<sup>181</sup> The dingos Annie wrote of were no doubt the Aborigines' camp dogs. Annie liked to tell a good story. In Ann Baxter, *Memories of the Past*, in Webby, 1989, p. 129, Annie claimed she had once caught an 'old man forest' kangaroo by the tail in order to stop him escaping.

<sup>182</sup> Frost, 1992, p. 80.

<sup>183</sup> Georgiana McCrae, *Journal*, 19 May 1844, H. McCrae, 1934, p. 111.

<sup>184</sup> H. J. Frith, *Wildlife Conservation*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1973, pp. 196-8. In the colonies upper class hunter / sportsmen strongly resisted using native species as surrogates for British animals in their sporting activities.

<sup>185</sup> Jessie Augusta Francis, *Journal*, in *The Journal of a Colonial Lady*, Landsdown Press, Sydney, 1985 (1856) pp. 10-11. Young colonial-born women who lived in the country often found joy in the freedom of riding through the countryside and acting in a 'daring' fashion.

<sup>186</sup> Lake, 1986, pp. 116-31.

<sup>187</sup> Annie worked on her uncle for years before he died to have him appoint her brother and cousin rather than her husband trustees of her property. She did this by bombarding him with letters which related her husband's iniquities, infidelities and poor health.

settlement with, and separation from, her husband. During this period Annie lived in Hobart with her brother and his wife as much as she lived at Yambuck. When in the confines of Hobart Town as her brother's guest and later as his housekeeper, Annie returned to her endless flirtations and conspiracies, her reliance on laudanum and, at times, took on the role (beyond what her ill-health appears to have warranted) of the invalid. In Australian literature women are frequently represented as having been de-feminised by the bush and of suffering mental and physical deterioration as a consequence. On the other hand Annie bonded with the bush in both a very 'feminine' and a very 'masculine' fashion. This split in her personality then flowed into her private life. In 1846 when Annie found she had been left property which would give her a quarterly return, and discovered at the same time that her husband had a potentially terminal illness - she began a very 'masculine' and calculated long term struggle for her right to control her own property. She succeeded so well that not only did she secure her investments in her own name but on Andrew's death succeeded in overturning her brother-in-law's prior claim to his brother's estate and inheriting the whole of her estranged husband's estate.<sup>188</sup> Annie achieved this largely by using her dependent 'femininity' to elicit help from her brother and those of her male friends who had experience in property rights and the law. This need to achieve independence *through* men - imposed on Annie by society - was to distort most of Annie's life for, until she lost interest in romantic love, with every gain Annie made in self-determination came a reciprocal need to abase herself at the feet of some man whom she believed she 'worshipped'.<sup>189</sup>

I have dealt in detail with this phase of Annie's life because it illustrates the oppositions which remained unreconciled in her and drove her for most of her life. On the one hand Annie was a victim of the quest pattern of romance - the complement in terms of human relationships of the Arcadian view of landscape - and on the other, precisely because she did not subscribe very deeply to an Arcadian view of landscape, it was the realities of an unromanticised and uncompromising nature which acted as an antidote to her inflated and idealised (and hence judgemental and potentially demonic) view of human erotic relationships. In adopting the quest pattern of romance Annie was moving - in the same way as with her hunting - into male territory. Instead of passively accepting the 'feminine' role in courting which was expected of her, Annie took on some of the

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<sup>188</sup> In 1851, not long after Annie had left the colony for England, the gold rushes enabled Andrew to sell Yambuck for a large profit. As Annie refused to leave Australia until she had made Andrew sign a water tight financial agreement, when he died in 1855 - having invested his money well - Annie inherited a goodly estate.

<sup>189</sup> Annie put the whole of her inheritance into the hands of her penniless second husband when she married him in 1857. Her second marriage failed in 1870. Annie died in 1905 aged 89 - having been determinedly independent for 35 years in spite of her reduced financial circumstances.

active courting behaviour associated with men and the masculine.<sup>190</sup> This active questing served Annie as an escape from the difficulties of everyday life and from the sense of disempowerment which gender stereotyping and her situation generated in her. The use of her journal as one of the weapons in her romantic 'hunt' both gave Annie a creative outlet and enhanced her sense of potency. In attempting to 'conquer' men in a daring, anti-social or 'heroic' fashion Annie engaged in an activity which had contradiction built into its very core. For though when she was 'innocently' immersed in risqué relationships Annie could consciously feel in charge of her life and future, her unconscious mind expressed terror at the thought of becoming a social outcast and her romantic activities inflamed rather than satisfied her sexual and emotional needs. Under such pressures Annie's repressed libidinal drive for potency and independence sometimes exploded into verbal or physical violence and, possibly - as I have argued might have occurred with Robert Massie - escalated from forbidden desire into - totally socially unacceptable - sexual expression.

### **Desire, drugs and madness.**

Between the years 1844 and 1846 when Annie realised she had become infected with some form of venereal disease but could see no way out of her dreary marriage, animosity escalated between her and her husband to such an extent that Andrew resorted to alcohol and Annie to laudanum in the hope of relieving their physical and emotional troubles. Annie frequently recorded that she had taken 'too much' laudanum and that as a result had hysterics, or was low spirited and dull, or beset by nightmares. She recorded one such opium-induced dream:

I was seated on a door step, the night was bitterly cold and I had no clothes scarcely to cover me beyond a cloak. My feet were bleeding, and I asked a child to give me a pair of old shoes that it had on. Just as the little creature had taken them off her own feet, two gentlemen (2 C.'s) came past, the one quite far (one in Wine - and the girl said to me "Oh! ask these gentlemen for money, you are dying! - I immediately seized her by the arm, and got behind a fence, saying "I can easily die, but I cannot beg" - I awoke sobbing aloud<sup>191</sup>.

It could be argued that for women such as Annie Baxter frontier life, in removing some of the social constraints which worked to control behaviour, allowed fears and desires from the

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<sup>190</sup> Annie Baxter, 1984, 13 January 1844, Frost, 1984, p. 138. Annie was quite aggressive in her pursuit of Massie. For instance when she had not seen him for some time she went to his house to demand an explanation. 'We [her friend Margaret and herself] have twice ridden over to Sherwood, and not seen its owner - but I will go again for I 'm determined too'. Annie used her journals not only as communication but as a way of keeping the relationship alive. For instance she would write asking if Massie still wanted her to send them to him as she completed them, or demanding that he return those which he had already been given.

<sup>191</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, February 1845, 20 June 1846, 11 September 1846, Frost, 1992, pp. 77, 90, 91. 2C's = two constables?

unconscious to surface. This breaking down of a strong (socially induced) barrier between the conscious and the unconscious mind was enhanced in early colonial society by widespread use of alcohol and opium. Like many women of her time Annie - unaware that laudanum was a highly addictive drug - started by taking it to relieve pain and to make her appear witty and relaxed in company.<sup>192</sup> If Annie had continued to take an ounce or less of laudanum a day she would have had few problems, however her supply was intermittent and she was poorly informed about, and - when feeling 'ill' or 'wretched' - uncaring of the side effects and withdrawal symptoms caused by random and overly large doses. In 1821 Thomas De Quincey described how the taking of laudanum produced a sense of well-being and 'peace of mind' *provided only* those who had become addicted to it continued to take a daily measured dose.<sup>193</sup> Annie's habit of resorting to large and / or intermittent doses of laudanum helps account for her mood swings, nightmares, insomnia and hysterical episodes in the same way as excessive consumption of alcohol helps account for her husband's sexual promiscuity and acts of physical and verbal violence. Ill-health, physical pain, and emotional need converged to encourage Annie and Andrew Baxter's drug dependency. Although the presence of alcoholism in men in colonial society has been well recognised and explored, less work has been done on laudanum addiction in women.<sup>194</sup>

Measured doses of laudanum gave the consumer pleasure because opium enhances the image making facility of the unconscious mind and breaks down the resistance of the conscious mind to such images. This allows messages from the unconscious to be integrated into the conscious mind. On the other hand large doses of Laudanum take such images beyond the conscious mind's capacity to assimilate them and render them overpowering and nightmarish. In this way opium acted in an artificial way in the same way as bonding with the land acted in a more natural way for some individuals. A moderate degree of bonding (whether through picturesque activity or romantic contemplation) with the natural environment for the European mind of the early settlers appears to have been enhancing; too much and they were at risk of being engulfed by their own repressed desires, fears, needs and guilt.

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<sup>192</sup> Hayter, 1968, pp. 25-26.

<sup>193</sup> Quincey, 1989 (1822) , pp. 90, 171, 193. On the other hand alternative overdosing and withdrawal not only produced 'irritability of the whole system' and 'restlessness', but 'moral and spiritual terrors' and an 'oppression as of madness'.

<sup>194</sup> Hayter, 1968, pp. 15, 41, 44, 54. Terry M. Parssinen, *Secret Passions, Secret Remedies: Narcotic Drugs in British Society 1820-1930*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1983, pp. 25, 26. The consumption of laudanum increased markedly in both Britain and the colonies as the century progressed, and despite frequent deaths - especially among babies - from its widespread use, concern was not expressed about its use until the 1860s. Opium addiction in women, like alcoholism, was generally kept well hidden.



In Kay Schaffer's opinion desire arises not from the presence of desirable objects but from the 'absence of wholeness'.<sup>195</sup> In the nineteenth century desire between members of the family was something which was both taken for granted and feared.<sup>196</sup> Like prostitution, incest became something about which there was constant speculation and gossip. A man being charged with incest was the equivalent of a woman being charged with adultery - both being forbidden sexual acts which threatened the preservation of the respectable patriarchal family.<sup>197</sup> As the degree to which actual incest occurred in the nineteenth century is a thesis in itself, before closing this consideration of women's sexuality as madness I would like to explore 'psychic' incest between brother and sister in order to expose its effect on the marriage relation: an effect which indirectly contributed to men and women projecting desire onto the land.

Kaplan claimed that dichotomised and exaggerated gender stereotyping within the family leads to a wish to elide generational and power differences and to attempt to incorporate differences which have been denied the self by gender stereotyping.<sup>198</sup> If her thesis is accepted it goes a long way towards explaining nineteenth century fascination with familial desire and incest. Nineteenth century women characteristically both idolised and infantilised powerful male relatives such as fathers and brothers; expressing covert sexual desire for them in the form of appropriative eroticism disguised as flirtatiousness. To a lesser extent women also attempted to replicate and appropriate the 'masculine' behaviour modelled by their male relatives.

In 1839, feeling newly abandoned in the bush, Annie wrote of her brother William: God bless him! How I do love him! never was mortal so loved! I completely idolise him - I don't know what would ever become of me if anything happened to him.<sup>199</sup> In appraising the 'language of love' which Annie used to describe her brother, Lucy Frost claimed her reading argued 'implicitly for incestuous desire'.<sup>200</sup> As Frost recognised however, in the nineteenth century such language between a brother and a sister was not unusual - under the inhibiting influence of the companionate family sexuality was most exciting when it was most covert.<sup>201</sup> The intensity of the brother / sister relationship and its covert eroticism was encouraged in the nineteenth century by the

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<sup>195</sup> Schaffer, 1988, p. 24.

<sup>196</sup> Stratton, 1996, p. 40. Though incest was often expressed by middle class persons as a problem which existed among the working classes. Stratton saw this as a mechanism of displacement.

<sup>197</sup> Poovey, 1988, p. 53.

<sup>198</sup> Stratton, 1996, p. 40. This is complemented by Stratton's belief that possession of the daughter by the father represented an empirical demonstration of male power - that is an attempt to gain the phallus and secure the patriarchal role within the family in its contextual relation with the state (experienced as an overly powerful phallic Father).

<sup>199</sup> Annie Baxter, *Journal*, 5 September 1839, *Fr* . . ., 1992, p. 24.

<sup>200</sup> Frost, 1992, p. 315.

way in which parents used the brother / sister relationship as role play for that of husband and wife; without - it was hoped - the latter relationship's explicit sexuality. It was expected that the stronger, wiser brother would learn 'noble mastery over impulse' in protecting and guiding the footsteps of his sister and, through acting as her 'indulgent monitor', inculcate in her 'appropriate feminine' behaviour. In return his sister, it was thought, would influence her brother to be a better person by being patient and self-denying. When adult, brothers, who like fathers and husbands served women as their window into the world, frequently became trustees and business advisers to their sisters and, if necessary, provided them with a home. In return sisters were expected to give their brothers personal service and to extend over them a benign religious and moral influence. Not surprisingly, though the nostalgia of shared childhood experience and familial conditioning made a powerful bond between brothers and sisters, an unacknowledged erotic component and left-over sibling rivalries from childhood - rivalries greatly exacerbated by highly differentiated gender roles - made nineteenth century brother / sister relationships highly combustible.<sup>202</sup>

Despite her earlier adulation, Annie fell out with her brother once she lived with him and had to submit to his control of her life and money. She then wrote sternly of her brother's 'wasteful life' and compared him to the husband she had recently left:

A more impertinent, Dictatorial person I never met with: his temper is equal to Baxter's; & if he had the power, I think he would treat a person quite as badly. I shall leave him, on my arrival in England.<sup>203</sup>

One of the accusations Annie made in later years against her brother, who - when she was still living with Andrew - had been charged with publicly assaulting a 'decent' working class woman when he had been drinking without losing her esteem, was that as a widower he sometimes slept in the same bed as his seventeen year old daughter Mina. Annie was quite sure this indicated incest and claimed that thinking about it made her feel like crying. She dismissed it from her mind with the reflection '[t]hese things do take place sometimes, that's certain! but thank God, very seldom'.<sup>204</sup> Annie was a great gossip and over the years recorded in her journal other 'shocking' cases of incest of which she had heard.<sup>205</sup> It is probable that in the case of her brother Annie may have over-reacted. At the time Annie was furious with William and jealous of any attention which he gave his daughter in the same way as she was jealous of any attention he paid to either his first or his second wife. Annie went to live with William very soon after his first wife died and fell out

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<sup>201</sup> Jacobs, 1993, pp. 126-139.

<sup>202</sup> Davidoff and Hall, 1987, pp. 348-351, 352.

<sup>203</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 27 March 1851, 15 January 1852, Frost, 1992, pp. 144, 159.

<sup>204</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 21, 23 August 1852, Frost, 1992, pp. 168-9.

<sup>205</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 13 May 1846, Frost, 1992, p. 85.

with him irrevocably soon after he re-married: clearly she felt very possessive of her brother and may have projected her own fear of incest onto him.

It could be argued that in marrying Andrew Annie chose someone as like her brother as possible. William Hadden was a twenty year old first lieutenant given to sowing his wild oats when he married seventeen year old Elizabeth Jacquier. Less than four months later seventeen year old Annie Hadden married the twenty year old first lieutenant Andrew Baxter, who was known to be 'wild' in the manner of William. It was only after she married that Annie realised that she felt intense antagonism toward Andrew in his role of 'brother as husband' in the same way as, after she had stopped sleeping with him, she felt intense antagonism toward him in the role of 'husband as brother'. Annie, who believed that 'a real friend is only to be found in the opposite sex to that which we belong - whether Brother, Lover, Father',<sup>206</sup> conflated her first husband with her brother in the same way as she later conflated him with Robert Massie. For Annie the conflated category brother, lover, father, pre-empted and prevented men taking the role of husband.

When William was posted to Hobart Town in 1844 (and it appears he obtained his transfer because of his sister's insistent requests) Annie spent her time between Yambuck and her brother's home working to force Andrew to sign a water-tight financial agreement which would leave her provided for after his death. In this Annie had the advice and support of William against Andrew. Having achieved this she then became her recently widowed brother's housekeeper. Within three years - as a direct consequence of family infighting and jealousies - Annie found herself homeless, with no male protector and a very small income. Her experience as William's sister / house-keeper in many ways paralleled her experience as Andrew's house-keeper / wife. In both cases Annie's sexuality and drive were not given expression within a strongly eroticised but sexually and emotionally inhibited / inhibiting relationship and hence sought convoluted and unrewarding - that is 'romantic' - expression outside of it. It could be said that for Annie Baxter the brother / sister relationship proved to be a powerful factor in both enforcing her confinement within a prescribed feminine role and encouraging her escape from it. While Annie used her relationship with her brother to advantage in escaping from her unhappy marriage, it proved to be an escape which was no escape. For Annie her relationship with her brother determined the type of man she chose to marry and modelled how she would interact with the natural environment - as a cavalier conqueror - while at the same time it ensured that her attempt to replicate her brother's form of masculinity would be thwarted by the 'femininity' which it was his job to inculcate and reinforce.

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<sup>206</sup> Annie Baxter, Journal, 24 January 1854, Frost, 1992, p. 187.

## SUMMARY.

The nineteenth century prescription that women be 'perfect mothers' had the corollary that women limit their sexuality or be judged 'mad'. Under conditions of early settlement when servants were scarce, domestic work hard, parturition dangerous and children 'got lost', the assumption that women could or should be 'perfect mother's' caused many women to feel they were being consumed by motherhood. Alternatively, in an environment where there was no divorce - but much desertion, greater freedom from supervision, an excess of bachelors and intermittent access to drugs and alcohol, women who had no children could easily come to fear that they were prostitutes. Two possible ways of handling these prescriptions and conditions have been shown in the lives of Georgiana Molloy and Annie Baxter - the embracing of compensatory paradisaical myths of the natural environment as a way of obtaining reassurance and nurturance on the one hand and attempts to escape from the prescribed female role by taking on aspects of 'male' conquest behaviour of the natural environment on the other. Though both women exhibited aspects of the behaviour of the other - Annie Baxter bonded with the land in the same way as Georgiana Molloy and Georgiana Molloy both took to the saddle in the great outdoors and sought out a male 'admirer' to supplement to her marriage in the same way as Annie Baxter, it was the depth of their reaction which varied. At a deeper level for both women an upswelling from the unconscious released, or threatened to release, the 'wild' woman within. This upswelling of unconscious content, heightened as it was by - prescribed and unprescribed - laudanum, produced anxiety in themselves and others. In social terms this threat of change in the persona of women gave rise to an 'excess of meaning' of what women might represent which had at all costs to be restored to a 'singular, straightforward reality' and re-absorbed into a congruent system of women (and the land) as property - domestic, tame, and above all, as physically and discursively contained and knowable.<sup>207</sup> It was because of this (inner and outer) need to restore the image of nineteenth century women to a 'singular, straightforward reality' that the growing and painting of flowers became such an obsession for women.

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<sup>207</sup> Morris, 1992, pp. 74, 80, 86. I have here adapted an argument Morris used in relation to how Aborigines were mimetically constructed as other on the frontiers. The same argument can be used with the representation of the land as [m]other.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### ***BEYOND THE GARDEN GATE***

Here Tulips bloom as they are told:  
Unkempt about those hedges blows an English unofficial Rose.

Rupert Brooke, The Old Vicarage.

In nineteenth century Britain when abstinence from labour (especially labour in the outdoors) served as an indicator of aristocratic status, acceptable work for middle class men consisted of either supervisory roles in farming and commerce or the undertaking of a profession, and acceptable work for middle class women consisted of either charitable activities or the supervision of the work of others in the home and garden. Among the working classes, although men and women worked in homes, farms, workshops and, as the century progressed, factories, women normally only worked in the fields on special occasions such as harvest.<sup>1</sup> Although British emigrants to the Australian colonies did not challenge the assumption that men were the producers and women the reproducers, they were forced to address the problem of the way in which 'ladylike' women should work in and travel through the often difficult colonial natural environment. Among the British middle classes the habit of women travelling long distances on holidays and family business had been established in the late eighteenth century. Many middle class British families took tours of Britain and Europe; tours which by the 1830s could include - strenuous activities such as mountain climbing for women as well as men.<sup>2</sup> The need to establish new settlements under primitive conditions extended such activities into everyday life and led to modifications in the way in which women worked in the outdoors and travelled through the natural environment.<sup>3</sup>

As stated in the introduction, it has been argued that Australia was seen by male immigrants as the last great temperate wilderness to be explored - an Edenic land of promise which belonged to the final stage of history,<sup>4</sup> and by female immigrants as a maternal 'garden' which received and nurtured human children.<sup>5</sup> According to this schema it was the difficult conditions of early settlement which caused negative metaphors of landscape to develop in Australian society with the land as woman, as mother, seen as non-nurturing, even devouring.<sup>6</sup> Paul Carter noticed that in nineteenth century topographical writing colonial

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<sup>1</sup> Aveling, 1992, no. 98, p. 6. Irish women tended to work in the fields more often.

<sup>2</sup> Schama, 1996, p. 495.

<sup>3</sup> Aveling, 1992, argued that the benign patriarchy of the early governors in the Australian colonies encouraged marriage as a way of releasing women from public labour. Lawson, 1990, Introduction. The oral tradition in the Lawson family was that in the colonies Louisa Lawson's grandmother ploughed with a single plough and reaped with a hand-scythe until she was nearly seventy.

<sup>4</sup> Gibson, 1984, pp. 6-11.

<sup>5</sup> Kolodny, 1995, pp. 171-3, 177.

<sup>6</sup> Schaffer, 1988, p. 22. Michael Cathcart, 'The Review of Books' in the *Australian*, April 1997, p. 7. After claiming there was 'little explicit evidence' in the writing of settlers of the land 'as woman, as mother', Cathcart admitted 'gendered imagery' was 'part of the repertoire of the nineteenth century imperial imagination'.

landscape was represented as having 'a face' - a fertile prospect smiled, appeared inviting; a drought stricken one turned away its face, was depressing. He believed successful adaptation to the Australian natural environment in the nineteenth century consisted of a mimetic process of transforming the countenance of the land into a face which was familiar and loved. In his opinion the face of the land represented the viewer's own mirrored image which needed to be cultivated, that is tutored to smile to 'enable possession and self-possession in the same instant'.<sup>7</sup>

This view of landscape as a self-reflection which would only smile if adequately tended, suggests that in Australia it was self-alienation within the individual European psyche which led to a generalised sense of alienation from the land. More especially, considering that the land was projectively constructed as female, as self-alienation from the feminine within. In a patriarchal society which dichotomised 'masculine' and 'feminine' characteristics and assigned them to different genders and then disempowered women, it was not uncommon for men and women to fail to integrate the masculine and feminine within their personality. I argue that it was when this inner alienation occurred that the land was projectively perceived as a rejecting and devouring mother / whore infested with (and likely to be raped by) wild dogs / wild men.<sup>8</sup>

Despite claims that the frontier was 'men's space',<sup>9</sup> throughout the nineteenth century women lived in and travelled extensively through the frontiers and recorded their responses to what they saw and experienced. Given the conditions of travel, nineteenth century women in the Australian colonies were surprisingly mobile; so mobile that in reminiscences written at the turn of the century 'pioneer' women frequently disguised or apologised for their earlier mobility.<sup>10</sup> This was because by that time exemplary 'pioneer' women were constructed as having been respectable, moral, compassionate, self-sacrificing, feminine, domestic and *content to stay at home*.<sup>11</sup> Although in the nineteenth century fragile economic conditions

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<sup>7</sup> Carter, 1996, pp. 9-11.

<sup>8</sup> Olive Banks, *Faces of Feminism*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1986, pp. 63, 77. The projection of sexualised images onto the land and animals stemmed from the nineteenth century fear that sexuality represented 'man's animal nature'. Stafford, 1984, p. 377. Projections onto the landscape of wild dogs / wild men was not confined to women - even that most 'masculine' of beings, the eighteenth and nineteenth century explorer, was terrified of 'beasts prowling in the wilderness'.

<sup>9</sup> Cathcart, 1997, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Emmeline De Falbe, *Memoirs*, 1902, and Mary McConnel, *Memories of Days long Gone By*, 1905, in de Vries- Evans, 1987, pp. 73, 89.

<sup>11</sup> Judith Godden, 'A New Look at Pioneer Women', *Hecate*, no. 5, 1979, pp. 7-20. Reekie, 1991. The construction of (idealised) pioneer women as having been immobile was used to control contemporary women who were constructed as restless and determined to 'try new pastures'.

could make travelling a necessity for women who needed to follow their breadwinner from one location to another, women also travelled a good deal from choice. This seems to have been partly because travelling offered women partial release from the inner and outer constraints and partly because it allowed women to experience a liberating 'natural' order beyond the restrictive social order in which they grew up and lived. Nevertheless restrictions were placed on women in regard to travelling: in 1866 the detective fiction writer Mary Fortune adopted a male persona to publicly state what many women secretly thought or wrote in private - 'I can scarcely fancy anything more enjoyable to a mind at ease with itself than [an unaccompanied] Spring ride through the Australian bush'.<sup>12</sup>

Nineteenth century middle class travellers carried a conflicted combination of evangelical religion, emergent 'scientific' rationalism, imperialist imperatives, and romantic individualism - religious, commercial and scientific ideologies which they expressed within the framework of ordered lives.<sup>13</sup> Such divergent ideologies resulted in displacement between allegorical / symbolic interpretation of landscape, 'scientific' causal explanation, and the experience of nature as beautiful / sublime<sup>14</sup> - the last tendency intensified by the belief that Australia was an incalculably ancient, untouched continent which was very close to the primordial beginning.<sup>15</sup> In the nineteenth century romantic women travel writers reacted against the externality of the Enlightenment explorers who translated natural processes into tangible signs by investing of their accounts with personal response.<sup>16</sup> In the same way as writers of fiction and 'Guides for Emigrants', women travel writers combined hints for emigrants with personal reminiscences and - after the middle of the century -with the celebration of the romance of colonisation.

From first settlement to 1850, a period when in the colonies roads and public transport were poor and travel writing was an enterprise intended to integrate description of an alienating world with the impression of character on the environment,<sup>17</sup> women mainly travelled with a male escort. In the second half of the century when the movement of women

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<sup>12</sup> Fortune in Knight, 1989, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Davidoff & Hall, 1987, pp. 25-8.

<sup>14</sup> In the nineteenth century the 'sublime' in nature was considered to be that which inspired awe, deep reverence or lofty emotion by vastness or grandeur - or even, at times, malevolence. As such it was generally associated with masculinity, patriarchy, the power of God the father, while 'beauty' was generally associated with women and the feminine.

<sup>15</sup> Mary MacKay, 'Sleeping Tigers of the South: Volcanoes and the Sublime', *Australian Journal of Art*, vol. 13, 1996, pp. 96, 101, 103.

<sup>16</sup> Stafford, 1984, p. 453.

<sup>17</sup> Gibson, 1984, p. xv. The overwhelming desire during this period was to 'improve' the bush - the 1860s being the time when Acclimatisation Societies enjoyed maximum support.



into the landscape was facilitated by improved public transport, women's new role as shoppers to some extent<sup>18</sup> legitimated women travelling alone or in the company of other women.<sup>19</sup> The development of shipping routes and railways which opened up the outback for women in the second half of the nineteenth century paved the way for the emergence of the female traveller / explorer / heroine epitomised by Ellis Rowan who, although she complained before she made her first unaccompanied journey into the 'wilds' that her heart 'misgave' her, insisted curiosity compelled her to go forward and that she was amply rewarded for her physical sufferings by the scenes of 'wild mysterious beauty' which she had observed.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the fact that in Australia women travelled extensively throughout the nineteenth century, in late nineteenth century literature nineteenth century women were represented as having been virtually immobile. In such literature women either made the metaphorical journey from outside the garden fence into the home when young and marriageable, or, as mature wives and mothers, from the home through the garden gate and out along well trodden and circumscribed pathways into delineated, familiar and contained terrains. The function for women in both of these journeys - from the perimeter to the centre and (more tentatively) from the centre to the perimeter and back - was set within male journeys as man's helper; the destination of female journeying being represented as otherwise unimaginable, a void or blank space.<sup>21</sup>

In this chapter I consider legitimating factors which worked to determine how, why and when women were permitted / expected to venture from their homes, and ways in which women sought to evade / extend inner and outer prohibitions on travelling through and interacting with the natural environment which existed beyond their sphere of domestic influence. This raises the issues of whether or not colonial women were either captives or explorers, what effect the picturesque enterprise had on women travel writers and women

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<sup>18</sup> Stratton, 1996, p. 89. In big cities women who were not accompanied by a male escort risked being confused with women 'street walkers' or prostitutes.

<sup>19</sup> Mary Spencer, 'Aunt Spencer's pencilings or jottings by the way, addressed to her highly esteemed nephew, Sebastian Waterhouse', 1855, La Trobe Collection, SLV, p. 10. 'You would wonder to see the ladies ride long distances unattended'.

<sup>20</sup> Rowan, *The Flower Hunter*, n.d. (1898), pp. 16, 31-2, 48, 56, 62, 79. Rowan claimed she was 'nervous at everything' but did not let this prevent her from travelling alone into the wildest of places. After her first solo journey into outback Queensland in 1890 she wrote: 'What a journey it has been .. I am bruised from head to foot, I am burnt nearly black, and my arms and shoulders, even through my jacket, are all blistered with the sun.... I was determined to come'.

<sup>21</sup> Sue Rowley, 'The Journey's End: Women's Mobility and Confinement', in Hoorn, 1994, pp. 82-3, 85, 87, 92.

travel writers on the picturesque enterprise, and what and if there were any discernible consequences resulting from women entering the landscape and attempting to contribute to its discursive construction.

### **Were women captives?**

Any consideration of the significance of landscape for women in the nineteenth century comes up against evidence of internal and external - that is psychic and physical, individual and social - mechanisms of containment and escape. Within the genre called captivity literature it is common for those taken captive by nomadic indigenous peoples to relate their experiences and what it felt like to journey as captives through 'a vast and desolate wilderness'. Kolodny and Schaffer have recognised the importance of such literature in reaching an understanding of how women were constructed in relation to landscape in colonial America and colonial Australia respectively.<sup>22</sup> In the American context by the time captivity literature entered mainstream literature in the nineteenth century the fate of the European male had changed from being captured by Indians to being adopted by them. European male outback heroes such as Daniel Boone were represented as adapted to and in control of their natural surroundings while the European woman continued to be represented as captive victims who were helpless to save the lives of their children, unable to learn from their captors and incapable of adapting to an outback environment.<sup>23</sup> It is said that captive literature promoted the helplessness and rescue of the captured white woman in order to found an 'ethics of civilisation in an ordered, divine state of nature': the white body of the rescued woman the site which provoked feeling and empathy in the middle class European reader and gave emotive power to the message that civilisation can overcome the disordered, unfeeling state of nature embodied in 'wild' humans and 'wild' landscape.<sup>24</sup>

There are few first hand accounts by nineteenth century European women who spent time living with Australian Aborigines. The most well known account is that of Eliza Fraser who spent thirty days at sea and fifty two days living with Aborigines after her husband, his

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<sup>22</sup> Kolodny, 1984, Ch. 1, 'Captives in Paradise'. Kay Schaffer & Kate Darian-Smith (eds.), 'Captive Lives: Australian Captivity Narratives', *Working Papers in Australian Studies*, nos. 85, 86, 87, 1993, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London.

<sup>23</sup> Kolodny, 1984, pp. 18, 28, 30-31. Kolodny believed the gendered difference in response to the wilderness displayed by men and women in nineteenth century American captivity literature stemmed from differences in the lifestyle of settlers - while many men 'made good' on the American frontiers and found a land 'flowing with milk and honey', a frontier existence for women - the majority of whom were 'tied to reproduction' - frequently meant 'enduring the hardships incident to the emigrant life'.

crew and herself were shipwrecked near Fraser Island in North Queensland in 1836. In literary explorations of the confrontation of civilised / wild the literary convention of the shipwreck serves as the experience which separates the old life from the new. Heavily influenced by biblical and eighteenth century travel literature such as *Gulliver's Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe*, contemporary thought had it that those who strayed outside the boundaries of civilisation would most likely suffer from anomie in the wilderness and become white savages deprived of customs and language. Eliza Fraser did not record her story in writing; hence the story compiled shortly after her 'rescue' from her oral account is fragmented and contradictory. This has not stopped Eliza Fraser's saga of captivity from becoming part of colonial and imperial mythology - it is claimed that in the 160 years since her saga of shipwreck, captivity and rescue became popular, various reconstructions have served as the locus of contested ideological representations which have challenged / upheld hierarchies of race, class and gender in Australia, Britain and America.<sup>25</sup>

Schaffer considered that in nineteenth century imperial literature male authors portrayed Eliza Fraser as either a masculine colonial subject - the heroic imperial survivor in a colonial conflict - or as a forlorn creature, the innocent feminine victim / prey of wild men and women and a harsh landscape. An account written by a woman author (Charlotte Barton, 1841) was based the historical reconstruction made by John Curtis in 1838. It departed from male constructions in not making European men in the least heroic but followed them and the emergent 'cult of true womanhood' by representing the captive Eliza as a genteel, suffering victim who felt helpless in the face of the death of her husband and her unwelcome confrontation with 'wild' nature.<sup>26</sup>

Given that in the Australian colonies women gave every appearance of taking pleasure in escaping into the bush to walk or ride, it would seem that nineteenth century Australian captive narratives mirrored not so much women's physical captivity within 'the

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<sup>24</sup> Kay Schaffer, *In the Wake of First Contact: The Eliza Fraser Stories*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1995, pp. 51, 72.

<sup>25</sup> Kay Schaffer, 'The Eliza Fraser story and construction of gender, race and class in Australian society', *Hecate*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1991, p. 147-8. In the twentieth century Eliza Fraser was associated with 'nature and sensuality,... [and as such] feared, reviled and blamed for her fate'. Schaffer equated the twentieth century construction of Eliza Fraser with that of Lindy Chamberlain whereby both women were made out to be 'bad mothers whose dominant personalities [and rampant sexuality] led to their own desperate lives'. Schaffer, 1995, p. 25.

<sup>26</sup> John Curtis, *The Shipwreck of the Stirling Castle*, 1838. Schaffer, 1995, p. 70. Charlotte Barton, 'The Loss of the Stirling Castle' in *A Mother's Offering to her Children*, 1st Pub. *Gazette*, Sydney, 1841, Facsimile edition, Jacaranda Press, Sydney, 1979, pp. 170-183.

bush' as their social and economic captivity within the family.<sup>27</sup> This was certainly the case with Charlotte Barton, the children's writer who published the Eliza Fraser captivity story. Charlotte Waring (Atkinson / Barton) arrived in New South Wales early in 1827 as the unconventional and strong minded governess of the family of Hannibal Macarthur. In September 1827 she married a forward thinking and well established farmer, James Atkinson, and settled on his estate at 'Oldbury', Sutton Forest, 140 miles south of Sydney where she quickly had four children. When the youngest was two months old Charlotte lost her husband of six years to an acute illness (possibly typhoid fever). After her husband's death, finding herself unable to control her convict labourers and run the extensive family properties on her own, Charlotte engaged George Barton, a friend of her late husband, as an overseer. Possibly because of the fear of scandal and / or because of the anxiety she felt at having been held at gunpoint by ex-convict bushrangers,<sup>28</sup> less than two years after her first husband's death Charlotte married George Barton - thereby losing the income from property on which they lived. According to Charlotte, George Barton proved to be a mentally unstable alcoholic given to physical violence and the avoidance of work.<sup>29</sup> After three seemingly desperate years during which Charlotte claimed she did most of the work of running the properties, Charlotte left her second husband and removed herself and her four children to a small bush house on one of 'Oldbury's' outstations. After seven months spent living in seclusion in the bush Charlotte moved herself and her children to Sydney in order to settle her financial affairs. She spent seven years in Sydney fighting to retain custody of her children and to obtain sufficient income from the trustees of James Atkinson's estate to provide for herself and her family.<sup>30</sup> The book '*A Mother's Offering to her Children*' - intended to appeal to adults as well as adolescent children - was aptly named in that it was written by Charlotte and sent to the *Sydney Gazette* in the hope of obtaining serialisation during a period of general recession when Charlotte felt she and her children were close to destitution.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 1 September 1795, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, pp. 48-9. '[A]s our family is large we do not choose to be long absent from home together'. As at the time the Macarthur's employed 30-40 people the 'family' may have this extended sense. Certainly the Macarthurs felt that one or other of them had to stay at Camden to supervise their employees as much as care for their children.

<sup>28</sup> At this time there was an outbreak of bushranging and of violence in the Berrima district and violence among Charlotte's convict employees - one convict murdering another on her property.

<sup>29</sup> Patricia Clarke, *Pioneer Writer: The Life of Louisa Atkinson: novelist, journalist, naturalist*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990, pp. 24-5, 28. After Charlotte and George Barton had been separated for some years he was accused and convicted of manslaughter.

<sup>30</sup> The will of Charlotte's first husband, James Atkinson, stated that if Charlotte remarried she would receive £1000 and the rest of the estate would be held in trust for the Atkinson children.

<sup>31</sup> Clarke, 1990, Ch's 2-4. Charlotte Barton's petition, 1 September 1840, AO NSW 7/3459 in Clarke, 1990, pp. 37-8. Charlotte's solicitor wrote: '[h]er situation is extremely distressing. She assures me she and

Metaphorically speaking therefore the Eliza Fraser adventure story which Charlotte wrote - which she claimed was true to life in all its details - <sup>32</sup> was the story of her own life. Metaphorically speaking, upon the death of her first husband Charlotte, like her heroine, found herself prostrated by her 'mournful bereavement' and in an 'anxious state of suspense' from having had 'a very calamitous shipwreck' upon a foreign coast where she had neither friends nor relatives from whom she could expect to receive financial or emotional support. Charlotte Barton had her narrative counterpart tell her fictional children that 'it would be impossible to describe the distress of the poor widow' Eliza Fraser at her 'mournful bereavement', the loss of her husband, the father of her four small children. At a later point in the story she wrote that Eliza Fraser lay 'groaning in captivity among those terrible savages [anticipating] a frightful, violent death'.<sup>33</sup> After the death of James Atkinson Charlotte clearly felt herself abandoned and 'groaning in captivity' among 'terrible savages' - initially her convict employees / bushrangers and later her second husband and the unbending trustees of her husband's estate. After she left her second husband Charlotte and her children lived not only metaphorically, but actually, in an empty wilderness - the Shoalhaven river valley where Charlotte was 'lost' in the bush for seven months - five and a half months longer than Eliza Fraser had been. In reality it appears that to Charlotte the bush along the Shoalhaven was not only a place filled in her fertile imagination with wild animals, wild bushrangers and wild savages, but a haven from danger which she grew to know and love.<sup>34</sup> Charlotte Barton's story of Eliza Fraser concluded when a 'prisoner of the crown' named Graham 'went into the midst of [the blacks and] snatched up Mrs Fraser; and ran away with her' to Sydney where a public subscription enabled a much reduced Eliza to return to her family in Britain.<sup>35</sup> Prescriptive writing perhaps wherein the shipwrecked and beset Charlotte, recently snatched from the hands of 'black men' by the convict Barton, would hopefully receive sufficient remuneration for her book from Sydney society to allow her and her children to return to Britain?

The captive story of Eliza Fraser gave a female writer such as Charlotte Barton the pretext to air her grievance that emigration into a dislocated frontier society where men outnumbered women and alcoholism, violence and self-interest were rife, represented a real

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the Children are literally starving'. Marcie Muir, *Charlotte Barton; Australia's First Children's Author*, Wentworth Books, Sydney, 1980, p. 11. Serialisation of *A Mother's Offering* began 23 December 1841.

<sup>32</sup> Barton, 1841, Preface.

<sup>33</sup> Barton, 1841, pp. 175, 177.

<sup>34</sup> Clarke, 1990, pp. 33-5.

<sup>35</sup> Barton, 1841, pp. 170-183.

threat to women who found themselves without a male to protect them and their interests. Though valid as complaint, Charlotte's captive story was thus not an accurate description of either her helplessness or her immobility. Charlotte Barton was far from helpless or immobile - she was strong-willed and effective - a woman who instigated her own journeys and successfully took on the patriarchal state legal system and two male trustees who, as neighbours eager to acquire land adjacent to their own properties, had a vested interest in Oldbury being sold for less than its value. In this they were disappointed for, after difficult seven years in Sydney the courts granted Charlotte and her children the right to return to Oldham to live. Charlotte stayed at Oldham until 1853 when she handed the property over to her son James - its legal inheritor. In time Charlotte's youngest daughter, who had grown up hearing her mother's stories of the disadvantages against which she had struggled in a man's world, became a successful writer, naturalist and artist, and, (for her time), liberated woman.

*A Mother's Offering to her Children* was the first children's book to be published in the colonies: it was a didactic book in which a mother / narrator encouraged her young readers to observe nature closely. The book was written in a well known form of questions and answers between Mrs Saville and her four children. As the names, ages and sex of the children in the book (Clara, Emma, Julius and Lucy) closely corresponded to those of Charlotte Barton's own children (Charlotte, Emily, James and Louisa) it is probable that Charlotte originally wrote and used *A Mother's Offering* as an instructional aid in her children's education. The story of Eliza Fraser was one of six disaster stories of shipwreck and cannibals which alternated with information on natural science - the purpose of the book being to entertain,<sup>36</sup> to impart scientific information, and, under the guise of moral instruction, to teach children how to survive in a difficult world.<sup>37</sup> As is typical in fairy stories no horror was spared the child reader; graphic descriptions of 'cannibals' cutting off the heads of captive European boys being followed by stories about animals eating each other which the narrator said showed that '[a] wise and good God has destined one thing as food for another'.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Webby, 1980, p. 45. That is entertain with adventure stories - as the old order was replaced by a more 'civilised' way of life literary forms developed which enshrined the old, now seemingly 'adventurous' order of bushrangers, Aboriginal attacks, fire, floods and shipwreck.

<sup>37</sup> H. M. Saxby, *A History of Australian Children's Literature, 1841-1941*, Wentworth Books, Sydney, 1981, pp. 184-5. Charlotte declared the moral of her book was that in an uncertain world 'civilised' children should not indulge themselves in 'unrestrained passions'.

<sup>38</sup> Barton, 1841, p. 95.

*A Mothers Offering* has been described as a collection of 'facts and anecdotes within a fictional framework' - a form which has 'limited imaginative possibilities'.<sup>39</sup> When Charlotte lived science and the romantic imagination were not seen as opposites so little effort was spent integrating them. Charlotte thus alternated her informative scientific chapters with adventure stories which were partly magical. It is probable that child readers would have been aware that though it was claimed that the stories of shipwrecks and cannibals were 'true' accounts, that they could, and should, be taken with a large grain of salt. Charlotte wrote:

Clara. Were they cannibals, Mamma?

Mrs Saville. Yes my dear. They ate the eyes and cheeks of the shipwrecked people; this they do with the idea that it increases their desire for the blood of white people.

Clara. What dreadful sanguinary creatures. It makes one shudder even to hear of it.<sup>40</sup>

The child's response suggests the modality which the author wishes her reader to adopt - Clara (or Charlotte Elizabeth, Clara's twelve year old counterpart in Charlotte's family) was not in the least upset at the thought of cannibals eating children's eyes and cheeks - the story was part fiction, Clara did not need to worry, her response could be prudish, conventional, untroubled. Though shortly after Charlotte Barton wrote *A Mother's Offering* a more realistic, proto-anthropological depiction of Aborigines featured in Sydney's papers, Charlotte was at one with her time in including Aborigines as an exotic background to her adventure stories and as satirised objects from which a moral for European family life could be drawn.<sup>41</sup>

It has been claimed that fairy tales are the purest and simplest expressions of collective unconscious psychic processes, that they represent archetypes in their simplest, barest, most concise form, and that these archetypes give insight into what was occurring in the collective psyche at the time the stories were written / circulated.<sup>42</sup> In fairy stories animals are anthropomorphic beings who represent human animal instincts - for instance a tiger represents 'tigerish' greed in humans. In the same way wolves and wild dogs represent the primal drive to survive; that is the 'cannibal' in humans - the tendency for the dog-eat-dog attitude commonly released by the struggle to succeed in a competitive society.

<sup>39</sup> Brenda Niall, *Australia Through the Looking Glass: Children's Fiction 1830-1980*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1984, p. 58.

<sup>40</sup> Barton, 1841, p. 34.

<sup>41</sup> Webby, 1980, p. 45.

<sup>42</sup> Von Franz, 1978, pp. 1, 3, 7. In the nineteenth century fairy stories were mainly read by adults.

Charlotte's stories which represented Aborigines as archetypal cannibals were not quite fairy stories - in her fictive representation Charlotte's metaphor came close to the surface, lost some of its metaphorical depth - therein developing an ambiguous modality which allowed it to be read as both a fairy story and 'the truth'. The same linguistic slippage can be seen when Charlotte promoted the ideology of the ideal family through a story about 'good little swallows' in which she used metaphor to demonstrate the 'tragedy' involved in losing the patriarch on whom families depended. The swallows Lightning and Rapid were totally happy building a nest inside 'a lady's house' until one day Lightning was 'seized by the remorseless cat' - though rescued and released by the lady in whose house he lived, as he flew away he was taken by a Magpie - an event which filled 'the eyes of [his] compassionating friend with tears'. In the story within a story ten year old Emma commented on cue: 'what a pity to be thus cut off by such a painful death: when so busily making a nest for [his] young'. Charlotte's own children were being taught to feel the central importance of their dead father and to accept that it was an act of God which - in spite of their mother's best efforts - had suddenly left them homeless.<sup>43</sup>

As well as representing unknown Aborigines who lived far away as savage cannibals, Charlotte constructed Aboriginal women known to herself and her children as cruel, negligent mothers who bashed their babies against trees because 'it was too much trouble to rear them' and let their babies to roll into the fire and be partially eaten by dogs.<sup>44</sup> Because this construction had higher modality - that is made higher claims to truthfulness - its dissemination had more damaging implications. It has been suggested that the negative portrayal of women in Australian culture grew out of negative images of Aborigines, convicts and slavery which were circulated between 1770-1850.<sup>45</sup> A consideration of *A Mother's Offering* suggests that the representation of women in a negative light in the colonies was intensified by the dissemination of scientific ideas which rendered ambiguous metaphors which until that time had been perceived as fictive. Unable to bring rational thought and emotive imaginative response together, in her book Charlotte alternated a supposedly 'factual' chapter with an ambiguously fictive and adventurous chapter and allowed the incongruous juxtaposition to heighten the misconceptions she portrayed. I would

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<sup>43</sup> Barton, 1841, p. 88-9. 'The History of the Swallows'. Muir, 1980, p. 30. In the 1828 census Charlotte and James Atkinson and their daughter Charlotte were listed as living in a small wooden house like that in the story. Schaffer, 1995, p. 62. Reconstructions of the Eliza Fraser story characteristically stressed that it was the death of her husband which made Eliza sexually and socially vulnerable.

<sup>44</sup> Barton, 1841, p. 205.

<sup>45</sup> Gibson, 1984, p. 183.



suggest that Charlotte Barton's writing demonstrates a loss of the ability to integrate that which was not rational; a loss of free interplay between the imaginative and the so-called factual - that which could be seen, measured and 'proved' by scientific investigation. As an educator of young children Charlotte Barton reflected a dissonance which was opening up in society between the romantic imagination and scientific rationalism - in effect between the conscious and the unconscious mind - which helped contribute to the construction of caricatured others.

### **Women's Journeys: venturing beyond the garden gate.<sup>46</sup>**

There were a number of reasons why women were *expected* to venture beyond the garden gate in the colonies in the nineteenth century. Bran Dykstra, commenting on a process which led to the devaluation of women, claimed that after being isolated upon a pedestal within the home around the middle of the nineteenth century women were driven out of the home into 'the dubious freedom of nature'.<sup>47</sup>

Because of the practical need to equip British and colonial women to be fit bearers of children, adequate homemakers, and hardy travellers, all classes of British and colonial girls and young women were encouraged to exercise in the outdoors and venture from home for activities such as picnics and country 'rambles'. Girls in particular were encouraged to go 'exploring', berry-picking, and wildflower gathering - usually in the company of their brothers or other male family members. Such outdoor activities, which were thought to demonstrate to the 'innocent young' the 'God-given purity of nature', served as legitimate escape for girls and provided them with opportunities to modify and / or evade the 'proprieties' which would later circumscribe their lives.

The climate in the Australian colonies was generally thought to be one of the best and most healthy in the world;<sup>48</sup> a belief which greatly encouraged settlers to engage in outdoor activities. What most legitimated nineteenth century women entering the landscape however was a belief system which, in seeing nature as 'God-given', considered landscape

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<sup>46</sup> Rowley, 1994, p. 86. Any crossing by women of the boundary between the interior point of departure and return (that is the home / garden) and the exterior domain of the adventure was considered to be a journey. In the case of large estates or nunneries the interior domain could be very extensive - see Dame Magdalen Le Clere to her Mother Superior in England, February 1849, in Helen Heney (ed.) *Dear Fanny: Women's Letters to and from New South Wales 1788-1857*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1985, p. 167.

<sup>47</sup> Dykstra, 1986, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Bolton, 1981, p. 26.

and natural productions to be a source of spiritual sustenance; an attitude which in England in the eighteenth century led to tree planting and landscape gardening on such a scale that 'the greening of England' has been described as a national project.<sup>49</sup> Such attitudes meant it was natural for middle class men and women in the colonies not only to seek to improve the landscape, but to look for their emotional and spiritual satisfaction in 'wild' or unimproved nature. Even in the earliest years of settlement considerable effort went into making sure women engaged with and enjoyed their new natural environment. At the end of the eighteenth century Elizabeth Macarthur, grieved to find herself restricted to short walks (two or three miles) around the Botany Bay settlement, solved the problem by 'constantly making little parties in boats up and down various inlets of the harbour'.<sup>50</sup> When the Macarthurs settled at Parramatta - fourteen miles from the settlement at Botany Bay and twenty miles from that on the Hawkesbury River - Elizabeth wrote that 'very good' carriage roads existed between Parramatta and Sydney and Parramatta and the Hawkesbury River and although she had only once journeyed on horseback to the Hawkesbury she accompanied her husband to Sydney whenever she could.<sup>51</sup> Twenty years later, aware that '[i]t is with the country ... that strangers are most pleased', Elizabeth grieved that she could not share with her English correspondents: 'our Australian Wonders.. our mode of life, our occupations, our wanderings amidst the woods, attentive to the notes of the Bell Bird and tracing the steps of the Kangaroo and Emu'. She wrote that in winter she and her family took their exercise:

[I]n the open air, and indeed we frequently remain out almost the whole day, for altho' we can have a fire in the house; the sun is warm and pleasant. We remain out rambling in our woods, or diverting ourselves in our garden until the evening surprises us.<sup>52</sup>

Colonial women enjoyed constructing themselves as 'outdoorsy' for an English audience. Family picnics, like attendance at church, were considered part of a woman's duty to help inculcate an appreciation of God and nature in children. Louisa Twamley (Meredith) who, before emigrating to New South Wales in 1839, achieved fame and financial independence in Britain as a romantic poet, writer, miniaturist, watercolourist, engraver and botanist, traced her love of wildflowers and of 'God-given nature' to her 'childhood days of

<sup>49</sup> Thomas, 1983, p. 241.

<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 7 March, 1791, E.M. to her mother 18 November 1791, pp. 33, 42. On these walks Elizabeth was accompanied by armed soldiers and forced to walk on 'native paths, very narrow and incommodious'.

<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 1 September 1795, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, pp. 48-9.

<sup>52</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 15 July 1818, 4, 21 September 1822, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, pp. 313, 373.

guileless sport' in the outdoors.<sup>53</sup> Ever an educationalist, before she left Britain the twenty seven year old Louisa counselled adolescent girls:

[N]ever to suffer that poetry of childhood to be effaced from their hearts; never to fancy with ridiculous pride, "O! I am growing up now; I shall soon be a woman, and it is *childish* to gather daisies, and to run into the fields; I must walk straight along the turnpike road, look right before me, and be lady-like!"<sup>54</sup>

Louisa went on to celebrate the pleasure to be found in climbing trees, claiming she longed for an 'educational revolution' which would give her the 'happiness' of seeing other women become as '*childish* as myself and as *unladylike* too, if active enjoyment in pleasure-giving scenes merits that dreadful epithet'.<sup>55</sup> Louisa - in actuality one of the most 'ladylike' of women - took comfort from her occasional gambolling in nature, seeing it as a sign of her liberation from social restraint. The same contradiction was apparent in Louisa's 'courage' in becoming a self-supporting writer / artist - which she did at an early age and at a time when it was extremely difficult for a women to enter the public sphere - her need to earn an income was dictated by necessity and her method of doing so took the form of an extremely conservative form of 'femininity' - a 'love' of flowers and 'picturesque' landscape.<sup>56</sup>

In bridging contradictions between the middle class desire for social and financial success and the achievement of natural order in, and moral satisfaction through, landscape, the romantic vision served as an impetus for exploration and emigration. An incurable romantic, neither Louisa's intense love of '[n]ature's glories [in her] own land' nor the public success she had achieved there, prevented her from marrying a colonially reared cousin and accompanying him (albeit, she hoped, temporarily) to New South Wales. Conditions in the bush, though they could give women some freedom from the rigorous gender roles of polite society, could make it difficult for women such as Louisa Meredith to maintain their childlike belief in 'the Romance of Nature'. This was because landscape in the colonies was initially seen as alien and emotionally unsustaining to those whose acquired aesthetic judgements and psychic needs called for historical association, order, 'greenness'

<sup>53</sup> Twamley, 1839, p. 7.

<sup>54</sup> Twamley, 1839, p. 248.

<sup>55</sup> Twamley, 1839, p. 248.

<sup>56</sup> Kerr, 1992, p. 528. By the age of 21 Louisa supported herself by her writing. When her father died two years later she also informally (her uncle officially did the job) took on his job as corn inspector for Birmingham. By the age of 27 she had published 5 books and many articles and exhibited 26 paintings.

and bodies of water in domestically 'wild' landscapes.<sup>57</sup> Ellen Clacy, recently arrived from Britain, on being shown the (admittedly very muddy) Yarra river asked:

And is this the beautiful scenery of Australia? ... I looked straight ahead, and innocently asked "Where?" for I could only discover a tract of marsh or swamp, which I fancy must have resembled the fens of Lincolnshire, as they were years ago, before draining was introduced into that country.<sup>58</sup>

Nevertheless British women emigrants found that in the colonies childhood memories of escaping from the confines of home and garden into the 'great outdoors' and learning about nature by being in it, not only generated nostalgic longings for 'home' but acted as an incentive to seek outdoor activity in a new environment. The pursuit of botanical interests was a legitimate excuse which early women settlers such as Georgiana Molloy who lived isolated lives surrounded by the natural environment used to justify outdoor activity.<sup>59</sup> It was much less difficult for girls who came to the colonies as children to obtain permission to ride and walk long distances in the bush for they were expected to do so on behalf of their mothers;<sup>60</sup> and, sometimes, to help their fathers,<sup>61</sup> while colonially born girls such as Charlotte Barton's daughter Louisa Atkinson took to the saddle and the outdoors as if it were a natural part of life.<sup>62</sup>

Colonial women found that - irrespective of the encroaching dictates of the domestic ideal which served to confine married women within the home - they were frequently expected to travel to a new place of residence.<sup>63</sup> When they moved any distance through the landscape married women often saw the landscape under conditions of stress as they attempted to move themselves, their household goods, their children and (possibly) their elderly relatives - from one place to another. In 1822 the thirty nine year old Elizabeth Hawkins crossed the Blue Mountains with her family in order for her husband to take up the

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas, 1983, pp. 194, 209, 214. The planting of introduced trees into the British landscape from the fifteenth century meant that stands of planted trees 'were cherished... for their human meaning, what they symbolised to the community in terms of continuity and association'.

<sup>58</sup> Ellen Clacy *A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings 1852-1853*, (1853) in Spender, 1988, pp. 116, 117.

<sup>59</sup> Lady Jane Franklin, Journal, 21 December 1838 in Mackaness, 1977, p. 52. 'Mr Smith seems satisfied with his position [Magistrate at a whaling station on Pelican Island, Van Dieman's Land] as does his wife, who occupies herself with botany, or at least with collecting and pressing flowers'.

<sup>60</sup> Sarah Midgely, Journal, in McCorkell, 1967.

<sup>61</sup> Mary Docker, Journal in Donkin 1990, pp. 113-4. On the trip to their property in 1838 the 10 year old Mary, who loved to ride, helped her father find horses and inspect the sheep and cattle.

<sup>62</sup> Clarke, 1990, Ch's 10, 11.

<sup>63</sup> Rachel Henning to Annie Henning, 17 April 1856, Adams, 1969, pp. 38-40. Though before public transport was introduced in the 1850s, women usually travelled with their families, after this women sometimes travelled alone.

position of Commissariat Storekeeper at Bathurst. As well as their convict servants, Elizabeth and her husband took their eight children - who ranged in age from twelve years to twelve months - and Elizabeth's seventy year old mother with them. Elizabeth claimed that during the journey the men were occupied with righting a dray carrying household furniture which had overturned on the steep mountain road, leaving the women and girls to spend the night alone in the open at the foot of the mountain. She wrote: 'we all felt the effects of being exposed so long to the night air and the great fatigue ... I should say never before was such a party of females without protection for so many hours'.<sup>64</sup>

In the last assumption Elizabeth was quite wrong. When travelling in the colonies women frequently had periods when their 'male protection' was absent or otherwise engaged. This was a great trial for women who had been reared to believe that they should not be in the outdoors without a male to protect them, much less alone in an unknown outdoors which they were told was occupied by all manner of wild beasts and wild men.<sup>65</sup> Fear of savages / wild dogs was the worry which most occupied Jane Dodds in 1830 when, having been shipwrecked off the West Australian coast, she and her family were forced to walk fifteen miles through the bush to Fremantle. Jane recorded:

Sad tales had been told of the savages and frightful sounds that had issued from the thick swamps which with the stories about wild dogs was really enough to deter much bolder adventurers than ourselves.<sup>66</sup>

A year later, despite having lost her baby to dysentery and all her possessions in a fire as her family struggled to reach their selection on the upper Swan, Jane could still write with relief that she and her family had 'met with neither sea nor land monsters' in their new country. Given the conditions under which they travelled it is not surprising to find that most women who travelled in the early years of settlement did not express positive interest in the colonial landscape and the local flora and fauna until well after they had settled in at their destination. It was to be eight years before Jane wrote of the 'striking and beautiful' flowering shrubs and trees and of the 'beautiful plumage' of the 'parrots, paroquets, cockatoos' which she saw about her in the Swan River Colony.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth Hawkins to her sister Ann Bowling, MS 535, NLA, pp. 110, 118 in Clarke & Spender, 1992, p. 110.

<sup>65</sup> William Govett, 'Notes and Sketches taken during a surveying expedition in NSW on Blue Mountain Roads', 1831, A330, ML. Men's expression of fear of wild men and animals - eg. Govett's about snakes - intensified such fears in women.

<sup>66</sup> Jane Dodds quoted in Heal, 1988, p. 37.

<sup>67</sup> Jane Dodds quoted in Heal, 1988, pp. 45, 53-4.

Later in the century when the country was more familiar and more settled, it was more usual for women to comment upon the landscape and the natural productions which they saw about them on their travels. Ann Williams travelled with her husband through the mountains of northern New South Wales in the 1880s. She made her mountainous journey driving a horse and cart containing herself and her baby following behind her husband who was single-handedly delivering a bullock drawn wagon to a timber camp. Driving a light vehicle on the badly maintained, narrow, steep and winding mountain roads demanded all Ann's skill and fortitude. Nevertheless she commented: 'I would like going along if we had not got the Wagon to take for I am frightened that we will meet with an accident before we get there as they are such contrary bullocks to drive'.<sup>68</sup> Soon after this the wagon overturned on a sharp corner causing Ann to write: 'on the whole we escaped pretty lucky but it would have been better if it had not happened at all ... I was so frightened for I thought that Tom was under the Wagon'.<sup>69</sup> In spite of her fright Ann retained sufficient verve to record the beauty and novelty which she saw about her - the creek 'nice and cool and shady with green Wattle trees', the locusts 'singing and the lizards 'running in all directions', the mountain views with far below 'the tops of trees and such beautiful creepers climbing up the stems of the Trees'. In simple unaffected prose Ann wrote of the effect on her of the night skies and the comet which she saw from her bed in the Wagon and of the great variety and beauty of the trees and flowers which she saw by the wayside.<sup>70</sup>

Unstable social and financial conditions in the colonies meant that the migratory enterprise was generally ongoing. Hence colonial women not only travelled long distances to reach the place where they were to live, but, once there, often found themselves forced to move again - perhaps once, perhaps many, many times. Louisa Meredith moved from New South Wales to Van Dieman's Land, and, having settled there, was forced by financial considerations to move house eight times.<sup>71</sup> Georgiana McCrae was also forced by financial considerations to move house many times, on one such occasion - when she moved from 'Mayfield' not far from Melbourne to a bush block two hundred miles further west - the journey, which involved several long stops in poor quality rented accommodation for herself and her younger children, took her six months to complete.<sup>72</sup> Travelling or moving home

<sup>68</sup> Ann Williams, *Journal*, 12th Day, 1882, MS 2492, NLA. Frost, 1984, p. 220.

<sup>69</sup> Ann Williams, *Journal*, Frost, 1984, p. 221.

<sup>70</sup> Ann Williams, *Journal*, Frost, 1984 pp. 215 - 227. Ann wished she could take them home to her garden.

<sup>71</sup> Louisa Meredith, 1853, p. 2. Rae-Ellis, 1979, p. 137.

<sup>72</sup> Georgiana McCrae, *Journal*, 24 January, 7 February, 24 April, 6, 30 May, 10 June 1845, H. McCrae, 1934, pp. 144-164. This was in part because Georgiana differed with her husband as to how she and the

was a very different experience for single women. Rachel Henning, who hated city life, was delighted to find her health and spirits improved by the ten day journey she made on horseback from Sydney to outback Queensland. She and her sister camped out at night and helped their brother with the horses. At the end of the journey Rachel wrote she was: 'rather sorry it was our last camp, for the journey on the whole was very pleasant: that outdoor life is so healthy too. I was perfectly well from the time I sailed from Sydney till I reached Exmoor'.<sup>73</sup>

In literary constructions colonial women were represented as approaching their new homes with dread; not only did they have to begin again, but their new bush home would be the base from which men would journey, but in which they would be doubly confined - by the demands of domesticity and by the surrounding bush whose ambience pervaded their lives.<sup>74</sup> Georgiana McCrae professed herself 'stunned by the prospect' of leaving her established home at Mayfield and starting again in the bush, delaying her departure for as long as she could. When she finally arrived at the group of slab huts surrounded by trees and mud which was to serve as her new home, she wrote: 'I am most unhappy ... The last six months of suspense, worry, hurry, delays, packing and unpacking, detention in town, and now this scattered way of living in huts ... has worn me out'.<sup>75</sup>

In 1844, soon after she arrived at her new home - her fourth in five years - Louisa Meredith complained: 'the everlasting forest ... bounded the narrow view on all sides, like a high dense screen ... Our new home was not a cheerful one ... and we soon found it to be exceedingly damp throughout and very cold'.<sup>76</sup> Colonial women with small children often themselves more confined than they had been in Britain in that once they had set up house far from town they could not venture from their homes unless their husbands were prepared to stay behind and mind the children and supervise the family's employees. Even the childless

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younger children should travel. Her husband wanted her to travel overland in a spring cart on roads she described as being 'only fit for a bullock dray'. She refused. In the end she and her young children travelled by sea. Although she enjoyed good health Georgiana found moving exhausting.

<sup>73</sup> Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 28 August, 23 September 1862, Adams, 1969, pp. 95-105. Such sentiments were also expressed by men. James Macarthur, Journal, January 1821, quoted in his mother's letter - Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, February 1821, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, p. 372. 'I .. reached home .. in much better health than when I set out bushranging. This sort of life is to me an efficacious, and at the same time agreeable restorative. Roaming in lonely independence through almost trackless wilds, and contemplating without interruption the vast sublimity of nature we lose the recollection of those unpleasant circumstances, which within the influence of Sydney's pollutions continually occur to harass the mind'.

<sup>74</sup> Rowley, 1994, p. 96.

<sup>75</sup> Georgiana McCrae, Journal, 27 June 1845, H. Mc Crae, 1934, p. 166.

<sup>76</sup> Louisa Meredith, 1852, Vol 2, p. 134, in Rae-Ellis, 1979, p. 137.

Annie Dawbin complained during her second marriage that her life on a cattle property meant she never went: 'beyond the paddock fence.. I have little to narrate in the way of incident: my life was never so monotonous, nor more drear'.<sup>77</sup>

Women also went into the outdoors in order to work. Though middle class and working class women who had grown up or lived in the country had a more relaxed attitude to working outside than did those who had grown up or lived in the city, in Britain it was thought that ideally middle class women would only work outdoors in a genteel way in the flower garden and working class women in a limited way with stock or during harvest. However as free settlers generally emigrated in order to repair their fortunes, a misfit developed in the colonies between women's customary work roles and necessity - the fragile economic climate, the 'unsuitability' of hired labour, the mobility of men looking for work and men's high death rate meant that women of all classes sometimes assisted with farm work or helped manage farm properties. In 1804 Governor King reported that working class wives were proving 'very useful' in rearing stock and in performing agricultural work.<sup>78</sup> In the early years of settlement a makeshift colonial economy which encouraged working class women to relate in a casual way to the workforce and the concept of home<sup>79</sup> led to a number of working class women from rural backgrounds renting and / or working land independently of men. Margaret Catchpole, who was transported as a convict, wrote:

I am not [married] and almost fifty years old, nor do I not intend. ... But thank God I can do as well as I do. I rent a little farm about fifteen acres... I hire men to put in my corn and I work a great deal myself. I have got 30 sheep and forty goats and 30 pigs and 2 dogs they take care of me for I live all alone, not one in the house.<sup>80</sup>

Research has shown that in the 1820s in New South Wales 33 women out of a study group of 241 not only had land in their own names but employed the labour to work it.<sup>81</sup> Although some of these would have been widows such as Charlotte Barton or grass widows such as Elizabeth Macarthur who ran farming establishments during the temporary absence

<sup>77</sup> Annie Dawbin, *Journal*, 31 December 1859, Frost, 1992, pp. 225-6.

<sup>78</sup> King, 12 August 1806, quoted in Aveling, 1992, p. 8.

<sup>79</sup> Paula J. Byrne, 'Economy and Free Women', *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol. 11, no. 23, April, 1996, pp. 89-97.

<sup>80</sup> Margaret Catchpole to her uncle Richard House, 2 May 1803, 2 September 1811, in Clarke & Spender, 1992, pp. 13, 15.

<sup>81</sup> Lynne Boyd, 'On Her Own: Women as Heads of Family Groups in the 1828 Census', *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 107, October 1996, p. 316.



of male relatives<sup>82</sup>, not only working class unmarried women such as Margaret Catchpole but unmarried middle class women such as Anne Drysdale engaged in farming enterprises which they personally established and ran.<sup>83</sup> As well as this married middle class women such as Annie Baxter overcame social prohibitions on working outside in order to contribute to the financial success of a rural marital enterprise. If Margaret Catchpole and Annie Drysdale are any indication women who succeeded in independently running rural enterprises took considerable pride in their activities. Nevertheless, Margaret, who could not afford economic set-backs, appears to have seen 'nature' and its' catastrophes - flood, fire, crop failure, sudden stock loss - in a more gloomy light than the financially secure Annie Drysdale who frequently expressed her pleasure in 'nature' and the 'picturesque' scenery' of her adopted country.<sup>84</sup>

Women accompanied their husbands and male relatives on family business and on shopping expeditions or, if their male relatives were ill, busy or away working, deputised for them. Business journeys could vary from the relative comfort of the vice-regal procession which as Governor's wife Mrs Macquarie made in a well-sprung carriage in 1815 to the discomfort of the journey made in what served for 'public transport' in 1843 by Sarah Davenport when she (and her children) accompanied her husband 'up-country' when he was looking for work.

When Governor Macquarie, who hoped to demonstrate that all classes of settler could safely make the journey, took his wife across the Blue Mountains in the Autumn of 1815 it was part of his considered campaign to publicise his newly made road to Bathurst. The governor and his wife were accompanied by ten male officials, beves of soldiers and servants and five baggage carts. Provision depots and wooden huts to serve as sleeping quarters were established for the initial phase of the journey, after which the Governor and his wife slept in a well appointed tent. Being seen to enjoy herself (in spite of the bone jarring jolting) in sight-seeing and sketching the sights - and be fresh, rested and gracious when she arrived in Bathurst - was all that was required of Mrs Macquarie. Given the

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<sup>82</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Eliza Kingdon, March 1816, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, p. 307. John Macarthur was absent in Britain for eight and a half years. His wife, took on the responsibility for all the Macarthur properties, and, though she worried about the welfare of 'our distant farms', rarely complained.

<sup>83</sup> Clarke & Spender, 1992, pp. 10-16, 35-38. Margaret Catchpole, an ex-convict midwife, farmed fifteen acres of rented land. Anne Drysdale, successfully managed 10,000 freehold acres as a mixed farm. In managing Camden Park for her exiled husband Elizabeth Macarthur travelled long distances with no other company than her male convict overseer or her nephew.

<sup>84</sup> Margaret Catchpole to Richard House, 2 May 1803, 2 September 1811, in Clarke & Spender, 1992, pp. 13, 15. Anne Drysdale, April 1840, Journal, 1839-54, La Trobe Collection, MS 9249, SLV, p. 65.

intention behind his trip it is not surprising to find that Governor Macquarie recorded that his wife bore 'the fatiguing journey over the Blue Mountains to this place wonderfully well indeed and has arrived in good health' and that, like himself, she 'loved the beauty of the scenery' she had seen along the way.<sup>85</sup>

On the other hand Sarah Davenport told her own story of the 400 mile journey she and her husband made from Sydney to a relative's farm on the Owens. Pregnant at the time she 'consented to go up the bush' Sarah, who wrote that she had come to the colonies because she 'wanted to make a fresh start in a new country', had not been aware how difficult and expensive travelling with a young family would be in the colonies. Sarah and her husband and children set out from Sydney in January 1843 on a bullock dray after having haggled the driver to take them with him by promising him a considerable sum of money upon their safe arrival at their destination. The first night out from Sydney gave Sarah a taste of what she could expect on her journey for their driver pulled up for the night near a 'Publick House' leaving Sarah and her family to make their beds under his dray. During the night drunken customers from the public house proved to be a nuisance. Sarah wrote:

[T]hey was a great deal of bad language used among them and fighting ... and they was for pulling poor me from under the dray for their own brutal purpose we never spoke to them but we armed our selves my husband with a small axe and me with a carving knife i felt determined to defend myself we were in that Position till Daylight.<sup>86</sup>

Sarah's journey proved to be long and difficult with her eldest child left behind in the care of strangers at one point. As 'strangers in a strange land' Sarah's only mention of the natural environment was awakening one night when her husband was away to step out of her camp bed into eighteen inches of water, an occurrence which she claimed gave her 'a fright for the moment'. Given that the creek beside which Sarah was camped was in flood and the nearest dry place 'about 50 acres' away, this was clearly an understatement. Sarah wrote:

[I] put a few close on and i tied my infant on my sholders and my two boys i tyed one on each side if one was lost we shold all be lost for no one was stiring and i knew the water was rising .. i led my children across the water in safety i caled the firs neighbour up that i came [to] .. he was as surprised as i was and i think more frightned.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Lachlan Macquarie, Journal, in Lysbeth Cohen, *Elizabeth Macquarie: Her Life and Times*, Wentworth Press, Sydney, 1979, pp. 139-140.

<sup>86</sup> Sarah Davenport, Journal, MS 10541, La Trobe Collection, SLV, in Frost, 1984, pp. 246-7.

<sup>87</sup> Sarah Davenport, Journal, Frost, 1984, p. 255.

Charitable activity formed part of the way in which class distinction was maintained on the voyage from Britain and in the colonies. As such it served as a legitimate reason for middle class women to leave their homes.<sup>88</sup> Women who could be spared from their home duties also travelled in order to stay with friends and relatives in times of pregnancy, childbirth, crisis, ill-health and in order to maintain friendships and family ties.<sup>89</sup> Women sometimes used friendship as an excuse to travel - for instance, despite the fact that she was frail and had only one leg, the unmarried Elizabeth Hudspeth gained reluctant permission from her family to make the sea and land voyage from Tasmania to New South Wales on the grounds that her good friend was facing a difficult childbirth.<sup>90</sup> Sometimes women travelled long distances to fulfil such duties and stayed away from home for considerable periods of time: such extended visits sometimes serving to reconcile city women to life in the country.<sup>91</sup> When Fanny Macleay first accompanied her parents to view one of the Macleay family properties she told her brother:

Since I last wrote I have seen much beauty - I have been reconciled to the country in short I think I could live here very contentedly all my life. I do not mean in Sydney for I hate it...but in the country or the bush as they call it.<sup>92</sup>

However three years later, having promised to keep her sister company during her first pregnancy, Fanny regretted having to bury herself for months in what she called 'the Wild Bush' at the Hunter River. Once there however Fanny found that she enjoyed escaping from the hectic life of Sydney and from her duties as hostess and philanthropist. She used the language of the picturesque to evoke her response to the landscape:

[I am] enchanted with the beauty of the scenery about us.. I do not find that justice has been shown towards its lovely variety of mountain wood & water - In short the River Hunter flows through a rich country possessing great diversity of beauty. The valley in which (?) reside is surrounded with high mountains the outlines of which are very picturesque and the appearance of which is ever varying as the day advances or recedes, sometimes wearing a garb of the softest blue and at others clothed majestically in purple & gold! The (?) are covered with trees to their very (?) and thus seem to be fringed. The lowlands or plains or flats as they are called here are overspread with fine

<sup>88</sup> Curtin, 1994, p. 639.

<sup>89</sup> Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 21 July 1862, Adams, 1969, pp. 83-5. Before she married Rachel Henning, who had her own income, travelled to stay with one friend or relative after another.

<sup>90</sup> Clarke, 1986, pp. 207-10.

<sup>91</sup> Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 14 May 1856, 10 September 1861, Adams, 1969, pp. 42, 75. On her second visit to her sister in Bathurst - made some years later in Spring rather than Autumn - Rachel was more impressed with her surroundings.

<sup>92</sup> Fanny Macleay to William Macleay, 27 April, 25 May, 21 July 1831, in Earnshaw, Davidson & Hughes, 1993, pp. 133, 135-7.

grass and adorned with Noble trees, the foliage of which although rarely green yet, is sufficiently variegated to please the eye.<sup>93</sup>

Fanny's ready acceptance of the country along the Hunter River grew out of its similarity to Britain which encouraged the belief that it could be further transformed by the extensive planting of dark green and deciduous trees. Happy with its appearance, Fanny immediately set about embroidering the land with history and imaginative association, writing:

I frequently fancy to my self when taking my solitary ramble that nearly such must have been Needwood Forest in the time of Richard the 1st and I look about for the appearance of Gurth and Wamba emerging from some one of the pretty grassy glades! We have however no swineherds but Shepherds & their more interesting charge in great abundance all around us!<sup>94</sup>

Self-directed reasons why women went beyond their garden gates overlapped with and were determined by - or grew oppositionally out of - legitimate reasons for leaving home. Charlotte Barton claimed she fled from her home because her husband was violent and dangerous. She wrote: '[He is] a raving lunatic .. his habits of intoxication render him unfit to live with'.<sup>95</sup> Having decided to leave her second husband Charlotte resorted to stealth. Firstly she sent off a good deal of furniture to Sydney. She then waited until a male friend who intended travelling up-country arrived from England so that he could escort her to her destination, then - during a period when her husband was away - organised her convict servants to load drays with sufficient necessities for a (seven month) stay for herself and her four children at the Atkinson outstation at Budgong. Louisa Atkinson later told the story of the long journey through the bush of herself, her mother, her two sisters and brother, one Aboriginal and several convict servants, the gentleman friend and the children's pet koala. Coaxing the laden drays down the mountain was the most difficult and anxiety-provoking part of the trip but camping out produced its own fears. In later years the family interpreted the trek as a milestone in their history of survival - with Charlotte cast as Moses leading the much beset Atkinson family out of Egypt. It was a test of female character in which the enemy was not the bush, but 'wild' men.<sup>96</sup> In her reconstruction of these events made when she was an adult Louisa Atkinson discursively killed off one of these 'wild' men - her step-father - by pre-emptively making a widow of her mother. She began her story: 'A widow

<sup>93</sup> Fanny Macleay to William Macleay, 21 July 1831, in Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 13.

<sup>94</sup> Fanny Macleay to William Macleay, 15 February 1828, in Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 91.

<sup>95</sup> Charlotte Barton's Disposition to the court, quoted in Clarke, 1990, pp. 28, 39. Muir, 1980, p. 25. In 1843-4 Barton was declared a bankrupt and in 1854 tried for the murder of a male employee whom he shot and killed. He was convicted of manslaughter and goaled for two years.

lady and her family, who had suffered much and had been forced to seek shelter at her cattle station ...'<sup>97</sup>

Fear of being alone and loneliness - 'I grew horribly afraid... The utter helpless loneliness of the situation I had so indefatigably walked into, began to impress me with no very cheerful feelings'<sup>98</sup> - could encourage women to leave their homes and travel through the bush. When forced by loneliness to make what were often long and difficult journeys to visit neighbours, friends and relatives, women sometimes looked on the 'bush' with greater interest. Women who found themselves unable to travel very far assuaged their loneliness by making short excursions into the bush to draw and paint in the way in which Louisa Clifton, Georgiana McCrae and Louisa Meredith did. They might also ride and hunt like Annie Baxter or collect botanical and other natural history specimens like Georgiana Molloy and Fanny Macleay. To justify such activities women often claimed their excursions were made to satisfy demands / requests made by male relatives or acquaintances.<sup>99</sup> When Fanny Macleay's brother repeatedly begged her to collect insects for him she replied:

You ask me about new forms of Insects - I believe I have already told you, dearest, that I never see any insect but those pests, mosquitoes, fleas, bugs, ants & c which are real nuisances ... We have *nothing new* in Sydney. I am going with Susan and Capt Dumaresque to Hunter's River for a few months and perhaps I may perchance find something good & rare. I promise you that I will look sharp about me - I shall have nothing else to do.<sup>100</sup>

Though young single women found journeying beyond the home an easier undertaking than older women and married women with children, the young Sarah Midgely, who lived at Belfast (Port Fairy) in Victoria, found that even in the 1860s travelling to town and church and visiting neighbours required strength and determination. Travelling was a dirty, tiring business and any lifts which were offered by neighbours in their traps, drays or carts were gratefully accepted. On some occasions Sarah and her brothers and sisters were forced by the weather to stay at home, at others they went out in spite of bad weather and lack of transport and had 'wet unpleasant' or 'hot and dusty' walks of fifteen to twenty miles through the

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<sup>96</sup> Louisa Atkinson, 'A Night Adventure in the Bush', Webby, 1989, pp. 172-5. Clarke, 1990, pp. 28-33.

<sup>97</sup> Louisa Atkinson, 'Recollections of the Aborigines: A Voice from the Country', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 September 1863. George Barton was certainly alive when the story took place and, as it is known that he survived his gaol sentence and went to England, probably still alive when Louisa wrote her story.

<sup>98</sup> Meredith, 1853, p. 60.

<sup>99</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 21 March 1837, BL 479A/1. When Captain Mangles requested she collect wildflower seeds for him Georgiana claimed that she had failed to fulfil similar requests from her brother George because her time was 'so much infringed on'.

<sup>100</sup> Fanny Macleay to William Macleay, 27 April 1831, Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 133.

'virgin' bush. Eventually the girls persuaded their father to buy them side-saddles and, although initially Sarah professed to having 'many fears [at] being on horse back any distance' and to being 'very stiff and tired' after her first long (25 mile) ride, being able to ride made the lives of Sarah and her sisters much less constrained - with 'the bush' within a thirty mile radius of their home suddenly taking on 'a very romantic appearance'. However things were rather different for their mother. For many years after she emigrated Mrs Midgely did not ride; it required her young daughter Martha's life to be endangered by typhus fever for her to brave horseback. Sarah wrote:

Mother went to Warrnambool to see Martha and to wait on her. It is the first time Mother has been on horseback in the Colony and since she was young, so that I think she had many fears.<sup>101</sup>

Mrs Midgely, who, after Martha recovered, often rode, was lucky that she was past her years of child bearing. When Louisa Meredith moved with her family from 'Springvale' on the east coast to Port Sorell on the north coast of Tasmania she was forced to ride the last thirty miles of her journey side-saddle in the dark and rain despite the fact that she had recently had a baby. She wrote of the experience:

I had been ten hours on horseback tiresomely creeping at a foot pace, and had become so thoroughly chilled, cramped, and drowsy, as to be scarcely capable of feeling the reins in my hand, and began to fear that I should drop off my horse before I arrived.<sup>102</sup>

Georgiana McCrae too suffered from the combination of motherhood and horse riding. Although five months pregnant at the time, Georgiana was determined not to be left behind when her husband decided in the summer of 1844 to spend a week visiting and picnicking with neighbours. The strong-minded Georgiana confided to her journal with some exasperation that:

Mr McCrae had determined that we must cover the journey to Captain Reid's on horseback, although I have told him how hazardous it is for me to travel far on the Timor pony. He says he can't afford to pay for a conveyance, so I *and mine*, must take our chance.<sup>103</sup>

Georgiana professed that during her 25 mile evening (in February the days were too hot) ride to Captain Reid's she 'suffered a good deal from the effects of a canter' and after

<sup>101</sup> Sarah Midgely, *Journal*, 5, 22, 25 October, 29, 30 November, 6, 23, 25, 30 December 1855, 9 May, 2 December 1856, 15 February 1857, in McCorkell, 1967, pp. 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 29, 30, 33, 35.

<sup>102</sup> Meredith, 1852, Vol. 2, p. 131.

<sup>103</sup> Georgiana McCrae, *Journal*, 6 February 1844, H. McCrae, 1934, p. 107.

the ride felt 'wearied to death', but that her 'cramped-feeling' was cured by 'a night's rest in a comfortable bed'. The next day however she wrote the terse '[s]uffering from lumbago'. During a pleasure excursion a few days later Georgiana slid from her side-saddle - which gave women precarious purchase at the best of times - and was hoisted back up by her husband. In her account:

15 February: Mr McCrae a clumsy rescuer, who, instead of lowering me, insisted on hoisting me up again, and gave me such a twist that I couldn't thereafter sit in any other way than a califourchon. Accordingly I walked "Don" the six miles back to Captain Reid's. After seven hours in the saddle, exposed to the scorching sun, I felt knocked up, and had reason to dread the effects of the wrench in my side.

16 February: A beautiful morning, which I should have enjoyed more if my knee had not continued to pain; my back, too, so racked me that I reclined on the sofa all day.<sup>104</sup>

Georgiana was to claim that her husband's rough treatment caused her to have pain in her side for the four remaining months of her pregnancy and to suffer 'unusually' during delivery.<sup>105</sup> With falls from horses being so common under colonial conditions it was scarce wonder that married women less intrepid than Georgiana McCrae frequently opted to stay at home when - as they often were - they were pregnant or post parturient.

Despite possible discomfort women sometimes accepted being parted from their children in order to view, and possibly discriminate against, a potential place of residence. Eliza Brown, an intrepid woman who had encouraged her husband to emigrate, claimed she was given the 'special privilege' of accompanying her husband on his six hundred mile round journey from York to the newly discovered grazing land at Greenough because she wished: 'to see the aspect of the country that the family have in all probability to be brought to, and that we should consult together on the spot as to the advisableness of it'.<sup>106</sup>

It may have been because Eliza's father had advanced her husband money for his farming ventures that Eliza had such power. As Eliza expected to be away from her family of five - the youngest of whom was eighteen months old - for three or four weeks and to be crossing country without 'any certain traces of a road', she found leaving them to be

<sup>104</sup> Georgiana McCrae, *Journal*, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16 February 1844, H. McCrae, 1934, pp. 107, 110. Women were (rightly) terrified of the effects which a miscarriage would have on their health.

<sup>105</sup> Georgiana McCrae, *Journal*, 7 March, 25 June 1844, H. McCrae, 1934, pp. 113, 125.

<sup>106</sup> Eliza Brown, "Narrative of a Journey from York to Champion Bay in the colony of Western Australia, during the months of May and June, 1851", Part 1, *The Inquirer*, Perth, 3 September 1851. Eliza's effrontery at taking this trip and publishing an account of it in which she claimed a right to have a say in where she lived led to her father's rejection of her.

extremely difficult. Not being used to riding a horse such long distances she also felt 'very ill' in the first stages of the journey but decided not to use illness as an excuse to turn back because she 'would look so foolish'.

Although Eliza was often tired on the journey - which after completion she described as 'a rather anxious undertaking' - she appeared to have enjoyed herself. Apart from the sandflies - which, in the same way as the explorer George Grey when he took that route <sup>107</sup> - she abhorred, the only real problem for Eliza was her fear that the party would be attacked by Aborigines. Because of this she was relieved to arrive at Champion Bay where there was an armed guard and watches set throughout the night, writing that that night she had 'the soundest sleep I had enjoyed during the whole journey'. Part of Eliza's pleasure in her journey may have stemmed from the fact that on such journeys middle class women had few responsibilities. While on route Eliza's husband made 'the steamer' and male servants did the cooking - it was only after the party arrived at Champion Bay that Eliza cooked a 'bush dinner for nine people consisting of a curry, a currant pudding and that necessary adjunct some loaves of bread'.

In Champion Bay Eliza did what she had set out to do - she inspected 'the romantic place upon which Mr Brown intends to erect a small cottage [which will] overlook two bends in the river' - and named the spot Glengarry. She discovered that Champion Bay Aborigines resembled those she knew at York and declared herself 'much charmed with the fine piece of water glassy and rippling; there is a fine bend in it, and the banks are picturesque'. Satisfied with what she had seen at Glengarry, Eliza proclaimed that she had formed the 'full intention of returning again next October unless unforeseen circumstance should prevent'. <sup>108</sup> In the event Thomas Brown was appointed magistrate at Fremantle and the Browns' eldest son developed Glengarry.

Pleasurable exercise in the bush which adjoined their homes was very important to colonial women. When she lived at Cambria, the beautiful home and garden established by her father-in-law, Louisa Meredith liked to walk through 'the orchard, with its fine trees and shady walks'; when first she went to live in less 'civilised' country therefore she initially complained that she 'had not many wild-wood walks near home' but before long became reconciled to walks through the Australian bush, seeing herself no doubt in the same way as

<sup>107</sup> Eliza Brown to William Bussey, 1 August 1851 in Cowan, 1977, p.119.

<sup>108</sup> Eliza Brown, 'Narrative of a Journey from York to Champion Bay in the colony of Western Australia, during the months of May and June, 1851, Part 2, *The Inquirer*, Perth, 10 September 1851.



the native lilies which she described as 'brave explorers of these wilds'.<sup>109</sup> Louisa claimed: '[t]he road leading to Spring Vale was my favourite [walk], as the "Bush" on either side afforded abundance of wildflowers'.<sup>110</sup> Middle class women were taught to believe that both too little and too much outdoor exercise might adversely affect their health. Mary Mowle, a mother of small children who had poor health and little free time, snatched every second she could from her household duties in order to walk, ride, drive and take boat trips in the outdoors - or, often, to just sit and watch the sea in front of her home. If Mary was prevented from venturing outdoors or taking outdoor exercise she became depressed and began to worry that her health would suffer.<sup>111</sup> Before she married Rachel Henning loved living in outback Queensland and dreaded visits to Sydney because, freed from household responsibilities by her sister, in Queensland she could walk or ride in the bush every day and glory in what she called an 'easy out of door life'.<sup>112</sup> Though women clearly enjoyed getting out of doors when the weather was at all reasonable, most women felt that when they did so they should either use their health as an excuse or apologise for taking time away from their household and social duties. Before she married Margaret Hamersley, who loved to ride, explained to her cousin that 'I ride out every day .. I am afraid you will think I am dreadfully spoilt but you must remember that it is only since my accident'.<sup>113</sup>

One of the reasons women liked to venture into the outdoors and / or travel was in order to write about or paint 'nature' - the recording of their impressions of nature being an extremely important form of self-expression for women.<sup>114</sup> Women such as Sarah Davenport who were able to write but who did not read a great deal, tended to record less polished and stereotypical responses to the natural environment than more educated women such as Annie Baxter, Eliza Brown or Louisa Meredith who half-hoped to have what they wrote published. Educated women such as Eliza Brown tended to include passages of purple prose in their travel accounts. Eliza wrote:

<sup>109</sup> Meredith, 1852, vol. 1, pp. 91, 127, 178. Meredith, 'The Lily of the West' in V. Smith & M. Scott, (eds) *The Effects of Light: The Poetry of Tasmania*, Twelvvetrees, Hobart, 1985.

<sup>110</sup> Meredith, 1852, Vol. 1, p. 178.

<sup>111</sup> Mary Mowle, Journal, 9, 12, 14 January, 1, 2 June 1851, 13 August, 24 October, 4, 11 December 1854, 25, 27, 29 December 1855, in Clarke, 1986, pp. 111, 132, 224, 230, 236, 255.

<sup>112</sup> Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 27 December 1862, 20 December 1863, 12 April, 1 May 1864, 18 February, Rachel Henning to Mr Boyce, 23 July 1865, Adams, 1969, pp. 117, 150, 166, 167, 192-3, 206. Because Rachel's unmarried sister Annie wished to run the household for their unmarried brother Biddulph Rachel did the station's bookwork - which left her with considerable leisure.

<sup>113</sup> Margaret Hamersley to Capel Bussell, 14 March 1867, Hamersley Papers, BL 2181A/43.

<sup>114</sup> Meredith, 1844, p. vii.

What signifies fatigue, hunger, or the sand flies; are the guns all loaded? keep them near at hand; never mind the dogs having tumbled one after another, into a native well-hole; it has somewhat clouded the purity of the water, but here is some muslin to strain it. Oh! dear how long it is going through! and the sand-flies sting so tormentingly: there! it is accomplished at last. When this nice clean canfull boils, we will set down to breakfast. ... there were some places that presented a grand looking picture to the eye; forests of banksia trees; the sun lighting up the gorgeous transparent flowers, for the most part a rich orange colour; others lilac and some white, were sometimes seen below us, in a valley winding between rugged hills. It only wanted a party of natives, uttering their wild shouts and poising their quivering spears, to give animation to the wild landscape; however we were quite contented that the picture had not this finishing touch.<sup>115</sup>

Picturesque writing such as the above is just that - writing which describes landscape as if it were a picture which is set in a discursive 'frame'. As such it tries to both word-paint a broad scene and evoke detail and cultural association.

Twenty four years after Elizabeth Macquarie made her trip across the Blue Mountains Louisa Meredith followed in her path. A well-known authoress in Britain, Louisa wrote to maintain her reputation and to supplement her family's income. Her most recent publication - her first picturesque travel book, *An Autumn Ramble on the Wye* - had been published just as she left Britain in June 1839. Louisa accompanied her husband - who intended to visit his properties west of Bathurst - on the 'romantic' journey across the Blue Mountains in order to include a description of it in a travel book she was writing about New South Wales.<sup>116</sup> The popular genre of travel writing reproduced by women was a literary and historical mix which explored both the external landscape and the inner self through the medium of a first person narrative.<sup>117</sup>

Unlike Elizabeth Macquarie who in 1815 crossed the Blue Mountains under optimum conditions at the best time of year, it was in October 1839, just weeks after she first arrived in New South Wales, that the pregnant Louisa and her husband crossed the Blue Mountains in a private carriage. Louisa found the summer heat, the occasional summer rain and the country - crisped by two years of drought - all equally oppressive. The physical discomfort she experienced on the trip was exacerbated by a sense of distance from nature (the establishment of wayside inns meant Louisa missed experiencing romantic night skies

<sup>115</sup> Eliza Brown, 'Narrative of a Journey', Part 2, *The Inquirer*, Perth, 10 September 1851.

<sup>116</sup> Alan Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia: A History*, vol. 1, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1996, p. 193. The name the 'Blue Mountains' travelled from word of mouth to the written record as early as 1793. Atkinson considered it was 'the seductive power of the vulgar' [!] which caused paradisaical myths to be associated with the mountains and their crossing.

<sup>117</sup> Maurice French, 'From the Profane to the Sacred: Travellers' Images of the Darling Downs before Separation', *Journal of Australian Studies*, No. 40, March 1994, pp. 45,46.

and campfires) and shock at seeing the landscape as not only strange, but fire scarred and drought stricken. Louisa's romantic expectations compounded her sense of alienation. She professed herself unimpressed with the road, the convict chain gangs, most of the roadhouses - tents, she claimed, were not infested with parasites in the way inns commonly were - the people she met, the ugly nature of the 'improvements' man had made, and, for much of the way, the scenery. Flowers were Louisa's greatest passion: even so she claimed that she 'almost began to dislike' the everlasting daisies - which she saw as 'blasted... dry, harsh [and] juiceless' - for 'daring to blossom' during a drought.<sup>118</sup>

According to Louisa her journey began well with her being 'quite delighted' by the 'picturesque and striking' view across the coastal plains which she saw from the top of Lapstone hill. She professed herself reassured: 'if all our progress over the dreaded Blue Mountains were as pleasant and interesting as the commencement, the journey must be less wearisome than I anticipated'.<sup>119</sup> For Louisa, as for all travellers from Britain who had a penchant for the picturesque, without 'greenery' (as she put it) and water, scenery could have little appeal. The drought stricken nature of the landscape thus partly explains why Louisa found the 'wild monotonous scenery' of the Blue Mountains 'a world of desolation, the contemplation of [which] became absolutely oppressive', and the 'so - vaunted' Bathurst Plains - 'a wide extent of brown earth, with occasional flurries of dust passing across it' - a 'heavy weary monotony'. Aware that upon the publication of her book the inhabitants of Bathurst would feel insulted by her evaluations Louisa excused herself on the grounds that because of the drought she 'could not be expected to form any very high opinion of [the area's] beauties or advantages ...the inevitable impression on my mind was of a most dreary and unpleasing character'.<sup>120</sup>

Seventeen years later Rachel Henning also dreaded making the 'disagreeable' 120 mile journey from Sydney to Bathurst. In April she found the steep, rough and muddy road frightening and bone shaking and the inns infested with insect life. Although she conceded the view from Mount Victoria was 'very fine' she thought it too dry and 'not equal to Snowdon by any means', while she considered the Bathurst Plains to be treeless and barren and Bathurst to be 'ugly. All brick and dust'.<sup>121</sup> Newly arrived from England when they saw the country the powerful negative reactions recorded by Louisa Meredith and Rachel

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<sup>118</sup> Meredith 1844, p. 110.

<sup>119</sup> Meredith, 1844, pp. 64-65.

<sup>120</sup> Meredith, 1844, pp. 73, 83, 84, 85.

<sup>121</sup> Rachel Henning to Annie Henning, 17 April 1856, Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 14 May 1856, Adams, 1969, pp. 38-41. Rachel travelled by herself in Cobb and Co. coaches.

Henning seems to confirm Paul Carter's conception that for many British women the landscape was initially experienced as looking back at them with an unsmiling face. This was because in the mind of English women the land looked as if it needed to be tended - as if it were neglected, unwatered, unloved. Until the 1860s the variety of conditions in such a huge continent defeated any attempts made by colonists to understand when, how and if this should be done.

Louisa Meredith published her account of her journey across the Blue Mountains in 1844, three years after she had left New South Wales 'with less regret than [she] could have believed possible' in the hope of finding a 'more temperate climate' for herself and her baby son in Van Dieman's Land. Louisa expressed herself better satisfied with the homely face of Van Dieman's land because it was 'more English .. and I could fancy myself some degrees nearer home'. She wrote:

The scenery around Newtown is the most beautiful I have seen on this side of the world - very much resembling that of the Cumberland Lakes; the broad and winding estuary of the Derwent flows between lofty and picturesque hills and mountains, clothed with forests, whilst at their feet lie level lawn-like flats, green to the water's edge. But the most English and therefore the most beautiful things I saw there were the hawthorn hedges ... having so much of the common country home life about them.<sup>122</sup>

Women in the colonies professed themselves eager to explore their natural surroundings - Jane Franklin expressed the determination formed by many women when she wrote: 'I determined to go ... I was very anxious to see it'.<sup>123</sup> As soon as natural wonders such as the Jenolan Caves were discovered women clamoured to join the parties which explored them.<sup>124</sup> For although in the nineteenth century exploring was considered to be the epitome of 'masculine' endeavour, throughout the century there were not only explorer-wives but a small number lady explorers.<sup>125</sup> Exploring for women in the Australian colonies could range from one day picnic excursions and week-long camping trips spent investigating natural wonders situated on, or near home properties,<sup>126</sup> to large scale expeditions similar to those

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<sup>122</sup> Louisa Meredith *My Home in Tasmania During a Residence of Nine Years*, vol. 1, John Murray, London, 1852, pp. 3, 28, 29.

<sup>123</sup> Jane Franklin, *Journal*, 'Excursion to Port Davey and Macquarie Harbour, December 1838', Mackaness, 1977, p. 39.

<sup>124</sup> Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 19 July 1861, Adams, 1969, p. 73.

<sup>125</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturalism*, Routledge, London, 1992, p. 213.

<sup>126</sup> Meredith, 1853, pp. 93-7. Louisa claimed that days spent crawling beneath and clambering over 'rocks, logs, bushes and briars' and into 'wild gullies' with her husband were the happiest times she had since leaving England. Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles 20 January 1841, BL 479A/2, Georgiana claimed

mounted by men. In all cases however there was no domestic reason for the women to be there - at a time when curiosity in the natural sciences could become 'a passion' and authors, artists, travellers and explorers exulted in finding parts of the earth which had 'never become hackneyed, that had never been reduced, and, indeed, were irreducible' - women wanted to collect or observe natural productions, to see and enjoy their natural surroundings and / or be seen to be engaged in 'useful' masculine rather than 'trivial' feminine pursuits.<sup>127</sup> In these terms exploring for women did not have quite the same focus as exploring and conquering the wilderness had for men wherein squatters and official designated explorers pushed beyond the 'limits of location' in a land thought to 'be there for the taking'.<sup>128</sup>

Two women who came close to rivalling men in the way in which they set out to explore the Australian landscape were Jane Franklin - who went exploring at the beginning, and Ellis Rowan - who went exploring at the end of the nineteenth century. Their approach was very different - Lady Jane Franklin, who, having claimed she liked 'bold and singularly shaped mountains' such as Mount Wellington, scandalised Hobart society by being the first woman to climb it,<sup>129</sup> saw herself as an explorer on behalf of society and science, whereas Ellis Rowan was an artist who travelled the outback in order to 'hunt' and be the first person to 'capture' in paint indigenous birds and flowers. As the notion of women as explorers is inextricably tied up with how nineteenth century women fared when they attempted to embrace either scientific or artistic interests, I will treat Jane Franklin's explorative activities in Chapter 5 (women and science), and Ellis Rowan's explorative activities in Chapter 6 (women and creativity).

### **Constructing the landscape; the sacred and the profane.<sup>130</sup>**

The popularity of the nineteenth century travel account in Britain and the Australian colonies stemmed, in part, from a desire for a new imaginative beginning which would give

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her week long camping trip in which she travelled through the countryside to Castle rock and walked and rode the extra 16 miles to Cape Naturaliste was 'most delightful'.

<sup>127</sup> Stafford, 1984, pp. 25, 329, 349.

<sup>128</sup> Robert Dixon, *The Course of Empire: Neo-classical Culture in New South Wales 1788-1860*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, pp. 79-119. Explorers tended to return as battered warriors - however they made some accommodation with the environment as regards technology of travel and the last great male explorers mostly demonstrated that they had learned respect for the countryside.

<sup>129</sup> Jane Franklin, 'Journal of an Excursion', December 1836, in m, 1977, p. 42. James Calder, *Recollections of Sir John & Lady Jane Franklin in Tasmania*, Sullivan's Cove, 1984, p. 9. Originally published as a 'Portrait of a Lady' in the *Mercury*, 3 October 1872.

a mythical apprehension of the earth as it was before human consciousness appeared.<sup>131</sup> This largely explains why the seventeenth century myth of the Great South Land as a 'land of plenty' was only temporarily dampened by the settlement of Australia as a gaol and easily reignited by the crossing of the Blue Mountains.<sup>132</sup> The desire to cross the Blue Mountains which was felt so strongly in the first decades of the nineteenth century was both pragmatic - the wish to find more and better grazing land for the colony's expanding pastoral industry, and imaginative - to impose a familiar conception of nature upon a strange environment. Nineteenth century romantic idealisations of landscape interpreted mountains as the source of spiritual renewal and plains as pastoral Arcadia's or God-given Edens. The Arcadian dream as propagated in England in the middle of the nineteenth century by writers such as Charles Dickens and Samuel Sidney caught the imagination of poor and genteel alike: the concept of an idyllic 'beckoning land' leading in time to bitter debate - which crossed class barriers - between pastoralists and intensive cultivators. This was partly because romantic conceptions of wilderness as paradise co-existed with pragmatic earlier conceptions of unimproved landscape as wild waste in which mountains were barriers to expansion and plains an emptiness waiting to be filled.<sup>133</sup>

Participants in such debates lacked the detailed ethnographic information relating to nomadic societies which would have allowed land in Australia and America to be seen as anything other than 'a wilderness: an empty land worked by no human hands, a vast *terra nullius*, land belonging to no one'.<sup>134</sup> It was thus thought that the European emigrant literally, rather than metaphorically, represented the New Adam or Eve come to claim an Eden which indigenous peoples had shown they were incapable of developing.<sup>135</sup> As commercialism and consumerism played a part in the formation of Romantic idealisations of plains and mountains it was common for descriptions of landscape to conflate aesthetic and pragmatic 'richness'.<sup>136</sup> Nearly a decade after William Wentworth formed part of the party of men who are commonly celebrated in Australian history as the first to cross the Blue Mountains, he wrote as if he expected actual gold, rather than gold from tourism, would be discovered in the Blue Mountains. He chorused:

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<sup>130</sup> French, 1994, p. 54, drawing on Arnold von Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, (1960). In psychic terms the journey can be divided into three stages: the separation from home, the journey with its potential encounter with the sacred, and the reaggregation or homecoming.

<sup>131</sup> Stafford, 1984, p. 441.

<sup>132</sup> Gibson, 1984, p. 58.

<sup>133</sup> Julia Home, 'Travelling Through the Romantic Landscapes of the Blue Mountains', *Australian Cultural History*, no. 10, 1991, pp. 84-98.

<sup>134</sup> Rhys Jones, 'Ordering the Landscape', in I & T Donaldson, 1985, pp. 182-3.

<sup>135</sup> Swartz, 1985, pp. xiii, 3.

Hail mighty ridge! that from the azure brow  
Survey'st these fertile plains, that stretch below ...  
Vast Austral Giant of these rugged steeps,  
Within those secret cells rich glitt'ring heaps  
Thick piled are doom'd to sleep, till someone spy  
The hidden key that opes the treasury.<sup>137</sup>

Male explorers such as Mitchell, Sturt and Eyre were largely responsible for the growth of a literature of survival in which the main obstacle to settlement was not, as one would expect, the Aborigines, but the emptiness of the autochthonous and malevolent land. This led in the late 1840s to the belief that it could no longer be assumed that settlers could tame and control the Australian landscape and to longings which turned inward to 'the country of the mind', with the centre of the continent eventually becoming the 'symbol of Australian aspiration'.<sup>138</sup>

Bernard Smith traced three stages of settler adaptation to the colonial environment. In his opinion colonists initial attempt to assimilate their new environment was followed by shocked recognition of real difference and then by the strategic use of the picturesque as a method to civilise the culture and aesthetically shut out that which seemed unassimilable.<sup>139</sup> Paul Carter recognised that one of the reasons European settlers found the land in the Australian colonies to be psychically unassimilable was because for them it was undifferentiated - nothing about the land was amenable to association; within the English lexicon of the knowable it could only be seen as characterless and unlovable. In the same way as under patriarchy there was no language - or ability to generate a new lexicon - which would allow an alternative construction of women from that of women as (superficially) fragile reproductive flowers in the nineteenth century there was no language which would allow landscape in the Australian colonies to be named and known.<sup>140</sup> In other words

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<sup>136</sup> Ryan, 1996, p. 71.

<sup>137</sup> William Charles Wentworth, 'Australasia', Cambridge University 1823, in *A Book of Australia*, T. Inglis Moore (ed.), William Collins, London, 1961, p. 52.

<sup>138</sup> Gibson, 1984, pp. 115-139. Ann McGrath, 'Travels to a Distant Past: The Mythology of the Outback', *Australian Cultural History*, no.10, 1991, pp. 113-124. McGrath believes 'the outback' - that is the image of desert, the land of the Aborigines with Uluru at its heart - is a symbol central to Australian national mythology which effects a cultural convergence between Aboriginal and European culture. In her opinion the outback myth represents a 'distant' heritage landscape which evokes not buildings or gloriously preserved ruins but 'emptiness': space turned into time, nature transformed into history so that history can be equated with nature - a magical process whereby what always was becomes the 'heritage' of the European.

<sup>139</sup> Smith, 1969, Chapter 9.

<sup>140</sup> Spender, 1990, pp. 3, 77.

language itself helped perpetuate the (in many ways similar) cultural dissonance which developed in the construction of women and the land.<sup>141</sup>

One of the characteristics of the Australian landscape which affected cultural adaptation was that it was experienced by colonists as too flat. The Australian landscape not only had few mountains, but those which it had were thought by colonists to be overly low and wrongly formed. Because high mountains were thought to encourage spiritual development it was feared that Australia's topographical flatness would cause the character of settlers to become 'limited and ... superficial'.<sup>142</sup> This fear intensified a subconscious belief that to gain ownership of land settlers needed to view it from an eminence. In terms of mythology a sense of not belonging, of spiritual loss, was compensated for by the belief that, in the same way as the sea voyage from Britain to the colonies, the territorial passage from the coastal plain to the interior through the 'unordered wilderness' of mountain ranges represented 'heroically cross[ing] the frontier from the profane to the sacred'. Psychically speaking in these terms crossing a designated frontier was experienced as a trip from death to re-birth, from life-threatening to life-saving with the old home constructed as profane and the new home as the sacred. A sense of having completed a ritual passage occurred in an immigrant when they felt that what had been left behind had been re-constituted as ordinary and that which was experienced as life-threatening in the journey was the price paid to have the place of arrival re-constituted as non-ordinary and saving.<sup>143</sup>

Whether or not crossing mountains served as a rite of passage, women who crossed mountain ranges in the early days of settlement were generally relieved when the mountains had been traversed and the plains beyond reached. This was because - regardless of whether mountain scenery was experienced as a 'wild, dreary sublimity' or as 'beautiful'<sup>144</sup> - the series of ascents and descents through precipitous gorges was experienced by women as physically and (possibly) psychically dangerous. The physical climbing up and down mirrored the psychological sinking and rising of hope and despair, of alternating fear and hopeful expectation in relation to the colonial experience. It is perhaps not surprising that the

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<sup>141</sup> Carter, 1987, pp. 42-7.

<sup>142</sup> Horne, 1991, p. 86.

<sup>143</sup> French, 1994, pp. 53, 56. French traced this pattern in relation to early constructions of the Darling Downs.

<sup>144</sup> Difference of perception of the Blue Mountains among women depended to some extent on whether they focused on the patches of rainforest - which they found picturesque - or on the more intimidating eucalypt / acacia scrub.



flat land on the other side of mountains was generally seen as 'an idyllic region with classical if not mythical overtones'.<sup>145</sup>

Three constructions of nature and of landscape - 'the beautiful', 'the sublime' and 'the picturesque' - were common in the nineteenth century.<sup>146</sup> Such constructions were by no means confined to the highly literate middle classes: in the colonies the ex-convict Margaret Catchpole was just as likely to use picturesque language to extol the beauties of nature as the middle class writer, Louisa Meredith.<sup>147</sup> Nevertheless, as Louisa Meredith's picturesque travel book *Notes and Sketches of New South Wales* which she wrote soon after she arrived in the colonies was a very different sort of picturesque travel book from *An Autumn Ramble on the Wye* which she wrote immediately before she left Britain, it is fruitful to consider modifications which life in the colonies engendered in women's written constructions of landscape.

In aesthetic debates the picturesque has always been difficult to define: when considering the picturesque it is therefore wise to be historically specific in regard to when the term was used.<sup>148</sup> As an aesthetic construction the picturesque tends to merge with the beautiful on the one hand and with the sublime on the other. In the nineteenth century the 'beautiful', which was usually associated with femininity, was seen as something simple, spontaneous, unforced and natural. The 'picturesque' - the most contrived of the three imaginative ways of seeing landscape or nature - generally represented an attempt to unite a variety of parts; variations of light and shade, roughness, and contrasting colours into an harmonious whole. The creation of the picturesque was a highly literary and intellectual activity which, in the case of landscape in the nineteenth century usually took the representational form of an pastoral idyll or Arcadia embroidered with detail. The 'sublime' on the other hand was associated with wilderness and masculinity and thought to be that which was experienced as above or beyond man - that which was seen as vast, even worrying. An experience of the sublime was thought to temporarily stun the spectator into aphasia - a moment of transport which caused the intellect to lapse out of discourse and out

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<sup>145</sup> French, 1994, p. 52.

<sup>146</sup> R. L. Heathcote, *Back of Bourke: A Study of Land Appraisal and Settlement in Semi-arid Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1965, p. 13. For at least a generation after 'the picturesque' and 'the wild' became fashionable in England (that is not until the 1850s-1860s) the need for shelter and sustenance meant the 'wilderness' of forest and desert were seen by settlers as too inimicable to allow the Romantic appreciation of wildness.

<sup>147</sup> See Margaret Catchpole's description of a lyre bird in R. Cobbold, *The History of Margaret Catchpole, A Suffolk Girl*, Facsimile edition, The Deben Bookshop, Ipswich, 1971 (1845), pp. 326-37.

<sup>148</sup> Copley & Garside, 1994, Introduction, p.1.

of contact with its analytical and perceptive self.<sup>149</sup> It is claimed that the British were at the forefront in furthering the 'divination of nature': they were also at the forefront in furthering belief in the sublime.<sup>150</sup>

The 'seeing' of the picturesque very much requires a prepared observer - someone who has learnt to see and interpret landscape and objects in a certain way. Louisa Meredith, when sailing past what she called 'the picturesque coast of Tasmania' self-consciously claimed that she was: 'quite busy with so much to enjoy, and only seemed to fear that I could not look about with enough energy to observe everything'.<sup>151</sup> The picturesque construction of landscape proved more difficult in the colonies than in Britain. This was partly because colonial landscape was so various and so unfamiliar, and partly because the picturesque represents a learned way of constructing landscape which requires the viewer to be sufficiently tranquil 'to take in' the view.<sup>152</sup> Except during fleeting moments, busy people, those in pain or discomfort, and those pre-occupied by grief and worry, find it difficult, if not irrelevant, to engage in 'picturesque' perceptual activity. The romantically inclined explorer George Grey claimed that although sunrise offered 'a very beautiful spectacle' he was too exhausted by sandflies and the 'fatigues of the night before' to enjoy the scene 'with the full delight I should otherwise have done', while Louisa Meredith claimed that the onset of seasickness caused her love for the picturesque to wane 'most lamentably'.<sup>153</sup> Newly arrived from England, Ellen Clacy dismissed the picturesque when she wrote with some acerbity of her tour of the Victorian goldfields:

[To] pitch our first encampment! how charming! exclaims some romantic reader, as though it were an easily accomplished undertaking. Fixing a gipsy-tent at a fete champetre, with a smiling sky above, and all the requisites to hand, is one thing, and attempting to sink poles and erect tents out of blankets and rugs in a high wind and pelting rain is (if I may be allowed the colonialism) "a horse of quite another colour". (Nevertheless) some sort of sheltering-places were at length completed... and then we made preparations for satisfying the unromantic cravings of hunger.<sup>154</sup>

The learnt, rule-governed nature of nineteenth century picturesque constructions has caused them to be accused of justifying colonisation by converting 'nature's unmanageable

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<sup>149</sup> Stafford, 1984, p. 413.

<sup>150</sup> Thomas, 1983, p. 261.

<sup>151</sup> Meredith, 1852, in Spender, 1988, pp. 60, 61.

<sup>152</sup> Sidney K. Robinson, *Inquiry into the Picturesque*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991, p. 87.

<sup>153</sup> George Grey, Journal, 4 December 1837, *Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in North-west and Western Australia during the years 1837, 1838, 1839*, vol. 1, T. & W. Boone, London, 1841, pp. 81-86.

Meredith, 1852, in Spender, 1988, p. 56.

<sup>154</sup> Clacy, in Spender, 1988, p. 125.

bounty into a frameable possession'.<sup>155</sup> Or, to put it another way, the picturesque enterprise is seen as part of a struggle for the semantic control of nature in which the suppression of 'interpretative and narrative signs' translates the 'political and social into the decorative'.<sup>156</sup> This critique of romanticism and the picturesque enterprise is complicated by the fact that romantics such as Louisa Meredith endorsed Chartism which (in theory) favoured communitarianism over private ownership of land.<sup>157</sup> One of the functions which picturesque activity served for colonists was that it magically reconciled the pressures of utilitarian agriculture and romantic demands for beauty / 'natural' wilderness.<sup>158</sup>

Stafford considered that 'the restless seekers' - nineteenth century travellers and explorers - fled not only toward something (an unpenetrated plenum), but away from something (a claustrophobic society).<sup>159</sup> David Punter contended that in psychological terms the picturesque represented an 'inscape' which expressed the movement of enclosure and control - the ego's need to have a world which it could hold and manage, while the sublime represented an 'escape' or movement outward - the ego's pleasurable abandonment of control. In these terms the construction of the picturesque and the sublime can be seen as individual creative activity which released destructive impulses within the psyche and allowed them to be ordered and modified by 'the essential work of reparation of the shaping imagination'.<sup>160</sup> In Punter's opinion an overly intense need in a viewer to construct a firm frame - a structure to control and contain nature was meant to allay fear of dissolution and death, and the suspension of all intellectual control by a viewer expressed desire for undifferentiated merging / embracing of death which was intended to allay fear of separation.<sup>161</sup> This ties in with Sue Rowley's tracing of the construction of colonial women in late nineteenth century Australian literature as 'the beginning and the ending' of the journey men made, that is as an 'personalised interior' wherein women and the home were seen as the 'closed interior space' which men both desired and sought to escape.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> David Punter, 'The Picturesque and the Sublime: two worldscapes', in Copley & Garside, 1994, p. 222.

<sup>156</sup> David Worrall, 'Agrarians Against the Picturesque: ultra-radicalism and the revolutionary politics of land', in Copley & Garside, 1994, p. 246. An example used to illustrate that social control is implicit in the picturesque enterprise is the aestheticisation of the Scottish countryside which occurred when enclosure and repossession of Scottish farming land was at its height.

<sup>157</sup> Anne Janowitz, 'The Chartist Picturesque', Copley & Garside, 1994, pp. 268-9. D. J. & S. G. M. Carr, (eds.) *People and Plants in Australia*, Academic Press, Sydney, 1981, p. 346. Louisa wrote and published articles for the Chartist cause when she lived in Britain.

<sup>158</sup> Ryan, 1996, p. 76.

<sup>159</sup> Stafford, 1984, p. 395.

<sup>160</sup> Punter, 'The Picturesque and the Sublime' in Copley & Garside, 1994, pp. 233 - 236. Punter drew on the theories of the child psychologist Melanie Klein and the Jungian psychologist James Hillman.

<sup>161</sup> Punter in Copley & Garside, 1994, pp. 226, 229, 231.

<sup>162</sup> Rowley, 1994, pp. 82-3, 84, 85, 96.

## **Was the construction of colonial landscape gendered?**

In an attempt to discover if the construction of colonial landscape was gendered I consider the recorded responses of men and women who crossed the Blue mountains in the first half of the nineteenth century.

### **A) Men's view of landscape.**

The belief that the Blue Mountain range, thought in the early nineteenth century to be a 'great barrier to progress', was first crossed by three intrepid young pastoralists who set out in the drought of 1813 to find fresh pasture has become an integral part of the Australian myth of colonisation. The reality was clearly more diffusionist, less definitive: it being the mythological terms of conquest which dictated that the 'first crossing' be definitive and achieved by 'suitable heroes'. It would seem that it was Governor Macquarie who was initially responsible for the propagation of this heroic myth of discovery - a myth which colonists were eager to embrace and historians slow to question.<sup>163</sup>

During the period when the penal colony of Port Jackson began to outgrow its convict origins it became common practice to construct the unknown interior as Edenic. With the burgeoning of free enterprise it was suggested that what prevented the colony of New South Wales from overcoming its circumscribed and tainted beginning was the range of 'impenetrable' mountains which lay between the Cumberland Plain and the plains of the interior. Mythologically speaking once one young European squatter set 'his' foot on the other side of the mountains the whole 'empty' land could metaphorically be claimed for European agrarian and commercial activity.

According to the official record in the years before 1813 a number of explorers unsuccessfully attempted to cross what was described as a 'confused and barren assemblage

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<sup>163</sup> Chris Cunningham, *The Blue Mountains Rediscovered: Beyond the Myths in Early Australian Exploration*, Kangaroo Press, Sydney, 1996, pp. 10-11. The crossing of the mountains was a gradual process of diffusion and accumulated knowledge which was not acted upon until it suited the purposes of the government. Non-heroic travellers - ex-convicts like Price who lived with mountain Aborigines - crossed the mountains for the government before 'The Three Explorers', who were officially hailed by Macquarie as heroes and publicly rewarded with grants of land. Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, March 1816, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, p. 306.

of mountains with rocks which bear the most barren and forbidding aspect'.<sup>164</sup> Official exploring parties, in refusing to accept that Aborigines knew a way across the mountains, made it difficult for themselves by attempting to cross the mountains in summer and by alienating their Aboriginal guides. As time went on many men travelled in the mountains - including Dawes, Tench, Paterson, Hacking, Reid, Price, Roe, Everingham, Bass and Wilson - and in so doing added to official and unofficial knowledge of the mountain's topography. By 1810 this knowledge was so extensive that Governor Macquarie, his wife, and a vice regal party made a day-long picnic excursion into the mountains which penetrated nearly as far into the mountains as Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson on their 'first' crossing.<sup>165</sup> When Wentworth, Blaxland and Lawson made their journey - which terminated half way across the mountains - they went in winter and, in the same way as Price had done years before, were thus able to follow a group of Aborigines who were making the crossing. A government surveying party led by Evans completed the crossing in the following year. It was Macquarie, who believed the time had come to open up the land beyond the mountains for settlement, who hailed the young men's efforts as a breakthrough.<sup>166</sup> It could be said that the discursive development of a single 'first, heroic' European crossing of the Blue Mountains stemmed from the desire to own the land conceptually as well as physically.<sup>167</sup>

Blaxland experienced crossing the Blue Mountains as a 'tedious operation' and Wentworth thought the mountains had the 'most barren aspect Imaginable'.<sup>168</sup> The Government surveyor, George Evans, agreed that the mountains were 'barren' but reported that the land on the other side had a most promising 'prospect'.<sup>169</sup> Unlike all who had gone before him, when he crossed the Blue mountains in 1815 Governor Macquarie was filled with 'admiration and astonishment' not only for the 'very extensive, grand and noble ..Bathurst Plains', but for the 'beautiful and grand' scenery he saw in the mountains. Immediately after his journey Macquarie published a glowing account in the Sydney and British papers in which he served as a propagandist for both the Blue Mountains and 'the Plains of Promise' which he claimed were some of the 'finest landscapes I ever saw in any

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<sup>164</sup> Governor P.G. King, 1805, in *Guide Book to the Excursion to the Blue Mountains, Jenolan Caves and Lithgow*, Pan Pacific Congress, Australia, 1923, p. 5.

<sup>165</sup> Cunningham, 1996, pp. 130, 135-6.

<sup>166</sup> Gregory Blaxland, 'A Journey of a Tour of Discovery Across the Blue Mountains in New South Wales', in Ann Miller, *Journals of Australian Explorers 1813-76*, Bay Books, Sydney, 1986, p. 24.

<sup>167</sup> Carter, 1996, pp. 12, 13.

<sup>168</sup> Charles Wentworth, *Journal*, 1813, in Horne, 1991, p. 94.

<sup>169</sup> George Evans, *Journal*, 1, 2 June 1814, Miller, 1986, p. 24.

country I have ever visited'.<sup>170</sup> In praising the Blue Mountains as much as the Bathurst plains Macquarie was well ahead of his time, for it was not until later in the nineteenth century that men characteristically praised the 'picturesque' quality of the mountains and referred to them as 'Nature's Conservatory' in a way which before that time was largely confined to women.<sup>171</sup>

Nevertheless camping in the mountains evoked romantic associations in some male travellers. Major Henry Antill, who accompanied Macquarie across the Blue Mountains in 1815, was moved to write of his experiences:

These different fires had, from the background where I was, a very beautiful effect, and enabled me to observe the scene before me. Some were busily employed cooking; others were smoking; making their huts or cutting down timber for fuel, and reminded me by their very occupations of what I had read of a camp of gypsies or the *bivouacs* of a Continental army.<sup>172</sup>

Major Antill's form of the picturesque was both literary and matter of fact, his imagination swinging between invoking the obligatory gypsies of romantic imagery and recreating personal military associations. Barron Field however was another matter. Outraged at the unpicturesque quality of Australian landscape, his thoughts turned to imperialist conquest. When camping out in the Blue Mountains in 1822 he wrote:

The air was refreshing. All were asleep from fatigue, with large fires of piled wood at their feet, the gleams on which (for they had been suffered to go down) gave a picturesque effect to the tent and cart, and the tethered horses which were patiently standing on the bleak and bare hill. A little more than 30 years ago, this land was inhabited by savages only, and these hills had, from the beginning of time, formed an impassable barrier between their tribes. The spirit of British Government had now come from the antipodes, and, with nothing but a colony of convicts had, in that short time penetrated upwards of a hundred miles into the interior of the country.<sup>173</sup>

Most men ignored or endured the mountains and concentrated on inventing euphoric and biblical Edenic metaphors of abundance to describe the park-like plains on the other side

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<sup>170</sup> Lachlan Macquarie, Journal 4 May 1815, 'Lachlan Macquarie: Journals of his Tours in New South Wales and Van Dieman's Land 1810-1822', in *Such Was Life: Select Documents in Australian History*, vol. 1, (1788-1850), Russel Ward & John Robertson, (eds.) Jacaranda Press, Sydney, 1972, p. 79.

<sup>171</sup> Nat Gould, *Town and Bush: Stray Notes on Australia*, Facsimile edition, Penguin, Ringwood, Australia, 1974 (1896), pp. 205-215.

<sup>172</sup> Major Henry Antill in George Mackaness, (ed.) *Fourteen Journeys Over the Blue Mountains of New South Wales 1813-1841*, Horwitz-Grahame, Sydney, 1965.

<sup>173</sup> Barron Field, *Geographical Memoirs on New South Wales*, London, 1825, p. 429 in Mackaness 1965.

through which they found they could easily gallop a horse.<sup>174</sup> Some years after his crossing of the mountains Wentworth described the plains as a 'beauteous landscape ... opening like Canaan' while the Reverend Samuel Marsden 'in rapture of the country' he had seen near Bathurst, told Elizabeth Hawkins and her family that they were going to the 'the land of Goshen'.<sup>175</sup> In 1827 William Dumaesq wrote that he considered the Blue Mountains to be not worth the 'trouble of ascending', wishing he could reach the Bathurst Plains in a balloon or on 'some royal road' which by-passed the mountains. However he professed himself ecstatic about the land beyond them describing it as:

[C]hristian country - the climate mild and delightful - the prospect cheerful and extensive - [it] awakened thoughts of abundance - of content - of thankfulness. The gorgeous sun was settling in a robe of gold, over the undiscovered country west of the Macquarie, and the scene was altogether worthy of a Claude.<sup>176</sup>

In calling the Bathurst Plains 'this modern Jordan' Dumaesq, who wrote picturesque travel accounts for the Sydney papers, was lending colour to his complaint that, at the time of writing, much of the 'heavenly country' around Bathurst had still not been made available for selection. Consequently he, like many another, unashamedly used the rhetoric of the picturesque to promote pastoral opportunities for favoured and aristocratic selectors such as himself; less privileged writers consoled themselves for their lack of access to land by mercilessly parodying Dumaesq's picturesque style of writing.<sup>177</sup>

Apart from Macquarie therefore, before the 1840s men were unanimous in constructing the Blue Mountains as a barren protector, the crossing of which must be endured if an Edenic paradise was to be reached. It is possible that it was such constructions encouraged the development late in the nineteenth century of the secularisation and dichotomisation of representations of landscape as either degraded public landscapes 'of endurance' or idealised domestic landscapes of Edenic abundance.<sup>178</sup>

## B) Women's view of landscape.

<sup>174</sup> Rickard, 1996, p. 49.

<sup>175</sup> Mackaness, 1965, p. 30. Elizabeth Hawkins to Ann Dowling, in Clarke & Spender, 1992, p. 118.

<sup>176</sup> William Dumaesq, 'A Ride to Bathurst' published in the *Australian*, 24 March 1827, in Mackaness, 1965.

<sup>177</sup> Robert Dixon, 'Scenic Tours in New South Wales: The Nineteenth Century Travel Essay', *Southerly*, no. 3, 1982, pp. 326-33. Dumaesque published under the pseudonym X.Y.Z. As such he was criticised and parodied by an 'anti-picturesque' writer under the name of Z.Y.X.

<sup>178</sup> Pauline Fletcher, *Gardens and Grim Ravines: the Language of Landscape in Victorian Poetry*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1983, p. 247.

At a time when mountains were thought to cause both physical regeneration and spiritual renewal,<sup>179</sup> colonial women went out of their way to find and express delight in mountains. Georgiana Molloy, who claimed she had 'a mountain loving eye' sought to discern even a slight a rise on the horizon,<sup>180</sup> while Louisa Meredith effused that she was 'never weary of gazing' on Mount Wellington.<sup>181</sup> Later in the century the colonially born Louisa Atkinson saw interest, variety and richness in the landscape when she wrote of a:

[G]lorious range of mountains- so high, so rugged, and tantalisingly untrodden ... they provoke a wish to approach, and make one think that something worth possessing must be hidden in their rugged heights.<sup>182</sup>

Before pursuing this further it is interesting to consider how Louisa Meredith, who originally neither expected nor wanted to stay in Australia for more than a 'few years', modified her picturesque travel writing style after she arrived in the colonies. In the period before she succeeded in establishing a domestic Eden in the Australian bush Louisa felt so disorientated by her surroundings that she complained that if she moved outside her front gate she would become lost because: Mountains, hills, valleys, ravines - all are wild and trackless as they were thousands of years ago ... and all forests here, and all parts of them, are to me so exactly alike ...<sup>183</sup>

In the event shortage of funds kept Louisa in Van Dieman's Land until her death in 1894 at the age of 83. Two years before she died Louisa claimed she experienced separation from her 'own' country as a cause for regret, confiding to Sir Henry Parkes: 'I was born under an evil star, or put myself under one, in quitting England in the first instance'.<sup>184</sup> Louisa's on-going nostalgia for England was expressed in both the physical and discursive way in which she constructed her immediate surroundings. She wrote of looking out of her dining room window and through her front veranda with its covering of 'passion flowers, roses and jasmine' to the 'grass plots and flower borders of hollyhocks, carnations, tiger lilies and other autumn flowers', bee hives, 'sweet fields of clover', dovecotes, portly

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<sup>179</sup> Stafford, 1984, pp. 105. 128.

<sup>180</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, June 1840, BL 479A/2.

<sup>181</sup> Meredith, 1853, p. 36.

<sup>182</sup> Atkinson, 1978, p. 27. Originally published as 'A Trip to the Southward', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 May 1871.

<sup>183</sup> Meredith, 1852 in Spender, 1988, p. 84.

<sup>184</sup> Louisa Meredith to Sir Henry Parkes, 15 December 1892, *Australian Dictionary of Biography 1788-1850*, vol. 2, D. Pike, A.G.L. Shaw & C.M.H. Clark (eds.), Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 1966, p. 240.



porkers and meadows with 'bright English willows' beyond. Such riches, she claimed, 'fully realise for us that scriptural picture of rural luxury "A Land Flowing with Milk and Honey"'.<sup>185</sup>

The desire to construct a domestic paradise within a strange land as a way of making it smile was best expressed by John Glover in 1835 when he endowed his representation of his Vandemonian home and garden (plate 11) with an 'other-worldly radiance'.<sup>186</sup> Glover's garden, based on the attitudes of Thomas Shepherd who claimed colonial gardening should be an act of 'conversion' upon the land,<sup>187</sup> was only three years old when he painted it, proving settlers could quickly create their own Eden *within* the wilderness. In the same way as John Glover as artist glorified his domestic Eden, Louisa as writer glorified hers. The fact that Louisa never constructed the broad landscape as an Eden to be exploited in the way in which male explorers characteristically did, clearly had a lot to do with her determined creation of a paradisaical garden - that is of her own Edenic surroundings.

In marrying her beloved but improvident cousin for 'love', Louisa unknowingly committed herself to a financial and practical struggle to survive. Though she discursively constructed her modest home and garden in Tasmania as a domestic rural idyll Louisa was bitterly aware that in the colonies such a life-style was not financially viable.<sup>188</sup> For much of her life Louisa's writing was as much necessity as pleasure: hence necessity (the tastes of the book buying public in Britain) largely dictated the form her writing took. This partly explains the trenchant criticisms of the colony contained in *Notes and Sketches of New South Wales* - her descriptions were intended to entertain her British reading public and inform would-be emigrants of conditions in the colonies. *Notes and Sketches* was one of the most popular books in Murray's Colonial Home Library.<sup>189</sup> As a romantic writer Louisa was engaged in demonstrating 'structured congruities between mind and matter', giving the illusion of nature successfully artifactualised.<sup>190</sup> When Louisa first arrived in Sydney, she found herself in the middle of a debate about the value of picturesque as against anti-picturesque travel writing,

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<sup>185</sup> Meredith, 1853, pp. 367-9.

<sup>186</sup> Jennifer Phipps, *Artists' Gardens: Flowers and Gardens in Australian Art 1780s-1980s*, Bay Books, Sydney, n.d., p. 28.

<sup>187</sup> Thomas Shepherd in Plant, 1994, pp. 52-3. Howard Tanner, *Converting the Wilderness: The Art of Gardening in Colonial Australia*, Australian Gallery Directors Council, Sydney, 1979.

<sup>188</sup> Meredith, 1853, p. 370. Louisa concluded her book with the sentiments: 'the only alloying drop of gall being the absence of all possibility of turning any of our surrounding abundance to pecuniary profit'.

<sup>189</sup> Rae-Ellis, 1979, pp. 122, 150.

<sup>190</sup> Stafford, 1984, pp. 453, 470.



PLATE 11. *A View of the Artist's House and Garden, Mills Plains, Tasmania, c 1835.*  
*Reproduced in Artists Gardens: Flowers and Gardens in Australian Art 1780s-1980s.*

<sup>191</sup> and instantly modified the first travel book which she wrote in the colonies to include elements of both forms of writing. The first travel book which Louisa wrote in Australia, *Notes and Sketches in New South Wales*, was thus a more pragmatic, more caustic and more scientific travel book than *An Autumn Ramble on the Wye* which she wrote just before she left England.<sup>192</sup>

The picturesque enterprise in Britain, and Louisa's personal recreation of 'beautiful scenery, drew heavily on the historical past for interest and depth: hence, like other picturesque writers in Australia, Louisa compensated for the absence of places of historic interest in the colonies - such as castles and ruins - by expanding her studies of natural productions and the manners and occupations of the colonists.<sup>193</sup> Lacking real castles, Louisa described the Blue Mountains as having imaginary castles formed from castellated rock walls. She wrote:

Had I been travelling in an old country, I should at once have decided that these were truly the ruins of some mighty mountain-fortress of former days; loopholes, arches, battlements and buttresses were, as it seemed, so clearly remaining, and extending far along the airy heights of these genii-haunted crags, for such I half fancied them, especially when a turn in the road gave to view a colossal head standing well out against the clear, bright, blue sky, and bearing a strong resemblance to the venerable and veteran Duke of Wellington ...as we slowly drove on, the features changed, and a judge with a flowing wig stood frowning down on us;... and then it again resolved itself into a mere turret of the hoary ruin. I thought myself of the mysterious castle of St John, with its wizard transformations, and of how much romance would attach to these fantastic crags in a romantic or legendary country; but the existence of poetry or imagination in New South Wales is what none who know and have felt the influence of its ledger and day-book kind of atmosphere would believe it guilty of suffering.<sup>194</sup>

Traces here certainly of colonialist apology - the invoking of the British hero of empire Wellington, and of a judge, signifier of British Justice, in the very configurations of the natural productions of the country. The invocation too of Sir Walter Scott's castle of St John symbol in its own way of the 'magical' *tenacity* of empire. As well as this, bitter complaint about the withering in the colonies of poetic imagination in the face of pragmatism and the desire for material gain. For the picturesque traveller both man-made ruins and nature's dolmens embodied layers of time - it not mattering much whether the passage of time was represented by a natural or cultivated stone object: sometimes ruins were even referred to as

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<sup>191</sup> Dixon, 1982, pp. 324-37. This debate, in which women took a part, began in 1825 and was not resolved until the middle of the century when it was won by professional male writers such as Henry Kingsley who were opposed to the anti-picturesque style.

<sup>192</sup> Smith, 1969, p. 295.

<sup>193</sup> Smith, 1969, p. 295.

runes - forgotten letters from a calligraphy whose understanding had been erased from human memory.<sup>195</sup> In this way ruins had the double symbolism of promising the imperialistic restoration of earlier glories while invoking the redemptive power of an unspoilt land to temper the materialism of modern society and arrest its spiritual decay. Male travel writers and explorers also evoked images of mythical, empty, ruined castles within the natural landscape. In the Australian context invoking ruins not only made the unfamiliar familiar, but, in transplanting European history onto the Australian continent, by-passed Aborigines who were represented as being outside of European history and without any history of their own.<sup>196</sup> Smith considered that it was because the colonies possessed neither 'ancient monuments nor places hallowed by historical associations' that picturesque writers in the colonies used both scientific information and 'visual rather than associational elements' to excite 'picturesque sensibility' in their readers.<sup>197</sup> This was no doubt partly due to the influence of the consumer market; all things novel or 'scientific' in the antipodes finding a ready market in Britain.

On her first journey in her new land Louisa struggled with the recalcitrant scenery she saw before her, complaining of its unsuitability for the picturesque enterprise while at the same time she attempted to modify the aesthetic of the picturesque to encompass it. The reader can experience Louisa's effort to accommodate the picturesque enterprise to a 'foreign' landscape - and her frustration at having to do so - in passages such as the following.

The wild scenery and the zigzag road reminded me of "Passes of the Alps", as drawn by Brockedon, save that our ravine had no foaming torrent roaring down it; and it was only by most intent observation that I could detect something like moisture trickling over the rocks, where an opening in the trees left the far-down stony bed visible... The Pass of Mount Victoria, by far the most grand and striking scene in this mountain region ... [a] most grand and beautiful landscape... so refreshing to eyes weary of the dark desolate sterility of the scenes we had just emerged from... The next point of our route having any claim to the picturesque was the rocky ravine at Cox's River; the sight of clear running water is always pleasant, but nowhere more delightful than in so dry and thirsty a clime as this. The ruins of numerous huts, formerly occupied by a convict gang on this spot, gave it rather a desolate look; but the clear little brook (for such in England should we call this river) gurgling merrily

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<sup>194</sup> Meredith, 1844, pp. 79-80.

<sup>195</sup> Stafford, 1984, pp. 138, 344. Stafford, 1994, p. 240.

<sup>196</sup> Ryan, 1996, p. 77. Ryan suggested that mythical disappearing castles fostered the belief that, given time, the native inhabitants would also disappear or 'fade away' as if they were a mirage. Mary Maynard, 'Projections of Melancholy' in I & T Donaldson, 1985. By the 1850s the belief - which was taken as fact by the end of the nineteenth century - circulated that Aborigines were 'dying out' on the mainland in the same way they were considered to have done in Tasmania.

<sup>197</sup> Smith 1969, p. 295.

over its pebbly bed, had a sweet music in its voice that made me forget all disagreeables.<sup>198</sup>

One factor which might have facilitated Louisa's modification of her picturesque style was the fact that in her early poetry Louisa drew heavily on classical models. In so doing she co-opted the authority of an established aesthetic which was written in response to a dry Mediterranean landscape and hence harboured within its rhetoric a suppressed primal energy.<sup>199</sup>

Louisa left Britain espousing what she called the 'God-given Poetry of Nature' and describing the 'language of flowers' as a 'universal language of love, beauty, poetry and wisdom, if we read them aright'.<sup>200</sup> It is no surprise therefore to find evidence in *Notes and Sketches of New South Wales* not just of acerbity, but distress. In her new land natural manifestations were initially too strange, too harsh to enable Louisa to read them as a 'language of love'. Some idea of the degree to which Louisa's emotions were engaged in expressing outrage at what she felt were challenges to the romantic ideal on which she based her life can be gained from recognising just how counter-productive it was for her to alienate members of the society in which she intended to live by criticising the land she saw before her. The lack of pastoral expanses, of greenness and water, of ancient ruins which represented to her a reconciliation between growth and decay and evidence of the benevolence of the passage of time, the lack of poetic and imaginative impulse and expression among her fellow colonists, the sinister presence of convicts and ex-convicts in place of the idealised free, productive and happy rural workers who stood for individual stability and social security - all contributed to Louisa's psychic distress.

In other words for Louisa the construction of the picturesque was not simply a learned way of writing about the environment but a learned way of dissipating internal psychic forces of destruction and reconciliation through the medium of 'seeing' an external landscape; landscape served her as palette and canvas for ritually working over and harmonising her inner landscape. Before leaving Britain Louisa claimed '[t]he fairy realm of Nature's Romance' contrasted with and enriched the 'matter of fact world'.<sup>201</sup> In what initially seemed to Louisa to be a hostile land, what she called a 'land of ever-browns', the

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<sup>198</sup> Meredith, 1844, pp. 74, 81.

<sup>199</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Passing Strange and Wonderful: Aesthetics, Nature, Culture*, Kodansha International, New York, 1993, p. 21. Schama, 1995, p. 210. In her art Georgiana McCrae also explored affinities between classical models and the dry Australian bush.

<sup>200</sup> Twamley, 1839, p. ix.

<sup>201</sup> Twamley, 1839, p. 250.

masculine sublime threatened to overwhelm her. If she was to tutor a harsh land to smile by '[e]volving a "poetic logic"; a language of representation adequate to the task of possessing a colonised country',<sup>202</sup> Louisa first needed to experience the land as more domestic, more feminine. For Louisa once her immediate environment - that is her English flower garden - was restored it could be mirrored onto the land as smiling features which would help restore her inner landscape and confirm her sense of self. Once Louisa established an English garden around her the Australian landscape gradually began to smile for and at her. As this occurred Louisa's writing style changed from archaic and stilted 'flowery' prose replete with classical literary allusion to an easy, familiar and strongly pictorial form of expression which, like her art, was simple, strong and colourful. From the middle of the century Louisa evolved an intimate narrative style which seamlessly combined the plain and the romantic: having simplified her prose, before long Louisa began to write mainly for children.

Compared with ex-patriates such as Louisa Meredith, colonially born women such as Louisa Atkinson - who between 1850-1870 wrote for the newspapers, *Farm & Garden* and the *Horticultural Magazine* - showed less strain in their picturesque accounts of the land. In her articles Louisa Atkinson tackled stereotypes of inferiority in Australia's natural history - challenging long held judgements such as the supposed monotony of the Australian bush and promoting native plants and products. It is claimed that her writing reflects both a changing perception of colonial wilderness as an Edenic garden in its own right and the beginning of a discernible tension between the perception of beauty and efforts to come to grips with the economic drive to destroy the wilderness which culminated in the passing of the first National Park legislation in 1879.<sup>203</sup> When writing in picturesque language about a pleasure ride through the Blue Mountains Louisa Atkinson appeared relaxed, stimulated, interested:

[O]ur horses were secured while we proceeded to investigate the course of the stream by which we had ridden for the last mile ... Rocks, impeding the course of the stream, lashed the water into a puny wrath, now leaping exultingly over an obstacle, again creeping beneath it - a curious gurgling sound was the result, fit music for these sylvan solitude's, sombre with heavy shadows. ..[we came to] the edge of the valley of the Grose.... hushed wonder for a moment held us spell bound, and then came the deep heartfelt, "Beautiful, how beautiful - how grand". We stood on a rock looking down into the deep gorge ... After having brought the sketch book into requisition,

<sup>202</sup> Carter, 1995, pp. 10, 13.

<sup>203</sup> Hawkes, 1992, pp. 50, 296. From 1860 onwards there was a growing recognition that the resources of the Australian wilderness were not limitless. With native-born Australians in the majority (in the 1881 census 63.2% were shown as born in Australia) conservation legislation represented an economic management of resources - and the effects of the City Beautiful movements - rather than preservation of plants and animals for their own sake.

we mounted our horses and rode through a scrubby piece of country, not without interest to the botanist...<sup>204</sup>

The same sentiments, the same set of stereotyped responses - 'how beautiful, how grand' - yet a much greater ease. Having looked into the deep gorge of the Grose river the young women completed their sketching and Louisa Atkinson rode off complacently describing what to Louisa Meredith would have been distressingly scrubby and drought stricken bush, as country 'not without interest to the botanist'.

One of the characteristics of migration and travelling is that the emigre / traveller finds themselves between two worlds - that which they have left and that at which they have not yet arrived. This may explain why even women who were not especially religious or 'romantic' experienced the power of the sublime in crossing the sea to the colonies and in crossing the mountain ranges which divided one part of the country from another. During her crossing of the Blue Mountains in April 1822 Elizabeth Hawkins experienced a moment of deep peace which appears to have reconciled her to being a settler.<sup>205</sup> Given the nature of nineteenth century motherhood, it is probably pertinent that part of Elizabeth's peace came to her vicariously through the observation of her children's joyous response to the mountain environment. Of her first of eleven nights spent camping under the open sky Elizabeth wrote:

It was a very moonlight night and all was novelty and delight to the elder children, immense fires were made in all directions we gave them their supper and after putting the younger to bed I came from the tent in which was a large fire. our drays and carts close in view. The men nine in number were busily employed in cooking in one place, our own man roasting a couple of fowls for our next days journey, at another the men (convicts), not the most prepossessing in their appearance with the glare of the fires and the reflection of the moon shining on them in the midst of a forest formed altogether such a scene as I cannot describe it resembled more a party of Banditti, such as I have read of than any thing else.. we saw Tom and the three elder girls.. happy as it is possible for young hearts to be then I seemed to pause it was a moment I shall never forget. For the first time for many a long month I seemed capable of enjoying and feeling the present moment without a dread for the future ... we returned to the table, there were moments of such inward rest that Hawkins took up a flute .. and calling Eliza to us she danced...<sup>206</sup>

While Elizabeth attributed her new found peace to a sudden conviction that the family would be successful in their new land, her script suggests that her conviction grew out of some inner experience of reconciliation which the conjunction of the beauty of the night, the

<sup>204</sup> Louisa Atkinson, 'Cabbage Tree Hollow and the Valley of the Grose', *A Voice from the Country*, *Sydney Mail*, 12 January 1861.

<sup>205</sup> Smith, 1969, p. 251. Smith claimed Elizabeth's experience transformed her from 'an exile to a pioneer'.

<sup>206</sup> Elizabeth Hawkins to Ann Bowling, MS 535, NLA in Clarke & Spender, 1992, pp. 112-113.

picturesque fantasy of sharing the night with bandits and her children's obvious contentment worked in her unconscious. How the imagination works in such cases clearly defies description, but what *is* clear is that the experience of nature can be very powerful and, as in this case, often reconciliatory. In the same way as the sea voyage to the colonies made a lasting impression on nearly all those who made it - usually giving individuals a sense of the vastness of the sea and of their own insignificance - camping out in the colonies, night skies and firelight deeply affected those men and women who experienced it for the first time. One wonders how many colonial women intimately experiencing - possibly for the first time in their lives - nature and night skies at such close hand were reconciled and transformed by the experience. Certainly many colonial women recorded a transformational awe at natural phenomena such as distant bush fires at night, comets across the night sky and night skies lit by thunder and lightning.<sup>207</sup>

When she set out to cross the Blue Mountains with her family Elizabeth Hawkins, aware that she was neither strong nor well, dreaded what she called the 'tremendous journey' ahead of her. It is somewhat surprising therefore to find Elizabeth describing herself, her mother and her daughters as walking on before the wagons whenever the weather permitted and enjoying themselves on the mountain roads, laughing and joking in the open air and gathering 'delicate nosegays from the flowering shrubs that grew amongst the trees'. In a long letter to her sister in which Elizabeth meticulously described the new and the strange for her English relatives, Elizabeth recreated Blue Mountain scenery:

You must understand that the whole of the road from the beginning to the end of the Mountains is cut entirely through a Forest, nor can you go in a direct line to Bathurst from one mountain to another but you are obliged often to wind round the edges of them and at times to look down such precipices as would make you shudder. You would perhaps imagine, as I had done, that the mountains are perfectly barren. For 40 miles they are barren of herbage for cattle but as far as the eye can reach even from the summit of the highest every hill and dale is covered with wood, lofty trees and small shrubs many of them blooming with the most delicate flowers, the colours so beautiful that the highest circles in England would prize them.<sup>208</sup>

Unlike male commentators Elizabeth made a distinction between the mountain country being judged 'barren' for the grazing of cattle and 'barren' in the sense of devoid of natural foliage. While admitting that the mountains would not support farming, she expressed surprise and delight at seeing the diverse and delicate natural flora of the mountains. Perhaps

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<sup>207</sup> For example, Fanny Macleay to William Macleay, 4 December 1826, Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 70. Eliza Brown to her father Mr Bussey, 20 June 1845, Cowan, 1977, p. 61. Ann Williams, Diary, 1882, MS 2492, NLA, in Frost, 1984, p. 215.



for Elizabeth memories of girlhood rambles in nature combined with a welcome sense of freedom from familial responsibility to help colour her joyful appreciation of walking through the mountains. Having descended onto the plains Elizabeth professed herself impressed with the English-looking countryside, describing it as 'extremely beautiful gently rising hills covered with wood'.<sup>209</sup> A practical and conscientious woman who put the needs of her family first, Elizabeth did not see landscape either in purely commercial terms, nor through the poetic distortions of the picturesque - the language she used to describe landscape, though emotive, was succinct and direct.

On the other hand, as a picturesque traveller who had trouble fitting colonial landscapes into the semantic framework of the picturesque, Louisa Meredith was mostly irritated by the landscape of the Blue Mountains, an irritation compounded by physical discomfort. She wrote of 'the intense heat which made [her] almost incapable of enjoying anything' and, to her, 'almost intolerable [and] indescribable chirruping, creaking and whirring of myriads of grasshoppers (*dust* -hoppers more properly), that seemed to fill all space around us'.<sup>210</sup> A large part of Louisa's irritation may have stemmed from the fear that one day she might be expected to live on her husband's pastoral property on the Murrumbidgee, ninety miles beyond Bathurst. Having travelled as far as Bathurst in physical and psychological discomfort, the Murrumbidgee must have seemed to Louisa to be just too awful to contemplate.<sup>211</sup> Louisa's distress could be said to have arisen not simply from a refusal to cross from the profane to the sacred, but from her perception of the seeming incapacity of the drought stricken land to satisfy either her spiritual or her pragmatic needs. In the same vein Rachel Henning, who experienced the Blue Mountains as a 'beautiful contrast to the weary plains' of Bathurst, was so homesick for England after she stayed some months with her sister in Bathurst that she returned to England where she lived for five years before rejoining her brothers and sisters in the colonies.<sup>212</sup>

Louisa enjoyed the scenery in the mountains on the way home from Bathurst more than she had on her way there partly because while she was in Bathurst it had rained in the mountains. Her joy in 'the greater degree of verdure' which she saw about her is palpable to the reader. The greenness of the mountains released in Louisa the free play of her picturesque

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<sup>208</sup> Elizabeth Hawkins to Ann Bowling, MS 535, NLA, in Clarke & Spender, 1992, pp. 111,112.

<sup>209</sup> Elizabeth Hawkins to Ann Bowling, MS 535, NLA, in Clarke & Spender, 1992, p. 114.

<sup>210</sup> Meredith, 1844, p. 62.

<sup>211</sup> In the event Louisa never lived on this inland property. Her husband became insolvent causing the family to move to Tasmania where his father had property.

<sup>212</sup> Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 14 May 1856, Adams, 1969, p. 42.

pen: inspired by a green landscape Louisa could run off paragraph after paragraph of limpid prose. While she disliked as much as ever those parts of the mountains that had seen bushfires - what Louisa described as 'the forests of those dreary, black Blue Mountains' - to her great joy the rain had encouraged the eucalypts and wayside flowers to blossom. She felt happy:

Entering a little valley with low hills on either side, we soon reached the borders of a bright brook, that as it gurgled and glittered over its rocky bed, spoke to me of many a lovely valley and verdant meadow at home, where, instead of being, as here, precious as a fount in the desert. Such a stream would be but one among the thousands that gladden the teeming earth.... All the valley was *green* too, think of that! And how exquisitely refreshing such moist greenness was to our dust-blinded eyes! Tall rushes grew there, and half-immersed water plants, from amidst which we heard the sonorous "clop, clop" of the great green frogs; and bright dragon-flies darted among the high waving reeds and the delicate "fringed" violet, a gem worthy to grace Titania's rarest crown. ... [Nearby] a sisterhood of Queens - a group of eight or ten splendid waratahs, straight as arrows - tall, stately, regal flowers, that with their rich and glowing hue, "Making a sunshine in the shady place", seemed like the magic jewels we read of in fairy-tales, that light up caverns by their own intrinsic lustre.<sup>213</sup>

Just a bit of green, some moisture and a few flowers and picturesque prose poured with seemingly effortless ease from Louisa's pen. This was the successful picturesque author, the lady who could incorporate without strain into her old way of seeing the strange and the new - the 'waratahs' and 'great green frogs'. If Louisa had not moved from New South Wales to Van Dieman's Land she might not have been able to write - for it was only in a green landscape that she could see picturesque beauty. On her way home from Bathurst she wrote of the beauties of a waterfall within 'a natural Colosseum', of gazing on parrots with 'sheer wonder, scarcely believing they could be *real*, as they rose in a flock from the road before us and flew past, brightening the very sunshine with their glorious colours', and of a thunderstorm with rainbow which made:

[A]s perfect picture of a landscape as ever eye beheld. How I wished, and wished in vain, for some rare artist to see it with us - and fancied the versions of it that Constable, Creswick, Copley Fielding, Cox or Turner might give to an admiring world.

Lapstone Hill, which had found favour with Louisa on her way to Bathurst, appeared even more wonderful to her on the way home:

[W]ith tall and graceful gum-trees loaded with their white and honeyed blossoms, lifting up their garlanded heads from the steep ravine, - amidst groups of the delicate,

<sup>213</sup> Meredith, 1844, pp. 120-121.

feathery-leaved acacia, whose countless clusters of pale-golden, hawthorn scented flowers were bending with the heavy rain-drops, that glittered and sparkled like diamonds on the shrubs, trees, and deep-crimson waratahs on the rocks above us!<sup>214</sup>

And so Louisa went on. Word painting. Happily adapting an accepted craft to its new surroundings - provided only those surroundings were sufficiently green and wet to be experienced by her as nurturing - after her experience of drought Louisa claimed that any 'greenery' which she saw became 'indelibly painted' on her mind.

Louisa resisted the mountains as a rite of passage between the coast as her old home and the inland as her new home. Hence for her that which was furthest away from the inland - and from the colonies - continued to constitute home. After her journey to Bathurst Louisa was doubly confirmed in her nostalgia for all things English in nature. Of her garden in Sydney she wrote:

Close under the towering pine trees grew a common English pear-tree; a crooked wide-spreading, leafy farm-house-garden sort of pear-tree, that won my especial love, from the good old-fashioned pictures of gable-ended houses and neat garden-orchards it brought to my mind, and the glory and delight of its spring-time blossoms was an earnest and most child-like joy to me. Surely never was pear-tree so watched and gazed on, both morning, evening and moonlight! ... and the old pear-tree shone out ... like a beautiful vision of home, telling store of pleasant stories in each fluttering leaf that fell from its thousands of flowers - telling of bloomy fragrant gardens, with velvet turf paths, and shady arbours, and singing birds, and little running brooks, *one* of whose silver threads near our thirsty home would have been a priceless treasure - oh! it was an exhaustless remembrancer of pleasant by-gones was that old pear tree!<sup>215</sup>

Louisa was here writing nostalgically to assure herself and her English readers that 'home' was missed, was superior, would never be forgotten. In this romantic passage Louisa demonstrated not just that she was nostalgic for 'home' but that she was pining for the familiar in nature through which she habitually gained self-nurture: identifying strongly with the feminised pear tree. It seems that in a country which Louisa experienced as harsh that she wished to think of herself as a fruitful English pear tree which would provide beauty and nurturance for her family; taking comfort from the belief that if the pear tree could survive under colonial conditions, so could she. It would seem that Louisa feared that in the colonies where the land did not nurture her or smile on her she might not be able to maintain her idealised self-image as a nurturing woman. This fear in emigrant women was reinforced by male anxiety that the colonial experience would cause 'pure', home-loving women to become outgoing, coarse and aggressive. Louisa's husband brought her the root of an

<sup>214</sup> Meredith, 1844, pp. 122-124.

English daisy to confirm her domesticity. She responded: '[the pear tree's] rival in my home-loving regard was a little root of the double daisy, which, as a great treasure, my husband brought me one day from a gardener'.<sup>216</sup>

It was common for women in the colonies to treasure a flowering plant from 'home' in the way in which Louisa treasured her 'double daisy'. The painting called 'A Primrose from England' (plate 15) recorded a supposed occasion in 1855 when it was said that upwards of three thousand people turned out to see a primrose - which grew wild in English fields and hedges but refused to naturalise in the colonies - come off a boat in Melbourne.<sup>217</sup> In the painting the woman with the potted primrose in the centre of the picture represents the Madonna (with the primrose as her Madonna Lily) at the centre of an annunciation / nativity scene - in this case a colonial annunciation / nativity scene complete with a dog held by the Christ child, a sailor / explorer, and a token Aboriginal. In the colonies during the period of the Victorian gold rushes the 'pure' woman as Madonna was both prescriptively enjoined to act as a civilising influence in the wilderness, to order disorder in nature, to push back boundaries where disordered growth had begun to break its bounds,<sup>218</sup> and mourned as something which had been left behind in England.<sup>219</sup> In the painting it is male wildness - the uncivilised male or masculinity as dog, as Aborigine, as (non-gentlemanly) explorer, which is shown crowding in from the perimeter into the space occupied by the 'feminine' woman as Madonna.

The wild country rose (the 'prim' rose) - that is the hardy but pure English woman as Madonna - is held up as the divine light which in the colonies will (hopefully) hold back the darkness of 'primitive' masculine debasement.<sup>220</sup> The image of the 'prim' rose thus served in the colonies as an icon to reinforce a shared civic and literary culture with Britain - which allowed British citizens to feel at home in the colonies - as well as an icon propagating

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<sup>215</sup> Meredith, 1844, p. 140.

<sup>216</sup> Meredith, 1844, p. 140.

<sup>217</sup> Phipps, *Artist's Gardens*, p. 46. Howitt, 1855, in J.M. Powell, *Watering the Garden State: Water, Land and Community in Victoria 1834-1988*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989, p. 52.

<sup>218</sup> Susan K. Martin, Introduction, *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn*, Henry Kingsley, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1993, p. xviii. Both a 'Primrose from England' and *The Recollections* feature the Madonna as saviour in the colonies. While both were produced by Englishmen, the artist, Edward Hopley, never visited the colonies, while Henry Kingsley lived in Australia for eleven years.

<sup>219</sup> This construction intensified with time. For instance 12 February 1870 *Town and Country Journal* published a narrative poem of 21 verses called 'The First Primrose in Australia' which extolled the 'pale hedge flower' which called to mind settlers' 'dear old English home'.



*PLATE 12. A Primrose from England. Edward Hopley, 1855. Reproduced in Artists Gardens: Flowers and Gardens in Australian Art 1780s-1980s.*

a prescription for women that they maintain their reproductive 'purity' of race and class in the colonies. No wonder Louisa gazed so often on her pear tree and her double daisy - without them as reminder of her cultural roots and her proper role in the colonies she might have lost her sense of self - or (possibly) begun to question her British feminine conditioning.

The intense home-sickness felt by English women in the Australian colonies thus appears to have been exacerbated by the wide-spread fear that in the colonies men and women would be barbarised by colonisation. A convict beginning, the outnumbering of women by men for much of the century and a heightening of resentment between men and women due to discomfort and dislocation served to increase tensions between the sexes and to exacerbate fear of a possible collapse of class barriers. Louisa's husband brought her an English daisy. He could not take her 'home' to England - his livelihood was in the colonies - but he could offer her ritual acts of atonement for colonial 'wildness'. In the same way in plate 12, though a 'pure' woman, and her incarnation, a 'prim' English rose, are shown surrounded by aggressive masculinity, masculinity in the form of wild dogs and wild men offer her ritual worship. In the same way men that looked at 'pure' women in order to worship a femininity which had no dark side, women such as Louisa Meredith looked at reflections of themselves in the form of 'pure' flowers: a narcissus in a vase in England and an English pear tree flowering in 'the wilderness'.

Louisa expressed her distress at the threat to her psychic equilibrium which emigration to a strange countryside caused her by becoming a conservationist. On her very first trip through the countryside she wrote censoriously of contemporary clearing practices:

The system of "clearing" here, by the total destruction of every tree and shrub, gives a most bare, raw and ugly appearance to a new place ... unless a settler can see an expanse of bare, naked, unvaried shadeless, dry, dusty land spread all around him, he fancies his dwelling "wild and uncivilised".<sup>221</sup>

Later in life she was to criticise her father-in-law and others for the damage their clearing and planting practices had caused in the countryside.<sup>222</sup> This is revealing because it shows how early in Australia's history the population was divided in their projective responses to nature: while some sought to destroy and distance themselves from nature as the unmediated

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<sup>220</sup> Neil Black in Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesteryear: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria 1834-1890*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1951, p. 57, described his fellow male settlers as 'half-savage, half-mad ... half dressed'.

<sup>221</sup> Meredith, 1844, p. 56.

<sup>222</sup> Rae-Ellis, 1979, p. 107, quoting from Louisa's unpublished memoirs.

terror within, others sought to conserve nature as something through which the terror within might be mediated.

## SUMMARY.

While men tended to use the language of the picturesque to promote commercialism - that is tourism, pastoralism or a mixture of both - women's responses, freed from the responsibility of financially supporting the family, were more concerned with outer landscapes as mirrors for that which occurred within. As the importance of religion and spirituality declined in the nineteenth century women enjoined with men in a semantic battle over what was to constitute the 'useful' - that which was materially useful or that which was psychically / emotionally / spiritually useful. For landscapes such as the Blue Mountains to become useful in this second sense it was necessary that they become imbued with significance. Once Louisa, as propagandist for *this* cause, saw the mountains as green, that is nurturing, she could begin her enterprise in earnest. In Van Dieman's Land Louisa allowed her picturesque sensibilities full play: she foreshadowed early twentieth century women writers by reconstructing 'the bush' as an impish Australian fairyland. In her writing she began to make magic of the Australian bush - for adults and for children - in passages such as the following:

[T]he skeleton forms of the universal gum trees ... so gaunt and grim and gnarled were they, with such viscous twists and doublings in their grey-white trunks - such misshapen caricatures of arms and legs scrambling all abroad; such odd little holes and clefts, making squinting eyes and gaping mouths in elvish faces, with scratchy scrubbing-looking wigs of dry leaves; and they had altogether so disreputable and uncanny an aspect, that if they had incontinently joined over my head in a Walpurgis dancing party, it would only have seemed a natural and suitable proceeding.<sup>223</sup>

Although Louisa's determination to make nature in the colonies fit into an acceptable picturesque frame was not consciously done in order to ensure the growth of conservative taste in colonial society, her writing had this effect.<sup>224</sup> Nevertheless the enthusiasms of female writers such as Louisa Meredith were less important in mythologising the natural environment than the paradisaical fantasies of male settlers. The imperialist imperative behind Edenic constructions of inland plains were made explicit by male explorers such as Mitchell who wrote of the Western District of Victoria:

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<sup>223</sup> Meredith, 1853, p. 59. May Gibbs - who I treat in the Epilogue - was particularly influenced.

<sup>224</sup> Smith, 1969, pp. 294-7.

The scene was different from anything I had ever before witnessed, either in New South Wales or elsewhere. A land so inviting, and still without inhabitants! As I stood, the first European intruder on the sublime solitude of these verdant plains, as yet untouched by flocks or herds, I felt conscious of being the harbinger of mighty changes; and that our steps would soon be followed by the men and animals for which it seemed to have been prepared ... Of this Eden I was the first European to explore... to behold its scenery.. and by my survey to develop those natural advantages, certain to become, at no distant date, of vast importance to a new people.<sup>225</sup>

Given that human perception determines the use to which land is put, writing which constructs the land as a beautiful and productive Eden - a self-legitimising view of space as a universal, measurable and devisable entity<sup>226</sup> - not only appropriates the land of subject races, but has detrimental long-term effects on the environment. Steven Dowers traced how Edenic constructions of the Monaro Downs - the plateau downs and alpine slopes which abut the Snowy Mountains - proved destructive in terms of land use for the region. The land of the Monaro was swiftly taken up for settlement because, like the Darling Downs and the Bathurst Plains, it offered large expanses of natural open grassland for the grazing of cattle. According to Dowers, because little distinction was made between the Downs and other Monaro landscapes a 'misreading of the land resource, a perception that it had a greater capability than it did' occurred. He concluded that Edenic fantasising led to 'constructed regional identities' which encouraged land degradation.<sup>227</sup>

In the early period of settlement psychic distress grew out of settlers not knowing and not belonging; their experience of the land as not smiling back at them because they did not know how to nurture it. Lacking historical associations and an adequate linguistic lexicon settlers could only discursively construct the landscape in traditional terms which intensified the compensatory paradisiacal longings they projected onto it. Women, whose paradisiacal projections onto the landscape most usually took the form of a domestic paradise - home, garden and (gradually) 'the bush' within a thirty mile radius of their homes, were encouraged to travel through the landscape in order to imaginatively (domestically) reclaim the land for society. In doing so they came up against the paradisiacal constructions of men who made wide explorative sweeps from the home out across the Edenic plains and back to woman /

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<sup>225</sup> Major T. L. Mitchell, Journal, June 30, July 13 1836 in *Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia*, vol. 2, T. & W. Boone, London, 1839, pp. 158-9, 171, in Ward & Robertson, 1972, p. 216.

<sup>226</sup> Ryan, 1996, p. 4. Ryan considered that constructing space as universal and monolithic allowed imperialism to hierarchise the use of space to its own advantage. In this schema although Aborigines shared the same space as Europeans they were thought to under-utilise it.

<sup>227</sup> Steven Dowers, 'Still discovering Monaro: perceptions of landscape', in Steven Dowers (ed.), *Australian Environmental History: Essays and Cases*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994, pp. 133-135.



home as the closed interior space representing conception / death.<sup>228</sup> The peripatetic nature of settlement and the imbalance of the sexes - which meant many settlers felt that they had no 'home' - compounded in men (and some women) a sense of not having a psychic 'home' to which they could 'go back'. In the face of this some settlers regained psychic equilibrium by experiencing journeys across seas or mountains as a sacred 'rites of passage' which gave them a sense of belonging. Others attempted to gain a sense of belonging by beginning to engage with 'the bush' in a receptive search for knowledge and understanding.

These early attempts at adaptation to a new land were not wholly successful. As a result as a stoic defence against foreign elements in the environment and the psyche at a perceptual and emotional level an exaggeration of masculinity *and* femininity occurred. At the same time as gender differences were *perceptually* intensified, in terms of *behaviour* traditional gender roles were (of necessity) modified by the conditions of settlement.<sup>229</sup> As I hope to show in Chapter 6 these tensions / contradictions showed up in the literature and art produced in the years preceding federation when significant stories and landscapes were identified to enable the forging of an 'imagined community'.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Rowley, 1994, p. 85.

<sup>229</sup> Tacey, 1995, pp. 197-8.

<sup>230</sup> McGrath, 1991, p. 113.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### ***HANDMAIDS OF THE LORD***

The jealous petals close,  
And shut within their selfish clasp the gem  
They darken, not admire. And are there not  
Some other selfish things in this strange world  
That do the like with flowers of lovelier growth?

Louisa Twamley, 'To the Passion Flower', 1839.

The first European settlement of Australia was undertaken when the Christian spatial metaphor which saw a hierarchical universe of male God, then man, then woman, then nature (mythed as female) in a fixed order of descent, had not been seriously challenged. Rather in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the metaphor was compounded when Newtonian (or, as Rachel Carson put it, 'Neanderthal') science - which explained nature in terms of God's intermittent intervention in a mechanical universe - won ideological supremacy over other possible 'scientific' explanations.<sup>1</sup> Between 1750 and 1850 the Pacific region provided a new field of experience for those interested in natural science; a field which challenged creation theory and encouraged natural historians to perfect descriptive and systematic systems which would help explain / contain the world.

The conceptual impetus for the emergence of 'scientific' knowledge was thus not so much increased attention to nature as an increased explanatory interest in mathematics.<sup>2</sup> One unfortunate corollary of a mathematical explanation of the universe as hierarchically structured and arbitrarily controlled by a patriarchal being, was that the scientific enterprise assumed that women - thought to be unable to grasp rational and mathematical explanation - would best serve its interests as the handmaids of men.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless it was because scientists found the 'wilderness' novel and exciting - a source of new things, new knowledge - that emigrant and colonially born nineteenth century men and women who demonstrated an interest in science provided the most optimistic response to the Australian environment. When allied to the Romantic aesthetic vision it was this response which helped invert the perception of the Australian wilderness as a place of exile and waste to a perception of it as a garden full of interest and beauty.<sup>4</sup>

Moyal traced three phases in the scientific enterprise in Australia in the nineteenth century - an early period when the colonies were unequivocally perceived as a source of data for European science, a period of colonial endeavour which mainly focused on natural history,

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<sup>1</sup> Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria, 1965, p. 257. In her opinion such science was based on the control of nature.

<sup>2</sup> Will Wright, *Wild Knowledge: Science, Language and Social Life in a Fragile Environment*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1992, pp. 67, 70.

<sup>3</sup> Moyal, 1986. In the early part of the nineteenth century women's subsidiary role in science was reinforced by biblical precedents; later in the century women's exclusion from scientific endeavour was reinforced by their own tentativeness and by a phalanx of powerful males who sought to defend male privilege and establish individual reputations.

and a period at the end of the century when an attempt was made to establish an independent Australian scientific tradition. It was during the last stage that Australian women unsuccessfully tried to attain some degree of equality with men in scientific endeavour.<sup>5</sup>

In the late eighteenth century the pleasures of science were taught to middle class children by private tutors who worked out a variety of 'engaging and non-deceitful' 'scientific' activities to fill children's free time. Although a difference of approach and expectation existed for male and female children (girls being encouraged to study horticulture and botany) it was expected that both sexes would study scientific activities and the natural world through imitation and interactive participation in a variety of 'gainful pleasures'. Public scientific performances and experimental artistic strategies were common in the form of mathematical recreations, collaborative magic shows, staged experiments, learning machines and natural history exhibitions; all of which were thought to be ways of breaking through illusion and imparting scientific knowledge and understanding to children and the general public.<sup>6</sup>

For most of the nineteenth century scientific activities took place not in academies but in public lecture halls, gardens and drawing rooms. Knowledge acquired through individual observation was particularly prized with the study of botany being considered a 'safe science' for women which would encourage them to engage in religious reflection and provide them with fresh air and exercise and opportunities to sharpen their powers of observation. In this way in the nineteenth century the study of botany became 'a necessary addition to an accomplished education' of middle class women. The study of botany by women was thought to have one flaw however - the Linnean system of classification which sorted plants into Classes and Orders was based on the counting the 'male' and 'female' reproductive parts of flowers. It was thus based on eighteenth century ideas of plant sexuality / reproduction which encouraged writers and commentators to construct 'anthropomorphised and eroticised accounts of the sexual politics of plants'. This problem was given a Mrs Grundy solution: when women wrote about botany - as they did in fiction,

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<sup>4</sup> Hawke, 1992, p. 41. After his trip to Australia with Mathew Flinders in 1801 Robert Brown (who courted Fanny Macleay) documented 3400 Australian plant species. This greatly increased interest in Australia.

<sup>5</sup> Hawke, 1992, p. 207. Although by the 1860s women such as Louisa Atkinson conducted technically sophisticated correspondence with men of science (in her case Ferdinand Mueller, W. B. Clark and William Woolls) they were rarely accepted as members of learned societies. This was partly due to male exclusionism and partly the result of male rivalry for status and ownership of scientific property (that is, knowledge and specimens).

<sup>6</sup> Stafford, 1994, pp. 55, 66, 225, 287.

periodicals, essays and expository poetry - they established their gentility by modifying the scientific vocabulary of men.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time as women and girls were encouraged to take an interest in science, the belief that man's power was active and his intellect made for speculation and invention and women's power 'for rule' and her intellect for 'ordering and arrangement', meant that the role women were expected to play in scientific endeavour was practical rather than ideational. Consequently the role given to colonial women who expressed an interest in science during the nineteenth century was normally that of the 'humble amanuensis'. This could be sheer hard work.<sup>8</sup> While women could collect, grow, prepare and collate, and / or record in pencil or paint natural history specimens for inclusion in the collections and publications of male scientists in Australia and Britain, they were not expected to be able to distinguish between or name specimens. In the same way, while women were expected to support men of science in their efforts to introduce plants and animals during the period 1860-1870 when Acclimatisation Societies were at their peak, and - from 1870 onwards when evidence of damage to the environment became obvious - in emphasising that the wilderness was not a limitless resource - they were *not* expected to engage in independent scientific research.<sup>9</sup>

The intense interest in logic, language and externals which characterised Enlightenment thought was modified in the early nineteenth century by romanticism's reclamation of the human imagination and senses. Hence by the middle of the nineteenth century a form of imaginative natural history which blended the materials of natural history with those of antiquity became a popular literary form.<sup>10</sup> Because women were associated in nineteenth century thought with imagination, spirituality and refinement they found a niche in writing this sort of natural history : in doing so women writers played an important role in popularising science and the natural world.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ann B. Shteir, ' "The Pleasing objects of our present researches": Women in Botany' in Frith, 1995, pp. 145-152.

<sup>8</sup> William J. Lines, *Taming the Great South Land : A History of the Conquest of Nature in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1991, p. 111. Collecting, cataloguing, preparing and packing specimens to be sent overseas was often women's business. Such vast quantities of colonial natural history specimens (pressed flowers, flower seed, animals, preserved specimens, rocks, and Aboriginal artefacts and skeletons) were sent from the colonies to Britain and Europe in the first 100 years of settlement that Lines claimed they consolidated the European 'scientific picture of the physical world'.

<sup>9</sup> Margaret Wertheim, *Pythagoras' Trousers: God, Physics and the Gender Wars*, Fourth Estate, London, 1997.

<sup>10</sup> James G. Paradis, 'The Natural Historian as Antiquary of the World: Hugh Miller and the Rise of Literary Natural History' in Michael Shortland (ed.) *Hugh Millar and the Controversies of Victorian Science*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, p. 124.

<sup>11</sup> Stafford, 1994, pp. 284, 292, 300, 301. Stafford, 1984, pp. 455, 470.

this sort of natural history : in doing so women writers played an important role in popularising science and the natural world.<sup>12</sup>

It has been claimed that because of their 'ancillary status and ... putative preference for the emotional over the rational' it has proved difficult to find a satisfactory theoretical place for intellectual nineteenth century women. Although there is some evidence of rebellion among such women, because they were affiliated with (and usually financially dependent upon) patriarchal figures, intellectual middle class women generally performed functions of legitimation / elaboration for the middle class patriarchal structure of which they formed a part.<sup>13</sup> Women's intellectual rebellion was especially constrained by the fact that men's responses to women's intellectual independence was defensive - in the nineteenth century there was profound distrust voiced of strong minded women and female 'blue stockings'. It was claimed that intellectual women would have trouble finding husbands, and, because it was thought brain work depleted energy from women's reproductive organs, would develop disfiguring masculine traits.<sup>14</sup>

I would argue that in the colonies in the nineteenth century a tendency to suppress intellectual activity in women was exacerbated by anxiety caused by dislocation and altered living conditions, by the uneasiness caused by conscious or unconscious recognition of the - by the terms of their own nineteenth century Christian education - unjust treatment of an indigenous people, by the changed cultural dynamics of a predominantly masculine society, and by the fervour which belief in Australia as a land of scientific wonder and opportunity generated among men of science. Given that the inhibition of women's intellectual expression in the colonies has left the nineteenth century historical record depleted of women's scientific contributions, the contributions women made in an effort to popularise natural history can be seen as a useful source of their vision of things natural. They also reveal the strategies women used to negotiate their circumscribed positions as thinkers. For instance, keeping in mind women's habitual use of nature as a metaphor for self-expression, Louisa Twamley's poem 'To the Passion Flower' from which the quotation on the title page of this chapter was taken, can be seen not simply as a romantic moral poem criticising the sexual double standard, but as a poem critiquing the social, intellectual and spiritual (the passion flower being a symbol of the crucifixion) exploitation of women by men; exploitation, which some decades earlier, Mary Wollstonecraft had openly criticised.

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<sup>12</sup> Stafford, 1994, pp. 284, 292, 300, 301. Stafford, 1984, pp. 455, 470.

<sup>13</sup> Deirdre David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy*, Macmillan, London, 1987, pp. 3, 6.

<sup>14</sup> David, 1987, pp. 15-16, 19.

Fanny Macleay, Jane Franklin, Georgiana Molloy, Georgiana McCrae, Louisa Meredith, Louisa Atkinson, Ellis Rowan and Mary Ellen Murray-Prior were well educated and creative nineteenth century women who felt it incumbent upon themselves to demonstrate an interest in natural science. Although her first concern was landscape and portrait painting Georgiana McCrae recorded many instances in her journals of interest in and knowledge of geology, comets, animals, birds, insects and plants.<sup>15</sup> All these women took a keen interest in gardening and all collected natural history specimens - shells, insects, flowers, plants, and in the case of Mary Murray-Prior, aboriginal artefacts. All travelled in the colonies, often recording their impressions of the natural environment, and Fanny Macleay, Georgiana McCrae, Louisa Meredith, Louisa Atkinson and Ellis Rowan also painted natural science subjects and / or 'topographical' views of landscape. Lacking that key to hard science - the ability to name and classify - which social power and a grounding in Latin gave to men, it was not uncommon for women in the colonies to write about and paint natural history subjects in the manner of Louisa Meredith and Louisa Atkinson - not scientists as officially defined, but acute observers of nature who expressed powerfully 'conservative' attitudes.<sup>16</sup>

Georgiana Molloy, Fanny Macleay, Jane Franklin and Mary Ellen Murray Prior on the other hand were part of what Moyal called 'the smallest handful' of British women in the colonies who during the nineteenth century genuinely pursued an interest in scientific study and / or made a creative contribution to science.<sup>17</sup> Without exception these women were more badly treated by society - both during and after their lifetimes - than women such as Louisa Meredith and Louisa Atkinson who expressed themselves in a less obviously 'scientific' manner. However, even Louisa Meredith, who during the forty years she lived in the colonies wrote about, promoted and painted natural history subjects, was lightly rewarded during her lifetime and is now largely remembered as a travel and children's writer and as a

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<sup>15</sup> Georgiana McCrae, 5 March 28 April 1843, 10 January 1844, H. McCrae, 1934, pp. 79, 81-2, 105.

<sup>16</sup> From the 1870s - in language, if not in life - educated women broadened their attitude of nurturance (previously expressed towards men, the home, children, the garden and 'unfortunates') to include the Australian landscape.

<sup>17</sup> Moyal, 1986, p. 90. The only practicing female scientist in Australia in the nineteenth century was a German - Amalie Dietrich. Isabel McBryde, 'Miss Mary, Ethnography and the Inheritance of Concern: Mary Ellen Murray-Prior' in *First in Their Field*, Julie Markus (ed.), Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1993, pp. 15-45. Mary Ellen Murray-Prior (nee Bundock) lived most of her life in 'the bush'. In the 1880s and 1890s she and her sister collected, collated and drew Aboriginal artefacts for the Sydney and Leiden Museums.

propagandist for the middle classes rather than as Australia's first effective female conservationist.<sup>18</sup>

From the first years of settlement middle class women such as Elizabeth Macarthur found that the study of botany was facilitated by the fact that every walk they took allowed them, as she expressed it, 'to put in practice that Theory I had before gained by reading'. However this pleasurable exposure to interesting material was largely negated for colonial women by their need to put aside such interests whenever family duty intervened.<sup>19</sup> As the century progressed middle class women in the colonies cultivated zoological, horticultural and botanical interests, attending Colonial Exhibitions, spending leisure hours in the museums and Botanic Gardens and using the ladies rooms at Mechanics Institutes libraries. In this way popular science reached a wide range of colonial women as well as colonial men.<sup>20</sup> In 1859 Sarah Midgely, the daughter of a lower middle class farmer / settler, recorded her fully engaged interest in a series of lectures which she attended in a country hall which included such topics as 'Man', 'The Beauties of Creation' and 'The wonders of Animated Nature'.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand Rachel Henning, who later believed her relationship with the man she married began with her learning from him 'the names of the Southern Constellations', took a satirical view of the lecture on Astronomy which as a young woman she attended in Bathurst in 1861.<sup>22</sup> This may have been because, as Elizabeth Macarthur had earlier expressed it, she had been made to feel by her male tutor that in presuming to study the 'general principles of the heavenly bodies ... I had mistaken my abilities and blush at my error'.<sup>23</sup> Subdued aggression at the way in which men encouraged a sense of intellectual inferiority in women in relation to science may have also lain behind young women teasing a young man whom they said was 'nearly crazy about beetles' by calling him 'Butterfly and Flirt'.<sup>24</sup> Because colonial women's interest in science was - not very subtly - channelled into horticulture and

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<sup>18</sup> Smith, 1969, pp. 290-8. Rae-Ellis, 1979, p. 218. In 1884 the widowed Louisa Meredith was awarded a pension of £100 per annum by the Tasmanian government for 'distinguished literary and artistic service to the colony'. Meredith succeeded in having her husband, who served in the Tasmanian Government, have legislation passed to protect Tasmanian wildlife.

<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 7 March, 1791, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, p. 29. Elizabeth was forced to put aside her botanical studies when her husband had a 'severe illness'.

<sup>20</sup> Moyal, 1986, p. 90.

<sup>21</sup> Midgely, 8, 22, 24 February 1859, in McCorkell, 1967, pp. 73, 79. She described the first as 'very excellent and impressive', the second as 'able, instructing and edifying' and the third 'good excepting that part referring to the inferiority of the fair sex which sentiment was not very acceptable'.

<sup>22</sup> Rachel Henning, 19 July 1861, 21 October 1865 in Adams, 1969, pp. 74, 214.

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 7 March 1791, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, pp. 28-9. Elizabeth was thus channelled into the study of botany as an 'easy science' in which she claimed she made 'a small progress'.

<sup>24</sup> Margaret Hamersley to Lily Landor, December 1863, Hamersley Papers, BL 1268A/3.



a (desultory) study of botany as the century progressed it became usual for women in Australia to profess that as far as science was concerned they were only interested in learning the correct names of flowers.<sup>25</sup>

### **Acceptable activities for women in science.**

#### **1) Botanical propagation, botanical collection, collation of natural history material.**

The nineteenth century was a time when female scientific activity was largely confined to women who were part of a social elite and who gained entry to scientific circles tangentially through matters relating to home and garden. Early in the century Governors and the wives of Governors saw it as part of their role to be patrons of horticulture and to encourage middle class women to grow both native and exotic plants.<sup>26</sup> Because gardening and plant propagation were considered improving activities for women, many of the most determined and enthusiastic gardeners and promoters of the acclimatisation of introduced plants in the colonies were women from the most sheltered of backgrounds.<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur, who herself took an intense interest in, and often visited, Sydney's Botanical gardens, spoke of Mrs Macquarie as having 'laid out, planted and embellished' the 'Government Grounds' wherein 'the trees thrive and are very ornamental'.<sup>28</sup> Although her dream lapsed when she and her husband were recalled to Britain, as the wife of the Governor of Van Dieman's Land Jane Franklin was responsible for the establishment of a Botanical 'mountain garden' of native plants in Hobart. In doing so she had hoped to encourage the British Government to allocate funds to allow the employment of a government botanist to run the garden and send Australian plant specimens to England.<sup>29</sup>

Just as in the 1860s and 1870 women supported the ideals of the Acclimatisation Societies, early in the century women took delight in their success in propagating introduced plants, justifying their interest in botanical matters by stressing the material benefits which botanical knowledge would bring to the colonies.<sup>30</sup> Mrs Maconochie, wife of the Governor

<sup>25</sup> Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 17 September 1864, Adams, 1969, p. 180.

<sup>26</sup> Georgiana McCrae, 1843, H. McCrae, 1934, p. 89. Mrs Maconochie to Captain Mangles, 26 December 1841, BL 497A/2. '[Y]ou can imagine how much I have to do' (to improve plants on the island).

<sup>27</sup> Cowan, 1977, p.1.

<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 4 February 1826, Elizabeth Macarthur to her son, Edward Macarthur, 26 May 1832, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, pp. 456, 467.

<sup>29</sup> Moyal, 1986, p. 73. Llyod Robson, *A History of Van Dieman's Land from Earliest Times to 1855*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992 (1983), p. 351.

<sup>30</sup> Miss Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 8 March 1817, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, p. 311.

of Norfolk Island, who was delighted to be able to tell a British correspondent that 'the beautiful rose Poppy you sent me in Van Dieman's Land, is now all over these colonies, chiefly from that seed', felt it incumbent upon herself to improve the quality of fruit stocks on the island. Oblivious of contradiction in the way of most educated people of her time, at the same time as she worked to introduce order and exotic species into gardening on Norfolk Island, Mrs Maconochie, gloried in the island's natural vegetation and landscape which she described as 'the wildest luxuriance... that could set an artist wild [where] Nature has done everything - man nothing'.<sup>31</sup>

The establishment of botanical gardens was initially given a high priority in the colonies because it was hoped such gardens would help ensure survival. Later Botanical Gardens received a high proportion of public funding not only because they were of scientific and aesthetic interest but because they were thought to have 'almost autonomous powers of improvement' on the general populace. The supreme model for scientific gardens in the colonies - a model few private individuals could afford to emulate - was the Royal Gardens at Kew, London. Kew Gardens expressed scholarship and taste by blending classical architecture with a form of horticulture which propagated plants from all over the world. The Royal Gardens at Kew was a model which in later years could lead to funds being allocated to Botanical Gardens at the expense of other public utilities.<sup>32</sup> It was also a model which led paterfamilias who were interested in botanical science - such as Alexander Macleay, (Fanny Macleay's father), and, much later in the century, Charles Ryan (Ellis Rowan's father), to expend so much money establishing and maintaining private botanical gardens that they ran into debt and lost most, or all, of their property.

By the 1830s small but active circles of scientific elite had grown up around influential families in Sydney and Hobart with the result that the following two decades saw a period of intense amateur 'scientific' activity in both New South Wales and Tasmania. The Macleay family, described as 'catalysts and contributors' to science,<sup>33</sup> established their family home as the centre of scientific discourse in Sydney. Like Charles Darwin, the men in the Macleay family were driven into scientific endeavour by the belief that there was a mathematical pattern to the natural world - which they as scientists could discover - which would reveal the

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<sup>31</sup> Mrs Maconochie to Captain Mangles, 26 December 1841, BL 479A/2. Hawke, 1992. Paradoxical oppositions and conjunctions between gardens and wilderness were taken from the bible.

<sup>32</sup> Goodman 1988, p. 404. In 1853 the Victorian Government spent the same amount on its botanical garden and the salary of the botanist who ran it as on the public asylum and public hospital combined.

<sup>33</sup> Moyal, 1986, pp. 75-6.

plan of creation itself.<sup>34</sup> Alexander Macleay, a fellow of the British Linnean and Royal Societies, was responsible for the founding of the Sydney Colonial Museum. He drew heavily on the help of Fanny, his eldest daughter, to establish and maintain one of the most comprehensive private natural history and entomological collections in the world and to create an extensive botanical garden which served as a rich source of information for both local and overseas scholars.

It is clear that the position of women in science in the colonies was affected by class as much as by gender. From earliest times in the colonies working class men with a background in gardening were employed under contract by collectors in Britain to obtain and relay to them botanical and natural history specimens.<sup>35</sup> European countries followed suit - but in at least one case were happy to employ - and amply reward - a working class woman. Between 1863-72 Amalie Dietrich was employed by the Godeffroy Museum of Natural History in Hamburg to collect natural history specimens in Australia. Amalie travelled on her own throughout outback Australia - seemingly with great joy - and collected, labelled and despatched huge quantities of natural history specimens to Germany. In 1867 she was elected Fellow of the Stettin Entomological Society. On her return to Hamburg in 1872 she was employed by the Godeffroy Museum and in 1885 was appointed curator of the Hamburg Botanical Museum where she remained in office for the rest of her life.<sup>36</sup> In contrast working class British women were not given the opportunity to earn a living collecting natural history specimens in the Australian colonies. One of the reasons for this was that once emigration of free settlers to the colonies began in earnest there were plenty of middle class women who were prepared collect botanical specimens in exchange for the merest whisper of acknowledgment.

Georgiana Molloy was one such woman. During her brief life Georgiana sent huge quantities of meticulously collected, prepared and collated plant specimens from the south west of Western Australia to Captain Mangles in Britain which Mangles admitted were far superior in quality and viability to those sent to him by the West Australian government botanist John Drummond. Nevertheless, despite the fact that Captain Mangles had to pay

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<sup>34</sup> William Sharp Macleay, 'Remarks on the Comparative Anatomy of Certain Birds of Cuba'. Paper, Linnean Society, London, 21 November 1826 in Elizabeth Windschuttle, *Taste and Science: The Women of the Macleay Family 1790-1850*, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, Sydney, 1988, p. 64.

<sup>35</sup> Margaret Catchpole to Richard House, 2 May 1803 in Clarke & Spender, 1992, p. 13. 'I have at this time a man to keep me company.. he is a gardener he come out as a Botanist and be allowed one hundred pounds per year and this provision found him and a man fetch wood and water and one to go out with him to collect seeds and see skins and all sorts of curiosities'.

<sup>36</sup> Moyal, 1986, pp. 94-97.

Drummond for his specimens whereas he only proffered Georgiana his attention and some gifts for her home and garden, when informed by Ellen Stirling of Georgiana Molloy's death Captain Mangles recorded her death in his letterbook without comment.<sup>37</sup> As Ann Moyal observed - in Georgiana's case it was her own 'modesty and eagerness to serve [which] assisted her devaluation'.<sup>38</sup> During the months Georgiana lay dying at the Vasse the botanist John Drummond and bird collector George Gilbert collected specimens in the territory at Vasse and Augusta from which for some years Georgiana had collected botanical specimens for Captain Mangles: it was Drummond who received most of the credit for discovering and propagating the botanical richness of the south-west of Western Australia.

At least Drummond, aware that Georgiana had been the first to find and preserve its seed, had the grace to name a scented boronia *Boronia molloyae* in her honour - a greater token of recognition than she received from Mangles. Georgiana's education as a botanist grew from her demand for precision; during the years which she spent botanising she studied reference books on botany, which, added to her practical activities, meant that before she died she acquired an encyclopaedic knowledge of the flowers of the south west of Western Australia.<sup>39</sup> Despite Georgiana's years of careful and ground breaking work of collecting, labelling and preserving specimens never before seen by Europeans - plants which found their way into a number of private and public horticultural collections in England and formed the basis for much botanical research at the herbarium at Kew<sup>40</sup> - the only mention Georgiana gained in Britain was a brief entry in Boulger's Botanical Index, 1931. On the other hand until patriarchal assumptions began to be questioned by female historians in the middle of the twentieth century, in Australia it was as if the many hundreds of well informed and dedicated nineteenth century women botanists and naturalists had never existed.<sup>41</sup>

Despite her higher social standing, Fanny Macleay fared just as badly as Georgiana Molloy. Like Georgiana, Fanny Macleay's public reward for attempting to pursue scientific activities in the colonies was a heavier work load during her lifetime and obscurity after it.

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<sup>37</sup> Hasluck, 1966, p. 244.

<sup>38</sup> Moyal in Carr, 1981, pp. 337-8.

<sup>39</sup> Moyal, 1986, pp. 92, 93.

<sup>40</sup> Moyal, 1986, pp. 92-4.

<sup>41</sup> Alexandra Hasluck, *A Portrait with Background: A Life of Georgiana Molloy*, was first published in 1955. Alexandra Hasluck, 'Georgiana Molloy', *Australian Dictionary of Biography 1788-1850*, vol. 2, 1966, p. 244. Georgiana's Horti Sicci were so precise in mounting and description that they have been retained for use at Kew Herbarium. Moyal, 1986, pp. 94-7. Elizabeth Gould supposedly had the Gouldian finch named after her. Louisa Meredith, Georgiana Molloy and Susan Fereday, a natural artist and collector for Kew Gardens, each had a flowering plant named after them, and Louisa Atkinson, natural artist and botanical collector, had two ferns, a shrub and a heath named for her.

For most of her life Fanny Macleay shared a house with eminent male relatives who achieved world-wide fame for their knowledge of natural history, with a library consisting of 4000 books 'on Theology, Biography, History, Botany, Medicine, Arts, Sciences, Mathematics, Education and every branch of polite literature', and with what has been called 'the greatest private natural history collection in the world'. Though educated by governesses in 'female pursuits' rather than in 'hard' science, Fanny was so exposed within the Macleay family to the study of botany, entomology, zoology, ornithology, marine biology, conchology, palaeontology, astronomy, horticulture and landscape gardening that her correspondence indicates that she absorbed a great deal of scientific knowledge. Nevertheless, in the self-deprecating way of nineteenth century women, she liked to declaim that: 'I know nothing of Nat. Hist. myself, I have not talent sufficient for a tyro in the Science but I quite admire & love those who study it'.<sup>42</sup> It seems probable that Fanny, who in her youth expressed strong intellectual pretensions and who after her death was described by her mother as having been her father's 'companion in his pursuits',<sup>43</sup> became self-deprecatory about her scientific interests and knowledge partly in response to the scorn heaped on her by her brother, the renowned natural historian William Sharpe Macleay.<sup>44</sup>

As well as increasingly feeling that she did not have the right to pursue her own interest in natural history, after she matured Fanny did not have the time to do so. On top of her duties - assigned to her by her over-extended mother - as chatelaine of her parent's house, nurse, seamstress and educator of her younger siblings, - and, after emigrating to Sydney - philanthropist, she spent considerable time and energy serving as handmaid to her father and other men in their scientific activities. This meant collecting, preparing, preserving, recording and sending overseas entomological and other natural history specimens, assisting with the planning and layout of the Elizabeth Bay botanical garden, entertaining and informing scientific visitors, and drawing and painting botanical and entomological specimens for her male relatives and male scientists in Australia and Britain.<sup>45</sup> Fanny, who took pride in being a competent floral still-life artist, complained as she got older that she had come to hate insects because preparing them prevented her from doing her painting.<sup>46</sup> Despite the extent of her scientific activities, Fanny was given little appreciation during her lifetime and to this day is

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<sup>42</sup> 'Frances Macleay', *Australian Dictionary of Biography 1788-1850*, vol. 2, 1966, pp. 178, 180. Fanny to William, 16 December 1826, Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 73.

<sup>43</sup> Mrs Eliza Macleay to William Sharp Macleay 20 August 1836, in Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 179.

<sup>44</sup> I deal with this later in the chapter.

<sup>45</sup> Windschuttle, 1988, p. 50.

<sup>46</sup> Fanny to William, 7 March 1817, 3 March 1828, Earnshaw et al, pp. 31, 94. In 1828 she remarked 'I never catch insects now - cause why? I see too many all around me morn'g noon & night - I hate insects most cordially I never draw!!'

rarely mentioned in official histories which record the contributions to science made by her famous male relatives.<sup>47</sup>

## 2) Illustration of male scientific enterprises.

With the colonisation of Australia close empirical observation in art in the form of accurate biological and botanical drawing served not only a need to understand God's plan and celebrate the beauty of his creation, but as a way of recording information which it was thought would facilitate colonisation. The term 'scientific' art, (like that of 'botanical' art or 'ornithological' art) is something of a misnomer in that nineteenth century natural history artists - whose art frequently appeared in publications meant for the general public - were expected to combine accurate, detailed and recognisable representations of plants, flowers, birds, birds eggs, animals, insects, shells and rocks with an aesthetically pleasing representation. The violence and loss which accompanied imperial 'hunter-gathering' for science tends to go without comment in histories of scientific illustration which focus on the role images played in enhancing the development of natural history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some of the loss which accompanied the recording of natural history specimens took the form of the unacknowledged appropriation of the energies of female natural history artists whose work ranged from highly detailed representations of botanical specimens to attractive paintings of plants and animals which were representational rather than scientific.<sup>48</sup>

As befitted their vocation as wives and mothers, women's natural history art in the nineteenth century generally either consisted of representations completed as 'gifts' for friends or relatives, or as unremunerated (and often unacknowledged) illustrations completed for male relatives and / or their scientific publications.<sup>49</sup> As the nineteenth century progressed a few Australian women natural history artists received payment for their illustrations, but, given the amount of time which it took to complete each illustration, not sufficient for even the best of them to make a comfortable living.<sup>50</sup> Despite a resurgence of interest in

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<sup>47</sup> Moyal, 1986, pp. 75-7.

<sup>48</sup> Gooding, 1995, p. 82. Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* (1859) caused a revolution in scientific thinking which encouraged an increasingly naturalistic interpretation of species within their own environment.

<sup>49</sup> Blunt, 1950, p. 267. Between 1753 and 1930 the *Index Londinensis to Illustrations of Flowering Plants and Ferns* listed 480,000 figures of flowers published under botanical names. Kramer, 1988, p. 60. In the Kew Collection works by women outnumber works by men almost 2 to 1.

<sup>50</sup> Kerr, 1992, p.708. For instance Helena Scott, widowed after two years of marriage, attempted to support herself through natural history illustration: as she aged her financial position became ever more precarious.

conservation and the natural environment this has remained true in the twentieth century when natural history art has continued to remain 'outside the mainstream visual arts world'.<sup>51</sup>

### Botanical art.

Flower painting in the west originated in herbals intended to facilitate the gathering of plants for food and medicinal purposes. Long before Linneus, the skill of the artist in the west was thus directed towards satisfying a public demand for precise botanical representation. During the great age of western flower painting - the seventeenth century when floral still life became one of the most popular genres in art - rare and exotic flowers were painted to place in the home in lieu of the (expensive and / or unobtainable) originals. To a nascent consumer society part of the appeal of such paintings was their celebration of the triumphs of colonisation and of an ever expanding horticulture. The eighteenth century and the first three decades of the nineteenth century are considered to have been the 'golden age of plant illustration' during which the development of the Linnean system helped formalise representation and encouraged 'the scientific virtues of tidiness, thoroughness and precision'.<sup>52</sup>

Botanists consider that botanical art is work which allows a plant to be exactly identified - each specimen painted separately to show its leaves, idiosyncrasies of growth, flowers, fruit and, if thought necessary for exact identification, its dissected and magnified flower parts.<sup>53</sup> However in the nineteenth century when most middle class women painted flowers the term 'botanical' art was somewhat loosely applied to a range of art which included botanically correct - but largely decorative depictions of flowers - to those prepared following 'the traditional and sometimes static formula of dissecting and examining individual specimens'.<sup>54</sup> Most of what was accepted by botanists in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as 'true' botanical art - much of which was painted by women - now resides in drawers and cupboards in natural history museums.<sup>55</sup>

Belief in a scientific vision and desire to have new plant species recorded as quickly and meticulously as possible might have made the botanically correct representation of flowers

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<sup>51</sup> Gooding, 1995, p. 85. Women natural history artists have always been poorly remunerated.

<sup>52</sup> Martyn Rix, *The Art of Botanical Illustration*, Bracken Books, London, 1989, p. 78.

<sup>53</sup> Helen Hewson, 'Ellis Rowan: An Appreciation' in *Flower Paintings of Ellis Rowan*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1982, pp. 17-18.

<sup>54</sup> Gooding, 1995, p. 82.

<sup>55</sup> Blunt, 1950, pp. xxv, 2.

the socially accepted creative outlet for women in the early years of settlement but it did not ensure that colonial women would have their botanical art accepted for publication.<sup>56</sup>

Although Fanny Macleay completed a considerable number of natural history paintings, all but one (plate 13) of her paintings have been lost. This was because, although Fanny herself took her art very seriously, the men for whom, or at whose instigation, she painted specimens of botanical, entomological, palaeontologic and, on one occasion zoological, art do not appear to have greatly valued them.<sup>57</sup> Despite her pretence that she cared 'not at all what becomes of them', Fanny sent twelve of her best botanical paintings to Britain to her friend Robert Brown hoping he would publish them in Curtis's *Botanical Magazine* - of which he was the editor.<sup>58</sup> Brown, an eminent botanist who has been described as 'perhaps the greatest figure in the whole of British botany', wrote a book on Australian flora which was not replaced as the definitive reference book on the subject until the second half of the nineteenth century. Fanny, ever tentative of her rights, requested of Brown that if her paintings did not serve for publication could he please forward them to her brother in Cuba. The result was that Brown either lost or misappropriated them. When her beloved paintings - the result of much painstaking effort - were neither published nor sent to her brother, Fanny declared herself 'very much vexed' that her 'precious drawings' had been lost. As a woman she was unable to do anything directly about Brown's seeming defection, but instead had her father write 'repeatedly' to Brown to request that he return - what she referred to as 'about two dozen drawings of plants which grow around here'. The paintings were never published, and as far as can be determined, never returned to Fanny or sent to her brother nor - it would seem - was an explanation of their fate, or an apology for their loss, ever given by Brown to either Fanny or her father.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Between 1812-1836 Curtis' *Botanical Magazine*, London, had 19 women contributors; mostly wives or daughters of men involved in botany or colonial women who had access to 'new' specimens.

<sup>57</sup> For Fanny's enthusiasm for her art see Fanny to William, July 1815, 20, 28 February 1817, in Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 13, 29, 30. For evidence that William requested her to draw for him see 2 May, 31 July 1830, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 119, 123. For her habit of giving men - especially Robert Brown and her brother William - gifts of her paintings see Windschuttle, 1988, p. 56 and Fanny to William, 8 November 1828, 'I cannot draw as much as I could wish for you for all my daubs are yours, you know if you like', 21 November 1829, 22 May 1830, 16 December 1830, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 103, 115, 121, 130.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Hulton & Laurence Smith, *Flowers in Art from East to West*, British Museum Publication, London, 1979, p. 43. As, in another floral still life which she painted at this time, Fanny depicted five species which had not previously been published in British botanical magazines, and as at that time Curtis's *Botanical Magazine* had 19 women contributors who were less accomplished artists than Fanny, it is hard to understand why Robert Brown did not publish her botanical art.

<sup>59</sup> Fanny to William, 22 February, 2 December 1830, 3 June, 23 September, 25 November 1832, 28 March 1833, 25 January 1834, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 116, 128, 145, 150, 151, 155, 161, 162.





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The one botanical painting of Fanny Macleay's which has survived into the present is a representation of a wildflower from Western Australia (the Painted Featherflower or *Verticordia picta*) which is presently held in the botany library of the British Museum. This seems to suggest that Brown donated at least one of Fanny's paintings to the museum. The painting is not only botanically correct but could be said to be 'beautiful' in both nineteenth and twentieth century terms. To Fanny as artist, beauty in nature was a concept which demanded the representation and celebration of nature as it 'really was' - nothing made by God being considered ugly. This is made clear from Fanny's comment to her brother: 'I never saw anything to equal the 'beauty of [Pelletier's] Birds excepting the plate you sent Papa of a vulture belonging to Humboldt's *Voy*'.<sup>60</sup> The representation of the vulture of which Fanny wrote (and the bird itself) would not currently be thought of as beautiful, while Fanny's depiction of a feather flower (and the flower itself) would. The desire to include some form of 'beauty' in natural history art in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was as widespread as it is in the twentieth, when it would seem logical that such labour-intensive art would have been replaced by photographic images.

This need to capture or understand the 'beauty of nature' - just as it was 'created' seems to underlie much scientific endeavour, and most especially 'scientific' art / representation. According to a twentieth century botanical artist whose botanical art work (plate 14) is indistinguishable from that done in the early nineteenth century, what distinguishes botanical from all other forms of floral art, is its precision and the inclusion in it of dissections of the sexual parts of flowers.<sup>61</sup> Modern art critics claim the distinguishing factor in botanical art is the way it combines 'scientific observation and aesthetic flair'.<sup>62</sup> Clearly both in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries the 'factual' approach of science and the 'aesthetic' approach of art become somewhat blurred when it comes to the representation of plants and flowers.

Given that modern botanical art painted by women is often indistinguishable from work done by women in the early nineteenth century, it seemed to me worthwhile to ask why a twentieth century woman - who has had flowers and a flora reserve named after her - took up the activity of botanical illustration. Rica Erickson, who came from an evangelical working

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<sup>60</sup> Fanny to William, 22 September 1815, Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 17. 'Voy' refers to the name of Humboldt's book *Zoologie de la Voyage*.

<sup>61</sup> Rica Erickson, oral history interview with author, 21 April, 1995. I have a botanical painting which was executed by Rica Erickson in 1996 which is indistinguishable in style from that shown in Plate 14.

<sup>62</sup> Gooding, p. 1995, p. 84.

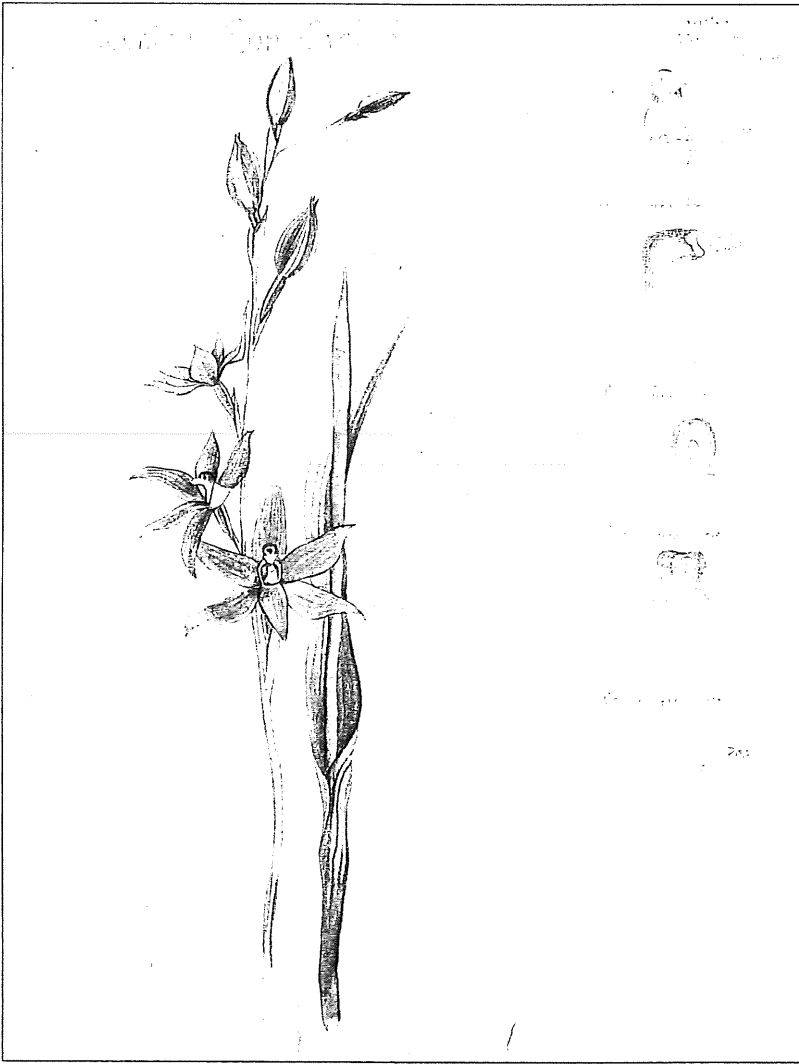


PLATE 14. *Thelymetranuda*, Rica Erickson, 1933. Reproduced in Wildflowers in Art.

class background, claimed she learnt to love wildflowers as a child when the West Australian bush was 'at her door'. She told researchers:

My grandmother was a gardener ... [the flowers] had to be watered every day and then when the time was ripe they bloomed. On the Goldfields whenever the rains came and we had bush flowers flowering and we were allowed as youngsters to go walking in the bush; it amazed me to find these beautiful flowers had no-one to look after them, they just came ... I suppose that's how it started really .. I don't like classifications. I like the plants.<sup>63</sup>

Rica told her interviewers that as a young woman she became a schoolteacher because she wanted to live in the bush and that it was while she was teaching at bush schools that she began to collect and draw orchids.<sup>64</sup> After marrying a farmer in 1935 and having 'four children in four and a half years', Rica did not draw for ten years until 'curiosity and the need to draw' encouraged her to begin drawing again and to write to male botanists asking for botanical information. In this Rica consciously identified with Georgiana Molloy saying: 'I used to write deliberately so I'd get an answer, something to come back with, and I'm sure Georgiana did the same thing'. Like Georgiana Molloy, Rica Erickson took her children with her when she went looking for plant specimens in the bush. She commented:

I must have been the only mother in Bolgart who took her children bush walking. It was a double ended thing. I had to take them with me but I wanted them to share and to understand what motivated me. If it brushed off on them well and good. ... It's a very personal experience to go exploring - even if it's written up and studied by someone before you, you have to do it again yourself to appreciate the wonder of it.

When Rica and her husband retired to the city she considered she became 'divorced from the bush' and hence turned her creativity in another direction.<sup>65</sup> She continues to believe however that it is the study of nature which allows a person to 'understand that human impulses are basically primitive. You accept what is'.<sup>66</sup>

### Ornithological art.

<sup>63</sup> Rica Erickson, oral history interview, 17 May 1990, L. Hopkins, B. Keighery, BL, OH 2528.

<sup>64</sup> Exotic flowers such as orchids have always been popular with women botanical artists. See the work of Rosa Fiveash (1854-1938).

<sup>65</sup> Rica Erickson, 'Sharing a Wonderful Dream', Monograph compiled from a series of interviews by Bronwen Keighery, Wildflower Society of Western Australia, Perth, n.d. pp. 3, 8, 9, 13. As well as publishing 4 illustrated books about wildflowers, Rica Erickson has published 16 books of history.

<sup>66</sup> Oral interview with author, 21 April, 1995. In 1980 Rica Erickson was awarded an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters for her achievements. Blunt, 1950, p. 4. Considered that flower painters were forced to recognise the narrowness of the gap 'which separates man from the rest of nature'.

From the moment botanical, animal, and ornithological specimens arrived in Britain from New South Wales British women joined in the 'scientific' depiction of them.<sup>67</sup> The best known of these was Elizabeth Gould, an accomplished natural history artist who later (1838) accompanied her husband John to Australia in order to paint Australian birds as illustration for his projected series of books.<sup>68</sup> Elizabeth brought only her infant son Henry with her on her journey, leaving her three other young children, Elizabeth, Louisa and Charles, in the care of her mother. While in Tasmania the Goulds enjoyed the patronage of Governor Franklin and his wife: Elizabeth was delivered of her fifth child - a son whom she named Franklin after the Governor - at Government house during a period when both John Gould and Jane Franklin were on a scientific excursion to Research Bay.<sup>69</sup> Despite her pregnancy and her later need to care for two infants, during the eighteen months Elizabeth Gould spent in the colonies she made several hundred finished drawings of birds, animals, plants and flowers.

John Gould 'discovered' 300 'new' species of birds while he was in the colonies - to add to the 300 already known. While his wife stayed behind and painted birds, or drew the flora of the colonies as background for her paintings, John Gould went on excursions to kill and collect birds, birds eggs and birds nests. Elizabeth's paintings (plate 15) delicately and elegantly combine accuracy with naturalism. They show a fine eye for detail, a desire for accuracy, and an ability to instil her subjects with a genteel form of life which captures the fragility - but not the potential for activity or flight - of her subjects.<sup>70</sup> Elizabeth Gould painted birds, the most active and fugitive of animals, as if they were beautiful immobilised flowers. This may have been partly because, although Elizabeth was appreciative of 'the natural productions' she drew and painted in the colonies, she was in the colonies not on her own volition but because her dynamic husband needed her artistic skills. A dutiful and uncomplaining wife, when she had been in Tasmania for three weeks Elizabeth explained to her mother:

The country is very fine, teeming with natural productions, both in the animal and vegetable kingdom ... Indeed John is so enthusiastic that one cannot be with him

<sup>67</sup> Barbara Perry & Joan Kerr (eds.), *Heritage: The National Womens Art Book*, Craftsman House, Australia, 1995, p. 269. Sarah Stone painted 36 plates of birds, reptiles and mammals - which had been sent as skins from New South Wales - for John White's *Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales*. (1790)

<sup>68</sup> Between 1832 and 1837 Elizabeth Gould painted and prepared over 600 lithographs as illustration for her husband's publications - *Birds of the Himalayan Mountains* and *Birds of Europe*.

<sup>69</sup> Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Sir John Franklin in Tasmania 1837- 1843*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1949, p. 76.

<sup>70</sup> Moyal, 1986, p. 41. Louisa Meredith 1853, p. 87. Louisa Meredith, who used John Gould's *Birds of Australia* to identify Australian birds, commented that some of the representations were not accurate.



without catching some of his zeal in the cause, I cannot regret our coming, though looking anxiously for our return.<sup>71</sup>

In her subsequent letters to her mother Elizabeth wrote of how she longed to see England and 'the dear, dear treasures it contains', of how she missed the 'dear little faces' of 'Lizzie, Louisa and Charley' - begging her Mother not to let her children 'forget Momma and Poppa if possible'.<sup>72</sup> After Elizabeth Gould's premature death twelve months after her return to England John Gould claimed his wife had 'for many years laboriously assisted me with her pencil, accompanied me to Australia and cheerfully interested herself in all my pursuits'. Despite her husband's praise, as a woman artist Elizabeth was largely invisible during her lifetime and after her death her work as an artist and lithographer was mostly subsumed under the name of others, including that of her husband who, it is often claimed, played a minor role in designing the lithographs published under his name.<sup>73</sup> This burying of Elizabeth as artist in the partly self-made myth surrounding the entrepreneurial John Gould was exacerbated by the fact that Elizabeth died (as a result of the puerperal fever which followed the birth in August 1841 of her sixth child) so soon after her return to England. Hence, although Elizabeth's paintings formed the basis of many of the lithographs in her husband's series *Birds of Australia* (1840-48), only 84 of the 681 plates in the series carry her name in the legend.<sup>74</sup>

In 1832 Georgiana Molloy wrote to her sister in England:

I am sitting in the verandah surrounded by my little flower garden of British, Cape and Australian flowers pouring forth their odour ... and a variety of beautiful birds most brilliant in plumage sporting around me. These little creatures seem quite delighted at the acquisition they have made in our emigration and are much tamer than any but the Robin and Sparrow in England ... the Honeyeater are minutely beautiful ... the symmetry of their form is perfect.<sup>75</sup>

In Georgiana's account the Australian flowers and minutely beautiful and exquisitely made birds welcome British settlers to their new land. This was Georgiana as herself a

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<sup>71</sup> Elizabeth Gould to her mother Mrs Coxen, 8 October 1838, in Alec H. Chisholm, *The Story of Elizabeth Gould*, Hawthorn Press, Australia, 1944, pp. 33-4.

<sup>72</sup> Elizabeth Gould to Mrs Coxen, 10 December 1838, 3 January 1939, Chisholm, 1944, pp. 36, 40, Kerr, 1992, p. 312.

<sup>73</sup> For example Ambrus, 1992, pp. 21-5. On the other hand Ann Datta in *John Gould in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, claimed that there are sufficient sketches made by John Gould extant to suggest that he a competent artist who designed a fair proportion of the plates which appear under his name. The controversy continues.

<sup>74</sup> Smith, 1969, p. 283. Kerr, 1992, pp. 311-12. H.C. Richter transferred her remaining finished drawings to lithographs and in so doing gave the birds increased body, strength and mobility.

reproductive and accommodating flower reflecting on the accommodating nature of the birds and flowers of a new land which, like women, in her mind existed in order to be enjoyed and treblely captured - in reality, as images, and through the human imagination.<sup>76</sup> It would not be stretching things too far to say that in her bird paintings Elizabeth Gould not only produced 'scientific' illustrations for her husband's books, but reproduced her own decorative, delicate and immobilised image. This brings out a facet of nineteenth century scientific illustration which is sometimes forgotten - specimens were not collected and reproduced simply in order to obtain knowledge but in order to key into the creativity and power which was thought to be at the centre of the created universe. Women were included in this configuration in that they were considered to be the unthinking vessels of new birth. It was no accident therefore that receptive, accommodating and uncomplaining women such as Elizabeth Gould, Geogiana Molloy and Mary Mowle - highly productive and constantly reproductive women who, as a result of overly frequent childbearing, all died in their late thirties - <sup>77</sup> should have been content to collect and / or reproduce their own images on behalf of men of science.

Much later in the century the colonially born floral artist Ellis Rowan, whose grandfather John Cotton has been described as 'one of the most naturally skilled bird-painters to have worked in this country'<sup>78</sup> followed in her grandfather's footsteps and travelled throughout the country 'hunting' Australian and New Guinean flowers and birds to 'capture' in paint. Nevertheless, unlike the immobilised Elizabeth Gould, as an addicted independent traveller, Ellis Rowan, attempted - beyond her ability to execute - to represent birds as being as mobile as herself. This led to the claim that although - as was consistent with the conventions of late nineteenth century ornithological art - Rowan represented her scientifically accurate birds against the backgrounds in which she found them,<sup>79</sup> her representations are not truly 'scientific' because her birds, while having great character and being colourful, exotic and

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<sup>75</sup> Georgiana Molloy to Elizabeth Besly, 7 November 1832 in Hasluck, 1966, pp. 98-9.

<sup>76</sup> From very early times women adopted Australian native birds and animals as pets. See Eliza Kent, 23 September 1803, 'The Buffalo Journal', Kent Papers, MS A3968 vol 4, ML, quoted in Heney, 1985, pp. 26-7. Later women naturalists such Louisa Meredith and Louisa Atkinson - the latter of whom was a taxidermist - kept and observed a large variety of native animals and birds.

<sup>77</sup> Clarke, 1986. Mary Mowle's art took the form of embroidery. The question of why some women died in childbirth in the nineteenth century while others - who seemingly had greater cause - did not do so is a fascinating one. Very conscientious or 'good' women such as Mary Mowle, Georgiana Molloy and Elizabeth Gould - whose deaths were attributed to 'prostration' as much as to infection - often suffered bouts of immobilising depression. It is probable that post-natal depression predisposed susceptible nineteenth century women to puerperal infections by prolonging the inactivity surrounding childbirth.

<sup>78</sup> Graham Pizzey, (ed.) *A Separate Creation: Discovery of Wild Australia by Explorers and Naturalists*, Currey C'Neil Ross, Australia, 1985, p. 76.



mobile, lack the fine detail and characteristic differences in shape which enable scientists to distinguish between them.<sup>80</sup>

### Entomological art.

In the seventeenth century Maria Sibylla Merian (1647-1717), became famous for the 'dazzling realism and microscopic clarity' of her paintings of insects, moths and butterflies and the plants, flowers and fruits on which they fed. She was particularly interested in the life cycles and metamorphoses of insects and became famous for collecting, raising, studying and painting insects 'from life'.<sup>81</sup> Influenced by Maria Merian and taught by their father, Helena and Harriet Scott became natural history artists who began by illustrating their father's publications and went on to earn an income by illustrating the books of other male natural historians. Harriet and Helena found themselves to be in a socially precarious position because their mother - the daughter of an ex-convict - had already had two daughters (by different men) outside of marriage before she cohabited with Alexander Scott. The girls' parents did not marry until 1846 by which time Harriet was 16 and Helena 14. It may have been for this reason that the Scott's marriage coincided with a move from Sydney to secluded Ash Island - an island rich in natural flora and fauna which was situated at the mouth of the Hunter River. Scott's first book, *Australian Lepidoptera and their Transformations* (1864), carried his attribution: 'Drawn From Life by Harriet and Helena Scott with Descriptions General and Systematic by A.W.Scott M.A.': an unusually generous act of recognition for which his daughters were suitably grateful.<sup>82</sup>

The girls' watercolour art (plate 16) benefited from the Indian Mughal tradition of flower painting which had been passed on to them by their father and uncles who had grown up in India. Though scientifically exact, it was also balanced in design, bright, glowing and

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<sup>79</sup> Rowan's bird paintings are both like and subtly unlike those of her contemporary William Hart who illustrated John Gould's *Birds of New Guinea*, (1875-88) and Richard Bowdler Sharpe's *Monograph of the Paradiseidae*, (1891-8).

<sup>80</sup> Hewson, 1982, pp. 17-18. As this was because Rowan had more than accurate scientific identification in mind when she painted birds I will discuss this in Chapter 6.

<sup>81</sup> Eleanor Tufts, *Our Hidden Heritage: Five Centuries of Women Artists*, Paddington Press, New York, 1974, p. 92. Towards the end of her life Merian's artistic ability served as a tool for her scholarly research.

<sup>82</sup> Marian Ord, *Historical Drawings of Moths and Butterflies*, Harriet and Helena Scott: Ash Island Series, vol. 1, Craftsman House, NSW, 1988, p. 22. Harriet Scott to Edward Pearson Ramsay, 1862, Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers 1860-1912, 563, ML. 'Oh you cannot think how grateful I am that my dear father allows me to place my name on the drawings! It makes me feel twice as much pleasure when I draw them!'



From Nature by Harriet Scott.

Chelepteryx Collesi.

Allen & Wigley, Printers, Sydney.

En Stone by S.T. Gill.

PLATE 16. *Chelepteryx Collesi*, Harriet Scott, Hand Coloured lithograph in *Australian Lepidoptera* 1898. Held at the Mitchell Library.

decorative.<sup>83</sup> Harriet and Helena, emboldened by the broad range of their scientific knowledge and their independent activities in finding plants, animals and insects in the luxuriant bush around their home, and rearing, preserving and painting them, became, as had Maria Merian two centuries previously, strong minded women with a love of life and a 'passion for discovery'.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless when aged twenty five Harriet, who when younger had longed to have a university education like her father, told a friend she had:

[A] great desire to distinguish myself in some way or other and if I were only a man I might do it, but as I am a woman I can't try, for I hold it wrong for women to hunt after notoriety .. clearly I ought to have been Harry Scott instead of Hattie Scott.<sup>85</sup>

Publishing books on Australian lepidoptera and entertaining visiting scientists were activities which Alexander Scott clearly thought befitted a man of science such as himself. However such a lifestyle needed a private income like that enjoyed by Scott's friend William Sharpe Macleay: in 1866 Scott was forced to declare himself bankrupt. When both Alexander's wife and Helena's husband of two years died, Alexander, Harriet and Helena moved to Sydney where for the rest of their lives they supported themselves with great difficulty.<sup>86</sup> Under such conditions Helena and Harriet painted and lithographed anything - snakes, shells, plants, insects, even bird's eggs. Harriet found the eggs of birds particularly trying to paint because it was difficult to represent them in a way which would allow them to be easily distinguished.<sup>87</sup> As president of the Entomological society of New South Wales Alexander Scott was in the perfect position to obtain commissions for his daughters - including some from William Sharpe Macleay, Fanny Macleay's brother who arrived in New South Wales three years after his sister's death. For some years, as well doing work for various overseas scientists, the sisters executed illustrations for almost all the scientific literature produced in Sydney. Despite this the only honour given to the sisters - a large one, which, no doubt, was engineered by their father - was honorary membership of the Entomological Society of New South Wales.

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<sup>83</sup> Kerr, 1995, pp. 166-7. Their art combined Indian techniques with a tradition in European natural history art which documented metamorphoses, and included representations of the plants on which the insects lived and separate drawings of body parts.

<sup>84</sup> Ord, 1988, p. 16. Harriet Scott to Edward Pearson Ramsay, 17 August 1865, Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers 1860-1912, 563, ML.

<sup>85</sup> Harriet Scott to Edward Ramsay, 19 November 1865, 563, ML.

<sup>86</sup> A year before her father died ( that is, 1882) the 52 year old Harriet married a widower with four children. As hers was said to be an unhappy marriage she may have married out of financial necessity.

<sup>87</sup> Harriet Scott to Edward Ramsay, 9 November 1865, 563, ML, Harriet told the friend who had commissioned her to paint them: 'I know perfectly well I shall never please you! I tremble whenever I think of the awful responsibility I am putting on every paint brush and if you see an *extra number of dots* you must imagine my busy [ lame?] fingers are all in a tremble at the thoughts of your ire'.

When compared with the work of Maria Merian - who included in her paintings such scenes as huge hunting spiders sucking the blood of humming birds - what is very different about the representations produced by the Scott sisters is the absence of anything sinister in nature. Helena and Harriet gave such vibrancy, colour and exoticism to their 'scientific' illustrations representing a seemingly benign world of insects that they were later able to find an outlet for their illustrations as greeting cards.<sup>88</sup> This was an outlet for natural history art - which has had a resurgence in the present era - which demonstrates an ongoing conjunction between the so-called 'love' of nature, aesthetically pleasing natural history art, the imparting of 'scientific' information and commercialism.

### **Unacceptable activities for women in science.**

#### 1) Patronage.

In Tasmania a scientific group formed around Governor Franklin and his wife. The Franklins established the first society for the advancement of science in the colonies in 1837 - the Tasmanian Society of Natural History with its associated *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science*. In 1840 the Franklins were also behind the establishment in Hobart of the Rossbank Magnetic Observatory to furnish climatic and meteorological data and link Australia's magnetic records with those of stations overseas.<sup>89</sup> While as a seaman and explorer John Franklin was undoubtedly better versed in scientific study than his wife, she enthusiastically and unequivocally supported him in his scientific enterprises. When the Colonial Office refused to advance funds for a natural history museum in Tasmania Jane Franklin personally paid for the building in 1839 of 'Acantha' a classical building on a 400 acre grant near Hobart which she hoped would serve Tasmania as a natural history museum. However, partly due to the absence of trained personnel in the colonies in the early years of settlement and partly due to the fact that the British government reserved funding for explorative activities, field research in the colonies was generally neither well planned nor systematically directed, and in the event Tasmania was as slow as the other Australian colonies to capitalise on an 'intelligentsia which respected intellectual achievement'.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Kerr, 1992, p. 706. These are still reproduced for sale by the Mitchell Library.

<sup>89</sup> Moyal, 1986, p. 117. Jane Franklin to her sister Mrs Simpkinson, 8 December 1840, in Mackaness, 1977, pp. 106-7.

<sup>90</sup> Glen MacLaren, *Beyond Leichhardt: Bushcraft and the Exploration of Australia*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Western Australia 1996, pp. 55, 98.

In fact Jane Franklin, a lady who attempted to act publicly as a patroness of science, met with such extreme opposition in Tasmania that until quite recently male historians believed the calumnies which were perpetuated about her during the years she and her husband resided in Hobart. Manning Clark, who described Jane Franklin as 'a woman through whom the gale of life blew so high that she was quite unfit to preside as first lady in a convict society which promoted the backsliding, slander, and character assassination with which one of her temperament could not cope',<sup>91</sup> constructed Sir John Franklin as a 'holy fool', a suggestible 'altar-and-throne Tory', and his wife as a neurotic, ambitious woman who lived vicariously through husband to such an extent that he eventually gave his life to satisfy her 'thirst for honour and glory'.<sup>92</sup>

When he composed his history Clark was aware that Jane and John Franklin were made the butt of a vitriolic media smear campaign in Van Diemen's Land which had been instigated by a political faction led by Montagu who represented the police, civil service and privileged landowners in Vandemonian society. This faction, which constituted the elite of Vandemonian society, feared Governor Franklin would fail to prevent the British government from terminating the assignment system for convicts. They were aware that without an assignment system Van Diemen's Land - in which three quarters of the population were convicts or had a convict background - would continue to be flooded with 'undesirable' citizens while they would be deprived of the free labour which ensured their wealth and social standing. In constructing the Franklins as he did Clark echoed the denigratory accounts of what he himself called 'the particularly vicious press' of contemporary Van Diemen's Land.<sup>93</sup> Despite evidence to the contrary Clark and some historians who have followed in his path believed it was Jane Franklin's 'restless energy' which led her to take an interest in science and exploring- thereby encouraging her husband to neglect his administrative duties as Governor - and suggested that it was her interference in government (the contemporary press called John Franklin government a 'petticoat government') which led to his dismissal from office.<sup>94</sup> On the other hand a more sympathetic biographer regarded Jane Franklin as an important contributor to Tasmania's intellectual life and concluded there is

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<sup>91</sup> C.M.H. Clark, *A History of Australia*, vol. III: 'The Beginning of Australian Civilisation 1824-1851', Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1973, p. 201.

<sup>92</sup> Clark, 1973, p. 202. Clark made this claim because Franklin later died while trying to find the NW passage. Stafford, 1984, pp. 386, 388. Clark failed to take into account John Franklin's self-conception as a heroic discover of the 'new' - a contemporary conception of 'single-handed accomplishment' and a 'psychology of continuous suffering' which prevented famous explorers from 'sink[ing] into repose'.

<sup>93</sup> Clark, 1973, pp. 201-4, 207, 209. Clark wrote: 'behind the courtesy and the high-minded utterances of Sir John there was a little child who was tied to his wife's apron strings'.

insufficient evidence to support claims that Jane Franklin interfered in the business of government.<sup>95</sup>

As has happened many times in Australian history, Jane Franklin's interest in the so-called 'masculine' fields of science and exploration enabled self-interested male opponents to label her as an 'aberrant' female and thereby make her a suitable scapegoat in a political struggle for power and property which occurred between men. Van Diemen's Land was a divided, troubled and conservative society not ready for a Christian humanitarian Governor and his idealistic and emancipated wife: outrage experienced by powerful masculine elements in Tasmanian society as a threat to their material power base thus equalled outrage experienced by them at a potential threat to patriarchal domestic power. I include this criticism of current historians in order to show how difficult it has proved in Australian history to reassess contemporary historical judgements of women who during their lives - figuratively or actually - attempted to embrace science or to cross prescribed 'feminine' boundaries in order to journey into what was conceived as 'men's territory'.

Although, as was expected of her, Jane Franklin was capable of self-deprecatingly claiming that she was 'hardly even a dabbler in science',<sup>96</sup> because she read widely in scientific subjects, mixed constantly with male scientists (including her husband) and discussed matters of scientific interest with many well-informed men, her well kept excursion journals bear witness to her extensive scientific knowledge and to her wish to express herself in a 'scientific' manner. As well as building the Tasmanian natural history museum to house the growing natural history collection and library which she had assembled at government house and establishing a botanical garden on the land which surrounded it, Jane lent her support to the Tasmanian Society of Natural History, participated in its activities and toured the colony to learn about its topography and natural history.

Given the vitriolic way in which she was attacked in Tasmanian society, Jane's eccentricity - or, to be more accurate, phobia<sup>97</sup> - about snakes becomes explicable. Jane Franklin loathed snakes to such an extent that she decided she would clear Tasmania of them

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<sup>94</sup> Clark, 1973, Ch 9. Lloyd Robson, *A History of Van Diemen's Land from Earliest Times to 1855*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992 (1983), p. 336.

<sup>95</sup> Frances J. Woodward, 'Jane Franklin', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography 1788-1850*, vol. 1, 1966, pp. 411-412.

<sup>96</sup> Jane Franklin, 'Diary of a Last Excursion from Melbourne', 1843, in Fitzpatrick, 1949, p. 195.

<sup>97</sup> Calder, *Recollections of Sir John and Lady Jane Franklin*, pp. 18-19. Calder wrote of an encounter between Jane and a snake: 'never did I see loathing more strongly evinced than by her as the ghastly reptile glided in front of her.'

by paying a bounty of one shilling on each snake killed on the island. Two years later, having paid out £600 to no purpose, she accepted that her plan was impractical. Leaving aside Freudian interpretations of the origin of this phobia - which suggest that Jane's libidinous energies may have remained unsatisfied - and concentrating on her imaginative and determined personality and the fact that at the time snakes were considered to represent all that was evil within the nature of man, it is likely that Jane experienced snakes in terms of a metaphor wherein she wished to rid Tasmania of the human enemies (vipers) with which she felt she and her husband were surrounded.<sup>98</sup> During her lifetime Jane's travelling, the intellectual and scientific nature of her 'at-homes', her wish to build an educational institution, her philanthropic attempts to settle ex-convicts on small holdings, and her building of the natural history museum - the last two of which the press claimed were done in order to bring her personal financial benefit<sup>99</sup> - all attracted fierce criticism in Tasmanian society. It has been suggested that the virulence of such opposition grew out of a contemporary belief that Jane thought she could assist her husband as a 'colleague and equal rather than as "wife", as that term was narrowly understood in the colony'.<sup>100</sup> Some time after the Franklins, who had been six years in office, had left Tasmania in disgrace in August 1843, a fellow 'blue-stocking,' Louisa Meredith, expressed her sympathy for Lady Franklin in these terms:

The constant efforts of Sir John and Lady Franklin to arouse and foster a taste for science, literature, or art, were more often productive of annoyance to themselves, than of benefit to a unambitious multitude. The coarse and unmanly attacks made in some of the public papers on Lady Franklin, whose kindness and ability, even if not appreciated at their full value, ought at least to have met with gratitude and respect, were most disgraceful.<sup>101</sup>

The determinedly non-intellectual Annie Baxter on the other hand who, when living in Hobart as a young woman, attended one of Lady Franklin's intellectual 'Drawing Rooms', expressed a world of feeling and amazement in her comment 'Mon Dieu!'.<sup>102</sup> Jane Franklin's determination to be an intellectual and physical help to her husband not only in his administrative capacity as Governor - a supporting role which she claimed in itself gave her few moments of leisure - but as someone who could share his interest in science, while at the same time she attempted in the face of powerful opposition to express herself as a cultured

<sup>98</sup> Penny Russell, 'Paradise Lost: Sir John and Lady Franklin' in *For Richer for Poorer: Early Colonial Marriages*, Penny Russell (ed.), Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p. 63. Russell speculated that the scorn Jane Franklin's scheme evoked in men may have stemmed from men's fear of castration.

<sup>99</sup> Fitzpatrick, 1949, p. 196.

<sup>100</sup> Russell, 1994, p. 52.

<sup>101</sup> Meredith, 1852, vol. 1, p. 29.

woman of her time, brought her close to physical and mental collapse.<sup>103</sup> At the beginning of 1842, nearly two years before the Franklins were recalled to Britain, Jane told her sister that because of the virulence of the public attacks made upon her she was considering returning to Britain without her husband; in the event the thought of leaving her husband to face his enemies alone prevented her from doing this.<sup>104</sup>

## 2) Scientific exploration.

In the first half of the nineteenth century exploring in the colonies was seen as a heroic masculine endeavour which became associated with well known male explorers such as Sturt, Mitchell, Grey and Eyre - men who, in an attempt to master the world, officially discovered the country, officially named it, and publicly published journals to document their discoveries. For much of the nineteenth century explorers' journals served as popular reading material and as an educative resource in schools which instilled an 'accepted' historical record of European 'possession' of the continent. The genre of the explorer's journal was not dissimilar from that of travel writing - explorer's accounts, like travel writing, included not only 'factual' scientific material but a narrative of the journey which featured picturesque description of landscape and the explorer as observer / writer at the centre of the landscape.<sup>105</sup> Because of this similarity with travel writing - which had become an accepted practice for women by the middle of the century - and because of the high status given to explorers and the mystic power given to 'exploring', early in the century some women were lured into exploring and into composing explorer's journals. However because the activity of 'exploring' was a strongly contested male province women such as Jane Franklin who attempted to publicly invade such 'masculine' territory fared badly.

Jane Franklin claimed she went exploring in the Australian colonies because she admired the 'air of freedom ... the feeling of unfettered liberty' which exploring gave her.<sup>106</sup> A woman with a zest for adventure, Jane was endlessly curious about everything about her. In the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century the scientific desire to cut through appearances was closely allied to the methodology of quest - the enterprise of voyaging

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<sup>102</sup> Annie Baxter, *Journal*, 1836, quoted in Cumes, 1979, p. 212.

<sup>103</sup> Jane Franklin to Mrs Simpkinson, 4 October 1838, in Fitzpatrick, 1949, p. 38. '[N]obody can tell how much I am occupied and how many things I have to think of. All these are urgent and immediate ... the moments of leisure are few, and are generally those of exhaustion'.

<sup>104</sup> Jane Franklin to Mrs Simpkinson, 1 January 1842, in Fitzpatrick, 1949, p. 265.

<sup>105</sup> Ryan, 1996, pp. 54-66.

<sup>106</sup> W.F. Rawnsley, *The Life, Diaries and Correspondence of Lady Jane Franklin 1792-1875*, London, John Murray, 1923, p. 94.



resting on the premise that everything must be sought in its place, not within books or even within 'the compendious Picturesque garden'. It was said that 'he (sic) who wished to explore nature must tread her (sic) books with his feet'.<sup>107</sup> However at that time for a woman the urge to know and explore was only part of the story - such desires being as a rule subservient to, or dictated by, inner or outer requirements which stemmed from a woman's relationship with a man. Jane Franklin's ideals of marriage were high: in her view there was no limit to the proper devotion of a wife. Reared as her father's devoted travelling companion, once married her devotion was to her husband rather than to the concept of the family. The focus of Jane's travels and the nominal reason for making them was thus largely her husband - the famous explorer Sir John Franklin.<sup>108</sup>

Jane had a somewhat unusual upbringing for a woman of her time. Her mother died prematurely leaving Jane's father to rear his four young children. When his only son died in early childhood the wealthy John Griffin taught his three remaining daughters to 'respect courage and perseverance' in the same way as he would have done with a son. Jane, who loved to read and had access to her father's extensive library, was well educated at a private school for young ladies. She frequently accompanied her father on his travels - travelling with him to Germany, Denmark, Bohemia, Spain and Russia - and thereby grew to share her father's love of exploring strange and romantic places.<sup>109</sup> Consequently by the age of nineteen Jane not only determined that she would develop the 'discriminating powers of [her] mind by means of diligent examination and deep reflection', but succeeded in climbing Mount Snowden in Wales, an experience which she claimed gave her an 'exalted and exquisite delight'.<sup>110</sup>

As an adult Jane was known by her close associates for her reasoning powers and her analytical habits of thought. She was 37 when she became Sir John's second wife and, as she and Sir John had no children and he had only one daughter - who was twelve years old when the Franklins arrived in Van Dieman's Land - from his first marriage, little parental responsibility. Jane was hence a devoted wife who aspired to be the intellectual and emotional partner of a man of science who, in holding advanced views on the education of

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<sup>107</sup> Stafford, 1984, p. 381.

<sup>108</sup> Russell, 1994, pp. 52-57.

<sup>109</sup> Cumes, 1979, p. 241.

<sup>110</sup> Rawnsley, 1923, pp. 19, 20.

women, allowed her a great deal of independence.<sup>111</sup> Nine years after his marriage to Jane Griffin Sir John Franklin was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Van Dieman's Land and in January 1837 the couple arrived in Hobart in order for Sir John to take up his appointment.

While both John and Jane Franklin were supporters of scientific investigation and indefatigable explorers and travellers, because Sir John could not always be spared from his governmental duties Jane, who, in the same way as Fanny Macleay - her well informed and scientifically inclined counterpart in New South Wales - hated to spend her time on dress and the (to her) 'frivolous' social amusements with which it was considered her job as first lady to provide for Hobart society,<sup>112</sup> often went exploring on behalf of them both. At such times Jane took infinite trouble to write comprehensive journals describing her explorations which she sent to her husband and which he read to others and, on one occasion, attempted to have published.<sup>113</sup> In 1839, after she had been away from her duties as first lady for four months during which time Jane became the first woman to make the 500 mile journey between Port Phillip and Sydney and travelled extensively in New South Wales - the Vandemonian press accused Jane of using government funds in a quest for notoriety and in order to undertake research for a book. The trip which she and her husband took to Macquarie Harbour in 1842 was described by the press as a 'wild and senseless freak' which resulted from the Franklins' overly 'romantic disposition'.<sup>114</sup> Jane was also criticised for having an 'unwomanly interest' in the life of the Aborigines.<sup>115</sup> In this way Jane's activities served as a test case for women who wanted to venture into the bush, take an interest in scientific matter and / or publish accounts of their explorations.<sup>116</sup> One unnamed Vandemonian defended Jane in the press by saying that he had daughters himself, and:

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<sup>111</sup> Fitzpatrick, 1949, pp. 39-40. Sophia Cracroft, Jane's female companion, described her as having 'that form of wisdom which enabled her to see the two, or more, sides to a question ... and sit in judgement of herself, as if she were another being'.

<sup>112</sup> Clark, 1973, pp. 206-7. As shown earlier, Jane Franklin preferred to give 'at homes' at which cultural, social and artistic concerns were discussed. Calder, 3 October 1872, *Mercury*, in *Recollections*, p. 8. As a friend of the family Calder in his retrospective of Jane's life loyally claimed these were an 'intellectual treat ... more of a conversazione .. an evening at Government House .. [being] the most enjoyable of all parties'.

Fanny Macleay to William Macleay, 5 March 1826 in Windschuttle, 1988, p. 12. Fanny wrote clothes and 'frivolous' social gatherings were a 'monstrous bore to me who hates this folly'.

<sup>113</sup> John Franklin to Jane Franklin, 14 May 1839, in Mackaness, 1977, p. 81. John Franklin sent Jane's excursion journals to the *Hobart Courier*.

<sup>114</sup> *Launceston Advertiser*, 19 May 1842 in Fitzpatrick, 1949, p. 300.

<sup>115</sup> Fitzpatrick, 1949, p. 242.

<sup>116</sup> Cumes, 1979, p. 242.

[T]hey are welcome to follow Lady Franklin to the bush tomorrow; and we desire them even to imitate the activity of mind and frame, which give her an interest in such expeditions, and reconcile her to their privations.<sup>117</sup>

Jane clearly saw her exploratory activities not simply as pleasurable but as a way of gathering scientific, social and political information for her busy husband, and hence, in her terms, part of her official duties as Governor's wife. Unfortunately the settlers of Van Dieman's Land did not see it that way. They expected their first lady to:

[B]ehave absolutely conventionally, to pay calls and receive callers, to attend public functions and give public entertainments, to dress smartly and as far as possible preserve, in a colonial environment, the elegance and refinement of 'home'.<sup>118</sup>

A list of Jane's major explorations is impressive. It includes an ascent of Mt Wellington made in December 1837 - a two day trip which made Jane the first woman to climb the mountain and first gained her the disapproval of the press. It needs to be said that at that time an 'explorer' was not necessarily the first to discover country - for instance when he wrote of exploring Australia Felix Mitchell did not feel it incumbent upon himself to mention that, apart from the Aboriginal inhabitants, there were cattle, horses, 30,000 sheep and approximately 200 Europeans settled in the area.<sup>119</sup> In December 1838 Jane accompanied a scientific expedition which intended to re-chart the S.W. Cape which included among its members astronomers, the bird specialist John Gould and the botanist Gunn. This marine expedition originally intended to voyage to Macquarie harbour but was forced by bad weather to go no further than Research Bay. Although aged forty six at the time and not a well or strong woman, no hardship seemed to prevent Jane from seeing anything upon which she had set her heart. When on shore, if she could not be carried in her 'palanquin' chair she walked and scrambled with the best of them. James Calder who in 1842 organised a cumbrous overland expedition to Macquarie Harbour for the Franklins claimed that on that journey Jane walked and climbed thirty extremely difficult miles. He later described her as 'good humoured', 'morbidly sensitive', 'innately brave' and with a 'very troublesome habit of taking her own way in everything'.<sup>120</sup> In 1839 Jane made her journey between Port Phillip and Sydney, in 1840 she accompanied her husband on a three week journey to the east coast of Van Dieman's Land, in December of the same year she made a journey to South Australia

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<sup>117</sup> *Colonial Times*, 9 October, 1839 in Fitzpatrick, 1949, p. 243. The writer was probably Captain Maconochie who for many years was John Franklin's private secretary.

<sup>118</sup> Fitzpatrick, 1949, p. 43.

<sup>119</sup> Gibson, 1984, p. 115.

<sup>120</sup> Calder, *Recollections*, The text was originally published in the *Mercury* 3 October 1872 as 'Tribute to a Lady' and the *Tasmanian Tribune* in six parts in October 1875. pp. 8, 18, 51-4.

without her husband and the following December went without him to New Zealand. In March 1842 the couple made their last extensive journey in Australia by the overland through the bush to Macquarie Harbour on the west coast and sailing back to Hobarton.<sup>121</sup>

Jane thus made two determined efforts to see the abandoned convict settlement of Macquarie Harbour. She claimed she was 'very anxious' to see it because it was the only harbour on the Western coast of Van Dieman's Land. As the wife of a naval man when she wrote her exploratory journals Jane included in them a great deal of information about coastal formations, soundings, weather patterns and potential anchorages. She also included historical, anthropological, botanical, geological, zoological, topographical and political information; she gave precise distances and heights above sea level as well as descriptions of people, events and places. Nothing seems to have escaped her attention. Hers were indeed 'scientific' fact finding missions. As well as this however she also, as explorers generally did in their journals, wrote an interesting narrative which included passages of picturesque description of landscape. Apart from her lack of paradisiacal fantasising her description of the land she saw when she became the first woman to travel overland from Melbourne to Sydney could have come from any male explorer's journal:

[W]e drove ... on fine open grassy grounds of beautiful verdure in many places, and very scantily wooded. These grounds fell towards the S.W in low shelving banks, towards a dried lagoon whitened with salt and which is skirted on the farther side by what they call the South Yarra, the embouchure of which we had passed in our passage up to Melbourne. The scenery on the whole is somewhat novel to our eyes, long accustomed to our own mountainous country, dense woods, and bush-encumbered ground-surfaces. It is however less picturesque and much tamer.<sup>122</sup>

At times Jane recreated the pastoral ideal:

This farm has a fine view of the river, and on a position a little below the cottage, the inlet called Muddy Creek is immediately below the eye, with the windings of a small river entering it between grassy and wooded banks on which cattle were grazing.<sup>123</sup>

She also wrote passages of writing which invoked the beautiful:

We, however, continued our course in a direct line towards the head of the water before us, and which terminates in a rounded beach bordered by a hedge of flowering tea trees with a wall of lofty foliage behind it leaving a dark gap, however, in the middle where

<sup>121</sup> Mackaness, 1977, pp. 9, 10.

<sup>122</sup> Jane Franklin, MS 114 Franklin Papers, Box 2, Folder 12, NLA, in Clarke & Spender, 1992, p. 133.

<sup>123</sup> Jane Franklin, Excursion to Launceston, January 1838, Mackaness, 1977, p. 29.

a small creek enters the bay. The hills rising behind this foreground complete a picture of great beauty.<sup>124</sup>

And passages which invoked the sublime:

I was struck as we moved along with the dense gloom and blackness of the woods as they rose immediately from the shore upon an outer base of dark-hued rocks. Over these the mountains behind Research Bay presented a noble and singular outline. I thought the French writers who expatiate so much on the terrible and severe aspect of nature in these Austral regions were not so much in the wrong.<sup>125</sup>

What distinguishes Jane Franklin's accounts as explorer from those of Louisa Meredith as traveller is the lack of an intimate story teller in her narratives. In her accounts Jane is mostly a reserved and shadowy narrator - distant, informative, non-intimate. Rarely does she, as narrator, slip into second person address or intrude in any way.<sup>126</sup> When she does strike a more personal note - for example when she wrote: '[w]e saw 4 pelicans standing in a procession line and looking like caricatures of something, I know not what' - the reader rather wishes Jane *had* turned her hand to travel or nature writing.<sup>127</sup>

The biggest difference in Jane's travelling was that she travelled in an official capacity as the wife of the Governor of Tasmania. She was given governmental aid and resources, governmental respect and attention when visiting other states, had considerable influence with her husband who took her fact-finding missions seriously, and, in her role as an explorer, at times even had the unusual power for a woman of naming natural features in the landscape.<sup>128</sup> In the Australian colonies the explorer, that is the white male traveller who dared to journey through the empty unknown; through 'the lonely continent', quickly came to represent the epitome of courage. This explains why Jane Franklin in her role as female explorer was described by a fellow explorer as a 'perfect heroine'. James Calder, who charted much of the inland of Tasmania, wrote:

It has been said a woman is naturally born and subject to fears. But Lady Franklin was innately brave, a perfect heroine; danger never deterred her when in pursuit of natural productions. Her daring excursion to Macquarie harbour has no parallel, camping out at night, crossing rivers, climbing mountains, tearing through scrubs - for it was not

<sup>124</sup> Jane Franklin, *Excursion to Macquarie Harbour, December 1838*, Mackaness, 1977, p. 51.

<sup>125</sup> Jane Franklin, *Excursion to Macquarie Harbour, December 1838*, Mackaness, 1977, p. 45.

<sup>126</sup> Ryan, 1996, p. 8. Ryan used the difference in authorial position - whether or not the narrator is represented as a 'heroic explorer' - to distinguish the two genres.

<sup>127</sup> Jane Franklin, *Excursion Journal to Macquarie Harbour, December 1838*, Mackaness, 1977, p. 51.

<sup>128</sup> Calder, *Recollections*, p. 72. On her 1842 expedition Jane named the Bagota Waterfall and the Cracroft Mountains.

walking - where many strong men perished in the attempt. Never tired of adventure, she went overland from Victoria to Sydney, a distance of six hundred miles, camping at night and undergoing difficulties and dangers few men would have the courage to face.<sup>129</sup>

However it would seem that this retrospective construction by a male contemporary of Jane Franklin as a heroic explorer was largely rhetorical. In the early nineteenth century explorers sought to find somewhere high from which to view the country - a mountain or hill from which they could look down upon and over the panoramic prospect. It has been suggested that the need to obtain a God-like vantage point allowed the explorative masculine gaze to measure and bring under male control the recumbent feminine land: while standing upon a summit to view the inland emptiness male explorers seemingly felt at their most masculine and dominating.<sup>130</sup> It was in his role as a conquering explorer that James Calder described an occasion during their journey to Macquarie harbour when Sir John and Lady Franklin, having reached the summit of Fatigue Hill four thousand feet above sea level, first obtained a panoramic view of the inland. He wrote:

A most extensive and diversified landscape is suddenly presented to us from this point ... Sir John Franklin when he reached the crowning point of this massive eminence assured us that during a long life, spent in wandering and in observation of what he encountered, it had never been his fortune to see so magnificent a picture as the one then before him. ... So varied is the immense panorama that lies before [a man] ... that his feelings must indeed be obtuse if he can contemplate it without excitement....

An irresistible feeling of depression involuntarily succeeds to our admiration of the scene before us when we reflect on the fact that in all this vast wilderness there is not a single inhabitant; not the faintest trace of its occupation by man is apparent. ... the entire country could not look more void of animation, even were it like Babylon itself, "the glory of the kingdoms", the pride of Chaldea, doomed to perpetual abandonment. Such a scene of utter lifelessness and desolation is, I believe, to be found in no other country in the world, habitable in the common acceptance of the term, except Tasmania.<sup>131</sup>

It is said that the nineteenth century construction of landscape as 'panoramic' required a fixed spectacle with a wide range of vision which 'demanded the complete success of the illusion that the viewer was part of the scene'.<sup>132</sup> It was no accident that in Calder's recreation of the panorama seen from Fatigue Hill it was as if Lady Franklin was absent, was not standing beside him and John Franklin; the companionate male explorers who together self-consciously looked out at the view. At that God-like point in Calder's journey Jane

<sup>129</sup> Calder, *Recollections*, pp. 9, 10.

<sup>130</sup> Ryan, 1996, pp. 88-9.

<sup>131</sup> Calder, *Recollections*, pp. 59-63.

<sup>132</sup> Ryan, 1996, p. 94.

Franklin ceased to embody woman as 'heroic' explorer and disappeared completely from the scene to subtly fuse with the abandoned 'whore' of Babylon whom Calder envisioned stretched out, unclaimed and 'desolate', before him. Faced with 'the lonely continent' Calder had reclaimed for men the sole right to explore, to dominate, to own the lifeless land as if it were a woman - and own women as if they were an empty land.

The problem with the heroic European vision of explorative conquest was that it could easily come unstuck. For instance John Franklin's ill-fated final expedition to find the N.W. passage is said to have caused 'profound shock to [British] national confidence' after it was revealed that following the death of John Franklin some of his marooned seamen resorted to cannibalism in the period before they froze and starved to death.<sup>133</sup> Here then, in the strongly gendered myth of imperialist conquest, is the beginning of the colonial outback myth 'with its curious reverence and irreverence for land, and its adulation of past men [explorers] .. who played no part in creating the mythically rich landscape', which McGrath believes symbolises for present day Australians 'our history, our soul, our acquisition'.<sup>134</sup>

### 3) Publishing

Jane Franklin found in the 1830s and 1840s that Tasmanian society was not ready to have a woman publish articles which contained specific scientific content. Thirty years later the colonially born Louisa Atkinson, who as the daughter of Charlotte Barton was said to be 'open, confident and forthright' in expressing her opinions in public and in her interactions with male scientists,<sup>135</sup> found that very little had changed. A long time friend of Baron von Mueller and a long time contributor of native plant specimens and plant locations to him at the Victorian Botanical gardens / herbarium of which he was the director,<sup>136</sup> sometime before 1870 Louisa sent Mueller her life's work - which she had written and illustrated over a number of years - in order for him to arrange for its publication. It appears Mueller had undertaken to have Louisa's *Natural History* of Australian birds and animals published in Germany. As with so much other women's work, once delivered into the hands of a male 'scientist' Louisa's manuscript and artwork mysteriously became 'lost'.<sup>137</sup> All that is known

<sup>133</sup> Daniels, 1993, p. 6. There were no survivors of the expedition which became marooned in ice.

<sup>134</sup> McGrath, 1991, p. 122.

<sup>135</sup> Lawson, 1995, p. 29.

<sup>136</sup> Lionel Gilbert, Introduction, Atkinson, 1978, p.7, Moyal, 1986, pp. 149-50. By March 1861 Louisa had sent 'three hundred specimens of plants to Mueller, many of which were new species. George Bentham acknowledged her specimens 120 times in *Flora Australiensis*.

<sup>137</sup> Ann Moyal, 'Women Botanists of the Nineteenth Century', in D. J. & S. G. M. Carr, 1981, p. 345. Louisa Atkinson to Mrs Woolls, 12 February 1872, Correspondence of Louisa Calvert, A 4496-A4501,

of its fate is that in 1870 Mueller told Louisa that the publishing of it was being temporarily delayed by the Franco-Prussian War: questions remain unanswered as to what happened to Louisa's portfolio after her death in April 1872. Louisa Atkinson's biographer posits that the manuscript may have been returned to Louisa and lost in a family fire: I would not be so sure. Baron von Mueller, so lauded by the many women collectors from whom he received plant specimens and after whom he occasionally named flowers, has been described by one of his biographers as a self-centred empire builder, 'an eternal boy gathering plants in a wide landscape' who believed 'success was virtue, failure was vice'.<sup>138</sup> Clearly this was not the whole story of the man who saw Australia's forests as 'a sacred patrimony ... heritage given to us by nature, not for spoil or to devastate, but to be wisely used, reverently honoured, and carefully maintained'.<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless it is clear that, as a typical man of his time, Mueller exhibited strongly patriarchal attitudes towards women. He frequently acted as if he believed that he had the right to appropriate women's efforts without acknowledgment - when she met and interacted with Mueller the British flower painter Marianne North was shocked at his acquisitiveness.<sup>140</sup> The impoverished Helena Forde (nee Scott) appears to have had trouble extracting (much needed) money from Mueller when she sold him her extensive botanical collection, and, despite all the work the floral artist Ellis Rowan did for Mueller over the years the illustrated book on Australian flora which for many years he promised would be published in his and her joint names never eventuated.<sup>141</sup>

Mueller was ousted from authorship of the prestigious *Flora Australiensis* - supposedly on the grounds that he was not sufficiently rigorous. The real reason probably had something to do with the fact that as a German Mueller, who was considered by some British botanists to be an anti-evolutionist, had a different scientific background and affiliation.<sup>142</sup> After a long tussle for proprietorship between Mueller and Kew Gardens of information relating to Australian botany, in the years between 1863-78 the *Flora Australiensis* was prepared at Kew Herbarium - from the Kew collections and from shipments sent by Mueller from Australia - by the well-known British botanist George Bentham. As a consequence Mueller,

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ML. 'Did I tell you that my Natural History has been removed from Keil to Strasbourg and placed in the Royal Museum there for publication?'

<sup>138</sup> Edward Kynaston, *A Man on Edge: A Life of Baron Frederick von Mueller*, Allen Lane & Penguin, Ringwood, Australia, 1981, pp. 2, 373-4, 375.

<sup>139</sup> Mueller, 1871, quoted by Powell, 1989, p. 70.

<sup>140</sup> North, 1980, (1893) p. 177. When North showed Mueller some seeds of rare Australian plants which she had collected he pocketed them in the face of her obvious indignation.

<sup>141</sup> Lawson, 1995, p. 26, Clarke, 1990, pp. 195-201. Meredith, 1891, p. 5. Louisa, whose name he had given to a flower, called him her 'esteemed friend of many years'. Marion Ord in Kerr, 1992, p. 707.

Clemente, 1991, p. 68.

<sup>142</sup> Moyal in Carr, 1981, p. 350.



an ambitious man demoted to the position of collaborator, felt slighted and hurt. Mueller's career as a German 'empire builder'<sup>143</sup> in a British country was clearly a chequered one and it is highly possible that he would have had unacknowledged resentment against, and resistance to, furthering the career of a strong minded woman such as Louisa Atkinson who, even had she lived, would have been able to do little to protect herself from exploitation at the hands of any man in Mueller's position.<sup>144</sup> It seems likely that despite the example set her by her strong minded mother, that had she lived Louisa Calvert, as she was by that time, would have done little to challenge Mueller's treatment of her, and this raises the paradox of the seeming independence and strange diffidence of the nineteenth century Australian-born women in regard to matters associated with science and scientists.

Mary Ellen Murray Prior was clearly another well educated and determined woman who was influenced by the feminist climate of the later part of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless during the many years during which she supplied the Sydney Museum with Aboriginal artefacts she was not in the least self-assertive. Eventually, having met with a final rebuff when she suggested to the director of the Sydney museum that what she called her 'notes' - that is, meticulously compiled and presented ethnographic research - be published, she turned her attention to more traditionally 'feminine' occupations.<sup>145</sup> Such attitudes in men and women changed slowly. Daisy Bates began her ethnographic research in the first decade of the twentieth century after having managed to find a male sponsor in the West Australian Public service who obtained for her a (meagre) payment for putting together ethnographic material relating to West Australian Aborigines.<sup>146</sup> After she had spent many years compiling first hand ethnographic and linguistic material Bates sent her material to Radcliffe Brown in order to have it prepared for publication. She later claimed her research was plagiarised and used by Brown to build his reputation as Australia's first professional anthropologist. The case is complex in that because what belonged to women belonged (of right) to men, and because women were diffident and presented material which male dominated disciplines found unacceptable in terms of content, language and presentation, male scientists who set out to rework women's material for publication found the task

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<sup>143</sup> Ambrus, 1992, p. 25. Mueller maintained a correspondence of over 3000 letters a year. Because he did not receive government funding for the collection of botanical specimens he obtained the help of many unpaid women collectors - Louisa Meredith, Fanny Anne Charlsley, Louisa Atkinson - whose specimens appeared in his *Fragmenta* - Ellis Rowan, the Scott sisters and Euphemia Henderson being some of these.

<sup>144</sup> Moyal in Carr, 1981, pp. 140-52. Clarke, 1990, pp. 206-7.

<sup>145</sup> Mc Bryde, 1993, pp. 37-9.

<sup>146</sup> Colonial Office File 1023, BL. Daisy Bates, who was employed on a 'temporary' basis by the West Australian Government for nearly eight years, was first employed by the Registrar General's Department on the 3 May 1904.

extremely time-consuming and difficult. Having given up on editing some woman's data, male scientists consciously or unconsciously appropriated large bits of it into their own thinking and / or research.<sup>147</sup>

### **Sibling rivalry ?**

This raises the question of sibling rivalry. Were male scientists and intellectuals threatened by women wanting to become their equals ? As a well-read young woman who delighted in visiting the British Museum and talking with natural historians,<sup>148</sup> Fanny Macleay told her brother - who was later to achieve considerable fame as a scholar and naturalist - that if she had the opportunities he had she would remain single and free of family responsibilities, travel the world, study natural history and become famous. At one time, irritated with the differences in their respective lives she expostulated: 'it made me almost mad to think what advantages men have over poor us, for they do what & go where they please; however, what can't be cured they say must be indured (sic)'.<sup>149</sup>

The middle class habit of educating daughters within the home and sending sons out into the world to be educated exacerbated envious longings on both sides. A sister could wish that she could share in the intellectual stimulation, the adventures and the excitement which she believed to be the lot of her privileged brother, while a brother could look back upon the, by contrast with his present life, seemingly idyllic period of his protected childhood and imagine that that was the enviable inheritance of his indulged sister. In the brother / sister relationship of Fanny and William Sharp Macleay - where eroticism was repressed more strongly than it was between Annie Baxter and her brother - idealisation of, and rivalry with a sibling of the opposite gender appears to have worked to inhibit, rather than encourage, the development of sexual relationships.<sup>150</sup>

Like his father William Macleay was a well salaried and highly esteemed civil servant who became internationally recognised as a natural scientist. On the other hand in the years

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<sup>147</sup> Hodge, 1992, Ch. 5. Daisy Bates' research was not published until over thirty years after her death when the anthropologist Isobel White spent considerable time and trouble making it acceptable for publication as: Daisy Bates, *The Native Tribes of Western Australia*, Isobel White (ed.), National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1985.

<sup>148</sup> Fanny to William, 20 February 1817, 'For my part I would spend my whole life [at the British Museum]', Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 29.

<sup>149</sup> Windschuttle, 1988. Fanny to William Macleay, July 1815, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 12, 13.

<sup>150</sup> William Sharpe Macleay never married while Fanny, who may have married because of her father's impending bankruptcy, married at the age of 43 and died six weeks later.

between finishing her education and her marriage some weeks before her death Fanny found herself to be at either her family's or society's disposal; something which she resented bitterly.<sup>151</sup> William's letters to Fanny have been lost - presumably destroyed by William when he took over the family home a few years after his sister's death - but there are enough references in Fanny's letters which relate to what William wrote to her to make it possible to reconstruct this interesting brother / sister relationship with some verisimilitude.

William was only sixteen months older than Fanny and the two bonded strongly as the two eldest in a family of seventeen children (four of whom died in infancy or early childhood). They were first separated in 1810 when William attended Cambridge and Fanny stayed at home with her parents in London and Surrey and took upon herself the role of their eldest, most indispensable daughter. Although later in life Fanny described herself as 'grave and sedate', (William described himself as 'taciturn'), the young Fanny's letters to William have a rebellious bantering tone - which she desired her brother to interpret as wit - while, judging from Fanny's responses, it seems that even when young William took his role as his sister's guide and instructor overly seriously. In later years William's chastisement of Fanny for 'inconsequentiality' and 'failed wit' clearly became heavier and her resilience to his criticism much less buoyant.

In one early instance it seems that William had accused his twenty one year old sister of vanity. She returned what she hoped was a witty reply by beginning with the salutation 'My very condescending Brother' and continued:

The blindness of some folk to their own failings, those even who pretend to have stronger minds than the generality of people, astonishes me beyond the power of expression! And that they should be impertinent enough to lecture others on the very subject they themselves transgress in, is above all surprising! Is it really possible, that, while cautioning your humble servant, you did not perceive yourself to be bursting, absolutely bursting with vanity? Oh my poor William. How greatly I do fear for your *Superior Mind* now, seeing that you have split on the Rock, that very Rock your very great kindness had enabled me, so well, to escape. I am very much grieved, I assure you, to perceive you are too far gone for me even to attempt to recover you.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Fanny Macleay to William Macleay, 21 April 1826, Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 67. 'Mrs Darling has instituted a School of Industry for Young Girls and sorely against my good will has appointed me Treasurer & Secretary. I am very angry - Papa well pleased'. 8 October 1826. "My time is very fully occupied with our School already I begin to sicken at the thoughts of it". Fanny also complained about this 28 April 1829, 27 April 1831. March 3 1828 Fanny expressed her irritation at helping her father with his insects and thus never having any time in which to draw or read.

<sup>152</sup> Fanny Macleay to William Macleay, July 17 1829, February 1830, 30 January 1814, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 112, 116, 9.

As William no doubt recognised, under the 'wit' lay sarcasm, a spirit which refused to accept that her brother had the God-given right to chastise her, and an intellect which - contrary to prevailing notions of gender stereotyping and in spite of William's status as university don - perversely continued to pride itself on being the equal of his. Nevertheless, despite her rebellious repartee, Fanny claimed she worshipped her brother. It was during this period that Fanny developed a relationship with the botanist Robert Brown - a man whom she afterwards felt that if her mother had not 'shaken her resolve' - she would have married.<sup>153</sup> At the time however, instead of cementing her relationship with Brown Fanny redoubled her expressions of affection toward her brother and told him that she never intended to marry in case she became 'a *wicked wife* , which I fear might be the case'. She wrote to William that her only pleasure was dreaming of him 'which I never fail of doing every night, so that you may believe, you engross no small portion of my waking thoughts'. This fixation on her brother as a source and focus of love had its cost. Robert Brown continued to visit the family home and thus remained a palpable presence in Fanny's life while she claimed she could be of no 'use' to the distant and critical William whose letters she found emotionally unsustaining. After yet again chastising her brother for his tardiness in writing to her she concluded 'my dearest child .. How much I wished that you had never promised me, that I should have the honour of keeping house for you when (if ever) you had one. I must I fear offer my services else where'.<sup>154</sup>

However she did not do so, the years went by and in 1825 the thirty two year old Fanny embarked with her parents and five of her sisters for New South Wales where her father was to take up the position of Colonial Secretary. At the same time William, deaf to Fanny's pleas that he accompany his family to New South Wales, sailed for Havana, Cuba, to take up the position of Commissioner of Arbitration (he was later made a commissioner judge) of a Court set up to abolish the slave trade. William remained in Havana until Fanny's death in 1836 after which he rejoined his family in Sydney. Parting from her 'adored' brother left Fanny as she put it: 'cast down to the earth [where] no happiness is ever again to visit my soul ... my thoughts dwelling on you whom I love more than I can express'. Life in the raw

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<sup>153</sup> Eliza Macleay to William Macleay, 31 July 1837, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 180-1. Brown never married. According to Fanny's mother, after her daughter's death Brown professed his undying love for her. Given that Fanny sent her paintings ambiguously to Robert Brown / William Macleay it is probable that Fanny saw the two as rivals for her affections.

<sup>154</sup> Fanny to William Macleay, July 1815, September 19 1815, 20 August 1816, 9 December 1816, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 13, 16, 20, 22.

new colony made the absence of her scholarly and cultured brother even harder for Fanny to bear. Once there she told him: '[w]hen I lost you, I lost everything - I feel that without you I am nothing ie. nothing good'. Worse was to come. Possibly one of the factors which encouraged the Macleays to emigrate was the hope of finding suitable husbands for their six adult daughters. Two years after she arrived in New South Wales Sir John Jamieson - a gentleman of appropriate status and income - proposed to the thirty four year old Fanny and she found herself importuned by her family to accept his proposal. Fanny again assured William she would on no account marry because her name (which of course was also William's) 'is too pretty to be given up'; soon after adding that the more she saw of the world the more she felt her brother's 'superiority to the rest of mankind'.<sup>155</sup>

Part of the reason Fanny missed William so keenly in the new world was because he vicariously represented the intellectuality and cultivated outlook and interests in life which she had been twice denied - initially by her gender and then by the act of emigration. It seems to have been resentment at the thought of living a vicarious life through a husband as much as avoidance of a life like her mother's dominated by reproduction which held Fanny back from marrying Robert Brown. This was probably what she meant when she wrote that she would make a *wicked wife* - that is one who felt jealous and competitive towards, and hence combative with, a husband who, like her brother, had unquestioned right of access to interests which she could only share in a subsidiary capacity.

Given that Fanny was appalled by the paucity of men and women with cultivated interests in the colonies, it is not surprising to find that she rhapsodised in her letters to William about the men of science she was lucky enough to meet. This included singing the praises of Mr Rumker, the German scientist who accompanied Governor Brisbane to the colonies to set up and run the Governor's observatory. She told William that Rumker, who had a 'fine taste for Drawing and Music', had consented to teach her German and Astronomy. Aware that William would assume that the pair were attracted to one other she added 'you are mistaken, for he never flattered me at all he never attempted it' - thereby no doubt confirming her brother's sense that this was a man whom his sister felt she could grow to 'admire and love'.<sup>156</sup> At the same time William wrote to his sister to sing the praises of a lady whom he had met in Havana. Because it took at least eight months for mail to pass between Cuba and New South Wales sometimes twelve months or more would elapse before responses to

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<sup>155</sup> Fanny to William, 6 September 1825, 5 March 1826, 21 April 1826, 11 September 1826, 4, 16 December 1826, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 41, 51, 54, 63, 71, 73.

<sup>156</sup> Fanny to William, undated slip with letter 11 September 1826, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 66, 67.

letters were received. This was to be the case on this occasion - the letters suggesting possible involvement with someone of the opposite sex - and the responses those letters evoked between brother and sister - took a long time to surface.

When Fanny received her brother's letter telling her of his attraction for another woman she was unable to conceal that she was cast into despair - it was, she wrote, nineteen months since they had last met and now her heart was sickened at the thought that 'you and I will never meet again in this world'. In the longest letter she ever wrote to William Fanny attempted to be philosophical about her probable loss and, in failing dismally in her purpose, alternately fretted about it and turned her rage at that loss upon herself in self-denigration.

My heart sickens ... you will form new ties which will prevent you ever thinking of us ... 'tis very wrong of me to wish it otherwise ... I can't help being selfish now & then - but I hate myself for the feeling ... I love you more than any human being ... You know not how much I dislike myself. I wish I were any thing but what I am ... How I wish I were clever in any way! That I resembled your fascinating friend! It will not do, a beast I am & a beast I shall remain now I fear. ... Now I wish & wish till my heart is sick that you were living here on a good fat grant of Land & that I were your *Dairy Maid* - I should make you an excellent servt, you may be sure. ... [If] I hear you are no longer a bachelor ... we shall then cease all communication and I must learn to bear all that! Will my *proudheart* submit? It must or break ... you are my only *friend*.<sup>157</sup>

Luckily perhaps for her peace of mind Fanny had only two months to wait before she received William's next letter in which he told her that his hopes had come to nothing. When she received William's letter in May, though suitably sympathetic, ('I need not tell you how deeply I regret your disappointment') Fanny could not conceal her joy that her brother remained unattached using his disappointment as the excuse to yet again encourage William to join her and his family in Sydney. She wrote:

How much I wish you would quit the Havana & come here ... Oh let me entreat you to come ... [you] would soon realise a large fortune here ... The country most beautiful - The Plants - Insects & Birds so lovely & interesting ... come to us to this finest of all climates - ... Will you come?<sup>158</sup>

Even as she was writing however Fanny recognised that it was unlikely that William would come - '[S]omething seems to convince me you never will - I shall never see you then in this world'.<sup>159</sup>

<sup>157</sup> Fanny to William, 25 March 1827, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 75-79.

<sup>158</sup> Fanny to William, 28 May 1827, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 81, 82.

It was not until April 1828 that Fanny received from William the letter which he wrote in September 1827 in response hers telling him of Rumker. William's was a letter written in what Fanny called his 'savage temper' in which he apparently proclaimed that he had no intention of ever visiting her in New South Wales, denigrated men of science whom she had mentioned in her earlier letters, and, if her quotation from his letter can be relied upon, instructing her to '[c]ollect Insects, time spent in this way is a great deal better than Star-gazing for believe me you will never set the Thames on fire'. It would appear that William Sharp Macleay was jealous - not simply of Fanny's possible involvement with some other 'man of science' - but of his sister's relationship with his father and of his father's reputation as a natural scientist. He was seemingly especially envious of the access to new and rare entomological specimens which living in the new world gave his father - specimens about which Alexander Macleay no doubt waxed lyrical in his letters to his son. It was Fanny's central position in the Macleay family from which William continued to exclude himself - and most especially her position as assistant to his father in his role as a world renowned natural historian with access to fascinating new species in the antipodes - which greatly propounded William's fraternal possessiveness.

From this time Fanny and William engaged in ongoing arguments which centred around Fanny's refusal to collect entomological specimens for her brother. Fanny had already expressed resentment at the time-consuming work of mounting insects which she performed for her father but, being financially dependent on him, which she felt she had no right to refuse. This may have contributed to the resistance Fanny exhibited when it came to the tedious job of collecting insects for William. If, on the other hand, William was hinting that Fanny should acquire some of her Father's entomological specimens to send to him in Cuba, he should have known that she could not and would not do this. In this instance it appears that Fanny, in standing in for her mother, inadvertently became the meat in the sandwich in an on-going (oedipal) struggle over scientific property which was waged between father and son. Given the unpleasantness, it is hardly surprising to find that when in 1831 Fanny yet again explained to William that she could not send him any entomological specimens, she complained: 'I really hate the word Insect now'.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Fanny to William, 23 May 1827, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 81, 82. In this she was right. William joined his family in New South Wales two and a half years after Fanny's death. After taking over the Macleay's home and gardens at Elizabeth Bay William spent the remaining twenty six years of his life working for science.

<sup>160</sup> Fanny to William, 27 April 1831; Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 133.

Fanny's unenviable position between father and son was exacerbated by her father's increasingly precarious financial position and his entrenched habit of borrowing money from his eldest son. On at least one occasion Fanny brought William's fury down upon her head by drawing on him - without first asking his permission - for money to help pay her father's debts and, on another, for not preventing letters William had written to her from being read by her father. The degree of rivalry and animosity which came to exist between William and his father can be inferred from William's later action of depriving his parents of their beloved home and garden when he appropriated Elizabeth Bay as payment for long term-debts owed him by his bankrupt father.<sup>161</sup>

To return to William's aggressive letter. Upon its arrival Fanny, who had a difficult enough life without her absent brother making it any harder, was roused by his jibes to retaliate:

You will not come to see us, you say - I never expected that you would condescend to visit Botany Bay and therefore am not so much disappointed at your resolve as otherwise I might have been - Besides we should quarrel for you would be impudent and I hate impertinent Persons. ...As to your kind assurance that I am in no danger of setting the Thames on fire, believe me, it was quite needless for though, doubtless, I am very vain yet, I am not such an Idiot as to wish, much less expect such renown can ever be mine - No - my dearest Brother - such wondrous works I leave entirely for your sapience to achieve. You may perhaps have a few hopes that way, and therefore are naturally anxious to prevent any competition - In my turn let me give you some comfort I *never* intend to try with you. You may for me, reap all the honour, all the advantage of so glorious a deed & I will not even envy you! I thank you for turning my *studies* and myself into ridicule - If I foolishly mentioned my desire of acquiring a little information there was no great harm in that wish - at least, *you* could not possibly suffer at a distance of so *many* thousand Miles - and granted, that I might stand a chance of never being a bit the wiser - City Gull [Macleay family language for silly girl] - *You* should be glad I could be amused even altho' in a way not likely to profit thee my Affectionate Brother. I cannot express how much I *feel* your *kindness* *forme*.

Insects I have no opportunity of collecting, were I so disposed, which I do not admit. You might just as well tell me to fly as procure Insects in Sydney - a stray Spider or Mosquitoe, to be sure, I may promise these. I do not love you half as well as I did and you, I perceive, all but hate me, therefore I need say no more but remain

Your much Obligated and insulted Servt  
Fanny Leonora.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>161</sup> Alexander and Eliza Macleay spent their last years living with one or other of their married daughters.

<sup>162</sup> Fanny to William, 28 May 1828, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 96-7.



Before sending her letter Fanny, claiming that her 'wrath had exhausted itself', capitulated by adding a postscript saying she loved William in spite of his 'unpardonable impertinence' and promising to obtain Insects for him - 'when I can'. Though normally Fanny wrote to her brother monthly it was three months before she next wrote and when she did so it was in order to mount another indignant defence of herself. She claimed William had written to her 'never attempt to be witty - it is the vice of the vulgar &c &c give me a sober matter of fact letter and let your style be suitable to yourself - *a low one*'. In reply Fanny told her brother that if he wrote to tell her he was tired of her correspondence she would never trouble him with more than 'two lines ... to give [him] an acct of [his] Parents health'. Fanny thought it would be better if he did *not* visit the colonies 'for [we] might be disappointed in you'. Her anger at William caused Fanny to reiterate the self-judgemental decision that 'I shall never marry ... with my peculiar temper I ought not'. She closed her letter with the claim that she still loved him 'very dearly'; two days later however adding a postscript which restated her inability to collect insects for him and again begging him to stop 'scolding' her.<sup>163</sup>

William's response was to write less often. By May of 1830 the thirty seven year old Fanny despairingly claimed that she was beginning to believe that she was inherently unlovable. She grieved 'if [you] do not love me, then no one can, and I am alone in the world'. As her father's financial position worsened, four of her sisters married and her parent's health declined, Fanny told William of her worries and her fear that she was a financial burden to her father. She joked uneasily that soon she would be 'left alone - a crabbed ill conditioned old maid!' Although she kept it from William, Fanny's health was deteriorating and she was beginning to feel that life had passed her by. In December 1830 Fanny's response to William's taciturnity and her father's financial worries took the form of encouraging the attentions of her father's right hand man, the Assistant Colonial Secretary Thomas Harington, by giving him three of her botanical drawings, of which gift he - unlike William who had ignored all her anxious queries as to whether or not he had received the natural history paintings she had sent - was satisfyingly appreciative.

Thomas Harington had been an admirer of Fanny's sister Susan before she married but at that time had been considered unsuitable as a husband by the Macleays because of the insecurity of his position under Governor Bourke. Thomas Harington had a similar personality to Fanny's brother William, in that, though ambitious, able and conscientious, he had a haughty, dictatorial manner which alienated him from those he met and limited his

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<sup>163</sup> Fanny to William, 29 August 1828, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 98-101.

career opportunities.<sup>164</sup> Although somewhere between 1831 and 1834 it was accepted by the Macleay family that Thomas and Fanny would eventually marry, the marriage was delayed by political and monetary considerations until June 1836 - by which time Fanny's health had deteriorated so badly that three weeks into her marriage Fanny took to her bed, and three weeks after that, died. Once she became involved with Thomas Harington Fanny no longer desired that her brother should 'know all [her] feelings'. She became sanguine about his criticisms and what she called his 'thoughtlessness' toward her, and, although she still encouraged him to 'Come - Come - Come' to New South Wales, she made it clear that she made the request on behalf of her parents.<sup>165</sup>

It would appear that rivalry between brothers and sisters over science was complexly influenced by both class and gender. If Fanny had not had to spend so much of her time working for philanthropic causes in order to further her father's standing in the community she may have gained sufficient satisfaction from her scientific pursuits to have become emotionally independent of her brother. In the same way, if Alexander Macleay could have found it in him to treat his daughter as an equal in his scientific pursuits her resentment against her brother may have largely evaporated. On the other hand if William Sharpe Macleay could have co-existed with his father without rivalry in New South Wales perhaps Fanny would have married sooner and given up her scientific activities entirely. However, given the attitudes of the time, it is highly unlikely that a family such as the Macleays could ever have found a real place for a talented daughter in their scientific pursuits. What becomes clear is that overt and covert gender rivalries exacerbated rivalries which existed between men who were engaged in scientific pursuits: these formidable rivalries joined with a number of other factors to ensure that during the nineteenth century women remained sidelined on the perimeters of science.<sup>166</sup>

### **Taste and science.**

In Britain, but even more so in the colonies, an interest in science was seen as evidence of social standing and good taste: for much of the nineteenth century the pursuit of science was largely an elitist enterprise. No better example of this can be found than Alexander Macleay's Botanical garden at Elizabeth Bay. From the beginning of settlement the harbour at Port Jackson evoked admiration - especially among middle class women who enjoyed picnicking

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<sup>164</sup> Arthur McMartin, 'Thomas Harington', *Australian Dictionary of Biography 1788-1850*, vol. 1, 1966, pp. 511-512.

<sup>165</sup> Fanny to William, July 30 1834, 10 February 1836, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 166, 176-177.

around its perimeters - for its romantic beauty.<sup>167</sup> The landscape gardener Thomas Shepherd told the people of Sydney in the early 1830s that 'in this country we can obtain one hundred acres of good land by the side of some river ... for £25, and it is our own fault if we do not become Lairds and Land-Owners'.<sup>168</sup> Shepherd and his fellow Scot, Alexander Macleay, whose efforts at Elizabeth Bay Shepherd admired and advertised, thought of landscape gardening as an obligation; an act of conversion on a new land. Fanny and the rest of the Macleay family shared Alexander Macleay's enthusiasm for his landscaped garden at Elizabeth Bay which, Fanny said, expressed her father's 'taste and science'. Long before March 1835 when the foundation stone for the Macleay's stately Elizabeth Bay house was laid, the choice fifty four acre estate within Sydney's town boundary which had been granted to Alexander Macleay on his arrival in the colony had been landscaped by him and become the 'Lion of Sydney'.<sup>169</sup> Recognition for his garden was balm to Alexander Macleay - the family had been in the colony for a little over a year when Fanny wrote to William: 'Elizabeth Bay is becoming a pretty place - Papa will have a famous garden there. He will try to cultivate every plant that he can procure - I will send you a plan of it very soon'.<sup>170</sup> Two years later Fanny wrote:

Elizabeth Bay is improving in beauty every day - we now have some beautiful walks thro the Bush. Mr Deas Thompson who is possessed of an infinity of good taste is the Engineer and takes an astonishing degree of interest in the improvement of the place... {We are to have ] a picnic at Elizabeth Bay! The Governor [Darling] having requested Mama to give him one ... We have bowers of myrtle &c constructing .. delicacies in the way of Poultry &c *cooking* - Bugles promised .. and no ladies but those from Government House and the much envied birds - the Macleays.<sup>171</sup>

Fanny might celebrate the fact that only the Macleay girls and the Governor's family would be at the Macleay picnic but the truth was Alexander Macleay and his family were not

<sup>166</sup> Irigaray, 1985.

<sup>167</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 7 March 1791, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, p. 32. 'I can conceive nothing to equal it'.

<sup>168</sup> Thomas Shepherd, 'On Planning the Gardens of the Marine Villas of Port Jackson', (lectures given between 1827-35 which were published posthumously in 1836), Bernard Smith, (ed.) *Documents on Art and Taste in Australia: The Colonial Period 1770-1914*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1975, p. 48.

<sup>169</sup> Fanny to William, 12 December 1833, 9 May 1835, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 159, 169. This grant, which Alexander Macleay was given by his friend Governor Darling in 1826, was the source of envy and dissatisfaction among colonists. The prime site was public land which had been used by Macquarie as a fishing village for Aborigines and gazetted by Governor Brisbane as the site for an Insane Asylum.

<sup>170</sup> Fanny to William, 25 March 1827, Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 78. All the Macleay family members collected seeds and plants for the garden from all over the world.

<sup>171</sup> Fanny to William, 25 February 1829, Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 106. Alexander Macleay might not have been so friendly with Edward Deas Thompson if he had known that eight years later he would be forced by Bourke to hand over his position of Colonial Secretary to Edward - who was Bourke's son-in-law.

all that popular in Sydney society. This was partly because Alexander was an unashamed empire builder: Francis Forbes, the usually judicious Chief Justice, describing him as 'a canny Scot with a prodigious capacity for work and an insatiable appetite for broad acres'.<sup>172</sup> A wine merchant turned public servant and amateur naturalist, Alexander Macleay had been retired on a pension for 10 years when he was encouraged by Earl Bathurst to accompany Governor Darling to New South Wales as his Colonial Secretary. The fifty nine year old father of a large family, Macleay, though deeply in debt when he arrived in Sydney, was determined to build an extensive empire based on land and scientific fame.<sup>173</sup>

The vegetation on uncleared ground around Sydney Harbour was different in the early nineteenth century than it is today. At that time Aboriginal fire practices had converted scrub and forest into open woodland with stately trees - woodland which settlers thought resembled 'a gentleman's park' with woods and lawns.<sup>174</sup> The effect of the beautiful harbour and the seeming promise of being able to establish an aristocratic estate within this park-like Eden meant that in Sydney 'rural scenery and water views [formed] the favourite subjects of taste with most persons of capital'.<sup>175</sup> Alexander Macleay saw himself as a man of taste: the problem was he had a deficit of capital. Nevertheless he pressed ahead and cleared ten flat acres of his fifty four acre grant at the base of the rocky promontory which fronted onto Elizabeth Bay. With a mile long entry road from the gate of his estate which passed through attractive natural bush, rocky promontories 'richly ornamented with beautiful indigenous trees and shrubs' and some of the 'most interesting prospects of the harbour and shores of Port Jackson', the exuberant Alexander Macleay found time to drive out from inner Sydney nearly every day to supervise the twenty or so men who for ten years worked to landscape his personal paradise.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> C.H. Currey, *Sir Francis Forbes*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1968, p. 173. As well as his original grants of 54 acres at Elizabeth Bay and 2,560 acres at Byalla, Alexander purchased a further 863 acres at Byalla, 3663 acres at Camden and 2560 acres at Ulladalla. He also had rights to cattle runs on the Richmond and Murrumbidgee rivers.

<sup>173</sup> Fanny to William, 12 November 1827, Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 87.

<sup>174</sup> Helen Baker Proudfoot, 'Botany Bay, Kew, and the Picturesque: Early Conceptions of the Australian Landscape', *Journal of the Australian Historical Society*, June 1979, vol. 65, part 1, pp. 41-2. Today most of the large trees have vanished and the underwood re-grown into scrubby bush.

<sup>175</sup> Thomas Shepherd, 'On Planning the Gardens of the Marine Villas of Port Jackson', (lectures given between 1827-35 and published posthumously in 1836) in Smith, 1975, pp. 40, 43.

<sup>176</sup> Shepherd, in Smith, 1975, p. 42. Macleay was - as Shepherd put it - 'willing to preserve his native trees and shrubs to extend his Landscape Gardening'. When Shepherd gave his lecture (c1832) a gardener's cottage, coach house, stables, botanic, flower, landscape, fruit and kitchen gardens had been established. Shepherd praised Macleay for 'digging out rocks, filling up hollows, making approaches, and walks, grass plats, basins &c., ...and the purchase of foreign trees and plants, which have been arranged with great skill and taste'.

By 1832 not only the Macleays and their invited guests but the (uninvited) elite of Sydney had acquired the habit of picnicking in Macleays' garden estate.<sup>177</sup> In 1835 *The Observer* told its readers that Alexander Macleay at his Elizabeth Bay garden: 'cultivated specimens of many interesting trees and shrubs of this colony, along with others from various parts of the world, intermixed with some growing in their native localities'.<sup>178</sup> By February 1836 the garden had become a wonder to visiting botanists and pleasure seekers alike, and Alexander, his house half built, threw a grand celebratory outdoor party and dance for 150 persons at Elizabeth Bay. This caused his son George to publicly applaud his father's good taste and secretly worry where on earth the £6000 needed to complete the house could be found.<sup>179</sup> By the time it was finished the Elizabeth Bay house and garden constituted a Sydney icon which artists such as Conrad Martens used to invoke New South Wales as a prestigious paradise. (plate 17) Ironically, before it was fully finished, Elizabeth Bay's owner was declared bankrupt and forced to give his dream estate to his principal debtor - his son William.

## SUMMARY.

In the colonies nineteenth century antiquarianism, fuelled by the romantic quest, gave rise to grand orientalist collecting ventures. Edward Said has argued that such ventures, and the publications they gave rise to, were decisive moments in the colonial interpretive control of the idea of the Orient - such antiquarian projects providing in his opinion a means of colonising the past and giving its artefacts new cultural uses / interpretations.<sup>180</sup> Lacking a historical past, orientalist projects of colonial interpretive control in Australia took the form of collecting ventures focused on nature. Knowledge relating to and 'specimens' of plants, animals, rocks, fossils and Aborigines - who were thought to be a part of nature - were collected, inspected, drawn, classified and reinterpreted. After the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origins of the Species* in 1857 the collecting of such 'specimens' if anything gained in importance. The role of women in this massive enterprise was confined to that of collectors and recorders - a role in which women, taught such skills through the 'feminine' occupations of needlework, watercolour painting, and letter writing, demonstrated a capacity

<sup>177</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Edward Macarthur, 2 November 1832, Mrs John Macarthur, Journal and Correspondence, 1789-1840, ML A 2906.

<sup>178</sup> Quoted in Helen Baker, *Elizabeth Bay House*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1967, p. 44.

<sup>179</sup> Fanny to William, 10 February 1836, Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 176. George Macleay to William Macleay, 1836, Macleay Papers, ML A 4303, p. 17. Bligh, 1973, p. 55.

<sup>180</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Vintage, New York, 1979, pp. 83-8.



7E 17. Elizabeth Bay and Elizabeth Bay House. Watercolour. Conrad Martens, 1839. National Gallery of Victoria.

for tedious and meticulous work, excellence in illustration, and careful documentation. As a result throughout the nineteenth century women rarely, if ever, translated their enthusiasms for natural history into purposeful research or published their findings: instead they supported the research of male natural historians / scientists.<sup>181</sup>

Clearly women's internal conditioning - which Germaine Greer described as 'the carefully cultured self-destructiveness of [nineteenth century] women' which led them to have 'defective wills, and libidos suppressed to the point of neuroticism'<sup>182</sup> - played a part in this. So did the demands of motherhood, an education which did not include Latin and women's designated social role as being only privately and indirectly remunerated. What is not always sufficiently recognised however - and this became particularly clear in the field of science - was the rivalry and unease which was mobilised between women and professional men if and when women attempted to go beyond their designated role as helper.<sup>183</sup> This first became apparent in Britain when Florence Nightingale attempted to develop nursing as a autonomous career / profession for women. She very quickly discovered that female independence could only be won if nursing was set up as a supportive subordinate profession to its male counterpart.<sup>184</sup>

I would argue that one of the reasons why women in the nineteenth century found they were denied anything beyond a supportive role in science stemmed from the contemporary belief that the world was a damaged paradise - a colossal ruin - behind which it was hoped a prior state of original completeness could be discerned by means of 'scholarly reconstruction'. This was a task for which - by the terms of the metaphor of women as flowers - women were demonstrably incapable. Women could 'be' but they could not be expected to 'know' - to reason, to find answers to the mystery of the universe. They could collect and paint specimens and write entertaining narratives melding myth, lyrical landscape, folk tale, local colour and natural history which popularised the great theoretical 'discoveries', the 'big truths', which men such as Charles Darwin were constructing, but they could not venture behind the scenes where the material was being collated, classified,

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<sup>181</sup> McBryde, 1993, p.35.

<sup>182</sup> Greer, 1979, p. 327.

<sup>183</sup> Isabel McBryde, 1993, does not *explicitly* make this claim but her paper strongly argues for it. In Hodge, 1992, Ch. 5, I tackled this issue when I discussed the failure of Radcliffe-Brown to have Bates' anthropological research published. After promising in 1910 to prepare her manuscript for publication Brown returned it two years later still unpublished - saying it was beyond editing. Bates later claimed that Brown used material from her manuscript to launch his anthropological career in Australia.

wrestled with : 'understood'. At a time when physical nature was seen as a hieroglyph and new answers were being sought about the nature of the universe and human existence, women - who were thought to be closer to nature than men - must continue to be constructed as decorative flowers so that they could be kept from the workroom where the great hieroglyph was undergoing fervid *manly* interrogation.

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<sup>184</sup> Poovey, 1988, Ch 6. To do this Nightingale fused two aspects of the domestic ideal - the self sacrificing aspect of mothering and the managerial component wherein middle class women were expected to be able to organise - in a proto military style - servants and large domestic households.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### ***DRAWN FROM NATURE***

**Wearing the white flower of a blameless life.**

**Alfred Tennyson: 'Idylls of the King'.**

**They speak not of torment nor blackness nor sin  
Quietly as angels do the flowers come in.**

**Shaw Neilson: 'Flowers in the Ward'.**

Reduced to playing a minor role in scientific pursuits, nineteenth century women increasingly found themselves symbolically equated - as the British Poet Laureate put it - with 'the white flower of a blameless life' which a man wore to offset his aggressive public persona. During the period of intense sociological transition which in the nineteenth century saw the church lose ground to the new religions of science and consumer-capitalism, women attempted to reclaim their lost potency through 'the exploitation of the feminine identity as their society defined it'.<sup>1</sup> In other words middle class women accepted the redemptive mission of extending their 'improving' matriarchal 'influence' beyond the family into society. Women attempted to do this not only through charitable work, the nursing profession and support of such social organisations as the purity campaigns, but by writing and editing books and magazines - on 'nature' (as an extension of women's moral self), the home and the garden - and by engaging in the painting of 'uplifting' landscapes and floral art.

In the colonies during the early period of settlement art had largely a recording function; the work of both male and female artists was thus principally concerned with producing a visual record of colonial life and colonial topography / natural productions. Consequently until recently artistic productions from this period have been virtually excluded from mainstream art (which is generally thought to be about ideas) and thereby undervalued and / or lost. This devaluation has been more acute in the case of works - mainly craftwork or fragile sketches made in pencil or watercolour - produced by nineteenth century 'amateur' women artists. Many of these works have been either kept within the family or, in being valued for their historic rather than their aesthetic qualities, stored behind the scenes - supposedly for their own protection - by libraries and museums.<sup>2</sup> The aesthetic devaluation of nineteenth century women's creative work has been exacerbated by the conservative nature of 'feminine' genres which, having evolved during a period when scientific and aesthetic concerns were rarely distinguished, met with criticism from both the disciplines of art and science when these disciplines diverged in the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> Germaine Greer, who accepted that 'real' art is about ideas, summarised the position of nineteenth century women artists in this way:

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas, 1977, pp. 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> Ambrus, 1992, pp. 9, 10, 12, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Ambrus, 1992, p. 28.

[I]f one's self image is dictated by one's relations to others and all one's activities are other-directed, it is simply not possible to find one's own voice. ... In their anxiety to feel the right feelings and give evidence of having lovable natures, many nineteenth century women painters falsified their own perceptions and over-stated emotional experiences which they did not actually understand. ... [however] Every painting by anyone is evidence of a struggle, and not all such struggles are conclusively won. There are more warring elements in women's work than in men's and when we learn to read them we find that the evidence of battle is interesting and moving.<sup>4</sup>

Using Hartz' theory of the traditionalising power of conceptions and activities which are introduced with a fragment from a larger society, it could be claimed that in the Australian colonies in the nineteenth century it was not only male systems of political belief which were arrested and frozen in time, but women's creative activities. Bernard Smith considered that in the first half of the nineteenth century colonial taste, comment and artistic criticism consisted of a 'melange of transported ideas and ideals' which should be examined to find what was eventually discarded and what accepted and / or modified by indigenous forces.<sup>5</sup> It is clear that for much of the nineteenth century patriarchal conceptions contributed to colonial women's creative endeavours being contained and undervalued. Colonial women's imaged perceptions of their new world were thus often - but not always - presented in a proscribed form which, in encoding a private and emotive, but derivative, view of nature had low contemporary public status. Luckily perhaps, because feminist art critics now feel that an understanding and appreciation of women's images may help counter the linguistic turn of contemporary thought, there has been a renewed interest in recent years in the artistic endeavours of both nineteenth and twentieth century women.<sup>6</sup>

Leaving aside aesthetic considerations for the moment, art produced during the early period of settlement is of especial interest because it conveys settlers' responses to a new environment. The social and artistic conventions of the early period of settlement dictated that women inhabit a separate artistic world - which had its own traditions and conventions - from that inhabited by men. At a time when professional artists and writers were few, the creative endeavours of women - whether in the form of embroidery, craft, art, or written expression - can thus serve as a corrective to the acceptance of the belief that in the colonies there ever was a homogeneous view of nature. While the world of women's creative expression left only a smallish body of work in the fields of landscape painting, floral art and natural history illustration which provide insight into nineteenth century women's

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<sup>4</sup> Greer, 1979, pp. 325, 327.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, 1979, p. 90.

<sup>6</sup> Barbara Maria Stafford, *Good Looking: Essays in the Virtue of Images*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1996, pp. 51-2.

perceptions of nature and the natural world, it left a much larger body of decorative art and craft work - which in many cases demonstrates women's 'hidden ingenuity and individual creativity'<sup>7</sup> - which helps illuminate how women perceived the natural world.

One of the ways in which people in Britain constructed Australian nature in the early years of settlement was as whimsical and freakish. In these terms the Australian antipodes were seen as 'a brilliant and fantastic, but enchanted garden' full of curious and colourful birds, animals, flowers and insects - in other words as a beautiful (but potentially melancholy) fairy land full of antipodal inversions.<sup>8</sup> This was a notion which kept resurfacing in Australian society: from the 1860s onwards being adopted by male writers such as Marcus Clarke. Clarke summarised his view of Australian landscape in 1869:

In this young land, which lacks as yet sufficient history of its own to show by its exemplified teachings the littleness of man's ambitions, we meet with natural writings more sombre in their meaning for the student... Australasia has been rightly named a Land of the Dawning. Wrapped in the mists of early morning her history looms vague and gigantic... In Australia alone is to be found the Grotesque and the Weird - the strange scribblings of Nature learning how to write.... But the dweller in the wilderness acknowledges the subtle charm of this fantastic land of monstrosities. He becomes familiar with the beauty of loneliness. ... he learns the language of the barren and the uncouth, and can read the hieroglyphs of haggard gum-trees blown into odd shapes... The phantasmagoria of that wild dreamland called the Bush interprets itself, and he begins to understand why free Esau loved his heritage of desert-sand better than all the bountiful richness of Egypt.<sup>9</sup>

Steeped in such conceptions many women in the Australian colonies overcame the inhibitory effect of Evangelicalism on image making and took it upon themselves to record nature as they saw it through a perceptual prism which combined religious delight, scientific precision and interest and a vision of colonial nature as a potential source of intellectual, aesthetic and imaginative wonder.<sup>10</sup> I would argue that in the face of changing artistic and cultural values and the ever expanding inhibitory influences of pragmatism, rationalism and 'hard' science, women have played a powerful role in keeping a (traditionally conservative) child-like imaginative vision of nature alive - often through illustrated literature and art

<sup>7</sup> Joan Kerr, 'Putting the Colonial Lady Painter in her Place', Ann Toy, 'Timethrift, or All Hours Turned to Good Account' in Toy, Riley, & McDonald, 1988, pp. 12, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, 1969, pp. 226-7.

<sup>9</sup> Marcus Clarke, 'The Australian Landscape', in *A Colonial City: Selected Journalism of High and Low Life*. L. T. Hergenham, (ed.) Queensland University Press, St Lucia, Queensland, 1972, pp. 361-5.

<sup>10</sup> Kerr, in Toy, Riley, & McDonald, 1988, p.10.

supposedly meant for children <sup>11</sup> - into the present in Australia where it now survives chiefly under the protective umbrella of conservation.

In this chapter I explore the 'naturalistic' representation of nature which colonial women artists reproduced in abundance - 'beautiful' flowers and birds, gentle and 'engaging' animals, and 'refreshing' scenery. In so doing I hope to celebrate that which is joyful in this activity while at the same time exposing - in Hartzian terms - the less welcome distortive and conservative power of the imperialist attitudes towards nature, class, gender and race of which the prescription that women (and the feminine) be wholly flowerlike and 'nice' formed a part.

### **Women's creativity and constraint.**

Women undertook a range of creative activities which varied according to time, class, marital status, financial security and geographical situation. While for most of the nineteenth century women's creative activities began and ended in the home, some creative activities had a greater potential than others for bringing public recognition to their creator. The categories amateur / professional, public / private, paid / unpaid, graphic / written, working class / middle class, tended to be somewhat blurred, conjunctive and ambiguous in nineteenth century Australia. During the first half of the century especially, most women had to struggle to find the time and the right to be creative in any but the most domestic of ways. In an era when birth control was unobtainable, unacceptable or unreliable, having a large family was thought to be part of a woman's duty, and the loss of children was to be expected, women often had little physical or emotional energy for formal forms of creative activity. It may be because of this that Kristeva suggested that creativity and childbearing serve a similar purpose in a woman's psyche.<sup>12</sup> If Kristeva's suggestion is accepted then it becomes clear that the effect on the creativity of colonial women of multiple childbirth and the (often unresolved) grieving which resulted from the loss of children, has never been effectively evaluated. In 1994 Brenda Niall touched on the subject of how nineteenth century women's creativity related to their gender-specific resentments, guilt and unresolved grieving, when she suggested that Georgiana McCrae - who before she left Britain had practiced as a professional artist - experienced an 'irreconcilable conflict between parenting and painting' in the colonies. Niall made the case that when first in the colonies Georgiana was prevented

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<sup>11</sup> I explore the re-emergence in Australian society (in times when social stresses are building up invisibly in society) of the silver thread of nature as fantastic, whimsical and filled with magic and wonder in the epilogue of this dissertation.

from painting in a professional capacity by her husband who felt she should concentrate on being a wife and mother. Agnes, Georgiana's last child, was not born until Georgiana was 47 by which time, Niall argued, Georgiana's stifled resentment at the restriction of her creative expression to some extent soured her ability to be nurturing. Hence when Agnes died in early childhood Georgiana, consumed with grief, guilt and resentment, refused to be comforted. Eventually she separated from her husband and for the remainder of her life denied herself the artistic expression which at one time constituted her greatest joy.<sup>13</sup>

Keeping in mind the powerful social and psychological restrictions which helped shape women's creative expression, in this chapter I consider women's creative work as it related to the natural environment through the categories of needlework and craft, 'sentimental' floral productions, landscape art, and a form of natural history art which combined scientific and aesthetic principles. I conclude the chapter with an analysis of two examples of women's 'high' or professional art in the shape of two very different floral paintings - one of which was executed by a woman artist at the beginning, and one by a woman artist at the end of the nineteenth century.

### 1) Needlework and Craft.

Women's role in the family as the educator of morals / bearer of emotions meant that to a large extent it was women who were allocated the role of reconciling their family - and society - to the natural environment. It was because of this that colonial women took their children into the natural environment in Australia in the same way as their mother's had done with them in Britain and taught them to endow 'the wild' with a powerful nostalgic magic. Rachel Henning captured the satisfaction inherent for children in such activities when she wrote:

There is no joy like that we felt when in the Springtide hours  
We bounded o'er the wild, free hills, and plucked the mountain flowers  
Where tall fern waves and harebell blue with purple heather blend  
Such gay unfettered happenings with the years of childhood end.<sup>14</sup>

Nineteenth century colonial women expressed their positive reactions to 'nature' not only through taking their children on picnics and through scientific / creative pursuits such as

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<sup>12</sup> Kristeva, 1981.

<sup>13</sup> Niall, 1994, pp. 215-18.

<sup>14</sup> Rachel Henning to her sister Henrietta Boyce, 18 March 1870, 25 March 1878, The poem, 'The Days of Childhood', written by Rachel, was included with a letter, Adams, 1969, pp. 238, 282-3.

writing, drawing and gardening, but through sewing, craft and other small scale or 'homely' creative activities. Because it was believed that students could best learn to 'see' nature through the medium of art, middle class girls were strongly encouraged to draw landscape and copy natural history specimens: such activities led naturally to the copying and / or designing of natural history motifs for use in women's sewing and craft activities. Hence, quite early in the century women in Britain and the colonies translated engravings of Australian birds and flowers into designs to decorate clothing and for use in embroidery, tapestry and Berlin woolwork -making framed pictures, cushions and firescreens which could be used to decorate the home.<sup>15</sup>

As well as using Australian birds and flowers as motifs to decorate clothing and household goods, middle class colonial women used materials from the natural environment - dried wildflowers, ferns and feathers - to make pictures and artefacts, and shells, rocks, driftwood as natural decoration for their homes.<sup>16</sup> In improvising as best they could, working class women also used materials from the natural environment. Homecrafts from the 1860s and 1870s survive in the form of birch brooms and cabbage tree hats, while in the late nineteenth century wheat bags made of jute were combined with material from old clothes and natural grasses to form floor and bed rugs (Waggas).<sup>17</sup>

In western tradition the representation of flowers and birds was *predominantly* scientific and analytic rather than predominantly aesthetic and philosophical or decorative and hedonistic as was the case in Asia and India respectively. Consequently even in women's sewing and craft where the function of flowers and birds was purely decorative it was considered important for natural productions to be represented accurately - that is, as was commonly stated in artistic attribution, as if they were 'drawn from nature'. It was because of this need for accuracy in representation that from the beginning of the nineteenth century florengiums were published which served as a source of information for women gardeners and as pattern books for women undertaking embroidery, china-painting and craft.

The effect on women of being trained from an early age to undertake painstaking tasks such as needlework has long been debated by feminists. At one end of the spectrum

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<sup>15</sup> Marion Fletcher, *Needlework in Australia: A History of the Development of Embroidery*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989, pp. 56, 57.

<sup>16</sup> Patricia R. McDonald, 'What to Do With Our Girls', Toy, Riley, & McDonald, 1988, p. 33. Feather work consisted of pictures, wreaths and bouquets made from the feathers of native birds.

<sup>17</sup> Wendy Hucker, 'The Pioneer Women's Hut and Rural Domestic Crafts, Toy, Riley, & McDonald, 1988, p. 42.

Germaine Greer considered that such tasks were intended to inculcate patience and passivity in women and to circumscribe individual creativity: the main criteria for middle and upper class women's creative work being in her opinion that 'it be grotesquely time consuming and totally useless', while Rozsika Parker - who did not deny that needlework was used to inculcate the 'feminine ideal' or that it encouraged 'an infantilising representation of women's sexuality' - felt that in the nineteenth century women could also use sewing and embroidery as a means to obtain private space and respite from unwelcome tasks.<sup>18</sup> She articulated the paradox thus: 'embroidery, and thus femininity emerge both as self-denial and self defence, as a means of establishing an inviolate female space and announcing female subservience and availability'. In other words, in Parker's opinion, at the same time as painstaking activities such as needlework and floral art inculcated femininity in women it enabled them to begin to negotiate its constraints.<sup>19</sup>

In the colonies, as in Britain, middle class women's search for private space was inextricably mixed up with women 'being seen' to have leisure - a semiotic sign which was thought to establish an 'aura of respectability' and maintain class distinctions.<sup>20</sup> As well as this, because in the colonies it was common for middle class males to either die or 'fail' - events which could throw women upon their own resources - middle class colonial girls were taught plain as well as 'fancy' sewing.<sup>21</sup> Richard Skilbeck, secure in the knowledge that his daughters had learnt plain sewing, articulated a pragmatic lower middle class view about women's 'fancy work':

Fancy work, which I believe to be so detrimental to the health of young ladies at home, receives but a limited share of Australian young ladies attention, but while indulging in it to a certain extent they have the health to enjoy it, while the young ladies at home carry this supposed specie of refinement to a fanatical excess.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, although both lower middle class and working class women - who often earned a living by sewing on behalf of others - were mostly forced to take a pragmatic

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<sup>18</sup> Greer, 1979, p. 280. Parker, 1984, pp. 2-3.

<sup>19</sup> Parker, 1984, pp. 11, 165. Self containment and submission; skills which enabled impoverished gentle women to be self-supporting ensured wage bondage in working class women who worked in the textile industries. Parker accepted that nineteenth century women's 'selfless industry' and 'good taste' often resulted in women's intellectual starvation and sense of being confined which led to a 'morbid restlessness' characterised by feelings of fear, worry, guilt and frustration.

<sup>20</sup> Curtin, 1994, pp. 646-7.

<sup>21</sup> Emmeline Macarthur, *Recollections of an Old Lady of Life at the Vineyard*, ML A 2106, p. 2. 'I was taught every sort of work [by Charlotte Waring - afterwards Atkinson / Barton], required in the making of a shirt from seam to buttonhole as well as to mark it'.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Skilbeck in McCorkill, 1967, p.161.



attitude towards creativity, there is evidence that they also embroidered (and treasured through the generations) articles for use in the home which featured native bird and flower motifs.<sup>23</sup>

While in the early years of settlement many middle class women - including Georgiana Molloy and Fanny Macleay - found that lack of servants forced them to undertake plain sewing - making, altering and repairing curtains, clothes, and bed and table linen - for themselves and their families,<sup>24</sup> as time went on the amount of plain sewing middle class women undertook varied according to individual circumstance. Single women from well-established families such as Margaret Hamersley - who claimed she hated sewing - might reluctantly agree to make curtains as a special privilege for a beloved brother,<sup>25</sup> while a middle class married woman with a growing family and a husband on a small fixed income such as Mary Mowle could well prefer to sew rather than do the housework, cooking or the 'nursing' (that is the minding) of her small children. Mary Mowle always referred to her needlework - which included the creative decorating of baby's clothes with quilled flowers and the embroidering of bookmarks as gifts - as 'work', and, having categorised it in this way, undertook it with conscientious fervour. Although occasionally as Mary claimed she resented such work, calling it 'the everlasting & must-be-done needlework,<sup>26</sup> when a whitlow on her finger prevented her from undertaking it she clearly felt lost. On other occasions Mary claimed she actively enjoyed 'working' in the company of other women and that she took 'her work' with her when she sat on the beach each day waiting for her husband to return from *his* work.<sup>27</sup> There was generally an upsurge of creative sewing in Mary's life in the later stages of pregnancy - when the need for babies clothes was at its greatest and Mary did not feel like doing much else - which seems to have been soothing to a conscientious woman such as Mary who took care to instruct her daughter on her ninth

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<sup>23</sup> Fletcher, 1989, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Fanny to William, 5 March 1826, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 51-2. [A]s there are none here to assist in altering & repairing [our dresses] we shall have enough to do in order to "look like others" as Mama says - this is a monstrous bore to me who hates all this folly'. Not long after this Fanny became the treasurer and secretary of the Sydney School of Industry which taught working class girls how to do plain needlework.

<sup>25</sup> Edward Hamersley to Margaret Hamersley, 30 August 1867, Hamersley Papers, BL 1009/A/1A/31.

<sup>26</sup> Mary Mowle, Journal, 23, 24 May 1851, 19, 26, 28 November, 9 December 1853, 13 May, 8, 10, 28 June, 2, 24, 28, 29, 30, September, 4 October, 16 November 1854, in Clarke, 1986, pp. 131, 195, 196, 197, 212, 216, 218, 219, 226, 228, 233.

<sup>27</sup> Mary Mowle, Journal, 20 September, 4 October, 24 October 1854, Clarke, 1986, pp. 227, 228, 230.

'[A]s I had a book & my work to amuse me I did not feel the time passing heavily'.

birthday to be 'good & kind, gentle & pleasing so that everyone will love you & and feel happier for having you with them'.<sup>28</sup>

In performing needlework - that is in decorating homes, clothing and gifts for husbands, friends and families - middle class women were thought to provide visible proof of their love and devotion and thus indirectly morally uplift society. Because of this women's sewing and fancy work was highly ambiguous in terms of individual creativity.<sup>29</sup> Creative practices among middle class women depended on marital status, personal temperament, the availability of servants and the rise and fall of family fortunes. If it was at all possible middle class colonial women continued the English tradition of spending the mornings in 'drawing from copies, embroidery, or reading the history of England or similar improving books'.<sup>30</sup>

Because for many years colonial society was more dislocated than British society, artefacts such as embroidered goods which took women a very long time to make could help announce / advertise a family's climb up the social ladder. It was no accident that it was during the period of her father's (short-lived) affluence when the Tompson family was attempting to consolidate its improved social standing that one of Charles Tompson's daughters executed a distinctive representation in tapestry of the family home and garden at Clydesdale near Windsor in New South Wales.<sup>31</sup> Hence, although women's embroidery was generally expected to be competent rather than creative, with girls being mostly taught to follow patterns in their decorative work,<sup>32</sup> there is considerable evidence to show that once they reached adulthood colonial women made little distinction between copying from patterns

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<sup>28</sup> Mary Mowle to her daughter Florence on her ninth birthday, 7 June 1855, Clarke, 1986, p. 263. Mary told her daughter that 'at times you are careless & very troublesome... I sincerely hope my child you will try diligently to improve'. Mr Mowle, Clarke, 1986, p. 275. Florence must have listened well because on her mother's death two years later she took over responsibility for the family, and on her own death at the age of 42 her father wrote: 'She was my best loved child - her name was a household word in the district in which she lived ... she worked for her sister and six children - she attended the sick & poor & and was one of the pillars of her Church'.

<sup>29</sup> Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 17 February 1861, 29 June, 15 October 1863, 12 April 1864, 23 November 1871, Adams, 1969, pp. 52, 133, 143, 165, 255. Except for on one occasion when she offered to reline her brother's saddle Rachel Henning eschewed needlework before marriage, while after it she made all the clothes worn by herself and her husband.

<sup>30</sup> Anne Piper, Journal, 1841, in M. Barnard Eldershaw, *The Life and Times of Captain Piper*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1973, p. 191.

<sup>31</sup> Toy, in Toy, Riley, & McDonald, 1988, pp. 16, 17. Elizabeth Curtis & Gillian Doyle, *Where Honour Guides the Prow: A Story of Early Settlers of Sydney Cove, Norfolk Island and the Murrumbidgee*, Limited Edition, 1987, p. 131.

<sup>32</sup> Kylie Winkworth, 'Ways of Seeing Women's Domestic Craft's', Toy, Riley, & McDonald, 1988, p. 45. Annabella Boswell to her aunt Isabella, 17 May 1836, in Niall, 1988, p. 177. 'I am making a basket of cardboard .. I have painted that pretty blue flower called native flax [on one side]... Miss Willis paints all the native flowers we can find for copies for us'.

and copying from nature. Louisa Meredith, whose embroidery of wildflowers was emulated by many colonial women, clearly drew her own pattern for the wildflowers which she depicted in the pair of embroidered pictures for which she won a prize in the Great Exhibition in London in 1851.<sup>33</sup> Similarly Rachel Henning was perfectly happy to copy flowers from nature in order to decorate a lampshade which she made for use in her brother's new farmhouse at 'Exmoor'.<sup>34</sup> Although in the early period of settlement it was common for women to decorate articles in the home with either British or Australian nature motifs, under the influence of the Arts and Crafts and Aesthetic movements of the 1890s such activities took on a degree of social obligation with middle class women being expected to create a personal domestic ambience in the home by making and displaying the many 'tasteful' artefacts they had created.<sup>35</sup> Under the influence of the drive towards federation and nationalism the artefacts which women created in this period were very often decorated with Australian scenes, flowers, animals and birds.

It was precisely when, in the later half of the nineteenth century, women had more time to express themselves creatively, that a distinction was introduced between 'high art' and 'craftwork'. According to the terms of this distinction high art was thought to be produced by male professional artists, usually in paint, and considered to reflect a concern in higher values, while craftwork - which was less esteemed - was considered to be produced by women, mainly as amateur artisans, and considered to lack originality.<sup>36</sup>

Because in nineteenth century women were expected to record the natural environment in order to reconcile themselves and others to it, during this period the bulk of colonial women's creative work which related to the natural environment was about incorporation / reconciliation. Beauty in the nineteenth century was thought to have a refining influence: as

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<sup>33</sup> Jennifer Issacs, *The Gentle Arts; Two Hundred years of Australian Women's Domestic and Decorative Arts*, Landsdown Press, Sydney, 1987, pp. 30, 139.

<sup>34</sup> Rachel Henning to her sister Henrietta Henning, 21 September 1863, Adams, 1969, p.142. 'I have been making a lampshade for the establishment of the same kind as the one I made for you. I foolishly left all my patterns of flowers in Sydney .. but I got some wild clematis in the creek, and drew a wreath of it and it cut out very well and looks pretty'. Kerr, 1992, p. 529.

<sup>35</sup> James Broadbent, 'The Chore and Art of Home Furnishings', Toy, Riley, & McDonald, 1988, pp. 30, 31. Margaret Betteridge, *Australian Flora in Art, From the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences*, Sun Academy Series, Sydney, 1979, pp. 11, 15. In the last decades of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth applied art objects were frequently decorated with native birds and flowers. Betteridge considered 'Elements of nationalism appear in the art, craft and design of each decade of the twentieth century'.

<sup>36</sup> Toy, in Toy, Riley, & McDonald, 1988, p. 21. In 1879 at the Sydney International Exhibition for the first time ladies work was put in a separate Ladies Court to be judged by a new set of feminine criteria,

such it was reproduced by women in their self-display and in their creative activities.<sup>37</sup> In England it was common for women's watercolours, embroideries and tapestries to take the form of framed arcadic views of the natural prospect and 'beautiful' still life birds and flowers which helped make the inside of the home feel safe; a buffer against the outside world of social and financial insecurity. In the colonies women continued this tradition but modified the content of the pictures to represent Arcadian interpretations of the colonial environment - usually views of the home set within an Australian rural setting and / or depictions of local flora and fauna. In the same way as colonial women's gardens reflected a (vacillating) move towards combining / rejecting what was essentially British and what was thought to be essentially Australian, so too did women's artistic activities. In the ebb and flow of incorporation there were no hard and fast rules as to time and place; no time when it could be said that a definitive and unambiguous incorporation of the Australian landscape / floral and faunal iconography and rejection of (an idealised) British landscape / natural iconography had occurred.

Although it has been claimed that in the early period of settlement 'art waited upon science' in the recording of natural productions and landscape,<sup>38</sup> even a glance at nineteenth century women's embroidery, Berlin work, landscape, flower and bird painting - in which the land glowed and birds and flowers as metaphors for the riches of the country were depicted as beautiful jewels<sup>39</sup> - provides evidence that scientific interest was only one part of the motivation for, and scientific precision one determinant in the nature of, women's creative endeavours.

#### 'Sentimental' art.

The wish to be 'womanly' in art - to take into art those things inculcated in women by the practice of dexterous activities such as embroidery and 'fancy' work (quilling, quilting, crocheting, lace making, tatting etc) - was most obvious in women's water colour painting of flowers in the form which is now referred to as 'sentimental' art. From the eighteenth

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before that women exhibited woollen tapestries and embroidered pictures in Fine Arts exhibitions alongside the paintings of men.

<sup>37</sup> Barbara Russell, 'The Langdale Linen Industry', *Art Journal*, 1897, pp. 329-30 in Anthea Callen, *Angel in the Studio: Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement 1870-1914*, Astragal Books, London, 1979, p. 117.

<sup>38</sup> Smith, 1979, p. 33.

<sup>39</sup> The Pardalote depicted in Elizabeth Gould's painting (plate 15) was called the diamond bird. Louisa Meredith, 1853, p. 83. Louisa wrote 'the diamond bird truly is a dainty little jewel, all gold and shaded amber, with silver spots'.

century flowers were constructed as symbols which could be used to convey messages to others. In this way flowers and artistic recreations of flowers came to represent a language and a morality wherein dictionaries which allocated interpretations to flowers could be used to decipher textual meaning. It was generally thought that paintings and bouquets of flowers could convey messages which were more subtle and 'sentimental' than words could ever be. Before she married Charles Meredith Louisa Twamley was one of a number of British women who benefited from what Wilfred Blunt somewhat derisively called the conversion of 'botany into a parlour game for any young woman who could count up to twelve' by publishing books on the language of flowers which were patterned on flower books published earlier in France. Blunt dismissed such best sellers as 'romantic little volumes of pretty posies and execrable verse'.<sup>40</sup> It was common for books on the 'language of flowers' - which usually earned their female creators considerable fame and fortune - to be written and illustrated by competent women naturalists / botanical artists such as Louisa Twamley.<sup>41</sup> The illustrations in such books were generally described as having been 'drawn from nature', and were, as Louisa Twamley expressed it, expected to cause an: 'awakening in our hearts of wonder, admiration, gratitude, and devotion; teaching us to look from earth to HIM who called [the loveliness of flowers] into existence'.<sup>42</sup>

In her dedication Louisa claimed her intention was 'poetical' rather than scientific because flowers formed 'one of the sweetest lines in the *God Written* Poetry of Nature'. She also claimed that in *The Romance of Nature* she illustrated and explicated British wildflowers rather than domestic flowers because she considered British wildflowers to be: 'the true philanthropists of their race. Their generous and cheerful faces ever give a kindly greeting to the troops of merry village children who revel in their blossomy wealth'.<sup>43</sup>

This anthropomorphic quote captures the essence of sentimental flower worship. It celebrates the superiority of the 'natural' middle class mother who, unlike her 'unnatural' aristocratic and working class counterparts, fulfilled all the tenets of the domestic ideal within a 'natural' rural setting - and without fail greeted her large family generously and cheerfully!

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<sup>40</sup> Blunt, 1950, p. 266.

<sup>41</sup> Between 1835 and 1839 when she emigrated to New South Wales Louisa Twamley published *Poems, The Romance of Nature or The Flower Seasons Illustrated, Flora's Gems or The Treasures of the Parterre* (re-issued 1842), and *Our Wild Flowers Familiarly described and illustrated*. These ran to second and third editions. After she emigrated Louisa re-issued *Flora's Gems* (1842) and wrote *The Bouquet: containing the poetry and language of flowers*. (1845). Editions of the above were also issued in the United States in 1844, 1846, 1851.

<sup>42</sup> Twamley, 1839, p. ix.

<sup>43</sup> Twamley, 1839, pp. iix, x.

Blunt described sentimental flower books as having 'engaging naivete of presentation .. charming... pictures and delightfully awful verse': as such he saw them as books intended to be browsed through by middle class families and friends who were gathered together around the winter fireside of a leisured England.<sup>44</sup> Possibly because in emigrating she lost access to British flowers and the British book buying market - or possibly because her attitudes had changed - after she emigrated from Britain Louisa Meredith only wrote one more 'sentimental' flower book.

It was usual in the colonies for middle class girls to be taught to draw landscapes and flowers by their parents, tutors, governesses or drawing masters.<sup>45</sup> So much attention was given to the genteel arts of pencil sketching and watercolour painting that colonial women began to seek a wider audience for their work than simply admiring friends and family. Books based on the sentimental flower tradition which recorded Australian wildflowers were written and illustrated by a number of women who came from well-to-do families - such as Fanny Anne Charsley, Fanny de Mole and Anna Frances Walker. In the colonies women who produced books 'celebrating the beauty of .. floral subjects' had to be in the position to approach a male botanist to have their wildflowers 'labelled', and capable of persuading their family to subsidise the publishing costs.<sup>46</sup> In order to avoid any taint of commercialism, women writers and illustrators of sentimental Australian wildflower books were careful to avoid taking credit for their achievements - remaining anonymous or disclaiming scientific knowledge and giving all credit to God or to the botanist who had classified their floral illustrations for them.<sup>47</sup> Fanny de Mole was careful to also mention that the money from the sale of her book would go to the church building fund and that her 'Book of Flowers' was made in order that 'our friends in England' could enjoy Australian wildflowers.

Women's creative work had the important function of helping to inculcate a 'love' of wildflowers and 'nature' in girls - a love which it was thought would help foster the development of an acceptable Australian female persona. Towards the end of the nineteenth century women artists and writers equated innocent girls, wildflowers and a benign and beautiful 'bush' in order to promote women's designated roles as modest wives and

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<sup>44</sup> Blunt, 1950, p. 220.

<sup>45</sup> Kerr, 1980, p. 356.

<sup>46</sup> Kevin Faby in Kerr, 1995, pp. 168-9.

<sup>47</sup> Ambrus, 1992, pp. 15-17. Fanny De Mole's work, *Wildflowers of South Australia* (1861), ran to two editions. Fanny Anne Charsley, who dedicated her book to Baron von Mueller, published *The Wildflowers Around Melbourne* (1867), Anna Frances Walker published *Flowers in New South Wales* (1887).

mothers, tourism and nationalism.<sup>48</sup> It was common for women artists such as Catherine Devine and Mary Stoddard to produce sentimental portraits of flower-like pubescent girls returning from the 'bush' with huge bunches of Australian wildflowers. (plate 18)<sup>49</sup> It is important to remember that to some extent women who wished to have their work published / exhibited had little choice but adopt this sort of stance.<sup>50</sup> The painting *Coming Home From the Bush* shows not only that beauty and modesty were prescribed characteristics in girls but, through the portrayal of elegant pet dogs, the way in which the animal in girls was expected to be domesticated / tamed. The new nation of Australia needed women to be vegetatively 'wild' in the way of Australian native flowers - that is naturalised to their new environment and reproductive within it - not animalistic or free-roving like Australian 'native' or 'wild' dogs. With much of women's creativity directed towards portraying women as feminine and many consumer goods designed to make women appear more desirable to men,<sup>51</sup> it is no surprise to find that feminists eulogised adolescent 'femininity' at the same time as they campaigned against child prostitution and child pornography.<sup>52</sup>

Sentimental art which features native flowers, animals, birds and landscape continues to be big business in Australia where it is currently used in the decoration of desk diaries, calenders, greeting cards, pictures for the home, household linen and women's clothing. The use in the present of the art of nineteenth century women floral and natural history artists such as Elizabeth Gould, the Scott sisters, Louisa Atkinson, Margaret Forrest and Ellis Rowan for calenders, desk diaries and greeting cards raises some interesting questions as to why a sentimental nineteenth century conception of 'natural' beauty continues to be popular in an era which supposedly repudiates nineteenth century sentiment.

### Landscape art.

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<sup>48</sup> For examples see Millett, 1980 (1872), p. 161. May Vivienne, *Travels in Western Australia*, William Heineman, London, 1901, pp. 14, 21.

<sup>49</sup> Greer, 1979, p. 324. Greer claimed Victorian women painters used any excuse to include children in their paintings.

<sup>50</sup> Kerry M. White, ' "Blooming with Childhood's Fragrance": Sweet Words and Tough Times for Women Writers in the 1870s', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 7 & 8, Summer, 1988. White claimed that for many years editors such as Stephens at the *Bulletin* would only publish the work of women writers if it took the form of 'sentimental' writing intended largely for children.

<sup>51</sup> Stratton, 1996, pp. 40, 237.

<sup>52</sup> Stratton, 1996, pp. 40, 47. Allen, 1988, p. 66. In the 1890s Australian first wave feminists began a long struggle to have the legal age of sexual consent for girls raised from 14 to 16. The legal age of consent was raised to 16 in England in 1885, but not uniformly legislated by the Australian states until 1910.



ATE 18. *Coming Home from the Bush*, Mary Stoddard, c 1881, Watercolour, Mitchell Library.



It has been claimed that landscape bore the brunt of Australian national expression during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries.<sup>53</sup> Landscape was certainly the dominant theme in colonial art with most nineteenth century women's albums, sketchbooks and scrapbooks containing representations of landscape alongside the ubiquitous pressed flowers and floral art.<sup>54</sup> While many women produced representations of landscape which were similar to those of Annie Baxter (plates 9 & 10) - that is simple pencil sketches of colonial homes and their surroundings - colonial women also did more finished watercolour landscapes which were similar to those produced by men. It has been claimed that representation of the Australian landscape began as 'kind of dream' nourished by the fantasies of paradise which grew out of the myth of the 'Great South Land'.<sup>55</sup>

Whether or not Australian landscape painting began as a dream, before long representation of landscape in the colonies performed the ideological function of providing Australian culture with the sustaining myths it needed. In the same way as the colonial explorer, the painter of colonial landscapes attempted 'to see the unseen, to be the first to tread the margins of the world'.<sup>56</sup> Louisa Meredith captured this sense of an untrodden paradise and of rapture in all created things when she recorded her first impressions of Tasmania as: '[m]ountains, hills, valleys, ravines - all are wild and trackless as they were thousands of years ago'.<sup>57</sup> Simon Schama documented the 'surprising endurance through centuries and ... power to shape institutions' of inherited landscape myths and memories.<sup>58</sup> Although women colonial artists were traditionally expected to copy from male landscape artists,<sup>59</sup> colonial women often introduced their own vision into their landscape art; a vision in which 'inherited landscape myths and memories' are clearly revealed.

Creation of dreamlike landscapes stemmed in part from a need to strengthen 'the cocoon of Englishness needed for cultural survival' and to create a 'friendly world into which the European settler [could] move without strain'.<sup>60</sup> During the period of adaptation to a very different natural environment it was posited that there were a number of 'typical' colonial landscapes whose essential qualities could, and should, be captured in paint.<sup>61</sup> Sophia

<sup>53</sup> Mary Eagle, 'Painting and Australian Identity', in Carroll, 1982, p. 184.

<sup>54</sup> Kerr, 1980, p. 361.

<sup>55</sup> Smith, 'History and the Visual Arts', 1976, p. 159.

<sup>56</sup> Stafford, 1984, p. xxi.

<sup>57</sup> Meredith, 1852, vol. 1, p. 84.

<sup>58</sup> Schama, 1995, p. 15.

<sup>59</sup> Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 10 September 1861, Adams, 1969, p. 76.

<sup>60</sup> Robert Hughes, *The Art of Australia*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Victoria, 1970 (1965), pp. 37, 42.

<sup>61</sup> Proudfoot, 1979, p. 32.



PLATE 19. *Five Islands with Aborigines and Lightning, Sophia Campbell, 1816. Privately owned.*  
*Produced in From Sydney Cove to Duntrron: A Family Album of Early Life in Australia.*

Palmer who accompanied her brother and his family to Port Jackson in 1800, married Robert Campbell, a shipping merchant a year later and set herself the task of capturing in paint typical colonial landscapes. Quite a few of Sophia's paintings of the 'wilderness' were produced during 1817: a year in which Sophia accompanied her husband on his travels to places which had not yet been settled. One such 'wild' place was the Illawarra district where Sophia used the Five Islands as the subject for a watercolour. (plate 19) When Sophia visited the Illawarra district it was just twelve months after its great cedar forests - which caused it to be considered a 'land of plenty' - had been discovered so it is likely that the only sign of European habitation would have been a few convict huts.<sup>62</sup> Sophia painted the Illawarra as an empty, gentle and cheerful land in which a few naked Adams responded in wonder to the glory of God in the form of lightning. Sophia's storm over the sea did not darken the prospect: clearly it did not frighten its female viewer with its ferocity.<sup>63</sup> As represented by Sophia the land of the Illawarra coast was a 'natural' gentleman's parkland of trees and pasture.<sup>64</sup> Although Kerr believed Sophia was cheeky enough to paint women not only in her Sydney street scenes but sitting inside a functioning courtroom - where women were not supposed to go - there are no women in her depictions of Arcadian landscape.<sup>65</sup> It is probable that despite her preparedness to paint idealised 'wild' landscapes, Sophia herself preferred to live on the busy Sydney wharf where her husband had built her home.

The habit of placing groups of diminutive Aborigines in the foreground of Arcadic paintings was very common in the early years of settlement. For Sophia, as for Joseph Lycett who painted in a similar style, such tiny figures were symbols of man as dwarfed by nature; man as an insignificant insect before God. It is possible that in this way representations of Aborigines as stick figures, traditionally small in the tradition of Claude, may have contributed to a more sinister perception of Aborigines as spiders / insects.<sup>66</sup> The inclusion of Aboriginal figures in Sophia's paintings provides just one example among many

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<sup>62</sup> Joan Kerr, in Joan Kerr & Hugh Falkus, *From Sydney Cove to Duntroon: a Family Album of Early Life in Australia*, Hutchinson, Australia, 1982, p. 39.

<sup>63</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 7 March 1791, Macarthur Onslow, 1973, p. 30. Mary Mowle, *Journal*, 24 November 1853 in Clarke, 1986, p. 196. From first settlement women claimed they were afraid of the intensity of thunderstorms in the colonies as compared with Britain. They therefore claimed that they enjoyed thunderstorms over the sea because they seemed much less fierce.

<sup>64</sup> It was rare for settlers to realise that such parkland was formed by controlled native burning.

<sup>65</sup> Kerr & Falkus, 1982, pp. 45-6. Kerr believed Sophia portrayed herself in the courtroom as part of the audience at a libel case brought by Samuel Marsden against the Colonial Secretary John Thomas Campbell.

<sup>66</sup> Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 28 August 1862, Adams, 1969, p. 92. '[The natives] are the queerest looking mortals certainly, with their long lean legs and arms without an atom of flesh on them, more like spiders than anything human'.

in a long tradition of attempting to convert the landscape from an Aboriginal, to a settler Arcadia.<sup>67</sup>

### **Breaking out - science and art, a 'feminine' hybrid.**

In the early years of settlement the painting of wildflowers by colonial women clearly served as a way for them to explore and come to terms with their new surroundings. However the practice of natural history art by colonial women also represented a fascination with the exotic flora and fauna of a new land through which colonial women could gain considerable kudos.<sup>68</sup> Two nineteenth century women, one born in England (Louisa Meredith, 1812-1895), and one born in Australia (Louisa Atkinson, 1834-1872) managed to combine active domestic lives with demanding professional careers as artists, writers and naturalists. Both women were influenced not only by the writing and attitudes of Charles Darwin, but by those of John Ruskin. Ruskin loved flowers, especially those from 'the wild': though searching and inquiring in his approach to nature Ruskin was above all a painter / poet who drew birds, flowers and animals in order to know them better. His drawings were thus not so much an end in themselves as a means through which to explore 'beauty' in nature. Nevertheless, although Ruskin's drawings capture the feeling of his subject with accuracy and sympathy - even tenderness - they are thought to 'rank below his [extremely eloquent] prose descriptions'.<sup>69</sup> Colonial women such as Meredith and Atkinson who were influenced by Ruskin helped establish a feminine genre of illustrated nature writing based on the scientific traditions of zoology, entomology and botany which expressed both scientific and aesthetic concerns. In the imaginative prose writing of Louisa Meredith and Louisa Atkinson - both of whom published novels in addition to books and articles on natural history - their romantic anthropomorphising of the native animals which they kept as pets, and their wish to preserve / conserve the natural environment were powerfully and imaginatively expressed.

### **Louisa Meredith as British-born natural historian, writer and artist.**

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<sup>67</sup> Rod MacNeil, 'Mythologically Correct: Peopling the Australian Landscape and Sydney Long's White Aborigines', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 46, September 1995, pp. 71-74.

<sup>68</sup> Gooding, 1995, p. 82. For instance Georgiana Leake made an album of botanically correct wildflower studies (from which plate 8 is taken) which she took with her to England to have identified by the botanists at Kew gardens. Ann Elias, 'Useless Beauty', *Art and Australia*, vol. 32, no. 1, Spring, 1994, p. 71.

<sup>69</sup> Blunt, 1950, p. 231-2, 234.

In addition to her life as wife and mother, Louisa Meredith devoted her time to recording her clearly observed impressions of the social and natural environment of New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania.<sup>70</sup> Originally a miniaturist, Louisa Meredith's illustrations for her earliest books were strongly coloured but crudely drawn. However the lessons she so enjoyed taking from John Glover and Skinner Prout in Hobart improved her painting technique, so that her later work (plate 20), while just as vigorous and colourful as that done earlier, was somewhat better executed.<sup>71</sup> During her first years in Tasmania when her four sons were small and her husband unsuccessfully attempted to make a living from farming, Louisa largely wrote and painted in order to supplement her family's income. After 1856, when Charles Meredith became the first member for Glamorgan and then, shortly thereafter, Colonial Treasurer, Louisa's busy life left little time for painting or writing. After her husband's death in 1882 however, Louisa again found herself pressed for money and responded by publishing a number of books on natural history. Although initially Louisa wrote wholly for British readers, after living in the colonies for some time she also addressed a local audience.<sup>72</sup> Early in her artistic career Louisa explained the criteria she followed in painting flowers and other natural history subjects:

My models always appear to me too perfect in their beauty for me to dream of doing aught but attempt to copy, faithfully as I can, their various forms and colours: invention here must be positive error, and I anxiously strive to avoid *that* fault.<sup>73</sup>

This was a model which Louisa followed all her life. Four years before she died at the age of 83 Louisa claimed she had spent her life making a collection of 'native flower portraits'. Given her passion for reproducing nature as exactly as possible, it is not surprising to find that Louisa Meredith, who described her natural history art as a 'gallery of a long life's brain photographs' was an early student of photography.<sup>74</sup> Although Louisa painted natural history subjects, portraits, landscape and still-life, she considered herself to be a better writer than artist. A comparison of her painting and her writing shows why. Louisa called plate 20 'Cool Debate'. It appeared in the last of her books to be published - a lavish limited edition coffee-table book - alongside a poem called 'Water-Beaux' and a text

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<sup>70</sup> Campbell, 1989, pp. 37, 40. In Hobart Louisa Meredith was part of a group - which included Mary Morton Allport and Lady Jane Franklin - of talented men and women landscape and natural history artists who were taught by John Glover and Skinner Prout. Louisa expressed in her diary her excitement at being part of this artistic flourishing.

<sup>71</sup> Clemente, 1991, p. 44.

<sup>72</sup> Meredith, 1852, vol 1, p. 74, 1891, p. 10.

<sup>73</sup> Meredith, 1839, p. xii.

<sup>74</sup> Louisa Meredith, *Bush Friends in Tasmania, Native Flowers, Fruits and Insects, Drawn from Nature, with prose descriptions and illustrations in verse*, Last series. Macmillan, London, 1891, p. 3.



478 20. *A Good Debate. Lithograph of the Australian Gold Frog, Louisa Meredith, 1891. Plate 8.*  
*Friends in Tasmania.*

which informed the reader that Louisa had made the acquaintance of the frogs in her first year in Australia and had ever since been fascinated by their 'beauty' and their 'queerly intelligent' expressions. Louisa claimed that it was because her painting could not capture 'the brilliant living colour of the originals' that she attempted to catch the appearance of the 'gold frogs' in words. She wrote:

I found the embroidery, as we may term it, on their wondrously shaded green velvet coats had precisely the appearance of richly embossed dead gold, set off by markings of shining black and white, as though jet and pearls were worked in with it: and as they move & breathe ever varying effects of light and shade seem to throb and pulsate all over them.<sup>75</sup>

Louisa was an embroiderer - with thread, with paint, with words. It would seem that women's early training in embroidery - and patience - went deep. It is said that 'nature writing is compounded of both information and imagination': in the prose of Louisa Meredith didacticism co-existed with lyrical word paintings. After her children had matured, Louisa wrote children's stories which valorised a sedate family life, imparted information about Australian birds and animals and moralised about the evils of wanton destruction of the natural environment and the killing of animals for sport.<sup>76</sup> Meredith's biographer claimed that Louisa had a 'lively penetrating intelligence' and exhibited in her writing a 'certain amount of original thought'.<sup>77</sup> This was most obvious in her embracing of conservationist issues. She openly condemned the leaving of litter in the natural environment, successfully encouraged her husband to have legislation passed to protect Tasmanian wildlife and used her art and writing as a means to make others care as much as she did about the preservation of that which she considered 'beautiful' in the natural environment.<sup>78</sup> In her later years Louisa was particularly appalled by the devastation which indiscriminate clearing and burning (the latter of which was meant to stop disease in sheep) caused in the Tasmanian countryside, writing:

[W]hen I remember the exquisite, melodious beauty of the spot where I often have gathered such sprays as I have drawn here; the bright little rivulet - boughs of Ti-tree, white blossomed and fragrant; the golden-fringed Acacias, and the lovely Currajong - and then I recall the self-same river-dell, as I last saw it; the shrubs all cut away, or

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<sup>75</sup> Meredith, 1891, pp. 40, 76.

<sup>76</sup> Niall, 1984 pp. 61, 62. Books such as *Tasmanian Friends and Foes, Feathered, Furred and Finned*, (1880).

<sup>77</sup> Chisholm, 1964, p. xv, Rae-Ellis, 1979, p. 186.

<sup>78</sup> Rae-Ellis, 1979, p. 182. At his wife's urging between 1860-74 Charles Meredith had legislation for the protection of wildlife introduced in Tasmania which was well ahead of that introduced in the other states of Australia. Bolton, 1981, pp. 98-9. Bolton suggested that this may have been possible because in Tasmania 'working class prejudices against game laws were less powerful and gentry attitudes stronger and more responsible'.

burned to black stumps; not one left; the giants of the primeval forest which grew near, lying prostrate and dead; the bright little flowers and graceful reeds all gone; the poor diminished stream creeping drearily among bare stones and charred sticks, I cannot allow that the "improvements" are welcome.<sup>79</sup>

Vivid, forceful and relatively accurate, during her life Louisa Meredith's eight illustrated books were well received in Britain. In Australia her later works in particular were appreciated for their 'beauty' and for the record they provided of the natural productions of Tasmania. Louisa was thus a populariser of the Australian environment in both Britain and Australia.<sup>80</sup> There is no doubt that Louisa Meredith found the destruction of what she gradually came to experience as a beloved colonial environment deeply distressing. The tragedy of Louisa's position was that her popularisation - through the use of the extended metaphor of the God-given wealth of golden sunsets, diamond birds, ruby-coloured flowers, frogs of gold embossed with pearls and jet - of the 'beautiful' environment of Australia with its natural 'riches' was interpreted by others as the promise of material wealth to be wrested from the 'mother' earth, either literally in the form of mineral deposits, or metaphorically in the form of agricultural products and tourism.

Louisa Meredith's books would thus seem to be beneficent at best and obliquely harmful at worst. However, it needs to be remembered that in her works the aesthetics of colonisation can be seen at work wherein the reproduction of visible surfaces allows contemporary power relations to be seen as normal and / or as separate from / irrelevant to an all-compelling quest for beauty. The attitudes which Louisa Meredith expressed in her writing in regard to Aborigines and convicts now make painful reading. Her evoking of the senses and the imagination in an apolitical context could also be said to provide an example of aesthetics accommodating ambiguity and justifying the exploitation of anyone or anything which 'nature' - as defined by imperialism - did not favour.<sup>81</sup>

Louisa Atkinson as colonial-born natural historian, writer / artist.

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<sup>79</sup> Meredith, 1891, p. 10.

<sup>80</sup> Rae-Ellis, 1979, pp. 194-5, 217-9.

<sup>81</sup> See Meredith, 1881, pp. 79-82. Her stories about Aborigines were told to her by her husband who lived in Tasmania as a child. Graeme Turner, 'Nostalgia for the Primitive', *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, May 1985, p. 65. 'The result of man's extraction from an historical condition and placement within nature is the production of the conviction that our historical limitations are produced by nature'.



Colonially born, and childless until eighteen days before her death,<sup>82</sup> Louisa Atkinson's writing was more obviously scientific and didactic than that of Louisa Meredith. Louisa's father, James Atkinson, whom Louisa never knew but whose memory her mother had kept alive, was a progressive farmer who very early saw the need to adapt European plants, animals and farming methods to the colonial environment.<sup>83</sup> A populariser of natural history studies through her illustrated series of articles published (1853-72) in the *Illustrated Sydney News*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Sydney Mail*, and the *Horticultural Magazine*, Louisa Atkinson expressed the pragmatism of her father in her natural history writing and the imaginative force of her mother in her novels.<sup>84</sup> As well as being the published author of six novels - novels in which, in the same way as Catherine Spence, Louisa explored new roles for women under patriarchy - she was a very competent taxidermist and natural history writer, collector and illustrator. Although mainly educated by her mother and lacking formal art training, Louisa developed an attractive style of naturalistic but scientifically accurate watercolour painting of flowers, shells, fossils, butterflies, insects, birds, lizards, snakes, mammals, aboriginal artefacts and landscapes. Most of her natural history art is set against backgrounds in which her subject lived and has an appealingly strong sense of life. (plate 21) Often - particularly in her bird paintings - Louisa's desire to represent her subject as fully alive and mobile over-taxed her artistic ability: clearly she was prepared to sacrifice accuracy to her concept of the nature of the animal she depicted.<sup>85</sup> In this her natural history art was more about ideas than has generally been recognised.

An active woman despite her chronic ill-health, Louisa Atkinson spent much of her time collecting botanical specimens in the bush. To do this she rode enormously long distances and gained a reputation for daring-do by wearing 'trousers' (as with Annie Baxter these were 'pantaloon' or culottes) on her riding expeditions. Many of Louisa's written articles are

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<sup>82</sup> Elizabeth Lawson, *The Natural Art of Louisa Atkinson*. State Library of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1995, p. 112. In her memorial service Louisa Atkinson was said to have had the symptoms of 'pulmonary consumption'. Three years before her death Louisa described herself as having breathing difficulties and weekly 'heart attacks'. Family legend had it that Louisa survived the birth of her daughter but died from coronary failure when she saw her husband's horse return riderless to their home.

<sup>83</sup> 'James Atkinson', T. M. Perry, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, (1788-1850, vol. 1), 1966, p. 42. James Atkinson published *An Account of the State of Agriculture & Grazing in New South Wales* in 1826.

<sup>84</sup> For a comparison with her father's writing see Louisa Atkinson, 'Hanging Rock on the Southern Road', 3 February 1871, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Possums, if killed, should be killed for their fur. A Trip Southward to Manaro and Molonglo', 29 May 1871, *Sydney Morning Herald*. Includes an analysis of the destruction of forests. 'What a pity that forest culture is neglected!' For a comparison with her mother's 'adventure' stories see Louisa Atkinson, *Gertrude, the Emigrant: A Tale of Colonial Life*, (1857) or *Tom Hellicar's Children*, (1871).

<sup>85</sup> Lawson, 1995. For examples of this see her birds, pp. 69-81, and her koala, p. 95.



PLATE 21. Study of a Possum. Louisa Atkinson, c 1860. National Trust of Australia. New South  
Wales.

based on the genre of picturesque travel writing wherein she blended into a seamless narrative anecdotes about people, personal opinion, botanical knowledge, scientific nomenclature, the habitat and location of plants and informed accounts of the various native animals she kept as pets. Louisa Atkinson did not marry until March 1869, eighteen months after the death of her mother, by which time she was 38 years old. She then married a friend of long standing - James Calvert a man who, having accompanied Ludwig Leichhardt on his expedition to Port Essington in 1844-5, was as interested in botany and explorative activities as herself.

As the daughter of Charlotte Barton Louisa Atkinson was taught from an early age not only to 'love' and observe nature, but to divide nature into dark and light, lovable and repulsive. In the previous generation Charlotte Barton demonstrated this in *A Mother's Offering to her Children*: Louisa Meredith demonstrated it by making dichotomies between 'savage' mythical animals such as dingos - who, she claimed, ate their victims alive - and 'gentle' inoffensive animals such as opossums who, in her opinion, could do no harm.<sup>86</sup> By the time Louisa Atkinson wrote it was common to represent young Australian women as effortlessly making friends with and nurturing a variety of native animal life.<sup>87</sup> Louisa's experience of caring for native animals caused her to be her better informed than her mother's generation. However, although less likely to either romanticise or satanise native animals, like most colonial women, Louisa treated native animals as if they were her children.<sup>88</sup> Having had possums and opossums as pets from an early age, Louisa expressed an especial affinity for these supposedly 'cuddly' animals, painting them often and writing of them as:

[T]he loveliest of the animals with which our forests in time past abounded. Of the most playful disposition, and capable of much animal education ... they skip from branch to branch with a truly tropical celerity, now whisking their long and bushy tails, fan like, through the air ... [The possum] feeds principally upon herbage and foliage, and soon attains a most unfashionable obesity.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Meredith, 1844, pp. 132-6.

<sup>87</sup> McPherson, in Hoorne, 1994, pp. 67-8, 79, reproducing 'An Australian Nature Convention' in *Australian Illustrated News*, April, 1892, p. 15. 'The girl is represented as having a femininity that is caring, nurturing and civilising. The animals in their tamed and domesticated state are symbolic of the 'successful' colonisation of Australia'.

<sup>88</sup> North, 1980 (1893), pp. 180-1, 183, 194, 196, 233. North took opossum 'mice' with her as her 'travelling companions' when she left Australia. Millett, 1980 (1872), pp. 204-215, Emmeline De Falbe, *Memoirs*, 1902, in de Vries-Evans, 1987, p. 55. Ellis Rowan & Winnifred Scott, *Bill Bailee: The Story of a Pet Bilboa*, Whitcombe & Tombs, Melbourne, n.d. (1908) pp. 35, 63. ' [E]very day [the bilboa] grew tamer and more completely hers'.

<sup>89</sup> Louisa Atkinson, 7 January 1854, *Illustrated Sydney News*. The appeal of Louisa's paintings of possums and opossums can be seen from the fact that her biographers respectively included 4 (Clarke, 1990, pp. 68, 80, 90, 220) and 6 (Lawson, 1995, pp. 4, 15, 18, 45, 49, 84.) of her representations of possums in their

One of the features of such writing was that, like natural history art, it was always represented as being based on first hand knowledge - that is information 'drawn from nature'.<sup>90</sup> Chambers has shown that 'interpolation of symbolic meanings, aesthetic values, and other cultural factors [are] found' in even the most 'naturalistic' of animal pictures and verbal representations.<sup>91</sup> This can be seen in Louisa's painting of a possum which she transformed into a harmless cuddly child in the same way that koalas are transformed in popular mythology in the present.<sup>92</sup> This represented a dichotomising by women (in particular) of the animal world into savage and untrustworthy on the one hand and gentle, lovable and childlike on the other: a dichotomy which extended into women's representations of Aborigines.

The flower painters / naturalists Louisa Atkinson, Louisa Meredith and Ellis Rowan all regarded Aborigines through the split representation of 'man's best friend' and saviour, and savage, sly killer.<sup>93</sup> This representation, which had attained widespread acceptance in Australian society by the 1860s, was one which was widely propagated by writers on the natural environment until the 1950s.<sup>94</sup> Isabel McBryde, who only recognised the caring aspect of such representation, described women's construction of Aborigines as childlike as 'the inheritance of concern' which in the nineteenth century was passed on from one generation of women to another.<sup>95</sup> In making this assessment McBryde failed to recognise

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publications, and by the fact that one of the two paintings by Louisa Atkinson's to hang in a public place - a painting which Thomas, Kerr, 1995, p. 167, described as Louisa's 'finest work ... portrayed with obvious affection' - is her representation of a possum which hangs in the Old Government House, Parramatta. In the nineteenth century women's 'love of' native pets coexisted with a belief in their use for food and / or industry.

<sup>90</sup> David Wade Chambers, *Beasts and Other Illusions: A portfolio of exhibits*, Deakin University, Victoria, 1984, p. 37. Natural artists of the time always claimed they had 'drawn from nature' despite the fact that many of their subjects were long dead or had been copied from another representation. The role that preconception and pictorial and social convention played in the preparation and the reception of graphic, spoken and written images was not recognised until much later.

<sup>91</sup> Chambers, 1984, p. 2.

<sup>92</sup> It is interesting that Louisa, who as a child had a strong-minded male koala as a pet, did not in the least represent Koalas in this anthropomorphised and infantilised way.

<sup>93</sup> Atkinson, 1978, pp. 18, 19. 'The Fitzroy Waterfalls'. (originally published *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 January 1871). Louisa Meredith, 1880, 1891. Rowan, *The Flower Hunter*, reprint n.d., (1898), pp. 70, 124.

<sup>94</sup> Rachel Henning to Mr Boyce, 23 March 1864, Adams, 1969, p. 161. 'I never heard an instance of a traveller being murdered or robbed by his own blackboy. We had the wild blacks on the run last week. They came down from the hills and robbed the shepherd's hut ... the blacks to the northward are said to be ...[even] more ingenious than these tribes'. For a consideration of this sort of representation in the twentieth century in the writing of journalist / anthropologist Daisy Bates and the journalist Ernestine Hill see Hodge, 1992, Chs 7 & 8.

<sup>95</sup> McBryde in Markus, 1993, pp. 39-45.

that the construction of Aborigines as children not only had the down side of Aborigines also being constructed as savage cannibals, but that it culminated early in the twentieth century in 'concerned' women such as Daisy Bates being employed by the government to take Aboriginal children away from their parents in order to place them in European institutions where it was thought they would receive 'proper' care.<sup>96</sup>

The complex position women such as Louisa Atkinson and Louisa Meredith took in regard to gender roles and the natural environment can best be explored by comparing a watercolour landscape executed by Louisa Atkinson (plate 22) with a watercolour on the same subject executed by Conrad Martens. (plate 23) At the time they were painted art was thought to work both as a moral agent and as an advocate of patriotism / commerce.<sup>97</sup> Conrad Martens painted 'Road Across the Blue Mountains with Mount Tomah in the Distance' in 1845. Only 45.5 x 65.2 cm in size, it has been described as 'small yet sublime, an epic of exploration and expansion ..[in which] the purely local awareness that an unknown Australian continent awaited discovery became an image for the birth of the nation'.<sup>98</sup> Martens was not interested in studying or portraying nature in detail; it is said of him that his art added poetry to a nature which he regarded as intrinsically inartistic.<sup>99</sup> Nature's laws, rather than experiential nature was what Martens sought to represent, something which would link a visionary science with a religious sense of unity and wonder; or, to put it another way, 'observation in the service of exultation' - the teaching of people to 'see' nature 'properly' through the use of art as poetic rhetoric.<sup>100</sup>

Louisa Atkinson's 'Pass Through the Blue Mountains' (c.1860) was clearly a copy of Martens' 'Road Across the Blue Mountains' in which the artist chose to alter the ambience, perspective and detail of the original. During the ten years she lived at Kurrajong Heights in the Blue Mountains Louisa often used the pass depicted by Conrad Martens when she made botanical collecting expeditions to Mount Tomah. Hence when she saw Martens' painting she may well have been intrigued (or irritated) to see his etherealised depiction of it. Seemingly she painted the largest of her watercolour landscapes in order to record the ways in which her vision differed from that of this very famous professional male painter. While it is difficult to know what to attribute to lack of expertise and what to intention, in Louisa's

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<sup>96</sup> Bruce & Callaway, 1989, pp. 269- 72. Likewise corroborees were initially represented in art as terrifying orgies - images of sexual debauchery and cannibalism - and later as a 'form of entertainment staged for the enjoyment of white people'. Hodge, 1992, Ch 6. Daisy Bates collected Aboriginal children 1908-1913.

<sup>97</sup> Smith, 1979, pp. 52-3, 106.

<sup>98</sup> Mary Eagle & John Jones, *A Story of Australian Painting*, Macmillan, Australia, 1996, p. 22.

<sup>99</sup> Eagle & Jones, 1996, p. 25.



PLATE 22. Pass Through the Blue Mountains. Louisa Atkinson, c 1860. National Gallery of Australia.



*PLATE 23. Road Across the Blue Mountains with Mount Tomah in the Distance. Conrad Martens.  
1845. J.C.A. Australia Collection.*

painting there are some differences that can only have been intentional. Louisa knew the road to Mount Tomah very well - it was steep, winding and above all, dangerous. No doubt it recalled for her the Worrendery Mountain Pass beyond Oldbury through which Louisa and her mother had fled from Louisa's violent step father when she was a child - an event which as an adult Louisa described in these words:

So steep were the mountains, so unabridged the streams, that no vehicle could cross them. Goods were therefore conveyed on pack-saddles placed on the backs of bullocks trained to the work. The party, excepting the drivers, were mounted on horseback... The pass had been improved by cutting steps down the face of the rocks, and the oxen .. stumbled down as best they could, while the horses groaned audibly, trembled, and even in some instances sunk powerless on the dangerous declivity, not encouraged by the sight of the gully yawning at the side of the narrow road. ... The cabbage- palms stretched their slender stems above the tangled copse and looked up to the face of heaven; the tree ferns, elkhorn and birds-nest ferns revelled in the humid shades. The shrieks of the blue Mountain and king parrots gave life to the green wood, and every stream was occupied by frogs which vied with each other in their shrill-toned croaking.<sup>101</sup>

Here the adult Louisa merged childhood memories of a terrifying mountain escape from a 'wild' man through Worrendery with later memories of the Blue mountains as a peaceful Eden in which she lived with her beloved mother and wandered at will enjoying the flora and fauna of paradise. According to Schama there have always been two Arcades in European thought; the Arcadia as idyll - a place of bucolic leisure - and the Arcadic 'dark grove of desire' - potentially a place of primitive panic, a 'labyrinth of madness and death'.<sup>102</sup> Martens might flatten out his mountain and give to his scene an air of tranquil sublimity by including picnicking travellers and resting bullocks to demonstrate the ease with which the Edenic pastures beyond the mountains could be reached; *he* might celebrate the unproblematic progress of civilisation into the future, *she*, like other creative women who painted or wrote about Blue Mountain crossings at this time,<sup>103</sup> was into counting the cost of the desire for instant success and future progress; Louisa's an ambiguous Arcadia which she represented as being as likely to generate negative male desire as an inclusive female sense of belonging.

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<sup>100</sup> Eagle & Jones, 1996, pp. 24, 52, 55, 56.

<sup>101</sup> Louisa Atkinson, 'A Night in the Bush' in Webby, 1989, pp. 172-5. Muir, 1980, p. 31.

<sup>102</sup> Schama, 1995, pp. 517, 522.

<sup>103</sup> Kerr, 1995, p. 138. Mary Martindale 'used her art critically' when she made 19 watercolour and pencil and wash drawings recording a trip she made with her husband across the Blue Mountains in 1860. On the title page of her sketchbook she depicted mountain scenery and a wagon train in the background and the skull and skeleton of a bullock and an abandoned wagon wheel in the foreground. Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 10 September 10 1861, Adams, 1969, pp. 79-80. After crossing the Blue Mountains in 1861 Rachel Henning complained of the way men treated horses and bullocks and of the number of their carcasses and skeletons which she saw.



In Louisa's painting Martens' tranquil resting bullocks have become a lone decaying carcass; the family at rest two vulturine wedge-tailed eagles - the largest birds of prey in Australia - here shown by Louisa, as one of her biographers put it, in an 'efficient, cruel posture' feeding off the dead bullock's misfortune.<sup>104</sup> In Louisa's portrayal of the convict-hewn mountain road, rocks have been used to shore up the dangerous edges in many places. Clearly Louisa was symbolically portraying mountains as places fraught with danger - not only in nature, but in mid-Victorian, post gold rush colonial society where wealth and social climbing had made people competitive. As Louisa Atkinson was a devout Christian the road in her painting no doubt also represented a 'path to heaven' whereon 'many shall fall by the wayside'. In Louisa's imagery Canaan or the land of promise which Conrad Martens celebrated and anticipated on the other side of his Blue Mountain crossing could never happen - for where Louisa's road met the promised blue heaven, it disappeared entirely.

As well as including in her painting a Christian injunction against materiality Louisa Atkinson - a strong minded and (for her time) liberated woman - recognised that in the society in which she and her mother lived it was dangerous for a woman such as herself to attempt to climb the heights of masculine privilege in the way in which she was attempting to do with her journalism and botanical work. Finally Louisa Atkinson seemed to be suggesting (perhaps unconsciously) that within colonial society - and the colonial psyche - domesticated nature in the form of a bullock dead from overwork served as prey for an alienated 'wild' nature in the shape of wedge-tailed eagles - encouraged by misfortune to scavenge rather than hunt. Although, in painting such a scene Louisa Atkinson anticipated the work of male colonial artists such as Louis Buvelot by over a decade, like most nineteenth century women artists she received no recognition whatsoever for her creative insight.<sup>105</sup>

### **Women's flower painting as 'high art'.**

In the west painting has had a moral and political, as well as an aesthetic function: consequently before the twentieth century women have been largely excluded from higher areas of art training and producing public art. Even in the seventeenth century when a

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<sup>104</sup> Lawson, 1995, p. 67. Lawson commented 'only at last does the eye, like the bird, alight on this small, realistic drama of the immediate foreground'. Louisa Atkinson knew what she was doing - left to itself nature could be dangerous, but not ugly - in her opinion man introduced the anomalous working bullock into the Australian scenery and men's overweening ambition / greed caused its death.

<sup>105</sup> Greer, 1979, p. 327. Greer claimed that when women led men in artistic expression in the nineteenth century they were soon 'plundered and overtaken'.

number of women became successful professional painters it was as painters of portraits and floral still-life.<sup>106</sup> After this high point in the seventeenth century, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was a return of women to the practice of 'amateur' or private arts and crafts. The increasing commercialisation of horticulture and the parallel growth of an analogy between women, the essential feminine and flowers, wherein women, flowers and the feminine were seen as beautiful and fragile - even, if the metaphor was pushed, weak and useless - meant that by the beginning of the nineteenth century the painting of flowers (by anyone) was considered a decorative female accomplishment rather than 'fine' or 'high' art. Because of this in the twentieth century women's nineteenth century floral art has been erroneously dismissed as purely representative - women endlessly recording their sense of wonder at what was 'beautiful' in nature.

Although flowers were reabsorbed into mainstream or 'high' art by male impressionists in the late nineteenth century, late nineteenth century women floral artists continued to pride themselves on painting and drawing naturalistic representations of flowers as part of their exploration / celebration of their female personas and the 'natural' world.<sup>107</sup> It is interesting to note that the naturalistic strand in floral and animal art - a refusal to produce other than photographic images - is something which, despite the wide use of photography in the field, has been continued by natural history artists (of both sexes) throughout the twentieth century.<sup>108</sup>

During the nineteenth century the depiction of flowers was viewed in the Australian colonies as an anti-intellectual, non-professional and unambitious activity which, in being considered the province of women, was largely avoided by male painters. However women took the representation of flowers upon themselves with such enthusiasm that by the end of the nineteenth century women's flower painting came to represent a feminine challenge to the 'seriousness' of art and to the idea of a progressive cultural life for the soon-to-be Australian federation.<sup>109</sup> It is because the practice of floral art - situated as it was at the very heart of patriarchy - by colonial women in the late nineteenth century caused some of its best known

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<sup>106</sup> Greer, 1979, pp. 227-8, 231.

<sup>107</sup> Stratton, 1996, p. 105. In terms of the metaphor of flowers the surveillance of women (by themselves and others) which nineteenth century flower and portrait painting represented was taken over by the photography of the fashion and film industries, pomography and the popular press - for example by the paparazzi's 'capturing' images of famous women such as Princess Diana, the 'English rose'.

<sup>108</sup> Terence James Bond, *Birds: The Paintings of Terence James Bond*, Ian Drakeford Publishing, Australia, 1988, p. 1. 'I see my work as an exploration and celebration of the natural world'.

<sup>109</sup> Elias, 1994, pp. 66-8. Flowers could serve as emblems for nation or state, but, because they were thought of as objects of 'mimetic representation' were considered inappropriate as national art.

female exponents to startle the masculine world of professional art sufficiently to mobilise a reactionary reprisal that I have found it worthwhile to trace its history.

1830 - Frances Macleay.

According to Wilfred Blunt, through the ages the painter of flowers has been 'tossed like a shuttlecock' between the scientist and the 'lover of the beautiful': in their art endlessly attempting to effect a compromise between these conflicting ideals.<sup>110</sup> Until 1830 scientific art in the colonies was largely functional. After this it took on a more decorative function with people like John Lewin painting large watercolours of plants, flowers and birds which were intended for display in public institutions and stately homes. It was in this climate of emergent display that Fanny Macleay painted a large floral still-life in the traditional Dutch style of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Before she emigrated to Sydney in 1826, on three occasions Fanny Macleay exhibited large floral still-life pieces at the London Royal Academy.<sup>111</sup> While in Britain Fanny received special tuition from a male artist, painting flowers in water colour and sketching landscapes, historical buildings and ruins. After she emigrated Fanny mostly produced small, 'scientific' paintings of flowers, plants and other natural history specimens, as far as it is known only completing one more large floral piece, a print of which currently hangs in the historic Macleay home - Elizabeth Bay House in Sydney.<sup>112</sup> As this painting is unique of its kind in the Australian art of the time it is well worthy of close analysis.

What had been a rising tide of women floral artists in the eighteenth century became a flood in the early years of the nineteenth when so many women practiced flower painting that, as Germaine Greer put it, 'it took only a nod or a nudge in the right quarter and the ladies flocked to exhibit'.<sup>113</sup> When Fanny Macleay exhibited a large still life floral piece as an Honorary Exhibitor at the Royal Academy Summer Show in 1824 there were more than fifty other flower pieces exhibited by women. A print of the floral still life which Fanny

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<sup>110</sup> Blunt, 1950, p. 266.

<sup>111</sup> Algernon Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and Their Work from its Foundation in 1769 to 1904*, Henry Graves, London, 1905. Fanny exhibited fruit and flower pieces in 1816, 1819, 1824.

<sup>112</sup> Fanny to William Macleay, 15 August 1817 in Windschuttle, 1988, p. 55. Fanny to William Macleay, 4 December 1826 in Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 71. According to her diaries and letters in the colonies Fanny sketched and painted plants, flowers, insects, animals, fossils, houses and landscape. Except for one botanical illustration, two large still-life and the pencil sketch of a Macleay house all her art has been lost.

<sup>113</sup> Greer, 1979, pp. 248-9.

exhibited in 1824 - the original is privately owned - is also on display at Elizabeth Bay House. Joan Kerr described it as a 'splendid large painting of English garden flowers, meticulously detailed in the sumptuous seventeenth-century Dutch manner of Rachel Ruysch'.<sup>114</sup> The 71.5 x 50.5 cm water colour depicts a large copper urn containing a complex arrangement of English garden flowers such as irises, roses, poppies, foxgloves and hydrangeas set upon a table within an English interior. Included in the floral arrangement are convolvulus and various grasses, while beside the urn on the left a snail is depicted and on the right a bird's nest containing small blue eggs. The twin of it which Fanny painted in Australia, though the same in size, style and genre, depicts Australian native flora arranged in a terra cotta urn set upon the wall surrounding a paradisiacal garden.

Having arrived in New South Wales during the summer of January 1826, Fanny complained bitterly about (among other things) the uninteresting nature of the country and its vegetation. She changed her mind however when the first wildflowers began to bloom in early Spring, and, on finding 'the bush quite full of blossom', reconciled herself to her new surroundings by recording the native flora in paint. She told her brother William: 'I have spoken to many persons requesting to have all curious specimen plants sent to me for I have not forgotten my promise of forming a Hortus Pictus for you'.<sup>115</sup>

For four years Fanny made studies of individual native flowers for the promised Hortus Pictus, including that of *Hibiscus heterophyllous* or native Rosella about which she wrote:

I have made a *tolerable Daub* last week - a beautiful new Species of Hibiscus from the Hastings River - the banks of it I mean - a very splendid large noble superb magnificent flower of a pretty rose colour - Such beauty you never beheld - you can have nothing finer.<sup>116</sup>

At last, on 2 December 1830, Fanny was able to tell her brother that she was 'very busy drawing a large piece of Native Plants & it is not very ugly tho' *of course* full of faults'.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Kerr in Toy, Riley, & McDonald, 1988, p. 11. The essence of seventeenth century floral still life was the imaginative arrangement of rare and attractive flowers.

<sup>115</sup> Fanny to William Macleay, 25 May 1826, 26 July 1826, Windschuttle, 1988, pp. 64-7.

<sup>116</sup> Fanny to William Macleay, 4 December 1826, May 22 1830, Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 70, 71, 121. In May 1830 Fanny told her brother of the influx of settlers to Sydney from the unhappy Swan River Colony - it may be that the settlers brought with them pressed West Australian wildflowers which inspired her to begin her Hortus; certainly she depicted a number of West Australian species in it.

<sup>117</sup> Fanny to William Macleay, 2 December 1830, Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 128. Fanny so needed her brother's praise that she was overly sensitive to his criticism - especially in regards to her art which was extremely important to her - and hence often anticipated or pre-empted it. Calling her precious flower paintings 'daubs' was a form of self-denigration which Fanny sometimes claimed originated from her

This was to become the painting in plate 24, a very competent and creative floral work which has as its crowning piece the rose-pink Hibiscus about which Fanny had written so enthusiastically four years before.<sup>118</sup> It would seem that the extremely busy Fanny Macleay justified undertaking such an ambitious painting by saying (and perhaps believing) that it was painted for her brother. In actuality, as the painting - which is now considered to be 'a quite exceptionally sophisticated example of early Australian colonial art of any kind'<sup>119</sup> - features five Australian plant species which had not at that time been reproduced in any English botanical magazine,<sup>120</sup> Fanny must have been well aware that her painting would greatly enhance her reputation in the colonies as both a 'lady-painter' and a botanist.<sup>121</sup>

In painting a Hortus Pictus or Historia Naturalis Fanny was following a seventeenth century tradition whereby large floral still life paintings in which each separate flower was shown as the ideal of its type were intended to give aesthetic pleasure, enhance moral good and serve as a pictorial record of local flora. In her painting Fanny followed the seventeenth century tradition of using artistic licence to show flowers which came from widely divergent areas and bloomed at different times of the year.<sup>122</sup> It is probable therefore that as well as using her own botanical drawings and paintings of Australian native flowers as studies for her finished piece that Fanny copied from the paintings of others - perhaps, among others, those of her friend Elizabeth Darling, the wife of the Governor of New South Wales.<sup>123</sup>

Twenty one plant varieties are represented in this painting of which sixteen are said to be Australian natives and five introductions from South Africa and Europe.<sup>124</sup> The Australian natives which are featured, though largely species from New South Wales, include some from as far afield as Western Australia. If it is accepted that the bright yellow hibiscus is

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brother: as his letters are now lost there is no way of knowing if William Macleay referred to, or thought of, his sister's art in this way.

<sup>118</sup> Regardless of the asymmetry it introduced into a painting, in the seventeenth century the most valued plants and flowers were put at the top of a floral still life or Hortus Pictus.

<sup>119</sup> Kerr, 1995, p. 272.

<sup>120</sup> Windschuttle, 1988, p. 67. The species were *Brunonia australis*, *Dianella laevis*, *Thysanotis tuberosis*, *Hibiscus diversifolias* and *Connesperma ericinium*.

<sup>121</sup> The term 'lady-painter' made the activity of painting respectable for women by stressing its amateur status - a British trend which seems to have been intensified in the colonies. Georgiana McCrae, a competent professional miniaturist whose family needed money, claimed that because in the colonies her husband objected to her being paid for her work she only sketched gifts for family and friends.

<sup>122</sup> Hans Michael Herzog, *The Art of the Flower: The Floral Still Life from the 17th to the 20th Century*, Kunsthalle, Bielefeld, Germany, n.d., pp. 15-21.

<sup>123</sup> Kerr, 1995, p. 269. Catalogue, Toy, Riley, & McDonald, 1988, pp. 51-2. Eliza Darling made a number of water colour studies of native flowers at this time - including *Tecoma hillii* *jasminoides*, the pink flowered creeper displayed prominently at the lower left of Fanny's still life.

<sup>124</sup> Kerr, 1995, p. 163.



*Hibiscus panduriformis* - which is found in Western Australia as well as South Africa - then I can find only three introduced species, all of which are from Europe. These three introduced species were traditionally included for their symbolic value in most British floral still life paintings. They are the hardy English hedge rose or sweetbriar (shown with its petals fallen to the far left mid-way up the painting) a symbol for Mary, the 'rose without thorn' - that is in Protestant terms, a symbol for woman as sacred.<sup>125</sup> The white hedge rose or sweetbriar and the second symbolic flower in this painting, the red field poppy or 'blood on the earth' as it was called, were two of Britain's best known wildflowers. Together they represented the twin personas of British women as tough, yet fragile, white-skinned and pure yet flame coloured and fertile: in Christian terms the red blood of resurrection which, on being lost into the earth by Christ and by the white virgin (in childbirth), miraculously sprang into new life.<sup>126</sup> The tradition of depicting the perfect Protestant English woman as a white skinned, red haired virgin - which began with stylised representations of Queen Elizabeth I - continued well into the nineteenth century. The poppy, the source of opium which gives the sleep of life and death, was shown in Fanny's painting in bud, full flower, spoilt flower and as a dead seed case, thus serving in the same way as the third symbolic plant, a Mediterranean wild grass called *Brazia Maxima* (substituting in this case for wheat) which represented both the staff of life and ephemerality - death and rebirth. In such paintings the redundancy of symbols for ephemerality - poppies, convolvulus - whose flowers come into bud, bloom and die in one day - grasses and dewdrops (in this painting seen on the hibiscus flowers) were intended to emphasise the brevity of human life and the vanity of human striving: withering flowers and dead grass being thought to demonstrate the biblical injunction that mankind would bloom like a flower and pass away, or die like grass by the wayside.<sup>127</sup> It was thought that such symbolism objectified the cycle of life and death for the viewer: death in the natural world being represented in such paintings as ever-present but potentially regenerative.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> The rose is the oldest domesticated flower: it was recorded on the walls of Knossos in 1600 BC and became politically sensitive in England with the War of the Roses in the sixteenth century. Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 20 July 1861, Adams, 1969, pp. 70, 76. Well before the 1860s the sweetbriar, having escaped home gardens, had invaded the paddocks in New South Wales and formed 'hedges and jungles'. Rachel Henning - though aware the wild rose was difficult 'to extirpate .. rejoiced greatly' to see it there.

<sup>126</sup> Blunt, 1950, p. 233. John Ruskin described the red field poppy as 'All silk and flame ... You cannot have a more complete, a more stainless, type of flower ... the most transparent and delicate of all the blossoms of the field'. It was this symbolism which caused the red Poppy to be used as a symbol for lives lost in Flanders during the first World War.

<sup>127</sup> The Bible. Job 14:1, Peter, 1:24.

<sup>128</sup> Elias, 1994, p. 71. Chwast & Chewning, 1977, p. 40.

Fanny was determined to give the floral still-life which she painted in the colonies a colonial context. She was careful to use native species of plants, birds and insects even for the most important of her traditional symbols - for instance, instead of using the traditional European species of convolvulus or 'Morning Glory' Fanny depicted a native species of convolvulus, *Ipomea palmata*, luxuriously spilling from the vase with its flowers in bud, full bloom, and beginning to wither. By the time Fanny composed her still life even the introduced species she painted - the poppy, the sweetbriar and *Braxia Maxima* (shown at the very top of the painting with the pink hibiscus) had become naturalised in the colonies. Also, although Fanny included in her painting two naturalised old world symbols for woman - the poppy and the hedge rose - she eclipsed them with the glorious richness and abandon of three species of native hibiscus. It would seem that in doing so Fanny intended to celebrate the new world as a place of hope for women: this is probably why she represented her English wildflowers - five poppies and one rose - as smaller, and her symbolically important native wildflowers - five hibiscus and one waratah - as larger, than lifesize.

Seventeenth century women painters of still life such as Rachel Ruysch made much of menacing surprise in their floral arrangements - one painting by this famous artist including in the foreground wild flowering thistles and poisonous mushrooms surrounding a coiled, open-mouthed snake about to engulf an oversize cricket; another a lizard raiding the eggs in a small bird's nest.<sup>129</sup> It is interesting to note therefore that in Fanny's representation hope outweighs despair; the traditional symbols representing evil such as a black background and the depiction of 'impure' life - lizards, snakes, rats, mice and (gargantuan) insects - being avoided. Instead, as befitted an entomologist's daughter, Fanny included in her painting minutely accurate depictions of a number of miniaturised colonial insects - one beetle, two flies and several ants. Also, with the exception of the poppies and the convolvulus Fanny's flowers are luscious and unfaded and her background bright.<sup>130</sup> As well as excluding most of the traditional symbols of despair, Fanny included in her painting an unusually large number of traditional symbols representing the promise of resurrection / hope. Her (native species of) passion flower was a traditional symbol for Christ's resurrection, as were the berry fruits, the three butterflies (butterflies emerge from a chrysalis), and the cherubim on the vase: cherubim, which for Christians symbolised Christ's promised return, had been used to decorate sarcophagi since Roman times.

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<sup>129</sup> Tufts, 1974, p. 100. This painting is in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

<sup>130</sup> In the original the background is much brighter and more clearly defined as a paradisaical garden.



Because Christianity took over much older symbolic systems from Hebraic, Greek and Roman cultures, the 'angelic' cherubs on the urn also represent cupid the son of Venus, Goddess of erotic love, and, because Fanny has shown her cupids without male genitalia ( a female tradition) they invoke nymphs or the Nereids who in pagan thought presided over birth / fertility and dissolution / death. In this mythology the urn as receptacle or sarcophagus was symbolic of the feminine principle: woman and the earth as the beginning and the end of material life.<sup>131</sup> Fanny included in her background classical architecture, leafy groves and the promise of distant water - a scene intended to invoke Arcadia, that is Pan's fertile realm populated with nymphs and satyrs. In combining Christian and classical symbolism / constructions of nature, Fanny perpetuated a number of contradictions. Protestant taste may have caused Fanny to substitute a demure (but tough) 'English Rose' for the phallic and flamboyant lily (represented on the title page of this dissertation) which was the traditional Catholic symbol for Mary and the Annunciation, but her iconography of flowers as sensual and sexual has been enhanced rather than diminished in a painting in which a spent rose is eclipsed by magnificent, even blowzy, pink and yellow native hibiscus and a large red-purple 'passion' flower (top left) with insistent upward thrusting stamens.<sup>132</sup>

Blunt considered that paintings such as this demonstrate the artist's passionate love of flowers and their joy in depicting them; a joy which in his opinion grew out of a contemporary equivalence between the growing and the painting of flowers.<sup>133</sup> This was true for Fanny who loved both gardening and flower painting. Identifying with flowers gave women a particular impetus to paint them intelligently and with meaning. As a young woman Fanny attended floral art exhibitions in order to see the techniques used by her female contemporaries. When commenting on another floral artist's work Fanny wrote:

To make a drawing pleasing to the eye it is not merely necessary to finish it highly but more especially one ought to attend to give some little effect to it... One piece was so ill managed, in particular being almost entirely composed of white flowers,

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<sup>131</sup> Cirlot, 1971, pp. 238, 278. Cherubs, considered in Hebraic law to be of the second order of angels, were modified under Christian influence to become 'innocent' children like the Christ-child who represented a youthful reawakening force for love within man. The domination of 'cherubic' or angelic love over 'cupidity' or erotic love was never complete - in iconographic symbolism or in life.

<sup>132</sup> Schama, 1995, p. 6. Schama made the point that nature and human perception are indivisible - 'landscape is the work of the mind'. The same observation holds good for natural productions such as flowers; symbols which in the West are redolent with associations which have been shown to date back to Neanderthal man.

<sup>133</sup> Blunt 1950, p. 117. Fanny Macleay was a keen gardener from an early age and worked in the garden at the Colonial Secretary's house which the Macleays occupied until their house at Elizabeth Bay was built.

with scarcely any shade, that I really think I could have given a better looking thing myself without any vanity.<sup>134</sup>

This was the technician as creative artist talking, someone who was aware of and intent upon enhancing the aesthetic, emotive and spiritual virtuosity of her creative work rather than someone prepared to passively copy 'nature' or the work of others. This independence of creative approach is most obvious in the tonal qualities of Fanny's floral still life, in her individual use of colour and background and in the creative freedom with which she represented her flowers by positioning them and scaling them with artistic licence to enhance the aesthetics of her representation and convey her message. Even in contemporary terms then this painting qualifies as 'high' art.

The most obvious precursor to Fanny's style of painting is not so much Rachel Ruysch as Jan van Huysum who painted floral still life in the first half of the eighteenth century. Jan van Huysum introduced asymmetry and decentralisation into his compositions of vibrant and tumbled - rather than painfully arranged and polished - flowers and fruits which he allowed to spill exuberantly from terra cotta urns decorated with cherubs. As well as this he liberally highlighted his floral arrangements with blue flowers, set the arrangements against light rather than dark interiors and painted 'insects so lifelike that one is perplexed by their immobility'.<sup>135</sup>

In Dutch floral art blue in the form of Irises, an important floral symbol for Christ and the Madonna, and convolvulus - and, on those few occasions when the vase was set beside or in front of a window - the sky, stood for the soul and the human desire for redemption. At the same time the use of the colour blue represented a desire to see and obtain the rare and exotic within the natural world. A bright blue and black bird like the Australian Superb Blue Wren which Fanny painted in the foreground of her still life represented the unusual or impossible in nature in the same way as the blue rose does today. Women colonists were absolutely entranced by Australia's bright blue wildflowers - such as the *leschenaultia* - which one lady described as 'a heavenly blue ... the most beautiful bright blue you ever saw in your life in any flower'.<sup>136</sup> Louisa Meredith described the Australian Superb Wren as one of 'Nature's marvels of beauty and brightness .. dressed partly in black, black *bird-*

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<sup>134</sup> Fanny to William Macleay, 18 May 1813, Windschuttle, 1988, p. 55. While Fanny admired the 'good finish' - on the work of the British flower painter Mary Lawrance, I take this comment to mean that she felt that technical virtuosity in floral art was not sufficient.

<sup>135</sup> Blunt, 1950, p. 119.

<sup>136</sup> Lady Broome to her son Guy Barker, 1884, 'Letters to Guy' in *Remembered with Affection*, Alexandra Hasluck (ed.), Oxford University Press, 1963, p. 61.

*velvet....with a cap and mantle of blue - such blue!*<sup>137</sup> 'It was as if Fanny, who, having discovered colonial wildflowers, considered New South Wales to be 'most beautiful .. [its] Plants - Insects & Birds so lovely & interesting',<sup>138</sup> meant to convey that in the 'topsy turvy' natural world of the antipodes the sun always shone in a bright blue sky. In these terms the busy little Wren represented part of the heavens which had miraculously become animated: both it and the bright blue native flowers served to reanimate the tired world of European nature. However the male Superb Wren is black as well as blue and Fanny painted this lively little species of wren as stiff-legged and dull eyed as if it had been (as it probably was) the victim of a taxidermist's art . Though Fanny's model may well have been taken from her father's natural history collection, she was sufficiently competent as an artist to have imbued her wren with life had she so wanted. Such a brilliant male bird, whose mate is a muted creamy brown, symbolically represented masculinity within nature as spiritual, vibrant and actively reproductive. In painting the male Superb Wren doubly done to death by the 'science' of taxidermy and by the one dimensionality of artistic representation, Fanny may have intended to suggest that, although nature in the colonies appeared bright and optimistic, creativity, spirituality and masculinity were 'stuffed'.<sup>139</sup>

Instead of signing her paintings Rachel Ruysch painted herself into her floral arrangements - among the flowers her self-portrait can often be seen faintly mirrored in a glass vase or multiply reflected in the open back of a silver pocket watch. It may be that Fanny consciously or unconsciously represented herself in her unsigned painting as the large pink hibiscus at the top of her floral arrangement. When she painted this floral piece with its voluptuous hibiscus flowers Fanny was an unmarried thirty seven year old - all but two of whose nine sisters had either died or married and left home. Feeling lonely and weary at having to 'constantly [strive] to keep up an appearance of respectability' in the face of her father's financial improvidence, at this time Fanny was just beginning a relationship with the man who, for six long years, she would be blocked from marrying.<sup>140</sup> Two years after she

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<sup>137</sup> Meredith, 1853, p. 84.

<sup>138</sup> Fanny to William, May 1827, Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 82. This was what she expressed in words.

<sup>139</sup> The male Blue Wren dedicates immense energy to reproduction. Fanny may have known that - in the same way that she did - wren siblings stay with their family of origin in order to care for the next generation.

<sup>140</sup> Fanny to William 22 February 1830, Thomas Harington to Frances Macleay, 16 December 1830 with annotation added by Fanny. Earnshaw et al, 1993, pp. 116, 130. Thomas requested Fanny make a drawing of wildflowers for him - she complied by sending him what she called 'three little daubs'. This seems to have been the usual way in which Fanny's relationships with men began. The marriage was delayed by political and financial considerations: this meant Fanny died from chronic ill-health six weeks after she married.

painted her floral still life another of her sisters married and Fanny wrote that she feared she would 'ere long ... be left alone a crabbed and ill conditioned Old Maid'.<sup>141</sup>

Given that Fanny (belatedly) decided it would be better if she married, it is not surprising to find that she preferred to place the soft, open and luscious pink bloom of the hibiscus in pride of place at the top of her floral arrangement above the very popular but dense, dark and self-contained waratah or *Telopea* which is considered to symbolise 'masculine attributes of strength and power'.<sup>142</sup> In some ways it would seem that the fair skinned, red haired Fanny Macleay shared her father's dream that the new world would reward settlers by granting them 'masculine' power and privilege within an Arcadic setting - power and privilege which would be enabled by, and expressive of, taste and 'science'. As Fanny discovered however, in the colonies it was foolhardy for a woman to attempt to model herself on Queen Elizabeth I and try to appropriate aspects of 'masculine' power and privilege. This brings us to a consideration of Alexander Macleay's dream of Arcadia. In Joan Kerr's opinion Fanny Macleay's urn of flowers was:

[L]ocated in a Greek Revival setting that is more evocative of the as-yet-unrealised garden at the Macleays' Elizabeth Bay property than of either classical antiquity or Regency England. The Elizabeth Bay gardens had been planted with a similar profusion of plants from all over the world, as well as many Australian natives, and a comparable ionic colonnade was proposed to encircle three sides of the house designed by John Verge. Equally lavish imported statuary, garden ornaments and follies were proposed to ornament the garden. ... This painting is no nostalgic dream of what had been left behind, but a foreshadowing of its realisation in the antipodes - the equal, even the superior, of the most lavish English aristocratic country estate.<sup>143</sup>

The British enclosure movement caused a re-evaluation of the opposition between the garden and 'common nature'. As enclosure proceeded and the 'country without' was rendered less 'wild', the landscaped garden was designed to incorporate bits of 'wilderness'. With this transition the status of the patriarch became equated with the garden or natural landscape as 'absolute intrinsic value' while woman's status was related - in the same way as small farms - to production. Masculinity was thus associated with the 'natural' right to possess land, and femininity with the 'natural' responsibility to (re) produce and maintain a family.<sup>144</sup> Despite the fact that in Australia vast areas of 'wilderness' continued to exist 'outside' the family estate, similar assumptions held sway. In other words, despite the inappropriateness of such beliefs, in the colonies the natural environment continued to be

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<sup>141</sup> Fanny to William, 24 March 1832, Earnshaw et al, 1993, p. 143.

<sup>142</sup> Elias, 1994, p. 72.

<sup>143</sup> Kerr, 1995, p. 163.

seen as a repository for the ideals through which urban experience and social hierarchies could be perceived / defined. Unfortunately for the Australian environment, in this idealisation the class which was thought to have established the 'natural' right to dominate society was the class which hoped to effect the greatest transformation of the wilderness.

At the time Fanny painted her floral piece with the (envisioned) garden at Elizabeth Bay as background the gardener Thomas Shepherd noted that 'a dwarf ornamental stone wall ... surmounted by a curvilinear coping with a few inches of projection' - from which bridle paths descended to a carriage road and wharf - had been constructed at Elizabeth Bay. This was probably the wall on which Fanny situated her urn of flowers. Alternately she may have positioned her urn on a plinth in front of the bower framing the entrance to her father's botanic garden where, as Shepherd described it, the walled beds and borders were laid out among 'lovely trees [with] on one side an amphitheatre of lofty woods; and on the other ... a large expanse of water'.<sup>145</sup> Given that the background in Fanny's painting was principally about aspiration and dream, it does not matter all that much. The dream was a dream of power through possession of 'scientific' knowledge, land, and tangible evidence of nature's beauty; in this case 'ownership' of a greatly admired view of Sydney Harbour.<sup>146</sup>

Alexander Macleay, a dedicated Tory who had a reputation as a hard task master with convict servants, dreamed of forming an aristocratic estate in the new world which, for him, would not have been realisable in the old. Fanny's painting of native flowers in abundance, in profusion, thus takes on class associations and environmental implications. Only the very wealthy could afford lavish, decorative gardens, flowers and women in a colonial environment which was known to be dry and have poor soil.<sup>147</sup> The colonies would be expected to live up to a picturesque ideal wherein flowers and women could be taken from their natural environment and asked to reproduce abundantly regardless of local conditions. Conrad Martens frequently made Elizabeth Bay House - with its balustrades and 'natural woods' a perfect symbol of aristocratic prosperity - the centrepiece of his Arcadic views of

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<sup>144</sup> Bermingham, 1986, pp. 14-17, 193.

<sup>145</sup> Shepherd, 'Lectures in Landscape Gardening in Australia', 1838, in Smith, 1975, pp. 43, 44.

<sup>146</sup> Settlers of all eras have been impressed by Sydney Harbour. Georgiana Lowe, October 1842, in A. P. Martin, *Life and Letters of the Rt. Hon. Robert Lowe, Viscount Sherbrooke*, London, John Murray, 1893, vol. 1, pp. 156-7. Lowe was thrown into 'a delirium of delight' by the picturesque beauties of Port Jackson. Rachel Henning to Henrietta Boyce, 16 May 1864, Adams, 1969, p. 64. 'I do not know how to give you any idea of the beauty of Sydney Harbour'.

<sup>147</sup> Georgiana Lowe, October 1842, in Martin, 1893, pp. 156-7. Plant, 1994, p. 52. Macleay's garden was criticised by Lowe as 'too dry, .. the plants grow out of white sandy soil'.

Sydney Harbour.<sup>148</sup> (plate 17) In fact part of the secret of Martens' success was his combination of the two principal dreams of settlement - the Arcadian West and the Landed English estate - in icons such as Elizabeth Bay House which he represented as a classical palace surrounded by 'an aureole of light and space' set within nature's paradisaical garden.<sup>149</sup>

Like the imperialist enterprise and the eighteenth century art which it emulated, Fanny's painting was meant to represent a splendid collaboration between man and nature; in the event land and nature in the colonies would not be so superficially subdued / wooed and there is some evidence in Fanny's painting, as there was not in those of Martens, that in 1830 she both endorsed and obliquely critiqued the attitudes on which her father's aspirations were founded. The empire building Blue Wren is glazed of eye and very dead. In her painting Fanny Macleay most insistently represented the cornucopia of possibilities for being a woman, including - on the masculine axis in the painting - the rod of male power represented by the waratah. By placing her urn of flowers, symbol for the fully rounded productive and reproductive woman, at the gate of a landscaped garden Fanny replaced the Lord of the Manor as the centre of his estate - as he had habitually been portrayed by eighteenth century painters such as Gainsborough - with an icon that surreptitiously represented herself.<sup>150</sup> It is no surprise to find that before long colonial 'lady painters' began producing estate portraits which depicted themselves as wives and mothers sitting on the verandahs of their homes firmly in charge of their husbands and children, the family garden in full bloom in the background.<sup>151</sup>

1880 - Ellis Rowan.

One of the most disturbing figures among nineteenth century Australian women floral artists was Ellis Rowan who became a popular figure towards the end of the nineteenth

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<sup>148</sup> Smith, 1979, p. 54. In colonial art the mansion home was increasingly depicted within a broader landscape - owners wanted the prospects of their estates captured. It needs to be remembered that in England large estates were not broken up until World War II.

<sup>149</sup> Plant, 1994, p. 52. Daniels, 1993, pp. 3, 5, 112. Martens modelled himself on J.M. Turner who endowed landscape with a sense of historical destiny and 'nature' intersecting or merging.

<sup>150</sup> Schama, 1995, p. 521. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries views of the estate against which the master, and sometimes the master and mistress, were portrayed as 'beaming with self-satisfaction' were used as 'decoration' in the stately home. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, The Viking Press, New York, 1973, pp. 29, 106-7. Berger wrote of 'the authority of art' justifying other forms of authority. He considered such paintings, which derived from the eighteenth century principle 'you are what you have', appropriated nature to celebrate the ownership of private property.

<sup>151</sup> Kerr, 1995, p. 312. Martha Berkeley, 'The Artist with her Husband and Children', c. 1845.

century. The way in which Ellis practiced flower painting - and she is conservatively estimated to have painted over 3000 finished flower and bird paintings - could be described in the same terms as Florence Nightingale's practice of nursing - women's 'domestic labour of love .. translated into nationwide housekeeping'.<sup>152</sup> In the late nineteenth century the middle class idea of Empire as a bracing, men-only environment had the consequence that a vigorous life of adventure free of home ties became a dream not only for many men, but for some women.<sup>153</sup> The 'New Woman', who, though aware that she was expected to retain her femininity and remain in a subsidiary position to men, felt called upon to do her bit towards furthering the empire.<sup>154</sup> During the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth, first wave feminism and the eugenics movement re-focused attention on motherhood and women's bodies as disputed territory. This was a period when there was an intensification of concern as to what constituted 'healthy' levels of femininity and masculinity - anxieties which became enmeshed in ideas of nationhood.

This was the background against which Ellis Rowan - partly enabled by the extension of railways and shipping routes - chose to 'heroically' travel alone through the 'wildest' of Australian and overseas landscapes in order to 'hunt' and paint exotic birds and flowers.<sup>155</sup> During Ellis Rowan's lifetime the stark contrast between her adventurous travelling and her extremely fragile body, ladylike mannerisms and projective portrayals of delicate wildflowers / exotic birds caused her to be lionised by the press in Australia, Britain and America. This was because, like many a public female icon before and since, Ellis encapsulated in her life and art stark unresolved contradictions in the contemporary prescription for womanhood. However, although Ellis and her floral art accorded with the spirit of her times, in the long term her art has fallen between two stools; the art establishment now judging her work to be botanical rather than 'high' art, and botanists considering it to be insufficiently accurate to be termed scientific.<sup>156</sup> Ellis ended up being open to this judgment because from the seventeenth century flower painting was an activity for women which combined science with

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<sup>152</sup> Poovey, 1988, p. 192.

<sup>153</sup> Tosh, 1994. Pratt, 1992. In Australia women travelled not only as flower 'hunters' but, like Ellis Rowan's friend, Daisy Bates, as journalists, travel writers and amateur anthropologists.

<sup>154</sup> Vicinus, 1973, p. ix. Women were attempting to end the double sexual standard by applying to men the restrictive sexual standards which had long applied to women.

<sup>155</sup> Susan Martin, 'Relative Correspondence', in Ferres, 1993, p. 66. Gillian Whitlock, '1901 / 1933: From Eutopia to Dystopia', in Ferres, 1993, pp. 168-72. At this time in literature written by women the power of Australian heroines changed from that of legitimate access to 'distinctly "female" characteristics and connections' - relation to home and landscape - to a blocked equation with masculine power.

<sup>156</sup> Hewson, 1982, pp 17-18. As a result in Australia only one of her works hangs in a public art gallery and the botanical books she illustrated were of American flowers and published in America.

'passion'.<sup>157</sup> In many ways Ellis Rowan was thus the late nineteenth century equivalent of Frances Macleay, melding science and aesthetic perception into a form of 'high' art which both reflected and critiqued ambiguous constructions of women, flowers, gardens, and landscape as places where culture and nature met. It is unfair to these women that - despite a long tradition of perceptive floral art by women - in Australia it is only in recent times that the value of their work has been recognised by (feminist) art critics as encoding a covert political intention to 'disclose through fragments all that had been erased in the transformed landscape' (that is the landscape of the countryside and the landscape of women's bodies / personas).<sup>158</sup>

In Australia in the late nineteenth century a three way split representation of women developed in art and literature wherein there were three possible personas for women - the Australian girl with her 'pure virginal femininity that possessed initiative and relaxed independence' who felt equally at home in the bush or the house, the distressed / suffering mother who felt abandoned in the bush, and the contented mother at the centre of family life who was situated on the transitional site, the home verandah.<sup>159</sup> At the same time mythical gender stereotypes invoked Australian's heritage in terms of the gendered oppositions, intrepid fearless explorers and brave pioneer mothers.<sup>160</sup> Ellis Rowan, another lady who had very white skin and very red hair, was said to be 'a tiny woman with an ultra-sweet voice' who prided herself on both her delicate youthful appearance and her adventurous spirit.<sup>161</sup> It is clear that Ellis's attractive, youthful, lady-like appearance was important to her for she was so fashionably slim that nowadays she would probably be considered anorexic. As well as this when she was living in America Ellis took the unusual step for a fifty one year old

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<sup>157</sup> Herzog, n. d., p. 21. Goethe, in his famous essay 'Simple Imitation of Nature, Manner and Style', considered that the virtue of the greatest of all female still life floral artists, Rachel Ruysch, lay in her understanding of nature being solidly grounded in science; that is in her being a well-schooled botanist. Blunt, 1950, pp. 3-4. 'The greatest flower painters have been those ...who have understood plants scientifically, but who have yet seen and described them with the eye and hand of the artist ... [who has] a passion for flowers'.

<sup>158</sup> Tim Bonyhady, *The Colonial Image: Australian Painting 1800-1880*, Ellsyd Press & Australian National Gallery, Canberra, ACT, 1987, p. 34. In the 1840s Mary Morton Allport painted wildflowers growing in their natural environments and in the 1870s Rowan, seemingly aware of its importance, copied her 'Teleopea punctata, from the mountain pass above Barrett's Mill'. Jane Shepherd, ' "I Never Promised You a Rose Garden": the Art of Deborah Russell, *Art and Australia*, vol. 34, no. 3, 1997, pp. 342-50.

<sup>159</sup> Hoorne in Hoorne, 1994, pp. 98-111. McPherson in Hoorne, 1994, pp. 67-80.

<sup>160</sup> Mrs Hirst Alexander, 'Women of Australasia' in the British Empire Series, 1900, Document 14 in *Freedom Bound: Documents on Women in Colonial Australia*, vol. 1, Marian Quartly, Susan Janson & Patricia Grimshaw, (eds.) Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1995, pp. 169-70.

<sup>161</sup> Kerr, 1995, p. 442.



woman of her time of having her face surgically 'lifted'.<sup>162</sup> During the period when her only child was establishing his independence Ellis forged a persona for herself which melded together some qualities of the intrepid unmarried bush girl, some qualities of the brave, suffering pioneer mother and some qualities of the intrepid male explorer. Ellis thus attempted to hold together through her life and her body a gulf which had opened up in society between strongly dichotomised images of femininity and masculinity.<sup>163</sup> Ellis somewhat unsuccessfully attempted to solve the problem of this dichotomy by coupling an extremely exaggerated form of femininity with an extremely exaggerated form of masculinity in the way in which Kaplan claims anorexics commonly do - by concurrently and dramatically acting out both forms of perverse behaviour.<sup>164</sup> As Australia sought to become a nation and the 'feminine' middle class woman with her supportive gender role and protected financial and social status came under threat in Australian society, Rowan's life and her images of women as beautiful flowers / exotic birds may have evoked - in women and men - a sense of gender difference which incorporated the safe and the known.

In Kristeva's terms, Ellis Rowan attempted to reach the 'phallic mother' in both her motherhood and her art. In a society which discursively constructed women's semiotic function as 'enceinte' (which means both an enclosing wall and pregnancy), floral art and motherhood may have been experienced by Rowan as activities which took her to the 'threshold of language and instinctual drive, of the symbolic and the semiotic'.<sup>165</sup> In paintings of the female nude (which, at a delicate remove, nineteenth century flower paintings represented) Christian theology recognised four forms of nudity - the nakedness of the sinner, animal nakedness, the figurative shedding of all worldly goods and nudity as

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<sup>162</sup> Helen Jo Samuel, *Wildflower Hunter: The Story of Ellis Rowan*, Constable, London, 1961. Quoting Ellis Rowan's niece Maie Casey who revealed her aunt always looked sad in later life because her (rather primitive) cosmetic surgery made it difficult for her to smile. Rowan, *A Flower Hunter*, n. d. (1898), p. 10. Originally Rowan began her travelling in the hope of curing a nervous disorder - possibly anorexia. Recalling how she had been when she set out she wrote: 'I looked as if I had been through one famine and was half-way through another'.

<sup>163</sup> Schaffer, 1987, pp. 1-6. Twentieth century literature such as *The Picnic at Hanging Rock* recreated nineteenth century women as 'delicate, wind-blown, idealised images of .. innocent girls' absorbed by the bush as primal mother in opposition to the 'masculine sameness of national self-identity'. Ivor Indyk, 'Some Uses of Myth in Australian Literature', *Australian Cultural History*, no. 5, 1986, pp. 61, 63. In order to sharply distinguish Australian from British culture, during this period the nationalists, aware of the heterogeneity of myth in the Australian context might mean myths would either fall apart or fail to add up to anything significant, deified 'the land' as 'mystical first cause'.

<sup>164</sup> Kaplan, 1991. In later life Rowan suffered physically from both her cosmetic surgery and from Malaria and other forms of ill-health brought on by her life as an intrepid 'explorer'. She also suffered psychologically from believing she had failed as a mother - see later in this Chapter.

innocence. All women flower painters, and Rowan in particular, emphasised the nudity of female innocence in the hope that as women they would be treasured rather than rejected as animalistic sinners.<sup>166</sup> Given that for most of the nineteenth century colonial women's prescribed role had been the fostering in the home and garden of children and flowers within a landscape which was thought to engulf lost children,<sup>167</sup> it would seem surprising to find women such as Ellis Rowan 'hunting' in the 'wilderness' for the 'beautiful' flowers and birds (women's lost selves, women's lost children) which they felt they needed to paint if they were to feel good about themselves<sup>168</sup> - that is surprising if the extent to which most colonial women were expected to (clandestinely) go beyond their prescribed roles were not recognised.

Ellis Rowan explained her motivation for travelling in these words: '[m]y love for the flora of Australia, at once so unique and so fascinating carried me to some of the remotest parts of the great continent of Australia'.<sup>169</sup> Ellis's love of wildflowers carried her much further than that. Following the model demonstrated to her by the British floral artist Marianne North whom she met in Albany, Western Australia, in 1880 - it took her to America, the West Indies, Europe, Britain and New Guinea.<sup>170</sup> Ellis Rowan constructed herself as what she called a 'Flower Hunter', adopting the intrepid explorer mode of women such as Mary Kingsley and saying of her travelling that there was 'something ineffably delightful in the thought of this wild away-into-the-mountain-to-shoot-tigers feeling about it all'.<sup>171</sup> As with Mary Kingsley, the authorial position Ellis assumed in the only travel book which she published could be said to have been 'a monarchic female voice' which asserted

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<sup>165</sup> Kristeva, 1981, pp. 240-1. These activities, or necessary 'privileged "psychotic" moments', allow the woman to 'cathect, immediately and unwittingly, the physiological operations and instinctive drives dividing and multiplying her, first in a biological, and finally in a social teleology'.

<sup>166</sup> Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 1985, pp. 294, 307, 324. Longings for Arcadia often inspire visions of the female nude - usually portrayed as 'nature' surrounded by flowers and animals - that is woman as the elusive Other who resides outside of culture in some natural and primal paradise.

<sup>167</sup> Hoorne, 1994, p. 106.

<sup>168</sup> Louise Mack, in the poem 'Little Golden Hair', *Dreams in Flower*, 1901, in *Bulletin* Booklet no. iv, the *Bulletin*, Sydney, 1975 (1904) captured the need women felt at the turn of the century to experience flowers as a symbol of joy rather than death - that is to deny that which was angry and dark in themselves.

<sup>169</sup> Rowan, *A Flower Hunter*, 1898, in Carr, 1981, p. 350.

<sup>170</sup> North, 1980 (1893), p. 212. North (1830-1890), a wealthy unmarried Englishwoman who travelled the world painting wildflowers, moved on as soon as she found 'no new flowers to tempt [her] to linger'. North bequeathed her paintings to Kew Gardens wherein she had a museum built to house them. Ellis Rowan married Captain Rowan in 1873 and had her only child in 1875. When her husband was alive Ellis seemingly travelled at his expense: after his death in 1892, she appears to have largely supported herself.

<sup>171</sup> Rowan, *A Flower Hunter*, n. d., pp. 71-2.

its own kind of mastery even as it denied domination and parodied power.<sup>172</sup> In her story Ellis was a female heroine who ignored unpleasant aspects of the countries she passed through. Ellis's seamless narrative, supposedly a series of letters which she wrote to her husband in 1887, was actually a carefully constructed quasi-fictional account based on trips which Ellis made to Queensland in 1887 and 1891 which she wrote after her husband's death. In her carefully constructed travel document Ellis sought to establish / recover a sense of European innocence.<sup>173</sup> For instance, although her trips were made during a period when there was ongoing violence between Europeans and Aborigines in the far north of Queensland and much visible destitution among the Aborigines further south,<sup>174</sup> Ellis Rowan wrote blithely of an Aboriginal camp at Barron Falls (a tourist destination even then) which she claimed she had originally intended to sketch 'before the men had left for their day's hunt' in these terms:

It was a very picturesque scene; the rich, dark brown of the natives and their huts, the reds of the dying fires and films of blue smoke as they curled upwards against the dark background of forest jungle, and in the foreground the sheen of sunlight on the river, where the lithe figure of the native boy was dexterously paddling a little canoe to the opposite side all combined to form a picture. Wild beautiful nature shut me in on every side. How could I caricature her? In utter despair I shut up my sketch-book and made my way back under the shade of the forest trees with their network of branches above all hung and festooned with thickets of clematis, convolvulus, and flowering bignonias, erythinas, tossing acacias, feathery palms - but I have not the gift of words to describe half their beauty.<sup>175</sup>

Despite the fact that Ellis presented herself in the above as a child let loose in paradise - the Aborigines simply part of an idyllic setting which demonstrated nature's abundance and beauty - it is probable that Ellis gave up her intention to sketch the native camp because she was solicited for handouts / payment. Nevertheless Ellis continued to invent a gentle world for her readers which would serve as a fitting background for her 'beautiful' paintings of birds and flowers.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Pratt, 1992, p. 213.

<sup>173</sup> Though Utopian, the late nineteenth century writing of Rowan, Kingsley and North can be contrasted with that of Georgiana Molloy and Frances Macleay in that it did not invoke Christian images of paradise. North, 1980, p. 174, described Nuytsia trees in bloom as looking like 'bushfire without smoke', while Georgiana Molloy to Captain Mangles, 14 March 1840, BL 479A/2, Molloy had described them as 'the trees which adorn paradise'.

<sup>174</sup> Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders & Kathryn Cronin, *Exclusion, Exploration, and Extermination: Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, Australian and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1975.

<sup>175</sup> Rowan, *A Flower Hunter*, 1898, in Chisholm, 1964, pp. 54-5.

<sup>176</sup> As did other women travellers - for instance Rosamund & Florence Hill, *What We Saw in Australia*, Macmillan, London 1875. pp. 129-30.

Ellis Rowan's discursive construction of herself as naive did not prevent her from travelling, being her own master and becoming a professional painter. Despite oft-repeated declarations that she was entirely self-taught, Ellis made sure she acquired whatever professional training she felt she needed.<sup>177</sup> She was also determined to exhibit, and later in life, to sell, her work. Her professional approach and the way in which her painting changed over the years in style and content sets Ellis Rowan apart from the myriad of competent 'amateur' Australian women wildflower painters - such as Marianne Campbell and Margaret Forrest - who proliferated in the 'springtime of nationalism' in Australian art of the 1880s. Such 'lady painters' began as Ellis did in depicting 'naturalistic' sprays of picked wildflowers set against a flat light background - but, unlike her, did not depart from this long established nineteenth century artistic tradition.<sup>178</sup> As Margaret Forrest came from a similar affluent middle class background, had equal exposure to the natural environment and began her life as a wildflower and landscape painter whose artistic talent and dedication equalled Ellis's,<sup>179</sup> it is interesting to explore why Ellis Rowan, whose work though prolific, was uneven, became a professional floral artist while Margaret Forrest did not.<sup>180</sup>

Ellis Rowan and Margaret Forrest were both keen gardeners and painters of wild flowers who were introduced to one another by Baron von Mueller to whom Margaret's husband, John Forrest, had long sent botanical specimens and from whom Rowan's father, Charles Ryan, obtained botanical advice for his 26 acre botanical garden / 'woodland paradise' at Derriweit on Mt Macedon, outside Melbourne.<sup>181</sup> Both women had a privileged

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<sup>177</sup> It is known that as a 21 year old Ellis accompanied her mother to London for a year to gain tuition in art, that Marianne North gave her lessons in oil painting in 1880 and that between 1905-8 she took art lessons from John Mather.

<sup>178</sup> Margaret Hazzard, *Australia's Brilliant Daughter, Ellis Rowan, Artist, Naturalist, Explorer 1848-1922*, Greenhouse Publications, Australia, 1984, pp. 23, 54, 109. In 1889 when Margaret Forrest and Ellis Rowan together made a wildflower painting excursion to the north of Perth in Western Australia, the paintings of the two women were almost indistinguishable.

<sup>179</sup> Jessie E. Hammond, *Western Pioneers: The Battle Well Fought*, Hesperian Press, Perth, WA, 1980 (1936), pp. 5-6, 47. Margaret Forrest, *The West Australian*, 18 September 1925, 'I adore nature and our lovely wild flowers which I have painted since childhood'. When her husband was Government surveyor the childless Margaret Forrest had a studio made for her in her home where she could paint - she joined the Wilgie Club and in 1896 the Perth Society of Artists, painted with both Marianne North and Ellis Rowan and exhibited her paintings in public. After her husband was elected to federal government in 1901 - she gave up her artistic work for a public role such as becoming president of the Australian Women's National Political League.

<sup>180</sup> Hewson, 1982, pp. 17-18. Gooding, 1995, pp. 82-3. Some of their paintings - such as the Blue Bookleaf Hibiscus - which they painted while they were together - are indistinguishable.

<sup>181</sup> Edward Hyams, *A History of Gardens and Gardening*, Dent and Sons, London, 1971, pp. 283, 284, 288. Owners of 'wild' gardens such as Derriweit - which included an English cottage garden, natural landscape and a botanical collection - experimented in modifying new cultivars from all over the world. Derriweit was Charles Ryan's dream. Having purchased the land the year before Ellis married he spent huge sums on

upbringing and a well rounded education in the genteel feminine arts of music, painting, needlework, gardening and botany. Though both were well behaved eldest daughters, Margaret Hamersley, the daughter of a man who owned a number of pastoral properties and sister of six vigorous brothers who were expected to run them, was unlike the young Ellis Ryan in that she passionately loved horse riding and passionately hated needlework.<sup>182</sup> It may have been exposure to horses and her brothers that made Margaret less of a romantic than Ellis. Well known to be an heiress, Margaret, though courted by many young men in the Swan river colony, chose to wait until after the death of her father in 1874 - by which time she was 32 years of age and in virtual control of her considerable inheritance - to marry the man of her choice whom she had known for nine years. The man she chose to marry was John Forrest, a great bear of a man who though clearly very able, renowned for his explorations, and by that time in a secure government position, had less social standing and wealth than herself. She obviously thought they would make a good team.<sup>183</sup> Ellis Ryan on the other hand married as an (immature) twenty five year old: her chosen husband a man whose face had been badly disfigured in the Maori wars who still had his way to make in the world.<sup>184</sup>

According to her biographer Margaret Forrest, ambitious for her husband to succeed in his career, tirelessly used her social talents and connections to further this end.<sup>185</sup> Being childless, John and Margaret Forrest formed a close couple and it is probable that Margaret Forrest experienced more satisfaction - albeit largely vicariously - from travelling with her husband, participating in his political career and undertaking philanthropic work than from attempting to pursue a personal career in painting. If such things could be measured perhaps promoting nationalism by supporting a successful politician as Margaret Forrest did, might have been thought to upstage - in nineteenth century terms of a woman's public duty -

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developing it by building a stately home and establishing a garden of great renown. Ellis went there often - including to have her son in 1875. After her husband died in 1892 she made Mt Macedon her permanent address. Ryan lost the bulk of the property in the 1890s but managed to keep 'the Cottage' - a large two story building on ten acres where Ellis spent the last years of her life.

<sup>182</sup> F.D. North (Flora Hamersley, Margaret's sister) quoted in Katherine E. Shenton, 'Concerning Lady Forrest: a Few Incidents and a Short Account of the Life of a Illustrious Lady', 1939, BL, HS / 262. Margaret's mother called her 'goody two shoes'. Hazzard, 1984, pp. 23, 45. Ellis Rowan liked to make her own clothes and to decorate them with the high quality lace she made.

<sup>183</sup> By her father's will Margaret Hamersley obtained a mill in South Perth, a farming property at York, allotments in Perth and Fremantle, the Stanley (later Swan) brewery, and a large house (the Bungalow) on two allotments of land in the centre of Perth. BL, Hamersley Papers, 2490A/7. It is unlikely that Edward Hamersley would have left his daughter this much property had she been married.

<sup>184</sup> Hazzard, 1984, p. 35. Ellis looked like a fragile fifteen year old in her wedding photo. Hazzard speculated that it may have been unconscious distaste at Frederick Rowan's disfigured face which caused Ellis to travel.

independently promoting Australia's flora on an international stage in the manner of Ellis Rowan. Margaret Forrest's representations of wildflowers vary from a 'beautiful' representation of a soft blue hibiscus whose seeds her husband of eight years sent her because the flowers were 'so pretty' and because he feared his 'own darling' might be 'lonely in the winter nights',<sup>186</sup> to a pragmatic depiction of the Swan River tea tree with its tiny flowers and tough woody foliage and nuts. If, as I argue, part of the satisfaction for women in painting flowers was exploring different possible female personas, then it seems that, like Ellis Rowan with her feats of exploring,<sup>187</sup> Margaret Forrest prided herself on being not only feminine, but tough and resilient. On the other hand the persona the highly imaginative Ellis Rowan explored for herself in her 'other worldly'<sup>188</sup> depictions of glorious tropical blooms, fruits and brightly coloured birds of paradise was of a demure woman who was inexplicably exotic.<sup>189</sup> This was an image of women which fashion designers of the day promoted to the detriment of the exotic birds whose feathers they sacrificed in the cause of women's fashion and their own profit.<sup>190</sup> Just as, with nationhood approaching, Australia's flora was represented as the most remarkable known to man - 'very astonishing and beautiful [because it bloomed] without a drop of water, and under a fierce sun',<sup>191</sup> Australia's womanhood was represented on the international stage as having a 'natural' beauty, resilience and exoticism.<sup>192</sup> At home constructions of women were more likely to be negative, one gentleman writing that a typical Australian was:

No flower with fragile sweetness graced [but]  
A lank weed wrestling with the waste.<sup>193</sup>

A wish to possess the 'soul' of exotic flowers was part of a late nineteenth century interest in elitism, materialism and nationalism.<sup>194</sup> Britain had long thought of the Australian

<sup>185</sup> F.K Crowley, *John Forrest*, vol. 1, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Queensland, 1971, p. 93.

<sup>186</sup> John Forrest to Margaret Forrest, 1882, quoted in A. & D. Muir, *Forrest Family: Pioneers of Western Australia, 1842-1982*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1982, p. 84.

<sup>187</sup> Hazzard, 1984, p. 98. Ellis Rowan obtained and painted 45 of the 52 species of the Bird of Paradise in New Guinea - an astounding feat considering that she drew from live specimens and was 68 when she made her first trip to New Guinea and 69 when she made her second.

<sup>188</sup> Stephen Scheduling, 'Ellis Rowan', Scheduling Fine Art & Joseph Lebovich Gallery, Sydney, April 1988.

<sup>189</sup> Kramer, 1996, p. 14. At that time women in Britain, Europe and America as well as Australia became fascinated by exotic flowers.

<sup>190</sup> Hazzard, 1984, p. 110. Rowan opposed the killing of exotic birds for their feathers for the fashion industry and worked with the Ornithologists Union to help prevent it.

<sup>191</sup> Lady Barker to Guy Barker, 1884, Hasluck, 1963, p. 61.

<sup>192</sup> Brian Elliott, *The Landscape of Australian Poetry*, F. W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1967, pp. 126-7, 176-8. Female poets such as 'Australie' represented in word pictures the 'natural' beauty and exoticism of Australian native flowers and fruit in a way which parallels Rowan's painted images.

colonies as a place to plunder for exotic plant life and gold. When Ellis Rowan exhibited in Britain in 1890s one article in the British Press claimed her paintings showed that a wealth of both flowers and gold were still to be found in Australia.<sup>195</sup> It was partly because of such attitudes that in the period 1873-1892, before she gave up entering national and international competitions, Ellis Rowan won a total of thirty nine medals of which ten were gold.<sup>196</sup> Rowan's success caused much anger among male painters of 'fine' or 'high' art in Australia who, intent on promoting nationalism through landscapes associated with a sense of golden light and / or aspects of the Australian Legend,<sup>197</sup> felt angered at being pipped by a female flower painter. The situation wherein an experiential gulf separated men and women artists in Australia,<sup>198</sup> drew to a head in 1888 when at the Centennial Exhibition in Melbourne a panel of 15 international judges awarded Ellis Rowan a gold medal and a first order of merit for a large still life oil painting of a bowl of chrysanthemums,<sup>199</sup> and second prize for her group of watercolour paintings of Australian wildflowers. Male exhibitors who had been passed over such as Louis Buvelot, George Ashton, Arthur Streeton, Tom Roberts, John Mather, Arthur Boyd (senior) and Fred McCubbin were outraged. Protests were entered which led to different categories for floral and landscape art being introduced in exhibitions - that is, in effect, different categories for female 'amateur' artists and male 'professional' artists.<sup>200</sup>

If the painting of wild flowers can be seen as an act of domestication, it could be said that Ellis Rowan's paintings depicted women as beautiful exotic flowers which could be domesticated. A reading of her later work wherein birds and flowers are shown thriving within their natural settings would be that Ellis Rowan's paintings predicted / prescribed that colonial women would organically become part of their natural surroundings. It is possible to make a parallel judgement that paintings by men from the same period which showed men driving sheep and cattle and moving ever further away from the home environment into the

<sup>193</sup> Arthur H. Adams, 'The Australian', 1901 in Elliott, 1967, pp. 182-3.

<sup>194</sup> Chwast & Chewning, 1977, p. 46. The flower which most epitomised this was the orchid. Worth more than gold to collectors, flower 'hunters' risked their lives travelling to out of the way places in an attempt to find new species.

<sup>195</sup> Hazzard, 1984, p. 90.

<sup>196</sup> Clemente, 1991, p. 5. In the 1880s other women flower painters- such as Catherine Purves - also won gold medals for their wildflower paintings.

<sup>197</sup> Women as well as men could put forward this interpretation of landscape. Dorothea MacKellar in 'I Love a Sunburnt Country' articulated the 'male' perspective of the time.

<sup>198</sup> Lake 'The Politics of Respectability', 1986.

<sup>199</sup> The chrysanthemum, which was brought to Europe from China in the seventeenth century, had already acquired the strong association with the 'good and cheerful' mother which was to be formalised in the twentieth century when it was made 'the' flower to give mothers on Mother's Day.

<sup>200</sup> Kerr in Toy, Riley, & McDonald, 1988, p. 9. Professional male painters quashed the system of open exhibiting as soon as they had sufficient numbers to effect a change. Hazzard, 1984, pp. 49, 50.

golden landscape were affirming a glorious future for the nation and a non-domestic role for men which promised / predicted / prescribed that men would successfully adapt to their new land by actively entering and mastering it. Much to Ellis's disgust, the two views, though clearly complementary, were not equally valid in terms of being valorised (and rewarded) as subjects suitable for 'high art'.<sup>201</sup>

Ellis refused to accept the new categories introduced for women in public exhibitions in Australia: instead from that time she held private exhibitions to sell her art. She reiterated the claim of natural history artists that because what mattered in art was the faithful recording of nature, to her 'colouring, form and harmony' were of greater importance than 'composition, tone or pattern'.<sup>202</sup> Prevented and discouraged by the male establishment from producing 'high' art, Ellis concentrated on 'scientific' illustration, and, upon recognising that Baron Von Mueller would not, or could not, commission her to illustrate 'scientific' works of birds and flowers in Australia, moved to America where she illustrated books on American and Canadian flowers.

In the last years of her life Ellis returned to Australia to live and attempted to persuade the Australian Federal government to purchase her large collection of paintings of the flowers and birds of Australia and New Guinea.<sup>203</sup> Despite Ellis having met considerable resistance to this while she lived, soon after her death in 1922 nine hundred and forty seven of Ellis Rowan's paintings were purchased by the National government, more, it would seem, in recognition of Ellis's popularity with the press and her having been 'a remarkable little explorer' than in recognition of the collection's artistic or scientific worth.<sup>204</sup> Because she was forced to turn to scientific illustration to earn a living and because on her death Rowan's art was classified as the province of the Australian National Library rather than the Australian National Gallery, her art has been largely rendered invisible and the chance that Ellis Rowan would ever be categorised as the creator of 'fine' art rendered improbable.

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<sup>201</sup> Ward, 1958. Ward posited that from the end of the nineteenth century a legend grew up that the dominant identity of Australian males was that of the itinerant 'bush' worker who bonded to other men and was able to survive in the toughest of natural environments. Lake, 'The Politics of Respectability', in Whitlock & Carter, 1992, p. 156.

<sup>202</sup> Rowan, *The Flower Hunter*, n. d., p. 205. Rowan quoted in Ambrus, 1992, p. 26.

<sup>203</sup> Although Rowan did not answer the public attacks made upon her, it must have affected her confidence because although for many years she had painted her flowers against their natural scenic backgrounds perfectly competently, (see Rowan 'Waratahs, New South Wales', 1882) in 1905 she took lessons in landscape painting to use in her backgrounds from the man who in 1888 had been her chief detractor.

<sup>204</sup> Ambrus, 1992, p. 26.



## A Difference in perspective.

When the floral art of Frances Macleay and Ellis Rowan is compared it can be seen that they were saying similar things about women and nature. Female miniaturists had long portrayed the human face with a loving attention to detail. As better technical means developed to reproduce original drawings from nature in the parallel areas of portrait production and flower illustration more and more emphasis was given to the minutiae of texture and structure.<sup>205</sup> At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Royal Academy of art gave official recognition to the view that 'Nature was to be rendered by the artist not with her imperfections clinging to her but in her perfect forms'.<sup>206</sup> It was no accident therefore that a miniaturist of the calibre of Georgiana McCrae did not paint flowers - the faces she painted of women and children - both Aboriginal and European - were her 'perfect' flowers.<sup>207</sup> In the portrait she painted in 1860 of her (middle aged) friend and fellow artist Louisa Meredith (plate 25) Georgiana depicted the same youthful fragile beauty (and promise of hidden strength) with which earlier colonial women artists had endowed women and children, and which Ellis Rowan later (1887) sought to capture in her flower portrait, 'Pandorea jasminoides and Clematis aristata'.<sup>208</sup> (plate 26) Though as the nineteenth century progressed patriarchal injunctions to women might be modified, what remained constant was women's images of themselves: not entirely of women's own making these images celebrated the beauty inherent in womanhood. In being only one half of the equation of women - which denied them earthiness and a dark side - this could have a repressive effect on women who compensated for their loss of self-determination by obsessively painting flowers in an attempt to enhance an existent self-image or forge a new one. Despite women's efforts to forge a new identity however, in the nineteenth century the image which kept recurring over and over behind all the others was that of the powerful and pure white lily *Lilium candidum* which had been appropriated by Christianity from the Goddess Flora for use as the symbol of Mary, the virginal, perfect and divine mother of God.<sup>209</sup>

## SUMMARY.

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<sup>205</sup> Hulton & Smith, 1979, pp. 123, 124.

<sup>206</sup> Smith, 1969, p. 1.

<sup>207</sup> For a representation by Georgiana McCrae of an Aboriginal girl as a dark flower see 'Eliza' (1845-51) in H. McCrae, 1934, Plate 24. Louisa Meredith would have been in her early to mid fifties when the portrait was painted.

<sup>208</sup> Kerr in Kerr, 1995, pp. 304, 312. Mary Morton Allport, 'Self Portrait with Curzon, Minnie and Evett', c. 1830s. In this miniature Allport showed herself and her three small children; one young child attempting to capture the attention of the infant her mother is holding with a rose.

<sup>209</sup> Representations of Madonna Lilies have been found in temple wall paintings in Crete dated c 1550 BC.



*PLATE 25. Portrait of Louisa Anne Meredith. Georgiann McCrae, c 1860. Art Foundation of Victoria.*



Grizelda Pollock claimed we need to question the motives behind 'the fantasy of visual perfection' which motivated nineteenth century artists in their effort to represent the 'natural beauty that is woman'. In her explanation of this phenomenon Pollock targeted the socio-psychic construction of sexualities of a period which stressed the 'absoluteness' of gender difference, using the following quote from Alfred Tennyson to prove her point:

Man for the field and Woman for the Hearth  
Man for the sword and for the needle she  
Man with the head and Woman with the heart  
Man to command and Woman to obey  
All else confusion.<sup>210</sup>

In Pollock's opinion such absoluteness led in the nineteenth century to the worship of one dimensional images of women as beautiful icons rhetorically constructed by the codes of drawing, painting and, later, photography. This construction was part of a wider pattern which represented 'nature' as controlled, ordered and trained.<sup>211</sup> The psychological explanation suggested by Pollock of why images of women (and flowers as sexual symbols for women) was that the painted image of that which is loved can be 'utterly and timelessly possessed': that is inanimate symbols and artefacts become the *property* of those who gaze on them. She wrote:

[F]lowers have often been used as a metaphor for women's sexuality, or rather their genitals' which, in simultaneously acknowledging and denying knowledge of the sexualised parts of the female body, draws attention to what is absent and to the anxiety which this presence / absence generates in a masculine producer / viewer. In other words the meaning ... is not what is there, but what is not, what cannot be articulated. The conjunction of Eve, Venus, Madonna constitutes woman as an ambiguous sign, dangerous to man through knowledge, domination or sexuality, dreadfully distant, but anxiously desired, an almost hallucinatory presence.<sup>212</sup>

Pollock posited twin compensatory fantasies - the pre-oedipal fantasy of the all-powerful phallic mother and the post-oedipal fantasy of woman as not only damaged but as 'damage itself'. In these terms a woman is both castrated and the symbol of castration - a powerful yet threatening femme fatale; the powerful but forever lost and perpetually desired mother of infancy. In these terms fetishism in the form of images of women served as

<sup>210</sup> Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *The Princess*, 1847.

<sup>211</sup> Griselda Pollock, *Women as Sign: Psychological Readings*, Routledge, London, 1988, pp. 123, 134.

<sup>212</sup> Pollock, 1988, p. 138.

defence against such fantasies: fetishistic conversion shaping the fetish into a substitute for what was considered to be lacking in the female body - the phallus - by building up the beauty of the object and transforming it into something satisfying in itself.<sup>213</sup> Taking Pollock a step further and assuming, firstly that in the nineteenth century adult men and women experientially felt the lack of potency rather than an actual phallus, and secondly that women as well as men adopted the fetishistic defence of images of the beautiful and potent lost mother of early childhood - for women such images simply underwent a deeper conversion: instead of gazing on the images of women, nineteenth century women fetishistically gazed upon and reproduced images flowers.

Ellis Rowan with her red hair and pale skin, her English mother and her Irish father, seems to have unconsciously identified with the ambiguously Protestant / Catholic Queen Elizabeth I, the disguised Madonna of an officially Protestant country whose citizens had had a Catholic upbringing. In this she was representative of many Australian-born women within whom - whether from familial or cultural influence - a struggle occurred between a Protestant and a Catholic iconography of motherhood. It may well be that this confusion within the founding mother was reflected in Australia's sons: it perhaps being prophetic that in 1897 the twenty two year old 'Puck', beloved only child of Ellis Rowan - who nine years previously had lost the ideological battle to have her images of flowers accepted as part of Australian 'high' art / national identity - died in a South African prison as a result of trying to live the myth known as the Australian legend.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Pollock, 1988, p. 139.

<sup>214</sup> Hazzard, 1984, p. 97. Frederick Rowan's great passion in life was horses. It seems he was in Umtali as a Mercenary in charge of horses. He died in the Umtali gaol, where he had been committed for trial on a charge of Forgery and Uttering, of Chronic Bright's Disease. This suggests Rowan may have had a drinking (or gambling?) problem which caused him to live beyond his means.

## **EPILOGUE**

My father was Noonuccal man and kept old tribal way  
His totem was the Carpet Snake, whom none must ever slay;  
But mother was of Peewee clan, and loudly she expressed  
The daring view that carpet snakes were nothing but a pest.

Oogeroo of the tribe Noonuccal: 'Ballad of the Totems'.

This epilogue is written in the belief that myths - which tend to intensify in times of cultural crisis - are mediatory structures between language and the unknown which change in relation to history. In post modern culture myths are often regarded as disguised mechanisms of social control. However if myth formation is recognised as part of the ongoing human process of creating a livable world, then it would seem better to regard myths as communications which need to be understood rather than deceits which should be analysed / exposed.<sup>1</sup> In accepting this, it seemed important to me to conclude this dissertation with a consideration of how nineteenth century myths about women and the natural environment affected social attitudes in Australia in the first decades of the twentieth century when, under the influence of the pressures building and exploding in Europe, Australian myth formation underwent a period of profound intensification / modification.

In the early years of settlement the iconography of flowers satisfied the need to have common reference points between people in Britain and Australia; between 'home' and the colonies. During this period flower gardening and flower painting restored to women a sense of self and, in time, encouraged the growth of a topophilic attachment to the colonial natural environment.<sup>2</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century scientific and romantic documentation of the Australian environment reached an apogee of 'naturalism' with female artists such as Ellis Rowan meticulously depicting the 'beautiful' native flora of Australia and the Heidelberg school of (principally male) artists establishing their vision of Australia's eternally golden landscape.<sup>3</sup> In the first decades of the twentieth century, under the influences of nationalism<sup>4</sup> and the science of psychology, two women artists - one Australian born and one English born - adopted the 'people - science - nature' nexus which had so engaged colonial women artists. In seeking to escape what they perceived as the superficiality of nineteenth century realism in women's art, in their different ways both May Gibbs and Margaret Preston forged specifically Australian myths about women, the family and the natural environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Lauter, 1984, pp. ix, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Hawke, 1992, p. 325. Hawke claimed in the colonies attachment to the natural environment had its source in the home, family, garden and familiarity with a local area: that topophilia at the domestic level was a necessary precursor to a wider attachment to wilderness 'for its own sake'.

<sup>3</sup> Berger, 1973, pp. 90, 114. Eagle in Carroll, 1982, p. 183. Both art forms were perpetuated in the name of nationalism by artists who had 'felt the pressure of an overseas reality'. They represented 'a highly tactile' form of art which played upon the spectator's sense of acquiring the thing which was portrayed - a skill of illusionism which importuned the sense of touch as well as that of sight.

<sup>4</sup> Betteridge, 1979, p. 15. Women's natural history representations, art, craft, and design have been affected by nationalism all through the twentieth century.

Both Margaret Preston (1875-1963) and May Gibbs (1876-1969) were writers, artists and travellers who were described by friends and social commentators as 'womanly' women.<sup>5</sup> Both women trained to be professional artists in Australia and Britain, both married in 1919 when they were in their early forties, both had no children, both painted the flora and natural environment of Australia and both were adept at promoting their own work. They differed in that in the period between the world wars Margaret Preston is said to have become the 'first painter in the country' while May Gibbs is said to have become the first person to forge a genuine Australian folklore based on the natural environment.<sup>6</sup> They also differed in that May Gibbs - who before she married had been largely supported by her family - kept her maiden name and supported herself and her husband by making a commercial proposition of her work, while Margaret Preston - who largely supported herself before she married - took the name of her husband and was thenceforth enabled by his financial support to pursue a career as a 'professional' artist who painted 'high' art. As part of the opposition inherent in their inverted parallelisms Margaret Preston claimed she 'loathed', while May Gibbs claimed she 'adored', gardening.

**May Gibbs: '[Fantasy] embodies my hatred of how things are imprisoned'.<sup>7</sup>**

As suggested earlier, an important part of women's role in the nineteenth century was to further children's interest in, and appreciation of, the natural environment. Women did this by teaching children to garden, by taking them into the natural environment to picnic and collect natural history specimens and by producing imaginative and informative children's literature.<sup>8</sup> The nineteenth century European myth of childhood innocence which both grew out of and influenced these activities was expressed by women as a yearning for a lost 'fairy

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<sup>5</sup> Dorothy Dundas 4 May 1985, quoted in Elizabeth Butel, *Margaret Preston*, Imprint, Sydney, 1995 (1985), p. 22. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 1914 in Maureen Walsh, *May Gibbs, Mother of the Gumnuts: Her Life and Work*, Cornstalk Publishers, Sydney, 1991, pp. 96-7

<sup>6</sup> Humphrey McQueen, *The Black Swan of Trespass: the emergence of modernist painting in Australia to 1944*, Alternative Publishing, Sydney, 1979, p. 143. Caroline Jordan, 'Designing Women', *Art and Australia*, Summer 1993, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 200, 202, 206. Jordan discussed the success of Thea Proctor and Margaret Preston in the inter-war period. She believed that the two women were early exponents of modernism which during this period was accepted / contained by the establishment as 'a marginal, decorative, feminine practice'. When modernism came to dominate mainstream art in the 1940s women modernists were eclipsed. Gibbs first produced what she called her 'Gum Nut Brownies' for the cover of *Lone Hand* in 1914: ever since adults have been as intrigued as children with her folklore world.

<sup>7</sup> May Gibbs, 'Note for *Nuttybub and Nittersing*', Notebooks, in Walsh, 1991, p. 135.

<sup>8</sup> Hattie Scott to Edward Ramsay, 22 October 1862, ML 563/1.



dream' lived within the natural environment.<sup>9</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century this essentially British concept had been transferred by both British and colonially born women to the Australian environment.<sup>10</sup> The metaphor of women as delicate, immobile flowers who could not survive without the mobility and potency of a men was an important part of the magical thinking which mythologised childhood and encouraged women to fantasise about the Australian bush.<sup>11</sup> It was no accident that in Australia the years of nationalism, international warfare and political tension - 1910 to 1950 - coincided with what has been called the 'golden age' of fantasy in children's literature during which fantasy became commodified.<sup>12</sup>

May Gibbs arrived in Australia at the age of four and, until the age of ten, lived in the Australian 'bush' in South and Western Australia. In 1907 the thirty year old May, having already trained in Britain as a 'serious' artist and portraitist, attended an exhibition of Ellis Rowan's wildflower paintings in Perth. As the direct result of this May spent the following year painting Western Australian wildflowers in a traditional nineteenth century style. In her struggle to establish emotional and financial independence from her family, it was not until the first World War that May Gibbs found an artistic outlet in Sydney through which she could support herself. This was an outlet which in time led May to explore nostalgic memories from what she called 'the happiest [time] in [her] life' - her childhood in the Australian bush - and to formulate and commercially package these memories into what has been called Australia's first coherent visual mythology.<sup>13</sup> During the period of the first world war Gibbs' images of anthropomorphised Australian flowers, plants and animals appealed not only to children but to adults: especially, it would seem, to Australian soldiers at the war front.<sup>14</sup> Hence, some modifications having been effected along the lines of 'immaculate conception and miraculous birth', by the end of the first world war May Gibbs' images of

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<sup>9</sup> Poem, 'The Days of Childhood', written by Rachel Henning for her sister Henrietta Boyce, 25 March 1878, 'Alas! That life's dark clouds should e'er that fairy dream destroy', Adams, 1969, pp. 282-3.

Meredith, 1839, p. 8. Hattie Scott to Edward Ramsay, 22 October 1862, ML 563/1.

<sup>10</sup> For example Lady Barker to her son Guy, 1884, in Hasluck, 1963, p. 67. Lady Barker told her son that the profoundly silent Australian bush with its 'brilliant flowers' made her feel life 'were all a dream'.

<sup>11</sup> It was common practice in nineteenth century novels and fairy tales to anthropomorphise flowers and / or include illustrations of hybrid women / flowers. For example in plate 2 of this dissertation and in Louis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*.

<sup>12</sup> Ida Rentoul Outhwaite (1888-1960) was the most successful creator of a fantasy world based on European tradition / landscape; May Gibbs the most successful of the many illustrators and writers who depicted local flora, fauna and landscape and developed a distinctly Australian fantasy iconography. Stratton, 1996, p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> Walsh, 1991, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> Walsh, 1991, Ch. 8. Robert Holden & Andrew MacKenzie, 'Snugglepot and Cuddlepie and Other Fairy Folk of the Australian Bush', Monograph, Royal Botanical Garden, Sydney, n.d., p. 2. Between 1916-1920 a series of five booklets which introduced May Gibbs' 'bushland ethos' sold over 125,000 copies.

naked (and largely androgynous) 'bush flower and nut babies' and of Mrs Kookaburra, the 'good mother' incarnate, had become national icons.<sup>15</sup>

After the war May Gibbs' images, which she began to incorporate in stories and publish as books, were widely used to popularise the concepts of Australia for the Australians, 'good mothering' and family values which were in tune with the eugenics movement and the inter-war intensification of nationalism. In the same way as other early twentieth century women writers of natural history stories for children, May Gibbs was deeply influenced by the writings of Louisa Meredith.<sup>16</sup> It could be said that May Gibbs, described by contemporaries as having a 'deep feeling for nature',<sup>17</sup> shared a vision of the Australian natural environment - and a belief that transmission to children of that vision was part of her role as a woman - with nineteenth century women.<sup>18</sup>

The period which included two world wars when men were often away from home for long periods and families either lost, or feared losing, sons, brothers and fathers, was a time when books which dealt with the break down of family life, encouraged the displacement of sentiment about loss and danger onto anthropomorphised plants and animals and stressed the importance of good mothering were understandably popular.<sup>19</sup> In the mythopoetic realm she created May Gibbs - an environmentalist who combined a diverse botanical, zoological and entomological knowledge of the Australian bush with accuracy in its representation<sup>20</sup> - drew

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<sup>15</sup> Anita Callaway, 'May Gibbs', in Kerr, 1995, pp. 280-1, 358. Robert Holden, 'Gumnut Town: Fact, Fantasy & Folklore', in Robert Holden (ed.) *Gumnut Town: Botanic Fact and Bushland Fantasy*, Royal Botanical Garden, Sydney, 1992, pp. 29, 31, 33, 35, 37. 'The motherly kookaburra .. who presented a confident middle class attitude in exhibiting and validating home values and domestic virtues' was used as propaganda promoting family values during the first world war and between 1920 and 1959 on posters and handbooks which promoted baby health clinics.

<sup>16</sup> Miranda Morris, 'Jane Ada Fletcher and the Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania' in Markus, 1993, Ch. 4. In the years 1914-1952 Jane Ada Fletcher wrote 'nature' stories which were used in Tasmanian schools which were particularly influenced by Louisa Meredith. For Meredith as an influence on Gibbs see for example Meredith 1853, p. 59 where Meredith created the Australian bush as 'elvish'.

<sup>17</sup> The *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 1914 in Walsh, 1991, pp. 96-7.

<sup>18</sup> See Marianne Campbell's 'fairy with flower cart' in Kerr, 1992, p. 130, Ellis Rowan's illustrated letter to her young sister in Hazzard, 1984, p. 21, Lady Barker's letter to her son Guy in Hasluck, 1963, pp. 61, 66, Meredith, 1853, p. 59.

<sup>19</sup> For Example Rowan & Scott, *Bill Bailee*, n.d. (1908) pp. 35, 63. Hazzard, 1984, p. 110. The tragic life and death of Bill Baillie wherein a bilboa is overtly represented as a substitute 'child to cosset, protect, play with and love' - a thinly veiled recreation of the life of Rowan's deceased son.

<sup>20</sup> Jean Chapman, 'A Biography of May Gibbs', May Gibbs Society, Sydney, 1994, p. 6. George Seddon, 'Cuddlepie and other Surrogates', *Westerly*, no. 2, June 1988, pp. 150-151, 154. Seddon described Gibbs as conservationist who was 'too good a naturalist to talk about reverence for life'. In her books Gibbs represented flora from the Harvey district in Western Australia and from the Hawkesbury sandstone region of New South Wales. Peter Bernhardt, 'Of Blossoms and Bugs: Natural History in May Gibbs' Art' in Holden, 1992, pp. 5-17, 21. Gibbs' advocated the maintenance of biodiversity in the natural environment.

on an understanding of what interested young children and access to images from the unconscious which give fairy tales their lasting appeal. Julia Kristeva suggested that just as national languages have their own dream language and unconscious, so too do the sexes; 'a division so much more archaic'.<sup>21</sup> Under the duress of war, in the first half of the twentieth century the anthropomorphic vision of the Australian bush as curious and quaint (and vaguely sinister) which had been propagated by nineteenth century women writers was modified to accommodate a construction of the bush, and the plants and creatures within it, as conflated substitute children / parents: especially infantilised substitute mothers.<sup>22</sup>

Between 1916 and 1943 May Gibbs published 12 books, numerous articles, publications for schools and syndicated weekly cartoons for children which developed the visibly Australian Gumnut Town as a parallel world to the human in which good parenting could be starkly contrasted to bad. It is interesting that Gibbs intimate, yet troubled and seething, microscopic world of the gumnuts represented an inverse reflection of the benign macroscopic world portrayed by male professional artists during what is now considered to have been a regressively Arcadic period in Australian art.<sup>23</sup> In Gibbs' miniaturised 'world of nature' the eternal battle between good and evil could be said to parallel that which was occurring on the world stage. It is generally accepted that resort to the world of nature for 'natural solutions' to age old problems endows such solutions with seemingly irrefutable authority.<sup>24</sup>

May Gibbs' illustrated stories for children combine aspects of an idealised and infantilised nature with images from the unconscious which have been said to represent the 'unspoken and nameless horrors of childhood'.<sup>25</sup> (see plates 27, 28). If it is accepted that in fairy stories individual characters express aspects of the human psyche and that clothes conceal or reveal truths about the human psyche, then the insistent nakedness<sup>26</sup> of the gumnut babies would seem to cry out for a psychological explanation. The unmediated

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<sup>21</sup> Kristeva, 1981, p. 241.

<sup>22</sup> Jane Ada Fletcher, 'Jenny and the Wild Ducks', (1916) quoted in Morris, 'Jane Ada Fletcher and the Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania' in Markus, 1993, p. 69.

<sup>23</sup> Gail Reekie, 'Contesting Australia; Feminism and Histories of the Nation', Whitlock & Carter, 1992, pp. 152-3. It was no accident that Gibbs 'submerged feminine' discourse, which served as counterpart to the dominant masculinist histories of the nation, emerged during the war when the world of women was kept separate and subordinate to the battlefield as the 'real' world of men. Margaret Plant, 'The Lost Art of Federation: Australia's Quest for Modernism', *Art Bulletin of Victoria*, no. 28, 1987, pp. 111-129. The art of the time featured tamed Arcadian domestic landscapes showing the family farm and an 'omnipresent cow'.

<sup>24</sup> Turner, 1985.

<sup>25</sup> Holden, 1992, p. 39, 41.

oppositions in Gibbs' characters - for instance Gibbs' 'Big Bad Banksia men' are vegetable 'nuts' who act like wild animals: males with muscular arms and legs who have female labia all over their hairy pudenda-like bodies - introduce an ambiguity which pervades all the levels of her text.

Gibbs' fictive world consisted of enclosed and enclosing spheres, one within the other - the world of man, the world of Gumnut Town and the world of the 'ideal' Gumnut family. The outermost world consisted of the big bad 'City' belonging to humans.<sup>27</sup> Going further inwards the traveller finds a happy Gumnut Town - which however has its own menace in the form of the evil Mrs Snake and the Big Bad Banksia men. In the centre of these concentric worlds is the supposedly sacrosanct home of the Gum Blossom family encircling a cradle in which an infant gum blossom lies sleeping. (see plate 27, centre). It would seem however that even in the innermost circle of the family home there is danger and surveillance - in this case the 'evil' eye of the Banksia man shown peering in at the window.

It has been suggested that May Gibbs' stories offered children coping devices for guilt and alienation. Seddon saw sinister anthropomorphs such as the Banksia men as a survival into the present of an animalistic world view which, in familiarising children with the unfamiliar, had the prophylactic value of giving children names for nameless terrors. On the other hand he saw benign anthropomorphs such as the Gumnuts (cupids with tiny wings, no genitalia and scraps of Australian native flora for clothing) as surrogates for lost maternal protection which works by inversion when a child, in feeling protective towards threatened Gumnut babies, generates compassion / reassurance for his or her own self.<sup>28</sup> In these terms children from war torn families in which the father was absent and the mother likely to be distressed or preoccupied could learn to face their own conscious and unconscious fears.

Unlike nineteenth century writers, May Gibbs did not equate the negative in the human psyche - in this case the Banksia men and Mrs Snake - with Aborigines. Her Aborigines were mildly portrayed as gentle ambulant grass trees ('blackboys') of various sexes and ages who lived a shadowy existence on the far perimeters of her stories.<sup>29</sup> It was left to writers and artists such as the Durack sisters to translate Gibbs' vision of the Australian bush into a

<sup>26</sup> Berger, 1973, p. 54. John Berger made the distinction between nakedness and nudity in art by claiming 'a naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude... To be naked is to be without disguise'.

<sup>27</sup> Despite being warned by all the animals to keep away from horrible humans, Cuddlepie, a male 'bush baby', set off in hopes of seeing a human and sees firstly a possum caught in a 'great iron trap' set by a 'bad' human and the possum set free by a 'good' human.

<sup>28</sup> Seddon, 1988, p. 155.

version for children which featured black children as the lead characters.<sup>30</sup> Purported to be written from the secrets imparted to them by black children, Mary and Elizabeth Durack wrote stories intended to teach white children to love nature and 'bush animals' by incorporating the secrets (and the power) of the 'happy dream-time' of the Aborigines. In one such story the Duracks' equivalent of the banksia men - the whirlwind - having stolen baby Woogoo, Woogoo's brother and sister, Nungaree and Jungaree, are forced to make a journey of discovery through the (seemingly sinister) Australian bush in order to rescue him. Unlike in May Gibbs' stories, in *The Way of the Whirlwind* the menace of the bush is shown to be illusory rather than real - the appropriation of Aboriginality encouraging white children to recognise that in Australia nature and the bush are wonderful rather than threatening. Although in this story nature is constructed in a way which is compatible with how Aboriginal women currently speak of the 'Earth Mother' who owns and tutors them,<sup>31</sup> it fails to acknowledge Aboriginal rights or recognise European cultural appropriation.

While May Gibbs did not evoke Aboriginality in the way in which Australian-born women writers of the time characteristically did, she *was* concerned with class issues. Her Banksia men with their muscular arms and legs, coarse speech and ongoing abductions of bush babies are clearly based on working class caricatures.<sup>32</sup> May Gibbs portrayed her Banksia men as increasingly animalistic as time went on - eventually combining the caricatured attributes of a gorilla with those of a banksia nut (plate 27, bottom right). In later life May felt the need to defend her right to feature 'bad Banksia men' - in her words, 'all that is undesirable' - in books intended for children. She did this by insisting that children's exposure to evil 'strengthened them if anything',<sup>33</sup> and by invoking the Australian Legend by claiming that as an eight year old living on an isolated farm in the bush she had been

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<sup>29</sup> Walsh, 1991, p. 199.

<sup>30</sup> Mary & Elizabeth Durack, *The Way of the Whirlwind*, Consolidated Press, Sydney, 1941.

<sup>31</sup> For twentieth century Aboriginal women's views on 'do-gooder' white women such as the Duracks and on landscape see Kath Walker (Ooderoo Noonuccal), 'Kath Walker', in *As the Twig is Bent: The Childhood Recollections of 16 Prominent Australians*, Terry Lane (ed.) Dove Communications, Melbourne, 1979, p. 25. Ooderoo Noonuccal & Kabul Ooderoo Noonuccal, 'The Rainbow Serpent', *Meanjin*, vol. 47, no. 3, Spring, 1988, p. 375. Coral Edwards, 'Being Aboriginal: Raised to Think White' in Whitlock & Carter, 1992, pp. 95-9, Somerville, *Sense of Place*, 1996, pp. 223-230.

<sup>32</sup> May Gibbs, 'Snugglepot and Cuddlepie: Their wonderful Adventures' in *May Gibbs Gumnut Classics: The Famous Gumnut Adventures*, Cornstack Publishing, Australia, 1991, p. 35. After her abduction and rescue 'Little Ragged Blossom' sought to escape the company of her rescuers because she 'felt so dirty'.

<sup>33</sup> Walsh, 1991, pp. 106, 135. Gibbs Notebooks, 1929. By 1923 Gibbs differentiated between her Banksia men. She wrote of long thin red ones, great knobbly brown ones, short thick black ones, yellow ones, fat round green and grey ones and some almost white. What superficially can be taken to be 'botanical' description clearly had racial and psychological (Freudian phallic) implications.

molested by an itinerant labourer - an elderly bearded man who had 'strange wild eyes' and 'gnarled hands'.<sup>34</sup>

Annette Hamilton claimed Gibbs' *Complete Adventures of Snugglepot and Cuddlepie* constitutes a genuine Australian myth.<sup>35</sup> She found two patterns of Australian gender relations were represented in this myth: 'the relations between pairs of men and an attached female' which she referred to as the problem of 'Your Missus and Your Mate', and the problem of female continuity between the generations which she referred to as 'How to have daughters without having Sex'. In structural terms in Gibbs' story 'Attachment to Mate' is opposed to 'Attachment to Missus',<sup>36</sup> with the Australian family represented as a place of male sexual and physical violence, absent fathers and abandoned and / or long suffering women who make huge sacrifices for the sake of their children.<sup>37</sup> Hamilton recognised that in the story although Snugglepot and Cuddlepie are closely bonded they are not equals, with Snugglepot being the 'instrumental' and Cuddlepie the 'expressive' partner in a relationship which is repeatedly broken apart by one or other of them entering into an exclusive relationship with Ragged Blossom. As 'the Missus' Ragged Blossom is continually forced to choose between her love for her adopted baby daughter and her love for one or other of her 'husbands': however, as Ragged Blossom always opts for the bonds of maternity over the bonds of matrimony, from time to time the mates are free to enjoy one another - that is until one or the other of them returns to Ragged Blossom. In this mythical story the magical resolution of a seemingly insoluble love triangle is that 'the two Mates and the Missus all go to live together' and form a happy family by adopting a large number of orphaned (that is, 'lost') children.<sup>38</sup> In this way the story would seem to represent a split between the masculine and feminine attributes within the social construct, 'masculinity'. However as the author is female and this fictive solution represents an inversion of the solution to gender problems which May Gibbs put into practice in her life when she (as breadwinner), a close woman friend and Gibbs' husband lived together and adopted substitute children in the form

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<sup>34</sup> Walsh, 1991, p. 28.

<sup>35</sup> Annette Hamilton, "Snugglepot and Cuddlepie: Happy Families in Australian Society", *Mankind*, no. 10, 1975, pp. 84-5. '[M]yths operate in men's minds without them being aware of the fact'. In Hamilton's terms the power of myth stems from its symbolic concern with 'unstated conflicts of the social order'.

<sup>36</sup> Hamilton, 1975, p. 86. The basic theme of *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie* is 'finding a lost baby' - who, Hamilton believes, is usually female, the theme of finding a lost male child being in her opinion 'a less successful myth for Australia'.

<sup>37</sup> Hetherington, 1983, p. 11. Gibbs is thought to have built on a psycho-dynamics of gender inherited from the nineteenth century.

<sup>38</sup> Hamilton, 1975, pp. 87-8.



1923.





1920.



1918.

**Bib and Bub**

Bibi and Bub sat in a Gumtree, thinking. Suddenly - they heard a strange noise. Climbing down, they saw something disappear and ran after it.

"It went in this hole" said Bub. "What can it be?" said Bib. Then down they fell. Mr. Hookaburra, awakened by screams, flew over. "Ah!" he said.

And hissing, made a noise like a mouse. Up came Mr. Snake. He pounced upon her, chopped her up, and - Out spring dear little Bib and Bub.

1924.

PLATE 28. May Gibbs, Plates from *The Gumrat Classics*, 1918, 1920, pp. 85, 123. *May Gibbs Master of the Gumrats*, p. 144. 'Bib and Bub'. (*Sunday News*, August 1924.)



of stray dogs, you could say it also represents a split in the masculine and feminine attributes within the social construct, 'femininity'.<sup>39</sup>

Not one intact family has a female child in the story of *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie*. Ragged Blossom achieves virgin motherhood when she and Snugglepot 'find' little Obelia, the 'beautiful white flower', the keeper of the pearls of wisdom, the one who in terms of the individual human psyche blossoms from within the pearl shell which lies at the bottom of the sea.<sup>40</sup> In terms of this myth males can be either adult - in which case they are violent and cruel - or infantile - in which case they constantly run away from their mothers. The metaphor of women as flowers - and its corollary belief in the need to develop a 'perfect' or idealised feminine in the human psyche - inevitably leads to both sexuality and 'masculinity' being represented as dangerous.<sup>41</sup> However, although Hamilton believed that Gibbs' reinforced the conservative position that women should develop their femininity and repress their sexuality, she believed her myth also acted as an agent for change in Australian society by questioning the ideology of the Australian family and suggesting that sex-based relationships can be immaterial or secondary: people can live together regardless of 'normal' family structure, the normal institutions of family and kinship can be replaced by households based on the ties of affection.<sup>42</sup>

May Gibbs ignored the 'civilised' adult personality and explored the helpless, amoral, polymorphous perverse infant who lived within the unconscious. If it is accepted that myth deals with the archetypal motif of the journey of self discovery, then it is likely that both Mrs Snake and the Banksia men represent repressed creative or libidinal energy. You could say that in terms of the society in which May Gibbs lived that she was suggesting that women became vicious and animalistic (like Mrs Snake, the symbol for alienated female 'masculinity') when they were excluded from the public world, while men became sinister and vegetative (like the Banksia men, the symbol for alienated male 'femininity') when they were excluded from the nuclear family. Or, to put it another way, social and familial conditioning which highly differentiates the masculine and the feminine and undervalues the latter causes men and women in Western society to feel alienated from both their so-called

<sup>39</sup> For many years May Gibbs lived with her husband James Kelly and her friend Rene Heames.

<sup>40</sup> Gibbs, 1991, 'Little Obelia', p. 111.

<sup>41</sup> Hamilton, 1975, p. 90. Such sexual symbolism abounds - not only are there black holes and dungeons into which the heroes are constantly thrown but they find themselves having to constantly wrestle with phallic symbols in order to prevent themselves being ingested. Characters fall into two categories - the inserted or the inserting: with all heroes / heroines (that is, primal innocence in quest of maturity) being in constant danger of being eaten or trapped (that is, emotionally or physically raped).

<sup>42</sup> Hamilton, 1975, p. 91-2.

masculine and so-called feminine energies - which then return in the form of monsters demanding attention.

Marion Woodman, a therapist who works with anorexic girls and women, claims she constantly sees a battle in women between inner and outer reality, the feminine and the masculine, being and doing, the unconscious and consciousness.<sup>43</sup> Woodman claimed that in women's dreams and creative expression the 'monsters' generated by this battle commonly take the form of a 'radiant hairy man living in the forest' and his partner, Mary Magdalene - the sacred whore: monsters experienced as so terrifying that women frequently 'refuse to dialogue' with them.<sup>44</sup> It was Mrs Snake as a sacred whore who hypnotised, imprisoned and / or 'swallowed' the gumnut babies in May Gibbs' books (see plate 28, bottom), and it was the Banksia men as wild men from the forest who ran away with and threatened to kill or do physical violence to the gumnut babies.<sup>45</sup> (plates 27, 28). May Gibbs had Obelia, Queen of the world under the sea, (in fairy stories the sea is a metaphor for the unconscious) condemn a captured (and repentant) Banksia man (see plate 28, upper left) in these words:

"The villain!", she cried, "Throw him to the sharks. He and his black shadows have taken our Ragged Blossom; they have cast her into the bottomless sea, where the days are as nights - I have seen it [in my mind]. Throw him to the sharks! Away with him!"<sup>46</sup>

In May Gibbs' stories it was 'good' animals such as Mr and Mrs Kookaburra, Mr and Mrs Koala, Mr and Mrs Kangaroo, and Mr and Mrs Lizard - mother and father figures who embodied 'domesticated' feminine and masculine energies - who repeatedly fought off Mrs Snake and the Banksia Men and rescued the naked and helpless bush babies.<sup>47</sup> The explicit motherliness and infantilised sexuality with which she imbued her microscopic alternative world of 'bush babies' could be construed as stemming from strong maternal, sexual and creative drives for which May Gibbs failed to find a sufficiently satisfying outlet.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Woodman, 1982, p. 20.

<sup>44</sup> Woodman, 1982.

<sup>45</sup> Hamilton, 1975, p. 90. believed that the Banksia men - who are half plant, half animal, that is phallus's with vulvae - represent the powers of Sexuality, rather than one sex or the other, the logical opposites of the Gumnuts who have no sexual organs at all.

<sup>46</sup> Gibbs, 'Little Obelia', 1991, p. 124.

<sup>47</sup> May Gibbs, followed the tradition set by women such as Frances Macleay of emasculating cupids - like the infantilised and androgynous 'Kewpie' doll which was popular between 1910 and 1950. The present-day equivalent is the Cupie doll's antithesis - the highly gendered and seemingly adult, 'Barbie' doll. and Rachel Haemes.

<sup>48</sup> Walsh, 1991, Between 1900-1913 and again in 1923-4 May Gibbs, who in later life claimed she was happy with her title of 'Mother of the Gumnuts' and called her gumnuts 'my babies', tried extremely hard to forge a career for herself as a painter of 'high art'.

The poisonous Mrs Snake and the demonic Banksia men who, in Gibbs' words, liked to 'torment small things',<sup>49</sup> gave May Gibbs' stories the 'element of menace' which distinguished them from the fantasy worlds created by other writers for children. As no explanation for their origin was ever given, it is probable that their wartime genesis rendered explanation unnecessary - for, taken together, they can be said to represent an alienated 'archaic elemental force' within the human psyche which at that time threatened not only the moral equation of the world of the gumnuts', but the moral equation of the 'civilised' Western world.<sup>50</sup> The combining of the 'wild man' persona of European folk lore with menacing phallic and generative symbols from the Australian bush embodied fears contained in the myth of 'the child lost in the bush' which had existed in Australian society since first settlement. The difficult early years that the Gibbs family spent struggling on a bush property at Franklin Harbour in South Australia and at Harvey in Western Australia - though glorified in May Gibbs' conscious memory - are captured in mythological form in her stories for children in a more sinister form - the 'bush' becoming both the idealised and the bad substitute mother, the idealised and the bad substitute father. While wave after wave of emigrants lacking in capital and expertise arrived in Australia hoping (magically) to begin life anew 'on the land', the chastening experience of trying to earn a living against extremely difficult odds continued to influence the way in which generation after generation of Australians perceived their natural environment.

Towards the end of her life May Gibbs, unable to make the trips into the bush which had sustained her interest, wrote satirical fantasies for 'adult' children which had a British setting.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps the last word on May Gibbs should come indirectly from a fellow satirical illustrator of children's stories, Olive Crane, who in 1920 executed a spoof of the Willow-Pattern plate which she called 'The "Gum Tree Pattern" plate'. Crane's painting - which modified the original by replacing willows with gum trees, Chinese palaces with Australian bungalows and flying doves with a bi-plane containing two lovers - showed a mother pushing a pram, a woman hanging washing on a line and two men off fishing by themselves far away from the domestic scene. It would seem that like May Gibbs when young, Crane, who produced the cartoon on the eve she left Australia to further her artistic career in Europe, felt a strong desire to escape from an artistically restrictive Australia which continued to

<sup>49</sup> Gibbs, 'Nuttybub and Nittersing', 1991, p. 145.

<sup>50</sup> Holden, 1992, p. 41.

<sup>51</sup> Bernhardt, 1992, pp. 19, 21. See May Gibbs, 'My Garden', in Walsh, 1991, p. 202. Walsh, p. 198. *Prince Dande Lion: A Garden Whim Wham* (1953). These had an implicit conservationist message.

endorse the traditional nineteenth century Australian identities of trapped, domesticated wife / mother and absent husband / father.<sup>52</sup>

**Margaret Preston: 'I am a flower painter not a flower'.<sup>53</sup>**

In general, despite slight modifications, twentieth century floral art carried on the nineteenth century tradition whereby women identified their persona with flowers and produced beautiful representations of 'wild' flowers which gave aesthetic pleasure, carried Latin titles, promoted nationalism and reinforced the Marion iconography of woman as ambiguously weak / powerful, contained / free, pure / sexual. The identification women felt with flowers was often quite physical. Daisy Rossi, a portraitist who adopted impressionist techniques to paint Western Australian wildflowers in their natural settings, claimed she refused to pick wildflowers because cut flowers reminded her 'of a mutilated limb severed from a body'. She defended her impressionist style by describing conventional representations of wildflowers as 'infinitely niggling and ladylike, conveying no adequate impression of the life of flowers'.<sup>54</sup>

Unlike May Gibbs who sought to incorporate the nineteenth century tradition of flower painting, in the 1920s Margaret Preston reacted against her early training as a floral artist expected to copy 'Nature, as perfectly as possible, setting down every detail just as I saw it',<sup>55</sup> by declaring this approach to be superficial.<sup>56</sup> Dedicated to fostering a distinctly national art and to producing representations of flowers which combined an accurate scientific vision with strong design, Preston wanted her flowers to suggest strength and permanence rather than delicacy and ephemerality: she thus began to incorporate techniques acquired from studying craft and 'our own Aboriginal art'.<sup>57</sup> Convinced that in art 'the mind must rule the eye' and that a 'truly national art' could only 'come from the subconscious', Preston claimed

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<sup>52</sup> Joseph Eisenberg, 'Olive Crane' in Kerr, 1995, p. 283. Watercolour reproduced *Home*, 1 March 1921.

<sup>53</sup> Margaret Preston, 6 April 1930, *The Sun*, (Sydney) 'I Am Not a Flower', 'Yes, my self-portrait is completed, but I am a flower painter, not a flower'.

<sup>54</sup> Janda Gooding, *Wildflowers in Art: Artists Impressions of Western Australian Wildflowers 1699-1991*, Art Gallery of Western Australia, 1991, pp. 60 - 65. See Daisy Rossi, 'Hovea trisperma', c 1915. Eva Bright, 'Daisy Rossi at Home', *Woman's World*, Perth, 1 October 1923, p. 556.

<sup>55</sup> Margaret Preston, interview in *Woman's Budget*, 1931 in Butel, 1995, p. 18.

<sup>56</sup> McQueen, 1979, p. 152. Preston called representations such as Rowan's 'camera images' and was scathing about them.

<sup>57</sup> Margaret Preston, 'Art For Crafts - Aboriginal Art artfully Applied', *The Home*, vol. 5, no. 5, 1 December 1924.

that the study and practice of Cubism, craft and Aboriginal art served to 'clear the mind of European standards, but not of training, which is part of our civilisation'.<sup>58</sup>

Because of her appropriation of Aboriginal culture and her determination to stay within the parameters of the domestic, Preston has been called a neo-colonialist whose art represented a 'cosy modernism'.<sup>59</sup> There is no doubt that Aborigines were peripheral to Preston's vision in a political sense: like most women who were flower painters Preston was engaged upon other tasks - for instance those of finding a sustainable Australian female identity and, during a period when 'assimilation' was thought to be a good thing, of forging a sustainable spiritual and emotional relationship with the natural environment for 'all' Australians. This becomes obvious when three of Preston's paintings are considered - 'Aboriginal Flowers' (1928), 'Self-Portrait' (1930) and 'The Expulsion' (1952).

Preston wrote of herself in the third person as searching to find a personal female vision / identity: 'Yet again the old restless feeling is bothering her. She feels her art does not suit the times, that her mentality has changed and that her work is not following her mind'.<sup>60</sup> Over the years Preston painted and crafted flowers across a range of genres; hers was a wide ranging exploration which included putting native and garden flowers in the same frame. She also experimented with both 'popular' and 'high' forms of art, again and again returning to explore styles in floral art which she had earlier dismissed as unsatisfactory.<sup>61</sup> 'Aboriginal Flowers' (plate 29) was painted in oil at a time when Preston was experimenting with a machine aesthetic. Her representation gives a strong, deliberately reductionist and overly symmetrical view of bouquet of red, black and white artificial flowers supposedly made from feathers by Aboriginal women.<sup>62</sup> Making flowers from feathers was not a traditional craft for

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<sup>58</sup> Margaret Preston, *Society of Artists Book 1945-1946*, Ure Smith, Sydney, n.d., p. 19, Manuscripts, no. 4, February 1933. Butel, 1995, p. 53. Preston was interested in exploring the Jungian unconscious.

<sup>59</sup> Margaret Preston, 1930 quoted in Butel, 1995, p. 52. She wrote: 'We simply cannot get to the bottom of [Aborigines'] minds, it is all just a little too simple for us'. Though naive, this was not meant to be derogative for Preston highly valued the simplicity and strength of vision which she attributed to Aborigines. Plant, 1987, pp. 126-7. Between the wars there was a yearning for 'a simple return to the soil' bred of the European conflict. To be successful art needed to be 'familial, enclosing, comforting'.

<sup>60</sup> Margaret Preston, 'From Eggs to Electrolux', *Art in Australia - Margaret Preston Number*, 3rd Series, no. 22, December 1927.

<sup>61</sup> In 1936, having exploited the modernist representation of flowers to the full and made a name for herself Preston returned to painting flowers in botanical and realist styles; for a while in 1946 she painted flowers in a sentimental style, and in the same year set them against a realist bush background in the manner of Allport and Rowan. For wildflowers and cottage garden flowers together see 'Rose and Banksia' (1936).

<sup>62</sup> Ann Stephen, 'Margaret Preston', in Kerr, 1995, pp. 180-181. Stephen extrapolated from the title that the feather flowers were made by an unknown Aboriginal woman. As by 1928 Preston had visited Aboriginal communities in northern Australia, and would have known the significance of feathers in male Aboriginal rites of judicial killing, this is quite possible. However, as the form of the flowers looks very

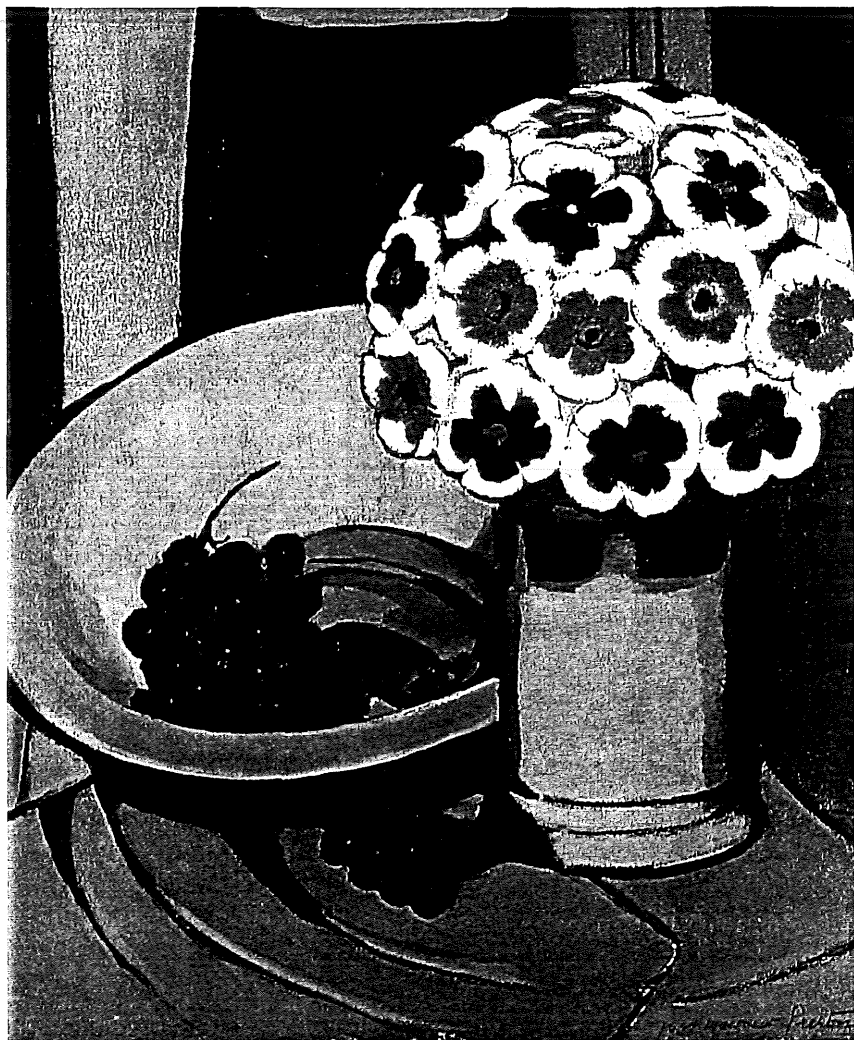


PLATE 29. *Aboriginal Flowers*, Margaret Preston, 1928, Art Gallery of South Australia.

Aboriginal women, but one - which like avian taxidermy - was enthusiastically pursued by European women at a time in the nineteenth century when it was common to call native-born white Australians, rather than Australia's indigenous people, 'Aborigines'.

Preston could well have been presenting to the viewer flowers - constituted from the feathers of birds which had lost their lives and their freedom of flight - which had cross-cultural historical associations as a powerful symbol of the objectification of *both* Aboriginal and European women under two culturally variant forms of patriarchy. Preston represented her primula-like flowers as having red or black centres and white borders. They can thus be seen as representing white women, black women and the red earth - or, because in Western society red generally means life / lifeblood / energy; white, purity; and black, death - as symbols of purity, passion and death. This reading, which suggests that Preston may have represented Australian (that is both Aboriginal and European) women as retaining life and spirituality even when encircled by the dictates of their respective patriarchal societies and to some extent denatured by the techniques of art and science, is reinforced by the round golden bowl containing a bunch of grapes which Preston positioned like a sun beside and partially behind the jar of artificial feather flowers. Alternatively, as the culture of flowers is an artificial concept which is not recognised in tribal or subsistence societies, Preston may have been invoking / celebrating the functional role she believed women had in tribal and pioneer communities. Most likely Preston was reflecting in paint more than she was aware - including the paradox that in the long term most 'gains' for women in modern industrial societies also represent loss; in moving from 'eggs to electrolux'; from tribal to so-called 'civilised' societies, women gained some things and lost others.

John Berger wrote:

To be born a woman has been to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men. The social presence of women has developed as a result of their ingenuity in living under such tutelage within such a limited space. But this has been at the cost of a woman's self being split into two. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself. ... From earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually. ... And so she comes to consider the *surveyor* and the *surveyed* within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman. ... Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another.

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like feather flowers made by European women in the nineteenth century I think it unlikely. I think Preston intended her title to imply that the flowers were 'Aboriginal' in concept and form.

*Men act and women appear ...* The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object - and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.<sup>63</sup>

Margaret Preston did not paint people in her landscapes and rarely painted portraits. However in 1925 she painted her husband's portrait and in 1930 her own self portrait (plate 30). Preston, who in marrying a man six years her junior dropped eight years from her age, was fifty one years old when she painted her self-portrait. McQueen considered the self-portrait did not reveal Margaret's "inner personality" or attempt a representational likeness ... the eyes do not follow you or even look at you: the pupils are set in the top centre of the eyes giving them a fixed inwardness by which sight is subordinated to thought'.<sup>64</sup> When interviewed Preston stressed that in her self portrait she had represented herself, as 'a flower painter, .. not a flower'. Certainly she portrayed herself as if her palate, which grows out of her hand, was part of her, while the real subject - the flower she was painting - is prominently set up against the background of the window of her home. Despite her declamation however, Margaret Preston is in her self-portrait in three guises - as her solid brick home, as the simple but strong red-gold wildflower growing in a pot on the window sill of her home, and as a painter of flowers who is herself a flower with red-gold petals rising on a long pink stem out of a plain black vase. Though the immobility of the painting suggests an object with a mask-like face; the intensity of life in the eyes suggests something unfathomable, the person within the persona, far beyond or within the objectified flower-self which Preston created for public display when, as Berger put it, she reluctantly agreed to 'offer up her femininity as the surveyed'.<sup>65</sup>

The 'Ideal Self-Portrait' which the professional artist Alice Muskett painted in 1908 in which she portrayed herself as the disembodied head of a beautiful, blind eyed woman - with her hand held across her throat to stop her speaking - floating ethereally beside a huge cut rose in front of an illuminated church window, displayed the same tension between how women were expected to be seen, how they saw themselves, and a longing for escape from self-consciousness.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Berger, 1973, pp. 46-7.

<sup>64</sup> McQueen, 1979, p. 156. In twentieth century self-portraits by women the subject rarely looks at the viewer - vision being represented as either askance or inward looking.

<sup>65</sup> Berger, 1973, p. 55. Preston's self-portrait was commissioned by the Art Gallery of New South Wales: however ambivalent she may have felt about having her self-portrait on public display as the first woman artist to be requested to provide the gallery with a self-portrait it was an honour she could not refuse.

<sup>66</sup> Illustration in the *Sydney Mail*, 9 December 1908.





*PLATE 30. Self-Portrait, Margaret Preston, 1930. Art Gallery of New South Wales.*

For most of her life Preston struggled with distinctions between mind and spirit; 'scientific' rationality and spiritual orthodoxy; spirit of place and spirituality. According to Humphrey McQueen the world wars affected her deeply, not only personally but as an artist.<sup>67</sup> McQueen suggested that the works Preston completed in the early 1950s in response to the religious revivalism represented by the Blake Prize 'could [either] have been the complete denial of all she had struggled to achieve' or, in the form of 'satirical primitivism', an extension of it.<sup>68</sup> The same dilemma faces critics when they try to evaluate / interpret the last works written and illustrated by May Gibbs.<sup>69</sup> As both women were in their seventies when these works were produced and both were deeply affected by the revelations of the post-war years, it seems likely that both a desire for spiritual understanding *and* satirical despair featured in their works.

'The Expulsion', 1952, (plate 31) which has been described as 'the most original, if least appreciated' of Preston's work, shows a white angel driving two black figures from the garden of Eden.<sup>70</sup> Two years before she painted 'The Expulsion' Margaret Preston painted a black Adam and Eve in a benign garden of Eden surrounded by Australian native plants, flowers, birds and animals. Hal Missingham remembered Preston describing this earlier painting to him in these words:

The Garden of Eden, obviously here in Australia, the oldest known land of all. Equally obviously, Adam and Eve should be black, *our* aborigines with a history stretching back to the Dreamtime. And our unique and wonderful wild flowers must go in, Sturt's Desert pea, flannel flowers, and the koala, kangaroo, emu and echidna; birds and fish.<sup>71</sup>

If this were to be an accurate reconstruction of the artist's attitudes it would have Margaret Preston appropriating Aboriginal history in exactly the same way, and for the same reasons, as nineteenth century male explorers. However a close look at 'The Expulsion' suggests that Preston's attitudes may have been somewhat more complex. In her painting, while the Garden of Eden goes on as before behind a gate padlocked and guarded by an angel intent upon preventing humans from eating from the heavenly tree of life, outside the garden Scottish thistles, Sturt's Desert Pea and Banksia bloom brightly. In traditional

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<sup>67</sup> Margaret Preston, quoted in McQueen, 1979, p. 163, from J. Ingamells (ed.), *Cultural Cross Section*, Jindyworobak, Adelaide, 1941, p. 40. 'If the mind of the artist is not affected by the tremendous happenings of the last twenty five years, then there is no hope for him (sic)'.

<sup>68</sup> McQueen, 1979, p. 161.

<sup>69</sup> Bernhardt, 1992, pp. 19, 21, wondered whether *Prince Dande Lion*, so different to anything Gibbs had produced before, was intended to be satirical or have its emotive spirituality taken at face value.

<sup>70</sup> Kerr, 1995, p. 433.



PLATE 31. *The Expulsion*. Margaret Preston, 1952. Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Christian iconography the thistle represents sin and sorrow: this interpretation had especial edge in Australia where the introduction of the Scotch thistle caused so much damage that 'thistle inspectors' were introduced in an effort to control it. Nevertheless, as Preston was extremely proud of her hardy pioneering Scottish ancestry, she may have given the thistle a double meaning - a potential pest yes - but only if it grew in the wrong way in the wrong place. Certainly Preston admired Banksias and Sturt Peas above all native flowers so it is probable that she intended to partially subvert traditional Christian symbolism which constructs banishment from the 'garden' to the 'wilderness' as exile.

In Preston's painting, although a black Adam bemoans his fate, a black Eve / Mary, her child somehow magically conceived, carried to term and born in the time it has taken the angel to bar the gate to the garden of Eden, smiles beatifically while she cradles in her arms a light skinned child. Can it be that Preston intended the viewer to think the child was ambiguously the offspring of a white 'angel' and a black 'human' father? Certainly while the two patriarchs express outrage (for different reasons) at Eve's complacency, women and the land continue to bloom with determination, hardiness and beauty. It is possible that Preston was challenging Christianity's traditional denial of analogy between the 'feminised' vegetable cycle of life and death and the 'masculine' theology of sacrifice and immortality by making her Australian Eve Adam's equal, equally set on the path to moral freedom of self-understanding / self-forgiveness. In refusing to construct the wilderness of the unconscious as a savage wasteland to be feared Preston may have been consciously invoking Carl Jung whom elsewhere she consciously endorsed. Whether or not Preston intended to overturn the Christian post-lapsarian legacy of expulsion and imperfection in order to assert an elision from garden to nature, she went further than any flower painter before her in asserting that after 'the fall', innocence could be retained if the anomalous nature of pseudo-dichotomies between good and bad, animal and vegetable, black and white, inside and outside, masculine and feminine, science and nature could be recognised / reconciled.

### **Conclusion.**

One of the challenges facing environmental history today is discovering how to 'integrate our understandings of the human and natural worlds'.<sup>72</sup> Since British settlement began in Australia Europeans have destroyed 70% of Australia's original woodland and

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<sup>71</sup> Missingham, 'Margaret Preston', *Art and Australia*, vol. 1, no. 2, August 1963.

<sup>72</sup> Stephen Dovers & John Dargavel, 'Environmental History: A Conference of Disciplines', in *Australian Historical Association Bulletin*, nos. 66-67, March - June 1991, pp. 25-30.

forest; European agricultural and pastoral activities have degraded two thirds of Australia's arable land and half its grazing land and threatened with extinction one third of Australia's native mammals and 2200 of its native plant species. To put it bluntly 'nowhere else in the world have so few people pauperised such a large proportion of the world's surface in such a brief period of time'.<sup>73</sup> My contention is that in Australia exaggerated and destructive constructions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' have greatly exacerbated exploitative attitudes to the natural environment. Under such conditioning women were expected to be passive reproducers within the context of the family while at the same time teaching children to see the natural environment as God Given; something which was theirs for the taking. On the other hand men were both expected to be 'home-based family men - to fulfil the domestic ideal of the 'good' father and husband'- and to wring a living out of an unknown environment within an economic system which arbitrarily favoured / punished the brave.

To complicate matters further, attempts by Australian settlers to live coherent lives within the social dictates of the time occurred during a period which witnessed a massive change from religious to secular systems of belief. As a means to counteract the biological and spiritual instability of the age, for much of the nineteenth century middle class women helped propagate the belief that worship of the beautiful in nature would earn individuals a place in paradise in another life - and justify the appropriation of that which they saw before them in this.<sup>74</sup> Partly as a result of this attitude, partly from a sense of duty, and partly from a sense of identificatory self-preservation, after their initial dismay many women professed to enjoy (the green parts of) the colonial natural environment and / or to adore its wildflowers.<sup>75</sup> In the nineteenth century women's 'love of flowers' set them on a collision course with men, who, in an effort to survive economically, were often 'casually destructive' of the natural environment - in particular acting as if they 'hated trees'.<sup>76</sup> If trees represent masculinity in its passive, immobile, vegetative and spiritual aspect, then it could be said that men were (actively) trying to destroy what was passive, non-heroic and spiritual within themselves; while women's love of flowers can be seen as an attempt to (passively) absorb into themselves a socially dominant image of womanhood as decorative and chastely reproductive.

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<sup>73</sup> Lines, 1991, Introduction, p. xx.

<sup>74</sup> Schama, 1995, p. 312. For example Ellen Clacy, 'A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings' (1853) in Chisholm, 1964, p. 50. Ellen claimed she viewed nature with 'an intensity of awe' which led her from 'the contemplation of nature to worship of Nature's God'.

<sup>75</sup> Hillman, 1975, p. 84. This projective positivist 'looking' is known as the naturalistic fallacy which gives a nature which is 'without deformities, irrationalities and individual idiosyncrasies'.

<sup>76</sup> Bolton, 1981, p. 58, Ch. 4 (quoting W. K. Hancock, 1930).

In the nineteenth century - before it was recognised that 'femininity' and 'masculinity' are symbolic principles shared by all humans which require 'subtle, complex and difficult adjustments' be made by men and women<sup>77</sup> - each sex, in trying to make sense of distorted gender prescriptions, projected onto the landscape either the face they needed to see in order to feel whole, or nightmare images reflecting alienated aspects of themselves. Australian mythology in the nineteenth century contained so much bricolage that it was feared the mix would 'fall apart, or fail to add up to anything of significance'. This fragility in Australia's myths of origin has led to attempts to forge an Australian national identity based on exoticism and primitivism.<sup>78</sup> Graeme Turner demonstrated that the gendered constructions of human nature which developed in Australia the nineteenth century are reflected in (introduced) contending constructions of nature which are promulgated in the present. Through the medium of television and film Walt Disney's anthropomorphic family and mother centred constructions of nature continue to contend with David Attenborough's implicit social Darwinism which suggests that if man is to continue his climb up the evolutionary ladder, sentimental hopes and illusions about nature should be put aside.<sup>79</sup> Kay Schaffer has shown that the negative view of women which grew out of nineteenth century constructions of nature recurs in the present in the form of reinvented 'natural' histories such as that of Lindy Chamberlain and the dingo who took her baby.<sup>80</sup> Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge suggested that while early settlers such as Georgiana Molloy felt the need to distance themselves from their experiences, the modern day descendants of 'pioneers' such as Judith Wright who seek to re-claim the past of their 'pioneering' antecedents across an unbridgeable gulf, create a reality which is 'outside of time'.<sup>81</sup>

The nineteenth century dichotomised perception of 'nature' as either simple, beautiful and redemptive or as 'red in tooth and claw', lay behind the oppositions I have been considering. Not only were Aborigines seen either as Noble Savages who 'drew their virtue from the simple life of nature' or as primitive cannibals sunk in 'the spiritual darkness of

<sup>77</sup> Tacey, 1995, pp. 191-3. Patsy Hallen, 'Making Peace with the Environment', *Canadian Women's Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, Spring 1988, pp. 9-18.

<sup>78</sup> Indyk, 1986, pp. 60-74.

<sup>79</sup> Turner, 1985, pp. 62-71. *Both* approaches depoliticise and dissocialise man and make his social and political history appear invisible / 'natural'.

<sup>80</sup> Schaffer, 1991, pp. 141-8. A view of women as 'tied to nature, the instincts and the sensual' - a 'bad mother' who is an object of fear and desire for men within masculine culture.

<sup>81</sup> Bob Hodge & Vijay Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Post Colonial Mind*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990, pp. 145-7. There is, however, a considerable difference between the position Wright took in *Generations of Men* and later work such as *Cry for the Land*.

their paganism',<sup>82</sup> but women were seen as either etherealised mothers or as depraved prostitutes and the natural environment as either wholly benign and sustaining or wholly engulfing and destructive. Likewise gender stereotyping dichotomised women as superficially feminine - passive and beautiful like flowers - or as wild dogs capable of consuming babies, and men as superficially masculine - rational, active and investigative, the highest in the order of animals - or as vegetative trees which should be felled whenever they were thought to block 'progress'.

Many of these oppositions grew out of the development over time of an impermeable division between the so-called 'rational' intellectualising capacity of the human mind - increasingly seen as masculine or 'conscious' mental activity - and the so-called 'irrational' magic and creative capacity of the human mind - increasingly seen as feminine or 'unconscious' mental activity. In this context, 'motherhood as consumption' and 'sexuality as madness' can be seen as convoluted metaphorical social constructions formed after the human mind has split and its emotive / metaphorical / imaginative capacities judged 'unnatural' and oppositional rather than complementary to its reasoning / intellectual / schematising capacities. Any activity which bridged the dichotomy within the human mind between 'rational' and 'irrational' modes of perception served (and serves) to heal the oppositions which developed in the wake of the enlightenment in gender relations and man's relation to the natural world.

In experiencing the settlement of Australia within an imperialistic framework, settlers not only found they had no language with which to articulate the land's uniformity, but no language with which to articulate its *enormity*. Given the extent of personal repression needed to function within a patriarchal society in which a desire for unity with the 'phallic' mother was a constant,<sup>83</sup> settlers were often terrified of the enormity of a land which seemed to mirror projections from their alienated unconscious. In 1856 Thoreau summarised this perception when he wrote: 'It is vain to dream of a wilderness distant from ourselves ... It is the bog in our brains and bowels, the primitive vigour of Nature in us, that inspires that dream'.<sup>84</sup>

Unlike Americans who, after the War of Independence developed a tradition of powerful travel and nature writers in order to celebrate their difference from Britain, until

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<sup>82</sup> Smith, 1969, p. 318.

<sup>83</sup> Sueellen Campbell, 'The Land and Language of Desire: Where Deep Ecology and Post Structuralism Meet', in Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996, pp. 124-136.

recently Australia has not felt a deep need to demonstrate that their natural environment is superior to that of the 'Old Country'. Nevertheless with the push to federate in the late nineteenth century it was 'the bush' which became the principal focus of myth and nationalism in Australian society. Hence, although Australia has not produced any 'great' nature writers in the manner of Henry Thoreau or Annie Dillard, in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a great many poets and writers - a high proportion of whom have been female - have written about the Australian environment.<sup>85</sup> It is sobering to find however that since late in the nineteenth century the mythology of landscape in Australia has subsided into an unexamined reverence for the outback - 'the land of the Aborigines where Australians aren't'.<sup>86</sup> Recently authors have begun to deplore that fact that Australians look into the metaphorical externalised distance - whether it be looking seaward or looking towards the 'mysterious' interior - in the hope of finding themselves and a coherent national image: perhaps, with the drive to form an Australian Republic, Australians will take the opportunity to heal racial, and gender divisions within society and within themselves and begin to feel at home in the land in which they live.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps it is fitting that the last word in this dissertation on the flowerlike nature of nineteenth century women who fostered flowers in order to avoid having to embrace the animal / 'masculine' in nature and themselves, should come from a twentieth century woman poet who attempted to 're-envision [Australian] cultural mythology'.<sup>88</sup> Soon after the world war which drastically revised westerners' view of themselves, Judith Wright wrote:

They crushed out of your throat the terrible song  
you sang in the dark ranges. With what crying  
you mourned him, the drinker of blood, the swift death-bringer  
who ran with you many a night; and the night was long.

...

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<sup>84</sup> Henry Thoreau, 30 August 1856 in Schama, 1996, p. 395.

<sup>85</sup> Chisholm, 1964, p. xv. In *The Best Australian Nature Writing* Chisholm included selections from Louisa Meredith, Louisa Atkinson, Ellis Rowan, Mrs Anneas Gunn, Mary Fullerton, Mary Gilmore, Kylie Tennant, Eleanor Dark, Miles Franklin, Christina Mawdesley, Anne von Bertouch, Maie Casey, Joyce Allen, Rica Erickson, Dorothy Cottrell, Elyne Mitchell and Edith Coleman. If he had included poets Judith Wright would no doubt have gained a place.

<sup>86</sup> Francis Adams, 1893 in Schaffer 1987, p. 1. Adams wrote: 'The bush is the heart of the country, the red Australian Australia'. McGrath, 1991, Drew, 1994, Preface. Drew agrees - but claims it is time Australians accepted themselves for who they are - coast dwellers who love to play in and / or look out to sea.

<sup>87</sup> Bill Bunbury, *Unfinished Business: Reconciliation, The Republic and the Constitution*, Australian Broadcasting Commission, Sydney, 1998. Before Australia can break free of Britain to become a Republic she needs to address the problem of Aboriginal land rights - for only when the debt has been acknowledged and restoration effected can growth occur - in the individual psyche and in the body politic.

<sup>88</sup> Lauter, 1984, Ch. 8, ' "Women and Nature" Revisited in Poetry by Women'.



The lover, the maker of elegies is slain,  
and veiled with blood her body's stealthy sun.<sup>89</sup>

I would contend that the precious gift to future generations which many Aboriginal women and (perhaps more surprisingly) some European women settlers preserved out of the destabilisation which nineteenth century settlement and the effects of 'modernisation' caused was the wish, the need, the desire, to interact with the solid earth, to make contact with matter - through gathering or through gardening - and to endow this activity with significance,<sup>90</sup> thereby keeping the way open for the development in the twentieth century of a biocentric view of nature which regards humans as part of an interactive web, and as such equal rather than superior to the rest of the natural world.

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<sup>89</sup> Judith Wright, 'Trapped Dingo', 1946.

<sup>90</sup> That I hesitate to call this significance 'spiritual' indicates how far we have travelled from the European nineteenth century view of life which saw the natural environment as 'the Garden of the Lord' which awoke in humans 'feelings of wonder, admiration, gratitude and devotion', and the nineteenth century Aboriginal view that the natural environment embodied their ancestors from whom they obtained the ground for their being.

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BL	Battye Library (Perth)
LTL	La Trobe Library (Melbourne)
ANL	Australian National Library (Canberra)
RPWAHS	Reports and Proceedings of the West Australian Historical Society (Perth)
NS	New Series.

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