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The art of fiction: Fact, myth and new knowledge on the North Australian Expedition, 1855 - 1857

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The Art of Fiction

Fact, myth and new knowledge on the North Australian Expedition, 1855 - 1857

A thesis submitted in the partial fulfilment of a
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Declaration of Authorship

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published by another person, except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any institution.

Abstract

This thesis determines the degree to which the North Australian Expedition, 1855–1857, contested established European fiction of the Australian frontier by systematically collecting new knowledge. It analyses the outcomes of one of the most forgotten expeditions in Australian history by interrogating the journals, charts and artworks of the explorers. In 1855, the Royal Geographical Society and the British Colonial Office sent an expedition into northern Australia under the command of Augustus Gregory. It was a region that Britain hoped would hold lucrative resources to support further economic and population development. The artist-explorer, Thomas Baines, was made second-in-command of the expedition. Baines was, by this time, a proven artist and explorer, and had received praise for his work in South Africa.

This research draws on privileged access to Baines' materials held by the Kerry Stokes Collection and compares these to the journals and other artefacts held by the Royal Geographical Society (London) and the State Library of New South Wales. The thesis tests the degree to which the explorers extended the 'European fiction' of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and whether they challenged that fiction by the acquisition of new knowledge. They did both. While acknowledging that the explorers' perspectives were shaped by the racial, cultural and political understandings of their time, it is possible to argue that the expedition's written records largely achieved a systematic acquisition of new knowledge. Baines' artworks, on the other hand, were more complex. Dozens of watercolours and sketches, previously unstudied, reveal thoughtful analysis of the people and landscape of the northern frontier. His oil paintings, designed for public exhibition, on the other hand, extended the exercise of myth-making and heroic individualism in the age of empire.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Introduction
The North Australian Expedition, 1855 – 1857

The North Australian Expedition began as an idea discussed in private talks between dignitaries in Whitehall and the Royal Geographical Society. After previous surveys of the continent, the Society believed that northern Australia was home to abundant resources, labelling it *Provincia Aurefira* (Province of Gold).[1] Control of these potential resources, which would promote settlement and trade with Asia, complemented British interests in the region.[2] The governor and colonial administrator of Queensland, Sir George Bowen, envisioned "north Australia as a future rival of Singapore—a place where the ships of all nations may trade without incurring tax or duty of any kind".[3] The discovery of fertile land in the north, it was thought, would be "an incalculable advantage to the colonies of South Australia and Swan River, limited as both of them were in their grazing capabilities".[4] Furthermore, Britain sought to solidify their claims to Australia in its entirety, thereby countering any potential French or Dutch ambitions in the area.

Initially, John Stokes was proposed as expedition leader, but as Britain entered the Crimean War, his skills were demanded by the Royal Navy.[5] Instead, Augustus Gregory was commissioned to lead. Gregory had lived in Australia since 1829, being one of the first colonists of the Swan River. He trained as a surveyor and worked under John Septimus Roe. Though lacking the military background held by most explorers of his time, Gregory proved himself a competent leader in multiple expeditions north of Perth in the 1840s.[6] He was

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[1] Jane Carruthers and Lindy Stiebel, *Thomas Baines: Exploring Tropical Australia 1855 to 1857* (Canberra: National Musuem of Australia, 2012), 21.

[2] Andrew Porter and Roger Louis, *The Oxford History of the British Empire: the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 304.

[3] "North Australia," *The Adelaide Observer* (Adelaide), Saturday 6 February 1864, https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/159522708.

[4] Janda Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," in *Thomas Baines: Exploring Tropical Australia 1855 to 1857* (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2012), 76.

[5] Kieran Kelly, *Hard Country Hard Men: In the Footsteps of Gregory* (Alexandria, NSW: Hale & Iremonger, 2000), 92.

[6] Wendy Birman, *Gregory of Rainworth: A Man in His Time* (Perth, Western Australia: University of Western Australia Press, 1979), 76.; Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 21.

later considered an "excellent and generous commander", and Charles Sturt claimed Gregory was "a good choice".[7] Seventeen men were placed under Gregory's command, including his brother Henry Gregory; surgeon Joseph Elsey; the geologist James Wilson; botanist Dr Ferdinand von Muller; collector and preserver James Flood; nine stockmen and the artist-storekeeper, Thomas Baines.[8] In the early days of the expedition, the *Geelong Advertiser* reported that:

> Mr Gregory, the assistant surveyor of Western Australia, has been appointed to the command of an expedition…to explore a portion of the north coast of that continent.… Mr Gregory's instructions are to make a direct march from thence to the southernmost point of the Gulf of Carpentaria, for the purpose of following up the discoveries made by Captain Stokes…to trace the course of these two noble rivers [Victoria and Albert], and to explore the tract of land lying between them…twelve months will elapse before the results of the expedition will be known to England.[9]

Departing from Sydney aboard the schooner, *Tom Tough*, and the barque, *Monarch*, the expedition arrived at the mouth of the Victoria River on 18 September 1855. The *Monarch* sailed to Singapore after completing her role in the expedition.[10] The party established a depot camp north of what the British called the Victoria River, from where Gregory, Wilson, and Baines explored the surrounding region in search of "settlement prospects and mineral exploitation".[11] The expedition experienced perpetual fears of "constant water and food shortages, diseases, crocodiles and hostile aborigines".[12] Indeed, hostile contact with Indigenous Australians occurred, although it is undocumented if any were killed on encountering the explorers. Wilson believed, probably naively, that "no impression left on the minds of the native population was unfavourable to their English

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[7] Dr Ferdinand von Mueller, "A Historical Review of the Explorations of Australia" (Meeting of the Philosophical Institute of Victoria, Mechanics' Institute, Melbourne, 25 November 1857). Kelly, *Hard Country Hard Men: In the Footsteps of Gregory*, 93.

[8] Thomas Baines, Thomas Baines' Journal, 1856-1857, on the North Australian Expedition, 1857, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

[9] "North Australia," *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* (Victoria), 22 December 1855, https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/91866642.

[10] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 23.

[11] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 21.

[12] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 21.

Red—Gregory's route, departing from Sydney, tracing the Victoria, and surveying east towards Brisbane

Blue—Baine's route to Timor and later rendezvous with Gregory in Sydney
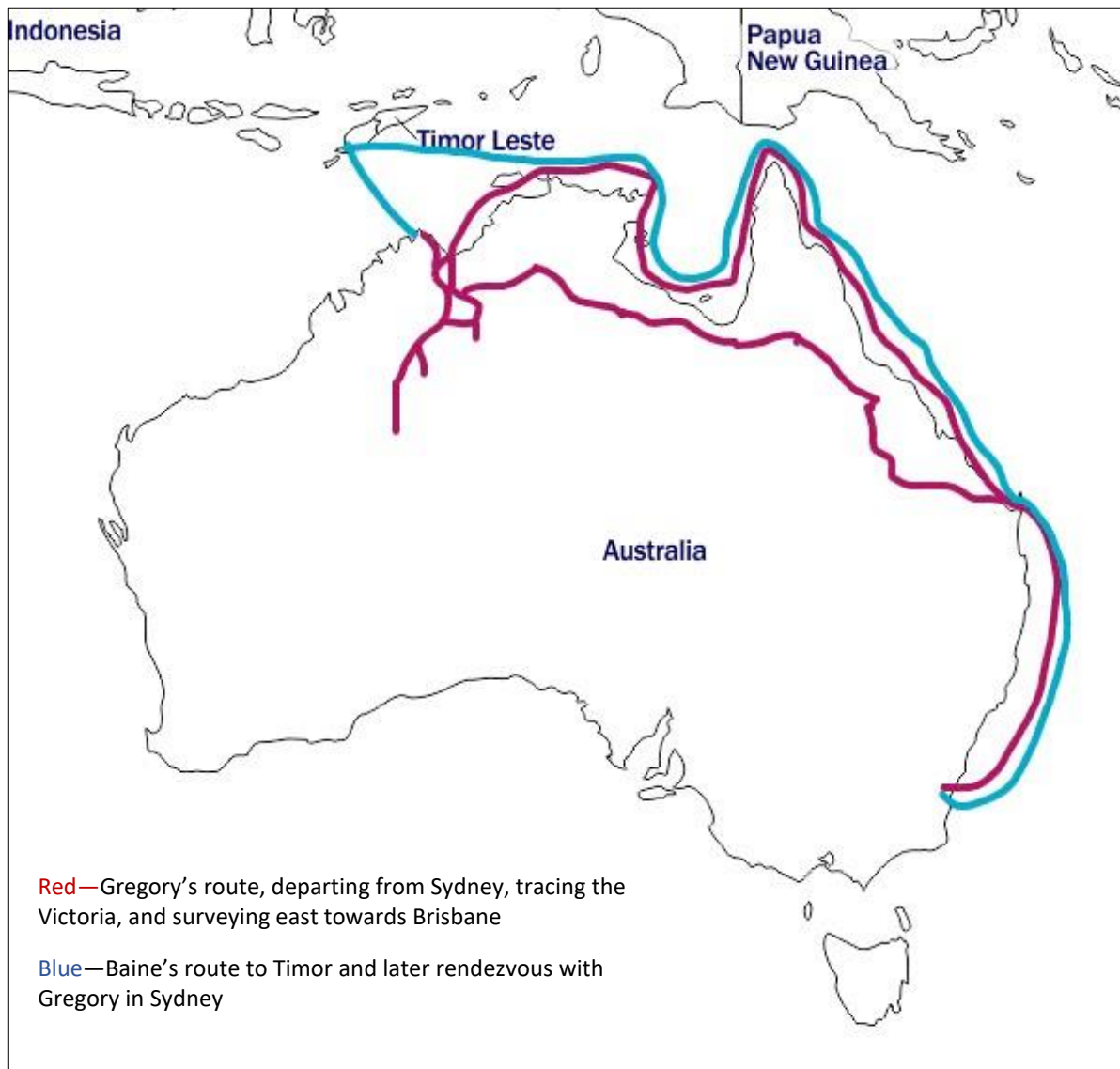
Figure 1: Map of the North Australian Expedition, the routes taken by Augustus Gregory and Thomas Baines. Stevie Cole.

visitors".[13] No explorers perished during the expedition.

On completing the north-western segment of exploration in June 1856, Gregory split his team in two. Baines led one group in the *Tom Tough* to Timor for supplies and repairs before sailing across the Gulf of Carpentaria and back to Sydney. Gregory led his team to Brisbane via what Stokes had earlier re-named the Albert River and the Plains of Promise. They arrived on 16 December 1856. In total, Gregory travelled more than 16,000 kilometres

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[13] "Journals, 1856-1857, kept during the North Australian Expedition. The journal of James Spottiswood Wilson, Joseph Ravenscroft Elsey, and journal of James Flood," ed. State Library of New South Wales Mitchell Library (1856-1857), 38.

over 17 months and chartered "three million acres of first-rate, well-watered pasture".[14] Murchison was pleased with the expedition's findings, stating that "no region on the globe…combines more advantages with the gain of a high political object than the north coast of Australia".[15]

Gregory, Baines, Elsey and Wilson documented the expedition, which produced ethnographic, geographic and geological information for the Royal Geographical Society and Colonial Office. Gregory's official journal, still held by the Society, began on 18 July 1855 with the expedition's commencement and was finalised on 26 December 1856 with his return to Sydney. It provides historians with an official insight into the nature of the expedition from the perspective of a professional leader who shed light on Australia's northern geography. To keep an account of the Depot Camp in his absence, Gregory tasked Baines, Wilson, and Elsey to record their day-to-day events and observations. Baines' journal begins on 30 January 1856 and ends on 3 April 1857. Currently housed in the Mitchell Library, Baines' journal narrates the occurrences in camp before logging the return voyage to Sydney via Timor. Wilson and Elsey recorded their observations in a combined journal from 3 January 1856 to 4 February 1856. Also held by the Mitchell Library, this source details the activities in constructing the camp, exploring the country, and encountering the local Indigenous community.[16]

Significantly, the North Australian Expedition also produced rich visual materials, much of which have not yet been widely studied. Throughout the expedition, Baines created a swath of oil paintings, sketches, and watercolours that recorded its events and encounters. Now stored at the Kerry Stokes Collection in Perth, Baines' images would have been the first many Europeans saw of north Australia, its landscape and Indigenous inhabitants. Baines created imagery that "blended ideas of science, art and exploration" and served as visual embodiments of British interests abroad not only in his official oil paintings of the expedition but also in his private folio of watercolours and sketches.[17] Through his art, Baines idealised the heroic individual and dramatised the expeditions, though his

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[14] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 23.

[15] Roderick Murchison, "Address to the Royal Geographical Society of London," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 2, no. 5 (1857-1858): 312, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1798955.

[16] "Journals, 1856-1857, kept during the North Australian Expedition."

[17] Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 71.

ethnographic accuracy has been termed "questionable" by Janda Gooding.[18] Through thematic images of encounters, Baines produced narratives of heroic individualism, cultural supremacy and masculinity.

Britons Exploring Australia: The Nineteenth Century

European world exploration reached its zenith in the mid-nineteenth century, characterised by ambitious imperial projects, economic and territorial expansion, a greater understanding of geology and geography, and a "growing interest in natural history".[19] Robert Stafford defined nineteenth-century exploration as the "goal-directed research" conducted in the "laboratory of the wilderness".[20] Indeed, the scientific knowledge gained through exploration became a tool that codified and inspired systematic European expansion in the nineteenth century.[21] New worlds opened up to the imperial gaze. The nineteenth-century European explorer's task was to interpret the landscapes of the new worlds they encountered and the people who inhabited them; their physical features, social customs, modes of production and exchange, systems of governance and law, and information about their languages.[22] Such information, both geographical and ethnographical, was an invaluable commodity that fuelled many of the nineteenth century's imperial projects. Acquisition of such knowledge led to the desire to control, dominate and subjugate explored territory and its inhabitants. Undeniably, the practice of record-keeping and the creation of maps was a means by which Europeans could understand the world and their place within it and claim parts of it as their own.[23] Through this process, the European explorer was a "missionary of science" who actively extended the frontiers of geographical knowledge.[24] When European explorers departed on expeditions, they searched for what Andrekos Varnava referred to as 'El Dorado'— a metaphor to describe the European quest

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[18] Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 78.

[19] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 12.

[20] Porter and Louis, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 3, 294.

[21] Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2001), 40.

[22] Dane Kennedy, "British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey," *History Compass* 5, no. 6 (2007): 199, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2007.00480.x.

[23] Nate Probasco, "Cartography as a Tool of Colonisation: Sir Humphrey Gilbert's 1583 Voyage to North America," *Renaissance Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (2014): 425, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/677407.

[24] Driver, *Geography Militant*, 4.

for "boundless riches", and "promised land", synonymous with empire-building and exploration.[25] Indeed, the European curiosity of El Dorado is evident in the extensive explorations of foreign lands from 1492 to the last frontier of the Antarctic.[26] These "blind experiments" of intellectual curiosity, coupled with the desire to understand the natural world, are components that formed the ideological drive of the idealism inherent in 'El Dorado' mythology.[27]

European activity in the Pacific from the eighteenth century represented a new era of scientific exploration.[28] Most notably in empiricism and scientific inquiry, the embrace of Enlightenment ideals inspired voyages.[29] Scientific explorations obligated navigators to record in their accounts latitude and longitude, rainfall measurements, wind direction, traces of the stars and planets, and collections of specimens and artifacts.[30] Tim Flannery suggested that a "thing is not truly discovered until it is written about, only then does it take shape in the minds of those who have no experience of it".[31] Naturally, those in Whitehall and the Society were not, themselves, explorers of frontiers, but the writings of the explorers they sponsored transcended their absence. As Adriana Cracium proposed, explorers were a "distinct species", belonging to their own private clubs, professional organisations, language and terminology.[32] Explorers became national heroes who charted the unknown, pushed the envelope of human accomplishment, endured hardships and (not always) lived to tell the tale.[33] Simon Ryan explained that the "mythologisation" of the 'heroic' explorers allowed them to be used as a tool in "imperial discourses" of "manly expansion" and the "occupation of land".[34] The romanticism of the explorer, along with the

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[25] Andrekos Varnava, *Imperial Expectations and Realities: El Dorados, utopias and Dystopias* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 2.

[26] Varnava, *Imperial Expectations*, 2.

[27] Varnava, *Imperial Expectations*, 2. Kennedy, "British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey," 1884.

[28] John Gascoigne, "Motives for European Exploration of the Pacific in the Age of the Enlightenment," *Pacific Science* 3, no. 54 (2000): 229.

[29] Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768 - 1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 1. ;Gascoigne, "Motives for Exploration," 229.

[30] Kennedy, "British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey," 1887.

[31] Lynette Russell, *Colonial Frontiers: Indigenous-European Encounters in Settler Societies*, ed. John MacKenzie, Studies in Imperialism, (Manchester, United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 2001), 50.

[32] Adriana Cracium, "What is an Explorer?," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 45, no. 1 (2011): 30.

[33] Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 11.

[34] Simon Ryan, cited in Elizabeth Hartrick, "Thomas Baines: Empire Man and Magic Laternist" (Exploring the British World: Identity, Cultural Production, Institutions, Victoria, University of Melbourne, 2004).

role of the Royal Geographical Society, was responsible for the "significant shift in how Europeans could know the world".[35]

Expeditions before 1830 have been described as "ill-equipped affairs", hindered by an "ignorance of terrain, weather, and game".[36] The results were superficial and "purely descriptive".[37] Academics have proposed that the Society was the fundamental British institution that revolutionised explorations and expeditions since its formation in 1830.[38] Its purpose was the "advancement of geographical science".[39] Dane Kennedy categorised the organisation as a combination of a scientific institution and a lobbyist of British interests abroad.[40] The institutionalisation of exploration was responsible for its shift into the sciences and away from the monopolisation of the military.[41] Scientific expeditions provided critical information surrounding the geology, geography and ethnography of foreign lands and Indigenous peoples. The Society "embodied the intimate connections between power and knowledge" in politics and geography.[42] By acquiring knowledge, coupled with the intrinsic linkages between information and power, the state became stronger by controlling newfound and newly charted territory, trade routes and new markets.[43] The Society was frequently involved in this process.[44] It offered advice, influenced government officials and the Royal Navy to secure patronage, ships, and crews, and, most importantly, published results.[45] The establishment of colonies and trade companies, and the ongoing exploration of environments, culminated in the expansion of British interest in distant and remote frontiers such as the *terra incognita* of Australia's vast regions.[46]

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[35] Kennedy, "British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey," 1886.

[36] Kelly, *Hard Country Hard Men: In the Footsteps of Gregory*, 61.

[37] Kelly, *Hard Country Hard Men: In the Footsteps of Gregory*, 61.

[38] Kennedy, "British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey," 1880.

[39] "History of the Society," Royal Geographical Society with IBG, accessed 29 March, 2021, https://www.rgs.org/about/the-society/history-and-future/.

[40] Kennedy, "British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey," 1886.

[41] Kennedy, "British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey," 1887.

[42] Simon Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: University of Cambridge Press, 1996), 32.

[43] John Mearsheimer, "Kissing Cousins: Nationalism and Realism," *Yale Workshop on International Relations* 1, no. 1 (May 2011): 5.

[44] Ian Cameron, cited in Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia*, 36.

[45] Ian Cameron, cited in Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia*, 36.

[46] Joshua Cole and Carol Symes, *Western Civilisations: Their History and Their Culture* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2017), 370.

Introduction

The North Australian Expedition was not the first of Britain's attempts to explore the northwest or the interior. In 1848, Ludwig Leichhardt aimed to explore the interior from Queensland to Western Australia; he is presumed to have perished and was, famously, never seen again.[47] Charles Sturt navigated deep into Australia's interior, seeking the fabled inland sea, and was the first to chart the Murray River.[48] Edward Eyre also led various expeditions into the interior, sought a route from Adelaide to Perth, and drove stock from Sydney to Adelaide, culminating in his hazardous journey around the Great Australian Bight.[49] John Stokes' maritime exploration through the Gulf of Carpentaria surveyed much of the Top End's coast and named the Victoria River in the process.[50] However, the Society's thirst for knowledge of Australia's north and the interior seemed insatiable, President Roderick Murchison claimed:

> No region on the earth presents a greater geographical problem to solve than Australia in the apparent termination of the interior of so many of her vast rivers….But what we geographers regret is that so very much of the territory, which lies between such distant outposts and the regularly settled countries, has not yet been inserted on any map.[51]

By 1800, Britain began to establish its monopoly over the Australian continent, and the ventures of exploration shifted into attempts at permanent settlement and colonisation. In 1829, Captain James Stirling searched the western coasts of Australia in search of suitable locations for settlement. In Australia's north, two colonies were founded—Fort Dundas and Fort Wellington, but both were unsuccessful in their sustainability.[52] These short-lived settlements represented Britain's claims to northern Australia, discouraging the French and Dutch from similar activities while linking British possessions in the Pacific (namely Singapore and Hong Kong) to their interests on the continent.[53] Regardless of the difficulties settling the north, in 1830, Britain issued a proclamation claiming the Australian continent in

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[47] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 42.
[48] J. H. L. Cumpston, *Charles Sturt - His Life and Journeys of Exploration* (Canberra 2007), http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks07/0700391h.html.
[49] Ivan Rudolph, *Eyre: The Forgotten Explorer* (Australia: HarperCollins Publishers, 2014), 2.
[50] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 20.
[51] "Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London", (London, 1855-57), 130.
[52] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 16. "The British in North Australia 1824 - 29: Fort Dundas," accessed 9 March, 2020, http://www.derekpugh.com.au/fort-dundas-first-settlement-in-northern-australia-1824-29.html.
[53] Pugh, "Fort Dundas."

its entirety.[54] The settlement of Port Essington in 1838, in what is now the Northern Territory, was a revived attempt at establishing a permanent British presence in the north, though that too only lasted 12 years before being altogether abandoned.[55] Remoteness, combined with difficulties in logistics for supplies, piracy at sea and diseases, plagued early settlement. Those in Whitehall, the Royal Society and the Royal Geographical Society sought to understand the region further before making more attempts.

Thomas Baines: The Artist-Explorer

Born into poverty in King's Lynn, Norfolk, England, in 1820, John Thomas Baines developed a passion for seafaring and painting at an early age.[56] Leaving school and differentiating from his family's labouring traditions, Baines became an apprentice of the painter William Carr, under whom he learned heraldic painting.[57] In 1842, he sailed for the British Cape Colony (South Africa) as a 22-year-old aspiring artist. [58] Baines worked as a joiner while also painting and selling small artworks of the African landscape.[59] By 1846, he had established himself as a talented marine painter.[60] His lust for travel was insatiable; he roamed around British South Africa, meeting explorers and joining three minor expeditions.[61] His first venture was beyond the Orange River in 1848, the Kei River in 1849, and an attempt to reach the Okavango Swamps in 1850.[62] On these ventures, he sketched, painted and recorded things and places of interest. In 1852, the Cape Government announced its intentions to draft and sponsor the construction of a map of the colony, and Baines provided them with the

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[54] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 42.

[55] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 18.

[56] Helen Luckett, "Thomas Baines: 1820-1875," *The Geographical Journal* 141, no. 2 (1975): 252, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1797210.

[57] Udo Richard Averweg, "Legacy of Pioneer Artist John Thomas Baines," Views and Analysis, *Daily News* (Durban, South Africa), Thursday 24 May 2018.

[58] Jane Carruthers, "Thomas Baines: Artist-Explorer of Australia and Southern Africa," *National Library of Australia News* 16, no. 1 (2005): 4. John McAleer, "'The Eye of the Artist': Thomas Baines, the Eighth Cape Frontier War, and the Representation of Warfare," *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 7, no. 4 (2014): 305, https://doi.org/10.1179/1752627214Z.00000000052.

[59] Luckett, "Thomas Baines: 1820-1875," 252. Carruthers, "Thomas Baines: Artist-Explorer of Australia and Southern Africa," 10.

[60] Marijke Cosser, "Images of a Changing Frontier: Worldview in Eastern Cape Art From Bushman Rock Art to 1875" (Master of Arts Rhodes University, 1992), 116 (TR9381).

[61] Luckett, "Thomas Baines: 1820-1875," 252.

[62] "John Thomas Baines," South African History Online, updated 23 August, 2019, accessed 27 March, 2021, https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/john-thomas-baines.

sketches he had created.[63] The accuracy and extent of his contributions caused Sir Thomas MacLear to offer him a place on his 1851 scientific expedition.[64] He returned to find the colony in a state of turmoil—the Xhosa Wars had recommenced. The armed forces demanded his services; General Somerset offered Baines the post of artist-draughtsman, which required him to form journalistic sketches and artworks of the war.[65] In service for only a year, Baines created visual materials ranging from battles to the traversal of the landscape to the picturesque to flora and fauna imagery.[66] These images had both aesthetic and practical merit, being both sources of nineteenth-century art and information.[67] Helen Luckett posited that Baines "minutely observed ethnographical detail and the customs of various tribes…he carefully observed flora and fauna, and preserved the skin of animals".[68] His works were published and disseminated throughout England.[69] At the end of the wars, Baines returned to England and frequently visited the Royal Geographical Society.[70] His field knowledge of South Africa was greatly received, with his maps aiding in understanding the 'Far Interior'.[71] Carruthers argued that Baines' usefulness as a cartographer played a decisive role in advancing his career and opened the door for his entrance into the Society.[72]

Impressed at his abilities and accomplishments, the Royal Geographical Society recommended Baines to be placed second-in-command to Gregory in an expedition into Australia's north. His extensive field knowledge, adaptability, and talent with a paintbrush were enough to earn him his place on the expedition.[73] He was assigned as artist-storekeeper and provided with 144 lead pencils, 162 tubes of oil paint and 158 watercolours.[74] Throughout the expedition, Baines created visual records that depicted the

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[63] Elri Liebenberg, "'Providing a Tolerably Correct Map of South Africa': the Cartography of Henry Hall," *International Symposium on "Old Worlds-New Worlds": The History of Colonial Cartography 1750-1950*, no. 1 (August 2006): 2.

[64] Luckett, "Thomas Baines: 1820-1875," 253.

[65] Luckett, "Thomas Baines: 1820-1875," 253.

[66] McAleer, "'The Eye of the Artist': Thomas Baines, the Eighth Cape Frontier War, and the Representation of Warfare," 317.

[67] Cosser, "Images of a Changing Frontier," 113.

[68] Luckett, "Thomas Baines: 1820-1875," 256-57.

[69] Luckett, "Thomas Baines: 1820-1875," 253.

[70] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 11.

[71] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 11.

[72] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 11.

[73] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 11.

[74] Extract from a Letter addressed to Mr. Galton by Mr. Baines, Artist to the North Australian Expedition, describing the Particulars of its Outfit. In "Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London," 49-51. Kelly, *Hard Country Hard Men: In the Footsteps of Gregory*, 94, 96.

venture's narratives and informed his imperial and scientific audiences of the nature of Australia's north, its inhabitants, and its landscapes.[75] Additionally, his journal documents the time in which he had command of the party in Gregory's absence. Gregory commended Baines' conduct throughout the expedition, as he showed "considerable energy and judgement in carrying out his instructions and a constant desire to carry out the object of the expedition".[76] Baines returned to England in 1857 with his complete collection of canvasses and sketches after a successful expedition. His renown won him distinction in his hometown, where he received the 'freedom of the Borough'.[77] At the Society's recommendation, he was assigned to David Livingstone's side in exploring the Upper Zambezi River in 1858.[78] However, further fame and fortune were not to follow. Baines was designated as a storekeeper without any specific artistic or scientific role.[79] Baines and Livingstone's brother, Charles, and eventually Livingstone himself, regularly clashed on the expedition. In 1859, Livingstone removed Baines from the party with an accusation of dereliction of duty and theft.[80] Baines was accused of using spare pieces of canvas to create artworks as gifts for officials.[81] As a champion of the Society and the British empire, Livingstone's words carried phenomenal weight and power. Though the accusation was never proven, it was enough to tarnish Baines' reputation as an explorer, destroy his career and "prospects in life".[82] Baines tried tirelessly to recover his reputation and career but fell ill in Durban in 1875 and died of dysentery and poverty on 8 May 1875.[83]

It is estimated that Baines created nearly four thousand drawings, watercolours and oil paintings throughout his life.[84] The bulk of his North Australian Expedition series resides in the Kerry Stokes Collection in Perth, while the Royal Geographical Society primarily holds his African works. Marion Arnold proposed that, while Baines' pioneering skills have been

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[75] Kelly, *Hard Country Hard Men: In the Footsteps of Gregory*, 94.
[76] Luckett, "Thomas Baines: 1820-1875," 256.
[77] Luckett, "Thomas Baines: 1820-1875," 256.
[78] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 11. Carruthers, "Thomas Baines: Artist-Explorer of Australia and Southern Africa," 5. Luckett, "Thomas Baines: 1820-1875," 256.
[79] Luckett, "Thomas Baines: 1820-1875," 256.
[80] Luckett, "Thomas Baines: 1820-1875," 256. Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 12.
[81] Luckett, "Thomas Baines: 1820-1875," 256.
[82] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 12.
[83] Luckett, "Thomas Baines: 1820-1875," 257. Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 12.
[84] Marion Arnold, "Thomas Baines, Landscape Painter: A critical assessment of the artistic merit of Baines' landscape oil paintings with special reference to work in Rhodesian collections" (B. A. Honours University of South Africa, 1979), 26.

documented, his talents as an artist have been "underestimated".[85] Many of his landscapes depicted what was unknown to the British public and general audience—vast places "interrupted by mountains and rivers which, when crossed, permit further territorial expansion".[86]

Bernard Smith and the European Fiction

The wealth of information won from European ventures to the Pacific represented the dominance of empirical thought over the neoclassicist, evident in the extensive and sophisticated record-keeping practice in ship logs, official documents, maps, and art.[87] These traditions of empirical observation, encouraged by institutions like the Royal Society and, later, the Royal Geographical Society, became a typical maritime practice.[88] Art remained a fundamental mode of disseminating the knowledge acquired from Pacific voyages, and, as Bernard Smith accentuates, artists gradually served the empirical sciences and less the "illusion" of a "tropical Arcadia".[89]

Smith remains the ground-breaking historian of Europeans in the Pacific. Author of the enduring work, *European Vision in the South Pacific*, Smith examined the history of art in landscape painting and scientific observations in the Pacific, including its challenge on established biblical beliefs. Although writing primarily of the eighteenth century, Smith's ideas permeate into the nineteenth century because knowledge and fiction continued to be represented and acquired via manufactured visual materials like maps and journals.

In a 1978 lecture on the art arising from Cook's voyages, Smith proposed that the "history of the visual arts in Europe between 1750 and 1890...can best be understood...as the steady, relentless and continuing triumph of empirical naturalism over classical

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[85] Arnold, "Thomas Baines, Landscape Painter," 26.

[86] Lindy Stiebel, "Creating a Landscape of Africa: Baines, Haggard and Great Zimbabwe," *English in Africa* 28, no. 2 (October 2001): 125-26, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40238934. Jane Carruthers and Marion Arnold, *The Life and Work of Thomas Baines*, ed. Phillida Brooke Simons (Vlaeberg: Fernwood Press, 1995), 92.

[87] Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768 - 1850*, 1.

[88] Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1.

[89] Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 1.; Bronwen Douglas, "Art as Ethno-historical Text: Science, Representation and Indigenous Presence in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Oceanic Voyage Literature," in *Double Vision: Art Histories and Colonial Histories in the Pacific*, ed. Nicholas Thomas and Diane Losche (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 69.

naturalism".[90] Smith argued that the early European interpretations of Pacific peoples as 'romantic' and 'noble savages', commonly portrayed in European art, was a 'European fiction':[91]

> He [the romantic savage] was of course, like the noble savage, essentially a European fiction…Faulty as knowledge still was, the conception of the romantic savage was a genuine effort on the part of the European imagination to make contact with the personal life of primitive peoples.[92]

However, other European representations of peoples, landscape, narratives and encounter were also examples of a European fiction. Artists and explorers of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries exploited the public's feeble knowledge of the Pacific to create spectacles and narratives that complimented, encouraged and justified further colonial expansion.[93] The Pacific was imagined, as Varnava expresses, to be an "exotic garden where man and nature coexisted peacefully", later, colonisation and dispossession soon blurred the illusions of such a fictitious mirage.[94] The eighteenth century's intellectual environment pushed Europeans "toward an Arcadian view of the Pacific", which was later challenged by nineteenth-century scientific exploration. [95] Colonies, empires, travel and trade placed the once mysterious and distant Pacific closer to the imperial metropoles.[96]

Research Problem

Most scientific explorers of the eighteenth century and nineteenth century kept meticulous records while searching for wealth and territory, including detailed maps, logbooks, diaries, sketches, paintings and visual reflections. Ordinarily, such documents were sent back to the metropole as objects collected and sometimes stripped from Indigenous peoples. In London, such evidence was typically kept by the Royal Society; in France, the Académie

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[90] Jaynie Anderson, *The Legacies of Bernard Smith: Essays on Australian Art, History and Cultural Politics*, ed. Jaynie Anderson, Christopher R. Marshall, and Andrew Yip (Sydney: Power Publications, 2016), 33.

[91] Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 326.

[92] Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 326.

[93] Paul Longley Arthur, "Fictions of Encounter: Eighteenth-Century Imaginary Voyages to the Antipodes," *The Eighteenth Century* 49, no. 3 (2008): 197, https://doi.org/10.1353/ecy.0.0014.

[94] Varnava, *Imperial Expectations*, 18.

[95] David Mackay, "The Burden of Terra Australis: Experiences of Real and Imagined Lands," in *From Maps to Metaphors: The Pacific World of George Vancouver*, ed. Robin Fisher (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993), 266.

[96] Luke Scalone, "Pacific Horizons: The Transformation of European Perceptions of Paradise, 1880-1900," *Undergraduate Honors Thesis Collection*, no. 342 (2016): 2, https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/ugtheses/342

des *Sciences* (Academy of the Sciences) and Russia, by the Russian Academy of Sciences. These institutions, founded on the idea of science and exploration, funded, schemed and resourced the expeditions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Artists of these expeditions, according to Smith, created a European myth, imagining Indigenous peoples to be reminiscent of classical Greeks or Romans.

Smith later conceded that, as scientists continued their explorations, "increasing knowledge not only destroyed the illusion but also became a most enduring challenge to the supremacy of neo-classical values in art and thought".[97] Here, then, is the research problem of this thesis: do the visual and archival records of the North Australian Expedition reveal an attempt to extend a European fiction of Australia's frontier, or an attempt to contest that fiction by the acquisition of new knowledge?

Research Aims

The records of Gregory, Baines, Wilson and Elsey during the North Australian Expedition created an image of the frontier which included first contact between its Indigenous people and Europeans. These records can be understood as belonging to Britain's narratives of empire in the nineteenth century and the product of scientific exploration. Baines' ethnographic accuracy has already been termed as "questionable" by others.[98] It is also true that the expedition "occupies a very small place in the annals of Australian exploration".[99] It is my intent to determine the degree to which the expedition acquired new knowledge of the northern frontier and its people. In this context, I therefore aim to:

1. appraise the nature of the European fiction and identify the fundamental proponents of fiction in the nineteenth-century context;
2. analyse the written records of the North Australian Expedition, including the published and unpublished journals, and assess the extent to which they reveal an acquisition of new knowledge that dispelled European fiction; and, finally, to

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[97] Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 1.
[98] Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 78.
[99] Anne M. Scott et al., *European Perceptions of Terra Australis* (New York, New York: Routledge, 2011), 233.

3. interpret Thomas Baines' representation of the Australian frontier in his sketchbooks and oil paintings to determine the degree to which the materials challenged the neoclassical values of exploratory art.

Structure and Method

Throughout this thesis, I use the materials that emerged from the North Australian Expedition, including the explorers' journals, diaries, paintings, and sketches. The journals of Thomas Baines, the official journal of Augustus Gregory, and the unpublished journals of Wilson and Joseph Elsey inform my interpretation of the expedition. The Royal Geographical Society's minutes and proceedings from 1855 to 1869 reveal the institutional perspectives on the expedition and its projected outcomes. James Wilson's report on northern Australia's geography provides a rich insight into both the scientific institution's motivations and objectives and the broader ideals of British imperialism. Newspaper articles published in Australia provide insight into the public's knowledge surrounding the expedition and the eventual annexation of the Northern Territory.

In Perth, held within the Kerry Stokes Collection are Baines' original oil paintings and his folio of sketches, watercolours, and drafts. This collection contains the visual perspectives and narratives of the expedition, from the departure from Sydney to the passage across the Gulf of Carpentaria and the Victoria River's survey to the journey to Timor. The most significant of Baines' sketches and watercolours reveal the ethnological objectives behind his work, particularly in his interpretation of Indigenous people encountered on the eastern coasts en route to the Victoria River. Examples of these include his watercolour entitled 'Tuesday August 28th, 7am. Gulf of Carpentaria South of Princes of Wales' Island', which depicts a small party of Indigenous Australians sailing a canoe and encountering the explorers at sea. Though Baines' oils have been studied before by academics, his folio works in the Stokes Collection have yet to receive scholarly attention. Examples of Baines most notable oils include 'Baines and Bowman meeting a hostile tribe, on the banks of the Baines River', (1855); 'Baines and Humphrey killing an alligator on the Horse Shoe Flats, near Curiosity Peak, Victoria River', (1856); and the 'Dispersal of a hostile tribe near Baines River, N.W. Australia', (1855). These images illustrate Baines' consistent narratives, where he placed Indigenous peoples at the peripheries of the scene and

portrayed the explorer as the conqueror of the landscape. This collection once belonged to the Royal Geographical Society in London. It contains 21 oil paintings and around 300 sketches and paintings from Baines' personal folio.[100]

Unfortunately, due to the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions on public services in the United Kingdom, I could not access the remaining resources of the Royal Geographical Society in London. The institution holds a small collection of letters concerning the expedition, and may include correspondence on the outcomes of the expedition. These are likely to be of use to others and suggest an opportunity for further research.

Chapter One: Bernard Smith and the Nineteenth-Century Pacific

In Chapter One, to achieve the first aim of this thesis, I interrogate the nature of European exploration of the Pacific, the nineteenth-century ideas of empire, and the visual and written records that commonly arose from the amalgamation of science, empire and exploration. This chapter will analyse an idea first proposed by Bernard Smith, that a 'European fiction' of the Pacific was created by explorers and artists of the eighteenth century. While Smith primarily focussed his attention on eighteenth-century European attitudes and approaches towards the Pacific and its peoples, many of the ideas of the Enlightenment and the sciences filtered well into the nineteenth century. Records of the discoveries and encounters by explorers were tools of information, yet also composed narratives of adventure, masculinity and heroism.[101] Smith wrote of European fiction as a concept that specifically surrounded the European representation of Pacific peoples for their audiences at home.[102] He sought to understand the nature of the complicated interrelationship between the European gaze, artistic traditions and styles, sociocultural attitudes, literary tropes and political institutions.[103]

By testing Smith against other scholarly literatures, including works by John Gascoigne, Jonathan Lamb, Paul Arthur, Pauline Turner-Strong and Stuart Banner, I interpret

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[100] "Could Royal Geographical Society's Baines Collection Stay in the UK?," Exhibitions, artnet, 2014, accessed 6 April, 2012, https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/could-royal-geographical-societys-baines-collection-stay-in-the-uk-74426.

[101] Steven Leuthold, *Cross-Cultural Issues in Art: Frames for Understanding*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2011), 28. Paul Wood, *Western Art and the Wider World*, 1st ed. (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013), 76.

[102] Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 326.

[103] Anderson, *The Legacies of Bernard Smith: Essays on Australian Art, History and Cultural Politics*, 15.

European expeditions to the Pacific and assess the extent to which they propelled a narrative of fiction. Examples that I consider include James Cook's three voyages to the Pacific and James Stirling's documentation of the Swan River. Types of evidence include journals, maps and visual records, revealing that the explorer was not a wholly reliable witness. Jonathan Lamb called such records the "real weapons" in the wars of empire, as written, cartographic and other records were critical in establishing European authority over new frontiers.[104]

Chapter Two: The Royal Geographical Society and Archival Materials

The second aim of this work, to assess the degree to which the printed records of the expedition reveal an acquisition of new knowledge, is achieved in Chapter Two. It is dependent on analysis of key records that include explorers' journals, maps and reports. The Royal Geographical Society was the fundamental institution that promoted, legitimised and advocated for British expeditionary science in the nineteenth century.[105] The Society has retained within its collection many of the records of the North Australian Expedition. These include proceedings, minutes and analyses of the expedition's findings, much of which are now available online. Notably, the Society houses the published journal of Gregory, which the institution has made publicly accessible. Additionally, some expedition records are now kept by the State Library of New South Wales. Table 1 lists those expedition records used within this research.

My appraisal of evidence begins with an 1858 debate that was convened by the Society at the conclusion of the expedition, which made principal use of Wilson's report. I then analyse the broader range of written records, in which I found evidence of the systematic acquisition of knowledge by the explorers. The journals of Wilson, Elsey, Baines and Gregory are unpacked for perspectives on the landscape and ethnography in the search for evidence of fabrication, fiction, information and language supporting ideas of settlement and colonisation. The final section of this chapter appraises the ethnographical value of the same records. In assessing the narrative of otherness in Aboriginal encounters, I cross-reference the expedition's records to assess the degree to which there was consistency in

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[104] Jonathan Lamb, "Introduction," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 18 (1994): 5; see also Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape.", 73.

[105] Kennedy, "British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey," 1886.

the explorers' interpretations of first contact. An extract of this data, regarding tooth avulsion, is provided in the chapter.

Scholarly literatures that are drawn upon include works by Jane Lydon, Darrel Lewis, Tony Roberts and Warren Elofson. These inform my discussion of frontier conflict in northern Australia and the intercultural relationship between explorers, settlers and Indigenous Australians.

Table 1. Archival records arising from the North Australian Expedition.

Augustus Gregory	Journal of the North Australian Exploring Expedition	1856-57	Royal Geographical Society, London
Thomas Baines	Thomas Baines' journals kept during the North Australian Expedition, 30 January 1856 – 3 April 1857	1856-57	Mitchell Library, New South Wales
Joseph Elsey and James Wilson	Journals, 1856-1857, kept during the North Australian Expedition. The combined journals of James Spottiswood Wilson, Joseph Ravenscroft Elsey	1856-57	Mitchell Library, New South Wales
Thomas Baines	Additional Notes on the North Australian Expedition	1857	Royal Geographical Society, London
James Wilson	Notes on the Physical Geography of North-West Australia	1857	Royal Geographical Society, London
Roderick Murchison	Address to the Royal Geographical Society of London	1857	Royal Geographical Society, London
	Proceedings Royal Geographical Society, Volume 1	1855-57	Royal Geographical Society, London
	Proceedings Royal Geographical Society, Volume 2	1857-8	Royal Geographical Society, London
	Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, Volume 14	1869-70	Royal Geographical Society, London

Chapter Three: Interpreting Visual Materials

The final chapter provides a deep analysis of Baines' visual records of the North Australian Expedition, and achieves my third aim. This has been made possible by privileged access to Baines' works within the Kerry Stokes Collection, which have been itemised in Table 2.

I assess the extent to which Baines, the artist-explorer, challenged the established European fiction of the Pacific. I place him as an artist-explorer of the nineteenth century and identify the techniques and compositions with which he framed the northern frontier. I investigate the contextual motivations, inspirations and approaches of artist-explorers of the nineteenth century, evident in the landscapes they captured, which provides context to Baines' work. John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* and Peter Burke's *Eyewitnessing* aid in investigating the sociopolitical influences on art and artists.[106] The nineteenth century was a profoundly imperialistic period of warring empires and emerging and evolving discourse surrounding race, civilisation, identity and empire. These ideas were, naturally, reflected on canvas by the artist-explorers abroad and artists at home. Burke writes that "painters may well be regarded as historians in their own right" as they "made contributions to the interpretations of the past".[107] Consequently, I establish an understanding of the nineteenth-century themes of contextual art and literature.

Gillian Rose provides a framework with which we can achieve complex understandings of Baines' images of northern Australia. Her 'sites and modalities' tool is an interpretational device that assesses four sites of meaning: the site of production, the site of audiencing, the site of the image itself, and the site of circulation.[108] The first three sites are most relevant for the interpretation of this thesis. The site of production involves how the image was made and the reasons behind its production. The site of audiencing involves ways in which the image has been, and might be, interpreted and by whom. Moreover, it also concerns how the image has been displayed and its relation to relevant texts. Lastly,

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[106] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 1972). Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001).
[107] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 158.
[108] Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*, 4th ed. (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2016), 16.

Introduction

the site of the image itself concerns its composition and its visual meanings and effects,

which make the image significant. However, such a discussion of interpretation is, of course,

Table 2. Thomas Baines paintings and sketches, North Australian Expedition, in the Kerry Stokes Collection.

Title of Work	Medium
A Confrontation on the Victoria River, 4th June 1856.	Pencil and watercolour on paper
Arms and Implements purchased from a canoe in the Gulf of Carpentaria off the South Coast of Prince of Wales Island, Tuesday August 28th 1855, 7am.	Pencil and watercolour on paper
Baines and Bowman meeting a hostile tribe on the banks of the Baines River, 1855.	Oil on canvas
Baines and Humphrey killing an Alligator on the Horse Shoe Flats, near Curiosity Peak, Victoria River, 1856.	Oil on canvas
Dispersal of the hostile tribe near Baines River, N.W. Australia, 1855.	Oil on canvas
The Exploring Party descending Stokes Range to the Valley of Jasper Creek—Harry Gregory attempting to find a ford, 1857.	Oil on canvas
Meeting with hostile natives on a branch of the Victoria River, Thursday December 13th, 1855, near the Baines River.	Pencil and watercolour on paper
Mr Phibbs and Bowman engaging the blacks who attempted to burn us out, Saturday evening March 15th 1856 to the south of Depot Creek, Victoria River, North Australia.	Pencil and bodycolour on paper
Natives bartering with the crew of Tom Tough, August 26, 1855.	Pencil and watercolour on paper
Native buildings, use unknown but supposed to be connected with some superstitious practice for the recovery of health, Saturday, March 8th, South of Depot Creek Victoria River, 1856.	Pencil and watercolour on paper
Native paintings on sandstone cliffs on the S.E branch of the Victoria...Monday April 14 1856. The fish - and serpents though sketched into the same picture were on rocks nearly 1/4 mile from each other.	Watercolour on paper
Native of North Australia near the Main Camp, Victoria River, May 15 1856.	Pencil and watercolour on paper
The North Australian Expedition crossing the Wickham River, a tributary of the Victoria River, Northern Territory, 1856.	
Scars on the shoulders of natives in the canoe.	Pencil and watercolour on paper
Tuesday August 28th, 7am. Gulf of Carpentaria South of Princes of Wales' Island.	Pencil and watercolour on paper

subject to the changes and vicissitudes in visual culture—the mode with which we understand social processes, practices and identities.[109] Therefore, the social modality, one of the four modalities, "is thus the most important modality for understanding the audiencing of images".[110] Visual images, especially artworks, reflect the mentalities, ideologies and identities of the time, which form a "mental or metaphorical image of the self or others".[111] Indeed, art is evidence of the social—the culture that created it and, further, the culture that gazes upon it.[112] The combination of Burke's and Rose's frameworks allows a unique approach to the visual materials of the North Australia Expedition and will guide the interpretation of Baines' artworks, sketches and watercolours.

Literature Review

On researching and writing this thesis, multiple themes and genres within the literature have been revealed. The most common of these themes concern the origins of the North Australian Expedition, the contextual nineteenth-century Australian frontier, and Thomas Baines himself. These themes and genres are interconnected throughout the thesis and have greatly informed my research.

The North Australian Expedition

The North Australian Expedition, 1855 to 1857, has been studied and interpreted by scholars such as Jane Carruthers, Russell Braddon and Wendy Birman. However, academics have still consigned the expedition to a "minor chapter in the history of Australian exploration", while Augustus Gregory, expedition leader, has been categorised as a "forgotten explorer".[113] This would suggest the expedition has not received as much scholarly attention as it deserves. Kieran Kelly provided a detailed account of the expedition and found its origins in 1853, where "approaches were made to the Royal Geographical Society of an expedition" into northern Australia.[114] However, Carruthers and Steibel

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[109] Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 1.
[110] Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 25.
[111] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 30.
[112] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 30.
[113] John Glover and Jenny Bevan, *The Forgotten Explorers: Pioner Geologists of Western Australia, 1826-1926*, 1st ed. (Melbourne: Hesperian Press, 2010), 48.
[114] Kelly, *Hard Country Hard Men: In the Footsteps of Gregory*, 90.

proposed that the origins of the expedition lay in the first British settlement in the north in 1824.[115]

Gregory is well regarded in scholarship, and his unique talents and prowess are documented.[116] Kelly categorised Gregory as a competent explorer and one of the most successful and capable in Australian history.[117] Carruthers and Stiebel termed him as "sensible and sober" and noted his experience and professionalism in the field.[118] In contrast, Russell Braddon claimed Gregory spent too much of his time and effort caring for the health of the expeditions' horses rather than its explorers.[119] Kelly rebuked this criticism by accentuating the importance of horses to the survivability of the party, and the success of the expedition.[120] D.B. Waterson claimed that Gregory's 'omission' from Australian history was due to him being "too successful":

> Modest, unromantic and resolute in following instructions, [Gregory] did not dramatise his report, boasted no triumphs and sought no honours....He excelled as a surveyor and manager of men, horses and equipment, and invented improvements for pack-saddles and pocket compasses. His seasonal knowledge and bushcraft were unparalleled, and he was the first to note the sequence of weather patterns in Australia from west to east.[121]

The literature surrounding Gregory, however, remains relatively limited. Several primary sources concerning him include, but are not limited to, his official journal of the North Australian Expedition, Thomas Baines' 'Additional Notes on North Australian Expedition, the Communication to Dr Shaw from Mr Frank Gregory on the Expedition from Perth to the North-West of Australia', and finally, his obituary.[122] These sources provide

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[115] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 16.

[116] Kieran Kelly, "Augustus Gregory and Australian history," *The Sydney Papers* 13, no. 1 (2001).; Birman, *Gregory of Rainworth: A Man in His Time*.

[117] Kelly, "Augustus Gregory and Australian history," 79.

[118] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 9, 21.

[119] Russell Braddon, *Thomas Baines and the North Australia Expedition* (Sydney: William Collins Pty Ltd., 1986), 107.

[120] Kelly, *Hard Country Hard Men: In the Footsteps of Gregory*, 291.

[121] "Gregory, Sir Augustus Charles (1819-1905)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 1972, accessed 8 February, 2021, https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gregory-sir-augustus-charles-3663.

[122] Gregory, *Journal*.; Thomas Baines, "Additional Notes on the North Australian Expedition under Mr. A. C. Gregory," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 2, no. 1 (1857), https://doi.org/10.2307/1799343.; Frank Gregory, "Communication to Dr. Shaw from Mr. Frank Gregory, on the Expedition from Perth to the North-West of Australia," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 5, no. 3 (1861), https://www.jstor.org/stable/1799130.; The Royal Geographical Society, "Obituary - Augustus Charles Gregory" (The Geographical Journal, London, The Royal Geographical Society, 1905).

valuable insight into the expedition's objectives, their findings and observations in the field, and their conclusions. The most significant of these records is the Society's minutes on James Wilson's 'Notes on the Physical Geography of North-West Australia'.[123] In these minutes, the Society discussed Wilson's documentation of the nature of the north Australian landscape and its fertility and value for colonisation. Scholars who have studied the North Australian Expedition have used the bulk of these records: Carruthers and Stiebel unpacked Baines' journal; Darrel Lewis appraised Wilson and Elsey's letters.[124]

Gregory guided his group, in total, over 16,000 kilometres over 17 months, which resulted in a successful survey of the north and no deaths.[125] Kelly accounted for this success by crediting the transition of exploration from the militaristic to the scientific realm.[126] Dane Kennedy recognised the influence of technological changes; the arrival of steam-powered industry and transportation turned European exploration and expansion into a swift, systematic process.[127]

The Nineteenth Century Australian Frontier

An interrogation of literature surrounding Australia's colonial history, European empires, imperialism and nineteenth-century Australian exploration informs our understandings of the nature of the North Australian Expedition. The critique of their interrelationship is key to establishing the context of the expedition and the nineteenth-century environment that produced it.

Kennedy provided multiple sources from which a historical overview of nineteenth-century exploration can be established. *The Last Blank Spaces*, *British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century,* and *Reinterpreting Exploration* are resources that document the nature of exploration, the motives behind European expansionism and the scientific approach to

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[123] James S. Wilson, "Notes on the Physical Geography of North-West Australia," *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 28 (1858), https://doi.org/10.2307/1798318.
[124] Darrell Lewis, "'Invaders of a peaceful country': Aborigines and explorers on the lower Victoria River, Northern Territory," *Aboriginal History Journal* 29 (2011), https://doi.org/10.22459/AH.29.2011.03.
[125] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 23.
[126] Kelly, *Hard Country Hard Men: In the Footsteps of Gregory*, 249.
[127] John M. Findlay, *The American West: The Reader* (Oxford: Organization of American Historians, 2001), 39.

ventures.[128] Kennedy posited the Royal Geographical Society as the chief proponent that advocated and legitimised expeditions, which directly influenced the exploration of Australia.[129] In correlation, Simon Ryan argued that the Society was the principal regulating body that dictated the method and reportage of exploration.[130] Many scholars have investigated the complex interrelationship between the sciences and empire, which provide this thesis with a wealth of historical context behind the nature of the North Australian Expedition as a product of the nineteenth-century scientific and political climate. Expanding on Nate Probasco's works that examined the role of cartography in early European explorations and expansions, Catherine Delmas investigated maps and charts as instruments of science and political power to provide insight into the nineteenth-century scientific and imperial institutions.

Further, Jonathan Lamb proposed that visual materials collected and produced by European expeditions were the "real weapons in the wars of empire" and became the "plunder" of empires, as they allowed power structures the legitimacy to set imperial agendas.[131] Indeed, Sir Humphrey Gilbert's map of North America, created to 'prove' to Queen Elizabeth I that England had rights to the region, can undoubtedly be seen in such a light.[132] According to Gooding, the written word was critical in establishing authority over distant landscapes.[133]

Charles Withers examined the motives behind Enlightenment exploration, which characterised voyages to the Pacific and differentiated them from previous expeditions to the Americas.[134] He found that it stemmed from "curiosity".[135] Indeed, encounters with new peoples, landscapes and things, as Phil J. Stern claimed, provided the fuel to the flames of curiosity.[136] While Kennedy termed these scientific ventures of history as 'blind

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[128] Dane Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013). Kennedy, "British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey."; Robinson et al., *Reinterpreting Exploration: The West in the World*.

[129] Kennedy, "British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey," 1886.

[130] Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia*, 31.

[131] Lamb, "Introduction."

[132] Probasco, "Cartography as a Tool," 426.

[133] Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape.", 73.

[134] Charles W. J. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

[135] Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason*.

[136] Philip P. Stern, "Exploration and Enlightenment," in *Reinterpreting Exploration: The West in the World*, ed. Dane Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 55.

experiments', to Andrekos Varnava, they had a metaphorical objective.[137] Varnava wrote of the symbolic 'El Dorado'—the mythology of unequivocal wealth in the rich promised land of immense value—as the psychological force behind expeditions and colonialism.[138] He suggested that "almost every imperial and colonial venture was a search for an El Dorado or utopia".[139] However, Michael F. Robinson questioned the scientific motivations of exploration and asked whether, instead, it was an innate part of humanity: "a remote ancestral habit?"[140] Robinson, like Harry Liebersohn, interpreted the narratives of exploration as the modernised "veni, vidi, vici" conquests of history.[141] In the middle stand, scholars like Stafford viewed the Society as an "ideological and institutional matrix" that combined the goals of science and empire.[142] Nevertheless, Kennedy argued that the British were at the "forefront of the systematic effort to explore the far corners of the globe" in the nineteenth century, and the explorer's goal was to 'fill in the blanks' of Britain's imperial map.[143]

At the turn of the nineteenth century, audiences were provided with a wide variety of depictions of Indigenous Australians drawn from a combination of first-hand accounts, narratives and realities of settlement.[144] Stuart Banner examined British policy concerning Indigenous peoples and found that it was typical for Indigenous communities to have their land purchased from them.[145] However, concerning Indigenous Australian nations, Banner found that the absence of Aboriginal farms was a fundamental factor in the differentiation in the British assessment of Indigenous Australians.[146] Therefore, Banner concluded that

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[137] Kennedy, "British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey," 1884. Varnava, *Imperial Expectations*.

[138] Varnava, *Imperial Expectations*, 1.

[139] Varnava, *Imperial Expectations*, 1.

[140] Michael F. Robinson, "Science and Exploration," in *Reinterpreting Exploration: The West in the World*, ed. Dane Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 21.

[141] Harry Liebersohn, "Shifting Narrative Perspectives on Encounters," in *Reinterpreting Exploration: The West in the World*, ed. Dane Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[142] Robert Stafford, "Scientific Exploration and Empire," in *Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Roger Louis and Andrew Porter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 296.

[143] Kennedy, "British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey," 1880.; Felix Driver, "Distance and Disturbance: Travel, Exploration and Knowledge in the Nineteenth-Century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 14, no. 14 (2004): 91, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440104000088.

[144] Paul Longley Arthur, *Virtual Voyages: Travel Writing and the Antipodes 1605-1837*, 1st ed., Anthem Studies in Travel, (Manchester: Anthem Press, 2010), 110.

[145] Stuart Banner, *Possessing the Pacific: Land, Settlers, and Indigenous People from Australia to Alaska* (Massachusets: Harvard University Press, 2007), 15.

[146] Banner, *Possessing the Pacific: Land, Settlers, and Indigenous People from Australia to Alaska*, 17-18.

terra nullius was not a blanket policy of the zeitgeist of British imperialism.[147] Manning Clark's *History of Australia* laid the foundations for a revision of Australian history.[148] Later, scholars such as Henry Reynolds and Keith Windschuttle epitomised the academic conflict regarding the Australian frontier: the 'history wars'. Reynolds produced numerous works concerning the Australian frontier, from *The Other Side of the Frontier* (1981) to *Why Weren't We Told?* (1999) to *Forgotten War* (2013), to investigate and explain the Australian frontier's realities of high levels of violence, dispossession, and conflict.[149] Indeed, Reynolds' monumental accomplishments continue to inspire scholarship today.[150] In contrast, Windschuttle sought to prove that the numbers of Aboriginal people killed in Australia's colonisation have been exaggerated for political purposes.[151] However, Tony Roberts found that at least 3000 Aborigines died in the frontier conflict of the Northern Territory and Queensland.[152] To visualise the conflicts, the University of Newcastle provides an interactive map where massacre sites and attacks around Australia are displayed, detailed and interpreted.[153]

Thomas Baines

Thomas Baines was an artist-explorer whose relevant literature primarily surrounds his ventures and accomplishments in South Africa and north Australia. In the mid-1970s, Helen Luckett posited that people seldom remember the artist-explorer outside of South Africa.[154] Since then, however, there has been an emergence of scholarship surrounding Baines. Marijke Cosser's 1992 thesis explored Baines' artistic compositions and technique in his approach to landscape and the depictions of the people within it. Cosser proposed that

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[147] Banner, *Possessing the Pacific: Land, Settlers, and Indigenous People from Australia to Alaska*, 15.

[148] Manning Clark, *History of Australia*, 1st ed. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1962).

[149] Henry Reynolds, *Forgotten War* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2013).

[150] Warren Elofson, "The Universality of Frontier Disorder: Northern Australia Viewed Against the Northern Great Plains of North America," *Agricultural History* 88, no. 2 (2014): 148, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3098/ah.2014.88.2.147.

[151] "Review of 'The Fabrication of Aboriginal History. Volume One, Van Dienman's Land 1803-1847'," Australian Archaeological Association, updated 18 November, 2013, accessed 3 February, 2021, https://australianarchaeologicalassociation.com.au/journal/review-of-the-fabrication-of-aboriginal-history-volume-one-van-diemens-land-1803-1847%E2%80%B2/.

[152] Tony Roberts, *Frontier Justice: A History of the Gulf Country to 1900* (Townsville: University of Queensland Press, 2005), 43.

[153] The University of Newcastle, "Colonial Frontier Massacres in Australia, 1788-1930," (3.0 The Centre for 21st Century Humanties, 2019), Interactive Map. https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/map.php.

[154] Luckett, "Thomas Baines: 1820-1875," 252.

Baines' typical landscape has half the picture engaged with the representation of nature, environment, and subjects, while the other half "usually portrays a magnificently observed sky".[155] John McAleer made a similar point, claiming Baines "delighted in the romantic beauty of landscapes".[156] Further, Russell Braddon described Baines' artistic style as one that focuses on representing the landscape, and his research found that the artist never once did a portrait of his fellow explorers.[157]

Baines' experience stemmed from his prominence in South Africa as a war artist, painting theatrical scenes of conflict between Europeans and the Xhosa people within gargantuan and extraordinary landscapes. Rather than focus on the military action of the scene, Baines' vast landscapes allowed space to provide detail.[158] As is common in his paintings of the North Australian Expedition, Baines typically placed human subjects within a vast landscape which framed them.[159] Felix Driver claimed that Baines achieved "an unusual degree of sympathy in his portraits" and rendered his "subjects as individuals rather than types", although other scholarly interpretations of his art dispute this.[160]

Elizabeth Hartrick found that Baines' artistic practice was centred on documentation and reportage and was thus considered information by the Royal Geographical Society.[161] Indeed, his representations of the challenging terrain for the British Army during the Xhosa Wars served as strategic military information to his audiences.[162] However, according to Braddon, the Society nearly sent a photographer in Baines' place to Australia, though they found the artist's versatility more beneficial than the latest camera device.[163] Janda Gooding, Marion Arnold, Elizabeth Hartrick, and Lindy Stiebel remain the chief scholars who have studied and interpreted the visual works of Thomas Baines. These authors unpack the themes within his artwork and commonly assess the extent to which he reflected

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[155] Cosser, "Images of a Changing Frontier," 129.
[156] McAleer, "'The Eye of the Artist': Thomas Baines, the Eighth Cape Frontier War, and the Representation of Warfare," 313.
[157] Braddon, *Thomas Baines and the North Australia Expedition*, 515.
[158] Carruthers and Arnold, *The Life and Work of Thomas Baines*, 154.
[159] Cosser, "Images of a Changing Frontier," 71, 129.
[160] Felix Driver, *Hidden Histories of Exploration: Researching the RGS-IBG Collections* (London: The University of London, 2009), 17.
[161] Hartrick, "Short Thomas Baines: Empire Man and Magic Laternist." 542.
[162] McAleer, "'The Eye of the Artist': Thomas Baines, the Eighth Cape Frontier War, and the Representation of Warfare," 314.
[163] Braddon, *Thomas Baines and the North Australia Expedition*, 38.

nineteenth-century ideals and perspectives on canvas. The primary themes that Baines entertained are his interpretations and representations of the landscape and those who dwell within it, their relationship to the landscape, and the scene's characters. Gooding classified Baines as an artist-explorer who contrasted classical artists and approached art by representing space and air.[164] Hartrick echoed a similar argument in noting the "emotional and performative space" of the Baines' landscapes, where scenes of action and adventure were represented.[165] Though he reflected drama on the canvas, Carruthers and Steibel labelled him a "war artist".[166] Baines constructed visions of flora, fauna, geographical formations, and encounters with the 'exotic' within vast landscapes.[167] Gooding found that Baines' works idealised the heroic individual within an era where exploration was fantasised and romanticised.[168] Therefore, while scholarship agrees that Baines' images are products of "pictorial imagination as well as keen perception", the degrees to which he extended the European fiction of the Pacific remains a pertinent question to be answered.

Thesis Significance

The findings and outcomes of this thesis will add to the scholarship surrounding the North Australian Expedition and the history of Australia's exploration. Through the unpacking of Smith's idea and supported by the frameworks of Rose, Smith and Burke, this thesis will find evidence of the contest between the creation of a European fiction and the systematic acquisition of knowledge. Applying Smith to an expedition of the nineteenth century will illustrate how his understandings of European exploration are relevant to recent history. Furthermore, the interpretation of Baines' oil paintings and his folio of watercolours and sketches, some of which have not yet seen scholarship, will reveal unique perspectives on the Australian frontier, empire, and otherness in the nineteenth century.

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[164] Cosser, "Images of a Changing Frontier," 542, 129; Hartrick, "Short Thomas Baines: Empire Man and Magic Laternist"; Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 71.

[165] Hartrick, "Short Thomas Baines: Empire Man and Magic Laternist." 540.

[166] Hartrick, "Short Thomas Baines: Empire Man and Magic Laternist." 541; Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 1.

[167] Hartrick, "Short Thomas Baines: Empire Man and Magic Laternist." 541.

[168] Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 72.

Chapter One
The Fiction of European Expeditions

This chapter investigates the notion that the materials arising from European expeditions into the Asia-Pacific in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries created a 'European fiction', which fuelled imperial narratives and helped justify and legitimise colonial ventures. It unpacks the ideas first proposed by Bernard Smith in his interpretation of European perspectives on the Pacific and appraises and defines the 'European fiction'. Moreover, it reveals the institutional proponents of fiction and the people who created and extended it and assesses its pertinency to the context of the North Australian Expedition.

Authentically representing the Pacific was difficult for artists and others who, frequently, had strong cultural presumptions of the region and its people.[1] Limited knowledge of the Asia-Pacific and the antipodes granted European explorers the freedom of creativity when producing imagery, with so few materials to challenge and question their work's accuracy and validity.[2] This freedom meant the political imagination was unrestrained, and stories and fictions of encounter were typically intertwined with narratives of colonialism and imperial conquest.[3] Naturally, Europeans interpreted the Pacific through familiar lenses. Smith identified a complex and ambiguous amalgamation of classicist and Christian thought at the forefront of those interpretations.[4] These two overarching lenses, the Christian and the classicist, through which Europeans observed, envisioned and represented the Pacific comprise the essential interpretive vision through which a 'fiction' was created and spread. In what Paul Arthur referred to as the "imaginary voyage", European art and travel literature helped embed an ideological lens through which the audience could view new worlds.[5]

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[1] Bernard Smith, "European Vision and the South Pacific," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 13, no. 1 (1950): 74, https://www.jstor.org/stable/750143.
[2] Arthur, "Fictions of Encounter: Eighteenth-Century Imaginary Voyages to the Antipodes," 201.
[3] Arthur, "Fictions of Encounter: Eighteenth-Century Imaginary Voyages to the Antipodes," 201.
[4] Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768 - 1850*, 6.
[5] Arthur, "Fictions of Encounter: Eighteenth-Century Imaginary Voyages to the Antipodes," 197.

In the eighteenth century, European explorers typically viewed the Indigenous peoples as "innocent" beings of nature: passive, simplistic, submissive and commonly "fascinated" by their white counterparts and "visitors".[6] By the nineteenth century, artists were deployed on expeditions to record the landscapes they encountered and ethnographically interpret Indigenous people. However, artists and explorers viewed the landscape through ideological criterions of race and commonly failed to represent their interpretations objectively. [7] Indeed, while Bougainville thought himself in the Garden of Eden while traversing Tahiti, observing "men and women sitting under the shade of their fruit trees" with "every appearance of happiness amongst them", Aboriginal Australians were being described as "Cowardly as the fox, treacherous as the wolf, depraved to the very lowest in his passions and desires."[8] Vague descriptive categories such as these that were applied to Indigenous peoples were, according to Smith, a European fiction.

The European Fiction

It became increasingly common for artists to join scientific voyages of discovery to the Pacific. In providing geographical and ethnological information to their sponsors, artist-explorers created media that fed into narratives of empire and inspired supplementary art and literature. Douglas suggests the importance of such visual records arose from the empirical assumption that images were seen to be less subjective than written texts.[9] Indeed, John Webber, the artist chosen by Cook for his third voyage in 1776, was selected primarily to provide drawings that avoided the "imperfections of written accounts".[10] However, visual media helped form a European romance of the South Seas, with narratives arising from tales of 'discovery', 'paradise' and 'utopia', capturing the European imagination and invigorating a lust of curiosity towards the Pacific.[11] As artists are inherently subjective in their interpretations and representations of history and their subjects, they produced

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[6] Arthur, "Fictions of Encounter: Eighteenth-Century Imaginary Voyages to the Antipodes," 201.

[7] Douglas, "Art as Ethno-historical Text," 66.

[8] Ter Elingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, Vol. 1 (University of California Press, 2001), 213.

[9] Douglas, "Art as Ethno-historical Text," 69.

[10] Felix Driver, *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire*, ed. Luciana Martins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 27.

[11] Matt K. Matsuda, "The Pacific," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (2006): 770, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/ahr.111.3.758.

"ideological" pieces rather than historical ones.[12] These fictions "promoted, spread and entrenched the assumptions and images emerging from scientific works", thereby stimulating an interest in the European fiction of the Pacific.[13]

On first encountering, interpreting and representing the Pacific, Europeans did so on familiar terms.[14] Initially, explorers captured the "strangeness" of the Pacific by viewing it through a classical lens, as an "epic" and "odyssey".[15] Eighteenth-century works likened Pacific cultures to ancient Greece, drawing on classical tales, themes, and understandings to find a place for the Pacific in a Eurocentric, Christian, and 'civilised' world.[16] Philip Jones argued that European expeditions categorised the other as a separable, classifiable form of humanity that was not integrated.[17] This means that while Europeans portrayed the other as human, they were depicted as being the personifications of past human states of being, such as the civilisations of antiquity or primitivity. K.R. Howe summarised this process as a European "journey of self-discovery" and expanded on Smith's idea that the European presentation of the Pacific helped to define "what the European was not", which helped Europe define itself.[18] Indeed, John Byron, on encountering the people of Tierra del Fuego in 1764, described one native inhabitant as a "Colossus" in regards to his height—a description of undoubtedly ancient Greek influence.[19] Moreover, widespread criticism of the 'first encounter' artworks of William Hodges, who accompanied Cook's second voyage to the Pacific, was centred around the inclusion of Greek features, from "elegant flowing robes" to figures of a "divine old man with a long white beard" which, of course, never existed in the

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[12] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 152.

[13] Chris Ballard, "The Art of Encounter: Verisimilitude in the Imaginary Exploration of Interior New Guinea, 1725-1876," in *Oceanic Encounters: Exchange, Desire, Violence*, ed. Margaret Jolly (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2009), 222.

[14] Smith, "European Vision and the South Pacific," 6.

[15] Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason*, 92.; Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 4th ed., New Approaches to European History, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 66.

[16] K. R. Howe, *Nature, Culture, and History : The 'Knowing' of Oceania* (Auckland: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 62.

[17] Philip Jones, "The Theatre of Contact: Aborigines and Exploring Expeditions," in *Expedition into Empire: Exploratory journeys and the Making of the Modern World*, ed. Martin Thomas (New York: Routledge, 2015), 90.

[18] Howe, *Nature, Culture, and History : The 'Knowing' of Oceania*, 63. Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1992), 10.; Tom Ryan, "Revisioning the Pacific: Bernard Smith in the South Seas," *Thesis Eleven* 82 (August 2005): 23, https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513605054355.

[19] Smith, "European Vision and the South Pacific," 75.

Figure 2: John Keyse Sherwin, *The Landing at Middleburgh*, engraving after William Hodges, 1 February, 1777. Wellcome Collection.

Pacific.[20] Additionally, on encountering the Tahitian culture, Joseph Banks estimated, "these gentlemen, like Homer of old, must be poets as well as musicians".[21] Louis-Antoine de Bougainville saw the same Tahitians as Greek gods, as he "never saw men better made, and whose limbs were more proportionate: in order to paint a Hercules or a Mars", he believed "one could nowhere find such beautiful models".[22]

In Hodges' sketch of Cook's landing at Middleborough—originally a book illustration—Cook is depicted in his naval uniform standing tall on the rowing boat, leaning on his musket. The Tongan chieftain stands in front of him, holding a plantain leaf to represent his culture's relationship and affinity with nature. Before them, stand the Indigenous Tongans gathered together in excitement, offering fruit to trade. The *Resolution* is depicted in the background to the left. This image is abundant with classical connotations, symbolism and techniques. The Indigenous peoples are portrayed in ancient Greek robes; the women modestly dressed in draping, elegant gowns with their hair neatly tied; the men,

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[20] Wood, *Western Art and the Wider World*, 78.

[21] Joseph Banks, *The Endeavour Journal of Sir Joseph Banks* (London, 12 June, 1769), Expedition record, 99. http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks05/0501141h.html#jan1769.

[22] Louis-Antione de Bougainville, *The Pacific Journal of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville*, ed. John Dunmore, trans. John Dunmore (London: Taylor and Francis, 27 May, 2003), Journal and Expedition Record, 249.

curly-haired with well-kept beards, are muscular and wear their robes around their waist. Another classical component of the image is the likeness of the children to cherubs, two of whom can be seen in the image's centre-right, clinging to their assumed mother. From this image alone, it is easy to ascertain why Hodges is criticised for his artistic style and Greek interpretations of the Pacific peoples—this is, of course, an example of the first elements of a European fiction to be disseminated back into the metropole of Europe and its empires. Not an authentic, scientific interpretation of the Pacific peoples, which sought to challenge the illusions of narratives, the fiction is thus: the native people of Tonga are an ancient people of noble stock and at one with nature, which is conveyed through their clothing, the symbolism of the plantain leaf, and the seemingly uncultivated environment which forms the landscape. The thatched building under the trees on the hill to the right evokes the idea that the island belongs to the Indigenous people—they have property, which would resonate with a European audience familiar with the dictums of ownership. Even in Cook's journal, the log regarding this encounter does not describe the scene, let alone the figures included in it, in the same manner in which it is visualised. The explorers encountered ranks of men with clubs shouldered and "twenty fine young girls neatly dressed and ornamented with red feathers".[23] However, Cook was not present at this initial meeting, and, of course, no mention is made of any appearances akin to Greek culture. To overtly contrast the written word from the visual scene is evidence of the prolific fictionalisation of European exploration. The encounters in the Pacific and their depictions by European explorers represent the extensions of a European fiction over the objective acquisition of knowledge.

Like Hodges, Sydney Parkinson, aboard the Endeavour voyage, produced over 200 paintings and over 600 sketches of Pacific peoples and landscapes, though they too closely resemble paintings of ancient Greek cultures than realistic portrayals of the Pacific.[24] Donald B. Freeman stated that "romanticism and idealisation were the norms in artistic depictions of central Pacific themes".[25] Those depictions were systematically adopted from Greco-Roman mythology and were a European attempt to bring the human experience between

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[23] James Cook, *Journal of Captain Cook's Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* (London: Text Creation Partnership, 1785), 79, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/ecco/004895036.0001.000?rgn=main;view=fulltext.

[24] Donald B. Freeman, *The Pacific*, 1st ed., Seas in History, (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 189.

[25] Freeman, *The Pacific*, 188.; Katrina Gulliver, "Finding the Pacific World," *Journal of World History* 22, no. 1 (2011): 87.

the subject and the viewer closer together.[26] Ter Ellingson described this practice as a "time-shifting manipulation" to bridge the chasm of geographical distance and cultural differences.[27] Such a process was instrumental in adopting the 'noble savage' idea, which guided the interpretations of observers of scientific explorations well into the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries.[28] The 'noble savage' was first a phrase that appeared in the play, *The Conquest of Granada* (1672) and later became an archetype propelled by Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau.[29] The 'noble savage' encapsulated the concept of a primitive society in a utopian state of peaceful coexistence with nature—a complete contrast with how Europeans interpreted their own lives and state of being.[30] The idea held that 'original man', in the state of nature, was free from sin and could not differentiate right from wrong. Over time, man was degenerated by laws, property, and insatiable lust for material life.[31] The 'noble savage' archetype is heavily reflected in the writings of Cook when he observed that the Indigenous Australians:

> are far more happier than we Europeans; being wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but the necessary conveniences so much sought after in Europe, they are happy in not knowing use of them. They live in Tranquillity…The Earth and sea…furnishes them with all the things necessary for life…They live in a warm and fine Climate and enjoy very wholesome Air, so that they have very little need for Clothing…In short they seem'd to set no Value upon any thing we gave them…; this, in my opinion argues that they think themselves provided with all the necessarys of Life.[32]

This idea evolved as empires expanded and frontiers descended into conflict, transforming Indigenous peoples into the 'brutal savage' and later, what Smith referred to as the 'Romantic savage'.[33] Examples of the 'brutal savage' are abundant in the illustrations of Cook's death, including Zoffany's painting, where the native Hawaiian people are depicted—once again, in a classical manner—performing atrocities and encircling the British

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[26] Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, vol. 1 (California: University of California Press, 2001), 18.

[27] Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, 1, 18.

[28] Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, 1, 11.

[29] Leuthold, *Cross-Cultural Issues in Art: Frames for Understanding*, 29.

[30] Leuthold, *Cross-Cultural Issues in Art: Frames for Understanding*, 29.

[31] "Explainer: The myth of the Noble Savage," The Conversation, 2016, accessed 20 May, 2020, https://theconversation.com/explainer-the-myth-of-the-noble-savage-55316.

[32] James Cook, James Cook's Journal of Remarkable Occurrences aboard His Majesty's Bark Endeavour, 1768-1771, 1773, The Journals of James Cook's First Pacific Voyage, 1768-1771, 1, 92, National Library of Australia.

[33] Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768 - 1850*, 247.

Figure 3: Johann Zoffany. *The Death of Captain Cook, 14 February 1779*, oil on canvas, 1795. National Maritime Museum, London.

marines, and towering over a powerless Captain Cook. The painting acts as an eyewitness account. Identifiable by his traditional blue naval coat, Cook is placed at the centre of the image and commands the viewer's attention. On his right and placed behind him are his adversaries, the 'brutal savages'. On his left, his fellow marines struggle to hold back the onslaught. In a similar fashion to the engraving by Hodges, the image romanticises the scene by depicting the Hawaiians as figures of Greek mythology—many are nude or modestly robed, and the figure in the action of stabbing Cook is wearing a headpiece similar to a Corinthian helmet. This painting is another example of what Matt Matsuda termed a "Romance of the South Seas".[34] In this context, the Romantic movement regarded man as part of—and subject to—the natural world.[35] An idealisation of the emotive, the feminine, the natural, and the Indigenous in contrast to the Western constructs of rationalism,

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[34] Matsuda, "The Pacific," 763.
[35] Howe, *Nature, Culture, and History : The 'Knowing' of Oceania*, 20.

science, and masculinity were the Romantic style's trademarks.[36] It criticised the absolutism of Christian dogma and claims of science and promoted the human experience and the sublime.[37] It did not, however, challenge the narratives of European fiction in the art of exploration.

Visual materials both validated and legitimised the 'noble' and 'brutal savage' archetypes.[38] These were examples of a European fiction.[39] The romanticism of the other also expressed a European gaze to the past, rather than the creation of a structure in which the other represents a possible future.[40] Nevertheless, writings to the *Monthly Review* claimed that "voyage accounts are generally looked upon as truth" because they have a "much stronger claim to the reader's attention than the most striking incidents in a novel".[41] Paul Carter put the point for this relationship between exploration and fiction succinctly when he claimed, "voyaging and storytelling go together".[42] The European fiction which emerged from the Pacific was one in which Europeans attempted to familiarise themselves with the other, and vice versa. To familiarise was to interpret; to interpret was to understand; to understand was an act of intellectual appropriation.[43] Such fiction removed the ability for the subjects to represent themselves, tell their history and display their own culture to the audience. Instead, European fiction told people where they had come from, whom they resembled and how their culture might be interpreted and understood. It paralleled their unique existence with Greco-Roman mythology with which they had no knowledge or familiarity and explained and even exaggerated their religious and societal traditions.[44] With this substantial intellectual power that the Europeans held through the creation of fiction in their visual materials of expeditions, the theme of colonialism arises. Colonialism, in the context of European fiction, forms the link between power and representation.[45] Representation is not a simple picture of an imagined or interpreted

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[36] David Waldron, "Rethinking Appropriation of the Indigenous: A Critique of the Romanticist Approach," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 16, no. 2 (2014): 68.

[37] Waldron, "Rethinking Appropriation of the Indigenous: A Critique of the Romanticist Approach," 69.

[38] Matt K. Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds: A History of Seas, People and Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 134.

[39] Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 1.

[40] Leuthold, *Cross-Cultural Issues in Art: Frames for Understanding*, 43.

[41] Arthur, "Fictions of Encounter: Eighteenth-Century Imaginary Voyages to the Antipodes," 204.

[42] Arthur, "Fictions of Encounter: Eighteenth-Century Imaginary Voyages to the Antipodes," 204.

[43] Howe, *Nature, Culture, and History : The 'Knowing' of Oceania*, 62.

[44] Howe, *Nature, Culture, and History : The 'Knowing' of Oceania*, 62.

[45] Leuthold, *Cross-Cultural Issues in Art: Frames for Understanding*, 45.

other; instead, it is a conscious creation of innate subjectivity with particular objectives in mind. Steven Leuthold understood this power as a form of "culturecide" that occurs through the appropriation of an image of native people, which is then filtered through a manufactured history. [46] To control one's history is to dominate one's future.[47] Media of this kind has been categorised as a "Western-style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient", where the differences between fact and fiction distort.[48] Indeed, Levi Strauss believed that to paint was to possess, terming the process a "feature of the art of Western Civilisation".[49] Thus, the agents of exploration, scientific inquiry and knowledge, were synonymous with the agents of fiction, who interpreted, codified, charted and explained what they saw and disseminated that vision to the metropole of empires.

John Berger accounted for the creation of European fiction surrounding the Pacific as the attempt to make the "unfamiliar familiar and aggrandise the new with the experiences the Europeans already possessed".[50] Berger termed this artistic approach as the 'mythological picture', in which the presence of Greco-Roman figures ascribe a "moral value" to the message and content of the image.[51] Indeed, to be akin to Greco-Roman culture—the idealisation and influence of Western Civilisation—was to be considered noble, virtuous and socially esteemed as a culture.[52] This dichotomy on frontiers allowed the canvas to become a stage for theatrical scenes of encounter, within which actors played the parts of heroes, villains and exotic characters within the realm of fiction.[53] Jones termed this phenomenon as the "choreography of encounter".[54]

The Agents of Fiction

As the Enlightenment progressed, traditional exploration with the motivation to conquer and appropriate shifted towards a quest for knowledge. Cook's three voyages of the Pacific

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[46] Leuthold, *Cross-Cultural Issues in Art: Frames for Understanding*, 43.
[47] Leuthold, *Cross-Cultural Issues in Art: Frames for Understanding*, 43.
[48] Wood, *Western Art and the Wider World*, 78. Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 73.
[49] Levi Strauss, cited in Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 84.
[50] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 101.
[51] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 101.
[52] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 103. Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768 - 1850*, 78.
[53] Jones, "The Theatre of Contact: Aborigines and Exploring Expeditions," 90.
[54] Jones, "The Theatre of Contact: Aborigines and Exploring Expeditions," 91.

to plot the transit of Venus and Bougainville's assertion that exploration assists in "perfecting the knowledge of the globe" exemplify this shift. [55] Just as the conquistadors rationalised their exploratory ventures with religious and state legitimacy, the voyagers of the Enlightenment found theirs in the advancement of science, humanity, and geographical knowledge.[56] Felix Driver termed these newfound explorers—those who actively extended the frontiers of geographical knowledge on behalf of Europe—as the "missionaries of science".[57] Undeniably, the ability to systematically map, chart, codify, sketch and write on what explorers encountered and witnessed was an ability that separated them from mere adventurers.[58] Their findings would inevitably influence other parties, whether cosmopolitan or state, to act on such information in an advantageous and exploitative manner. [59] In order to understand how a European fiction was created by agents of science, exploration and empire, it is vital to ascertain the role of explorers, artists and scientific institutions in the nineteenth century.

According to Andriana Cracium, European explorers were a distinct class that belonged to a powerful group that was categorised by their organisations and relations between power structures and science.[60] Indeed, the idealised explorer embodied the qualities of the 'heroic individual' of the Enlightenment and Romantic ages. Under the relentless pressures of surviving in an unknown environment inhabited by 'hostile' Indigenous peoples, the explorer sought truth by understanding the phenomena of nature. He was willing to risk his life in furthering the sciences.[61] Exploration, and even explorers themselves, were mythologised. Fascinated by tales of the exotic, many European consumers demanded dramatic and extraordinary wonders.[62] Fictional travel literature from *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and *Swiss Family Robinson* (1812) to *Masterman Ready* (1841) and *Coral Island* (1858) piqued the interest of the European imagination with tales of the exotic and sublime.[63] Such mythology of explorers and the 'heroic individual' shaped the colonial

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[55] Gascoigne, "Motives for Exploration," 231.
[56] Gascoigne, "Motives for Exploration," 233.
[57] Driver, *Geography Militant*, 4.
[58] Kennedy, "British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey," 1891.
[59] Kennedy, "British Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: A Historiographical Survey," 1891.
[60] Cracium, "What is an Explorer?."
[61] Robinson, "Science and Exploration," 27. Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia*, 21.
[62] Smith, "European Vision and the South Pacific," 69.
[63] Stern, "Exploration and Enlightenment," 61, 63.; Ballard, "The Art of Encounter: Verisimilitude in the Imaginary Exploration of Interior New Guinea, 1725-1876," 225.

imagination.[64] Jonathan Lamb, however, considered these navigational tales to be tainted with untruths. [65] David Livingstone was the supreme embodiment of the heroic individual of the nineteenth century: champion of the Royal Geographical Society, a 'national hero' and a household name.[66] For Simon Ryan, explorers were the authors of new worlds—a power that gave the landscapes they encountered 'value' because it had never been viewed in such a way before.[67] The European gaze, in this manner, was an imposition of power.[68] This interpretation allowed the explorer to create and feed into a fiction of exploration and the empires and scientific knowledge that came with it. In the first-hand accounts of expeditions, the explorer became both narrator and actor—the 'I' in texts can be interpreted as a narrator's voice, as well as an actor's in an imagined scene.[69] The act of exploring becomes a drama of sorts, rather than solely an event—one must be prepared and invested in the act of discovery of peoples, places and new objects.[70]

The Royal Geographical Society was a sophisticated scientific establishment that "represented British expansionism more than any other institution".[71] A product of the Enlightenment and empire, the Society regulated and shaped exploration, which became paramount to British colonial ambitions in the nineteenth century.[72] Led by the Second Secretary of the Admiralty, John Barrow, the Society was then composed almost entirely of men of high social status.[73] Indeed, the original members' list included 55 army and 32 naval officers, accounting for 19 per cent of all members, while three dukes, nine earls, six viscounts, 14 lords, and 38 baronets comprised a considerable portion also.[74] In its second year, it absorbed the African Association, taking its objectives, members, and institutional

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[64] Arthur, "Fictions of Encounter: Eighteenth-Century Imaginary Voyages to the Antipodes," 197.

[65] Jonathan Lamb, "Eye-Witnessing in the South Seas," *The Eighteenth Century* 38, no. 3 (1997): 205, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41467673.

[66] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 12.

[67] Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia*, 21, 24.

[68] Tim Flannery, cited in, Russell, *Colonial Frontiers: Indigenous-European Encounters in Settler Societies*, 50.

[69] Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia*, 46. Shelam, Tiffany, Naria Nugent, Shino Konishi, and Allison Cadzow. Brokers and Boundaries: Colonial Exploration in Indigenous Territory. Melbourne: ANU Press, 2016, 1.

[70] Robinson, "Science and Exploration," 24.

[71] Stafford, "Scientific Exploration and Empire," 296.

[72] Driver, *Geography Militant*, 40.

[73] D. R. Stoddart, "The RGS and the 'New Geography': Changing Aims and Changing Roles in Nineteenth Century Science," *The Geographical Journal* 146, no. 2 (1980): 191.

[74] Stoddart, "The RGS and the 'New Geography': Changing Aims and Changing Roles in Nineteenth Century Science," 191.

influence with it.[75] The Society soon became entwined in other British imperial institutions, as they shared common interests abroad. The Colonial and Foreign Office, as well as the Royal Society, provided "research suggestions".[76] The Royal Navy provided logistical support to many expeditions, with "no less than 190 Admiralty ships employed on missions of discovery" from 1800 to 1860.[77] Providing monetary assistance to the Society was the British government, interest groups, and commercial companies. Dane Kennedy found that many of the Society's members held a considerable reputation and influence in British colonial politics, the Admiralty, and Whitehall.[78] Simon Ryan asserted that the Society "embodied the intimate connections between power and knowledge" in politics and geography.[79] Indeed, the complex relationship between these institutions is highlighted in the scheming of the North Australia Expedition, which was "promoted and organised by the Royal Geographical Society, funded by the Colonial Office", and supported by the Admiralty Board.[80] Under the guise of gentlemanly science, the Royal Geographical Society was an organisation interested in expanding the borders of empire.[81] This agenda was promoted and practised through the institution's role in creating and disseminating European fiction.

Six codified objectives acted as both principles of the institution and shapers of the nature of exploration: first, explorers were to "observe, collect, register and digest to print…new, interesting and useful facts and discoveries".[82] Geographical knowledge was a currency of power in international politics.[83] The monopolisation of that knowledge, or at least an advantage in it, was deemed a primary interest to British imperial strategy.[84] To that end, the Society regulated exploration to capitalise on the potential of advancing scientific and imperial ambitions.[85] However, the Society ensured that the role of the

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[75] G. R. Crone, "Sponsors of World Exploration," *Science, New Series,* 101, no. 2624 (1945): 379, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1126/science.101.2624.379.

[76] Stafford, "Scientific Exploration and Empire," 300.

[77] Driver, "Distance and Disturbance: Travel, Exploration and Knowledge in the Nineteenth-Century," 86. ;James W. Scott, "Geography, Geographers, and Exploration," *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers* 55 (1993): 19, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24040081.

[78] Driver, *Geography Militant*, 14.

[79] Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia*, 32.

[80] Stafford, "Scientific Exploration and Empire," 304.

[81] Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia*, 37.

[82] Driver, *Hidden Histories of Exploration: Researching the RGS-IBG Collections*, 12.

[83] Mearsheimer, "Kissing Cousins: Nationalism and Realism," 5.

[84] Driver, *Geography Militant*, 40.

[85] Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason*, 94.

explorer was not solely geographical but also ethnographic. Explorers were encouraged to detail information regarding ethnographic descriptions of encounters with Indigenous populations, their physical features, customs and societal structure:[86]

> Note the description of the several people whom you meet, the extent of the population, their means of subsistence, their genius and their disposition, the nature of their amusements, their diseases and remedies, their objects of worship, religious ceremonies, and a vocabulary of their language.[87]

Through such regulated exploration and the accumulation of knowledge that came with it, the Society aimed to create "a library of the best books on Geography…[and] a complete collection of maps and charts".[88] Indeed, the Royal Geographical Society and empire were mutual beneficiaries and partners in British expansion, furthered by the exploitation of knowledge procured from expeditions. The scientific understanding of the world was a tool of colonial expansion, reflected in Catherine Delmas' words—"scientific knowledge and political power are interwoven".[89] Science and political interests pushed the explorers' ships from the harbour.[90] With each component of knowledge added to Britain's 'stockpile,' the seas and colonies became easier and more economical to navigate, control, monopolise, and expand.[91] The product that allowed this process to occur more than any other was creating, using, and exploiting the map, which will be examined later. The supplementary objectives were to:

> procure specimens of such instruments as experiences has shown to be most useful…prepare brief instructions for such as setting out on their travels…correspond with similar societies that may be established in different parts of the world [and] open communication with all those philosophical and literary societies with which Geography is connected.[92]

Through these objectives, the Society became the main regulatory body of geography and exploration, shaping and defining the practice and limiting them to a British institutional

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[86] Kennedy, *The Last Blank Spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia*, 199.
[87] Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia*, 38.
[88] Driver, *Geography Militant*, 27.
[89] Catherine Delmas, *Science and Empire in the Nineteenth Century: a Journey of Imperial Conquest and Scientific Progress*, 1st ed., ed. Catherine Delmas, Christine Vandamme, and Donna Spalding Andréolle (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2010), 25.
[90] Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 62.
[91] Stafford, "Scientific Exploration and Empire," 295.
[92] Driver, *Geography Militant*, 27.

monopoly. Moreover, the objectives ensured that knowledge could be centralised to an enclosed elite of explorers, scientists, Navy officers, and government officials. Although they may seem innately scientific, the objectives have political undertones that complemented the marriage between science and the political realm. The systematic exploitation of knowledge arising from expeditions in the colonial manoeuvres of the appropriation of territory exemplifies this. Indeed, in the explorer's actions, the publications of results, presentation and formation of narratives, maps, charts and art created opportunities to control space and people.[93] The imperial factor inherent in exploration is eternally echoed in Sir William Gladstone's words when he remarked to the Society in 1864: "Gentleman, you have done so much that you are like Alexander, you have no more worlds to conquer".[94] The words of Gladstone, who served as a British statesman for over 60 years, not only exemplify the interconnection between science, exploration and empire but also reveal the extent of the political and imperial role of the Royal Geographical Society—Gladstone suggested that, in its sponsorships and shaping of expeditions, the Society was actively engaged in the expansion of the British empire. John Gascoigne summarised aptly—"Science may well have been a cosmopolitan pursuit, but it did not come at the expense of service to empire".[95]

The Objects of Fiction

When Europeans explored new worlds, they systematically recorded and interpreted what they observed and encountered in terms that were familiar to them, most commonly in the form of journals, logs, sketches, diaries, and artworks. Jonathan Lamb argued that artifacts produced from expeditions can now be understood as the 'plunder' of the nineteenth century, as their exploitation and utilisation by the imperial powers had social and political ramifications that endure to this day.[96] Lamb described European maps, paintings, and written records as the 'real weapons' in the wars of empire, as the power to name,

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[93] Stafford, "Scientific Exploration and Empire," 316.

[94] "Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, XIV", (paper presented at the Session 1869-70, London, 1869-70), 214.

[95] John Gascoigne, cited in John West-Sooby, *Discovery and Empire: the French in the South Seas* (Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press, 2013).

[96] Lamb, "Introduction," 5.

represent, and fictionalise could set the imperial agenda.[97] This would suggest that the European fiction was a 'weapon', and the narratives of exploration were the means to extend the frontiers of empires. Indeed, Europeans created a one-sided history when they designed and disseminated visual materials from expeditions. The lack of Indigenous written records to counter the European "narrative-writers" meant that Indigenous history could be manipulated through place-naming, creating and using maps, and visual representations of the other.[98] As Europeans held the power-role in the relationship between the observer and the observed, the coloniser and the colonised, the potential to create fiction to complement the imperial agenda, the scientific establishments of the time, and capture the imagination both an intellectual and political freedom. Driver claimed that European exploration records were a projection of imperial geography, with the map at the forefront of such a projection.[99]

The map, such as that produced on the North Australian Expedition (see figures 7 to 10), provided a "symbolic language" that legitimised exploration and appropriation of land by those who wielded them.[100] Nate Probasco described maps as tools that were utilised to meet the "diverse needs associated with colonial settlement".[101] However, Lamb considered visual records such as maps, taxonomies, and other artefacts that arose from European expeditions as the "real weapons in the wars of empire".[102] Their exploitation and monopolisation by the imperial powers legitimised and encouraged systematic colonial expansion and land appropriation.[103] All reports—log entries, journals, retrospectives, and re-elaborations—were narratives created with degrees of truth behind them that made history occurring far away from the metropole visible.[104] In this respect, maps were the source of information gathered by explorers, which inspired and fed into fiction. However accurate a map may be it is still a subjective representation of a particular space that transcends its reality from a "state of separation to one of proximity", a process that

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[97] Lamb, "Introduction," 5.
[98] Nicholas Thomas and Diane Losche, *Double Vision: Art Histories and Colonial Histories in the Pacific* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 68.
[99] Driver, *Geography Militant*, 149.
[100] Stafford, "Scientific Exploration and Empire," 297.
[101] Probasco, "Cartography as a Tool," 426.
[102] Lamb, "Introduction," 5.
[103] Lamb, "Introduction," 5.
[104] Frederic Regard, *British Narratives of Exploration: Case studies of the self and Other* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2015), 10.

inevitably transformed the tool into an "intellectual weapon" of the political regime.[105] Robert Baldwin defined the map as a "state-of-the-art geographical and political statement".[106] However, despite the noticeable and overwhelming political impact that maps had, the scientific element in the art of their creation cannot be overlooked. In mapping territory, one must understand the land through a lens unfamiliar to ordinary human vision and organise and collect data through perception and survey.[107] This demands the use of sophisticated systematic surveys, interpretations, transcriptions and classifications—none of which the cartographer could accomplish without considerable respect and understanding of the sciences and a genuine curiosity of the worlds geographical composition.[108] Cartography brought the power to name: a power that is fundamental in the legitimate appropriation of land. Nomenclature usually fell to the explorer whom 'first' gazed upon the land or occasionally to the cartographer.[109]

Indeed, the term 'Pacific' is not organic to those it encompasses. It is a Western construct created to be a geographic region and delineator—its contextual inhabitants had no sense of belonging to such an entity, nor any such knowledge that a name had been prescribed on their behalf.[110] Paul Carter asserted, "the primary object [of imperial activities] is not to understand or interpret: it is to legitimate", perhaps too absolute a claim, but one that can indeed be applied to the exploitation of the map.[111] In addition to their political ramifications and service to empire, the creation and utilisation of maps intensified the cycle of exploration: the demands to 'fill in the blanks' on behalf of invested institutions encouraged and ensured successful ventures.

It has been established within scholarship that "travellers do not simply record what they see".[112] Instead, explorers move with a distinct purpose and observe according to regulated models. That is to say that both the European gaze and the European eye were

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[105] Probasco, "Cartography as a Tool," 27.; Delmas, *Science and Empire*, 27.
[106] Robert Baldwin, cited in Probasco, "Cartography as a Tool," 428.
[107] Delmas, *Science and Empire*, 26.
[108] Delmas, *Science and Empire*, 26.
[109] Jurgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 78. Delmas, *Science and Empire*, 47.
[110] Howe, *Nature, Culture, and History : The 'Knowing' of Oceania*, 60.
[111] Paul Carter, *Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 50.
[112] Ballard, "The Art of Encounter: Verisimilitude in the Imaginary Exploration of Interior New Guinea, 1725-1876," 221.

processes of an imposition of a determined future that was moulded, shaped and constructed on the first encounter. This is evident in the utilisation of journals and reports from European exploration and expeditions—no matter the authenticity and accuracy of the gaze. Stirling's reports of the Swan River in 1827 described the potential future of the landscape in his eyes:

> The mildness of the climate…[and] the short distance to India make a settlement on this coast an object of great interest…to the India Company. Voyages to England and long leaves of absence would no longer be necessary.[113]

Through this description, it is evident that Stirling envisioned a particular future through his gaze, which only included the British and not Australia's first peoples, and granted him the imposition of power upon the landscape he encountered. Additionally, Stirling's appeal to the fundamental institutions of British imperialism—the East India Company and the Royal Navy—can be considered an attempt to ensure that he persuaded Whitehall to consider and act upon his documented intelligence on the region. Further, Stirling reported:

> the country [is] rich and romantic….we encountered no difficulty…and met no obstruction from the natives. The almost innumerable variety of grasses…plants…and trees show that there is no deficiency in the three great sources of their sustenance, soil, heat, and moisture.[114]

Here, Stirling reported on the fertility of the landscape upon which he gazed, claiming he did "not believe that a more eligible spot could be found in any part of the world".[115] However, historical evidence would suggest that Stirling was, in actuality, embellishing the truth, for when the Swan River settlement came, it was far from 'rich and romantic' and was indeed a challenging environment to cultivate. Geoffrey Bolton argued that the fertile soil which Stirling described was, in fact, sand that comprised large areas of the two sides of the Swan, which accounted for the numerous failures of farming practices.[116] Shane Burke added that "the small amount of good soil meant that agricultural production did not develop as rapidly

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[113] "New Colony at Swan River," *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* (Sydney), 12 September 1829, https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/2193395.

[114] James Stirling, *"Captain Stirling to Governor Darling, 18th April, 1827: Narrative of Operations"* (London, 18 April 1827), http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks14/1402751.

[115] James Stirling, *"Captain Stirling to Major Moody to Under Secretary Hay"* (21 August 1828), http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks14/1402751.

[116] Shane Burke, "Fences, Furrows, Ditches and Settlement Policy," *History Australia* 4, no. 1 (2007): 1, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2104/ha070003.

as envisioned", which would contrast Stirling's summation of the Swan River as "land fit for the plough" and "capable of giving support to a million souls".[117]

Evidently, Stirling's reports were fictional and embellished but were nevertheless the result of his gaze upon a landscape that captured the explorer's imagination. Stirling's suggestions of a utopia epitomise the extension of a European fiction, which defied more objective, knowledge-based objectives of exploration. Lamb's interpretation of reports arising from European expeditions can be applied to the example of Stirling and the subsequent settlement of the Swan River by the British, which of course, wholly dispossessed the local Indigenous people of their land, autonomy and individual and collective futures. Stirling's fiction was the 'real weapon' in the British empire's appropriation and subjugation of the Swan River region and the 'rolling frontier' which came with it.[118]

In contrast to Stirling, early extracts from the reports to the Royal Geographical Society of the North Australian Expedition were not as embellished, distorted and visionary as Stirling's fiction. For example, Gregory's first encounter with the Victoria River did not lead to his vision of land capable of inhabiting 'a million souls'; in contrast, he anticipated it to be "an insignificant stream".[119] On landing, Gregory found "both water and grass scarce" and the shore ill-suited for landing the stock.[120] Further, the challenging task of unloading the horses from the vessels rendered the stock "completely exhausted" and so weak that they struggled to rise for days afterwards. To exacerbate matters, the *Tom Tough* ran aground on entering the mouth of the Victoria River and sustained so much superficial damage that many of its stores were lost.[121] Additionally, Gregory described the hardships of traversing the country, writing how the nature of the country, combined with the intense

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[117] Burke, "Fences, Furrows, Ditches and Settlement Policy," 9. S. H. Collins, *Downing Street: A Geographical Description of Australasia, Comprising New Holland, Van Diemen's Land, New South Wales, the Swan River Settlement* (13 January 1830).

[118] Lamb, "Introduction," 5. Ryan Cunningham and Miranda Fox, *The "Rolling Frontier"* (Prenzi Inc., 2018), Presentation.

[119] Progress of the North Australia Expedition. By A. C. Gregory, Commander. In "Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London," 32-33.

[120] Progress of the North Australia Expedition. By A. C. Gregory, Commander. In "Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London," 32-33.

[121] Report of the Progress of the North Australia Expedition, in "Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London," 185.

heat of the atmosphere, slowed the exploration team.[122] Unlike with Stirling, there was little embellishment from Gregory for the first encounter of the newfound landscape. Instead, he sought to record an empirical log of the Europeans contact and time with northern Australia and thereby challenge the preconceived European fiction of the continent and broader region.

Chapter Conclusions

This chapter has unpacked Bernard Smith's ideas surrounding the European fiction of the Pacific and examined its impact on expeditions and those it catalogued and categorised. I proposed that the texts and visual materials arising from imagined scenes, artworks, sketches, and artefacts served as evidence and codification of exploration, legitimising and promoting its practice. While eighteenth-century art and accounts created painted the Pacific as a utopia inhabited by noble peoples reminiscent of Europeans of antiquity, the nineteenth-century accounts from explorers sought to comprehend the unknown and acquire accurate knowledge for their beneficiaries. In providing their audiences with a plethora of facts, fiction and drama, they captured the interest of the European imagination.[123] This is reflected in the continuation of the systematic exploration of the Pacific and the European art and literature inspired by encounters. This complex process essentially served to ensure the visibility of exploration—the circulation of texts and images were vital in capturing the European imagination, creating and promoting a 'fiction' and, of course, the imperial and colonial manoeuvres of empires.

However, the creation of fiction was not a practice monopolised by artists. The written word was also subject to the same manipulations and embellishments as the canvas. Stirling's descriptions of the Swan River and the surrounding regions exemplify this in an Australian context. Indeed, while Augustus Gregory provides accurate reportage of the findings of explorations, not all of the expedition's records are as objectively based.

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[122] Report on the Progress of the North Australia Expedition, in "Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London," 186.
[123] Stern, "Exploration and Enlightenment," 61, 63.

Chapter Two
Fact, Fiction and Myth in the Records of the North Australian Expedition

On Monday, 10 May 1858, fellows of the Royal Geographical Society in London gathered to discuss the North Australian Expedition findings, which had been summarised in James Wilson's 'Notes on the Physical Geography of North-West Australia' and the future of Britain's interest in northern Australia. The session was chaired by the Society's president, Roderick Murchison, and members were read Wilson's report and heard that the region was excessively grassy, with an abundance of timber and edible fruits.[1] The expedition found, "after laying down the topography on maps, accompanied by pencil sketches" and "from statements of Mr Gregory and other sources", that "there are tracts of no less than five million acres...specially fitted for pasture and therefore suitable for the permanent settlement of a civilised community".[2] The response from within the Society was mixed. Murchison claimed that northern Australia should be occupied, while the geographer, Trelawney Saunders, cautioned that Britain should not send its productive workers there and advocated against European migration.[3]

Nevertheless, the learned fellows of the Society debated the future of a distant land they had never come into contact with, one which Indigenous peoples already inhabited. Murchison was the most enthusiastic about British colonisation and settlement in northern Australia. He spoke of the range of agricultural, pastoral and settlement opportunities that the expedition had revealed. However, he was wary of the extreme tropical climate of Australia's north when hard labour was considered, going so far as to proclaim that:

> If the slave-trade were still in its flourishing state, there would be a ready mode of evading this difficulty, for we should then only have to open a communication with the slavers of the African coasts and the piratical rovers about Borneo, Celebes, and other places in the Malayan

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[1] Wilson, "Notes," 212.
[2] Murchison, "Address to the Royal Geographical Society of London," 312. Wilson, "Notes," 212-13.
[3] Wilson, "Notes," 214.

Archipelago and obtain as many *human implements* as enterprising individuals might desire; but fortunately, this once highly prized traffic no longer exists as a recognised and legitimate trade.[4]

Murchison's surprising interest in the introduction of slavery aside, he then considered the importance of other labour, speculating that China might aid the expansion of Britain in northern Australia:

> We might obtain Chinese labourers, perhaps, sufficient in numbers and with hardihood adequate to cope with a tropical climate: but if we are to trust in the statements given in the newspapers from time to time, we cannot but conclude that there are already too many of that exclusive and singular race in Australia, and rather than augment their number, a counterpoise is needed to keep their arrogance within bounds.[5]

However, Murchison was met with disagreement from the pastoralist, explorer and inventor, William Lockhart, who argued that:

> There has been a great mistake regarding the Chinese emigrants who have gone to Australia. They were presented to me [as] rebellious, troublesome, and mutinous, and that at Melbourne, the authorities had been compelled to restrict the entrance of the Chinese on account of the trouble they gave.[6]

Lockhart believed that Chinese migrants would undermine Britain's interests in northern Australia, citing Melbourne as an example of racial prejudices and culture clashes. Dissatisfied with the prospect of encouraging mass Chinese migration to northern Australia, and without a population of slaves as an uncomplicated, cost-effective solution, Murchison appealed to the nationalistic, imperialistic and idealistic sentiment of the Royal Geographical Society:

> Are we then to view this land of mineral, pastoral, and arable capabilities at a distance, as a mere curiosity…whilst it is within our clutch forming part of the dominions of Great Britain and of the inheritance of our descendants? Is it for this that toilsome and costly expeditions have been organised and sent forth just to say *veni*, *vidi*, and then to leave our hopeful discovery as we found it, to be possessed by a wretched set of unredeemed and irreclaimable savages? [7]

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[4] Wilson, "Notes," 213.
[5] Wilson, "Notes," 213.
[6] Wilson, "Notes," 216.
[7] Wilson, "Notes," 213.

Resolute on Britain's occupation of the north, Murchison proposed the formation of a penal colony instead. He posited the idea that after the "rebellion in India", no doubt a reference to the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857 to 1869, that there should be a penal settlement for Indians.[8] In contrast, James Wilson claimed that emigrants to northern Australia do not have to "be Chinese or Sepoys" as there were "many thousands of Christianised natives on the islands of Ombay, Kisa, and Rotte…that would gladly move to North Australia for employment and would settle there with their families".[9] In the end, when the Northern Territory was annexed to South Australia in 1863, its development was mainly driven by colonists from South Australia and European migrants.

Institutions like the Royal Geographical Society capitalised on the scientific observations of Augustus Gregory, Wilson, Thomas Baines and Joseph Elsey. They became embedded into the larger imperialistic zeitgeist of the British colonial project in Australia. This chapter will explore the findings of the North Australian Expedition documented in journals, reports and charts, particularly regarding its geographical and ethnographic observations. These records will be assessed to consider the degree to which the explorers created and extended the European fiction.

Reporting on Geography and Landscape

The expedition's primary goal was "to trace the Victoria to its source" and determine the character of the north-western interior to "find a more direct tract" from the Gulf of Carpentaria to the settlements in the east.[10] This was under the principal object to determine conditions that might support a colony in northern Australia that would strengthen Britain's position in the east.[11] Charles Sturt, who contributed to the expedition's planning, encouraged Gregory to explore into the interior and then to "cross to the Gulf of Carpentaria and try to unite his (Gregory's) own line with that of Mitchell's Victoria".[12] The

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[8] Wilson, "Notes," 214.

[9] Wilson, "Notes," 217.

[10] "Science: Geographical Expedition in North Australia," *Brighton Gazette* (Brighton), Thursday 29 November 1855, https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000938/18551129/053/0003.; "Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London," 34.

[11] "Science: Geographical Expedition in North Australia."; "Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London," 34.

[12] Extract of a Letter from Capt. Sturt, F.R.G.S., to Dr. Shaw, in "Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London," 5.

Society revealed the degree of its imperial interests, declaring the occupation of northern Australia an "imperative necessity" to safeguard the East Indian Colonies.[13] For Britain to achieve the goal of occupation, the expedition had to offer an excess of intricate and detailed descriptions of the region's geography, biology, and geological composition in question to understand the nature of the country they intended to conquer and settle. This process was an example of the systematic acquisition of knowledge that typified the object of the expedition's explorers. The journals, charts and sketches that were kept, and in which painstaking records of country as well as first contact were preserved, were well within the tradition established by previous expeditions. Even now, as Tiffany Shellam notes, such scientific expedition records can be used to corroborate other forms of material and cultural evidence.[14]

Several significant records have survived from the expedition, some of which were published in the nineteenth century and all of which were first held by the Royal Geographical Society in London. Gregory's official journal was read to the Society on 22 June 1857 and later published. It was a heavily detailed description of the party's everyday occurrences and Gregory's actions as the expedition leader. An article from the expedition's surgeon, Joseph Elsey, reported on the party's health and his observations in the field. Baines' unpublished journal began on 30 January 1856, when Gregory departed from the Depot Camp with a small party to search for the Victoria River's source. Baines, left behind with Wilson and Elsey, logged the everyday occurrences in camp, his actions and observations, temperature, rainfall, and the uneasy relations between the explorers and the local Indigenous people. Wilson's accounts, in which he frequently comments on cultural contact during the expedition, are within private letters, reports to the Society, and a shared journal maintained with Elsey.

Gregory started his journal on 18 July 1855, when he described the arrangements for the *Monarch* and *Tom Tough's* departure from Sydney with a party of 18 members. He later included a chart of his mapped journey, which spanned from the Victoria River's exploration to the overland trek to Brisbane. These maps support his written accounts, as they both

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[13] "Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London," 34-35.
[14] Tiffany Shellam, *Meeting the Waylo: Aboriginal Encounters in the Archipelago* (Nedlands: UWA Publishing, 2019), 162-163.

verify and codify the surrounding regions. Elsey recorded that, on arrival at the Victoria, the "whole country was parched," the vegetation was withered, and bushfires were frequent.[15] At 10 am on 24 September 1855, after a long period of offloading stores from the boats and erecting a camp, Gregory travelled east. He found that the terrain was mostly level and wooded with "Eucalypti, Cypress, Banksia, Pandanus and Cycas".[16] Small streams ran from northern sandstone hills, and on their banks were small patches of grassy land. Exploring east-north-east, Gregory described the sandstone nature of the MacAdam Range, where he found an abundance of water but rugged terrain. Gregory consistently described and evaluated the environment he surveyed. Further descriptions from Gregory described the landscape's luxuriant vegetation, stony terrain and parched grasses. This was mainly due to exploring at the end of the dry season in the north. His journey down the Victoria River found little improvement in the soil quality, which would be essential to a successful British settlement; instead, it was deemed "useless for any other purpose than feeding stock".[17] Amid the assessment and exploration of land, Gregory regularly commented on the challenges of traversing the landscape. He spoke of difficulties ranging from a lack of fresh water sources to the impact of the harsh sunlight and sharp rocky ridges between banks and rivers.[18] Gregory summarised his observations on 24 November 1855, stating that:

> Except on the banks of the river and creeks, the country is poor and stony; the geological structure of the country…is bands of sandstone cliffs…and a coarse siliceous limestone. Though grass is abundant on every description of soil…the greater part is of inferior quality, and dries up completely at this season.[19]

However, Gregory's evaluation of the environment improved in the later months as he explored along the Jasper and Fitzroy Rivers. He wrote more regularly of well-grassed areas suited for stock, landscapes with favourable terrain, and reported on the overwhelming amounts of timber sources.[20] Wilson echoed such an assessment as he described the "abundance of grasses" and timber that surrounded the fertile rivers.[21]

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[15] Joseph Elsey, cited in Gregory, *Journal*, 136.
[16] Wilson, "Notes," 211.
[17] Gregory, *Journal*, 20.
[18] Gregory, *Journal*, 13-18.
[19] Gregory, *Journal*, 28.
[20] Gregory, *Journal*, 40, 46.
[21] Wilson, "Notes," 211 - 12.

However, traversing further into the interior, Gregory noted the inhospitality of the region.[22] He termed the surrounding country "worthless".[23] Gregory concluded the traverse into the interior in fear of dwindling supplies, coupled with the hazardous region.[24] He headed back to the lush region where the Depot Camp was situated.

Alas, Gregory's expedition did not find the interior to live up to its estimation as *Provincia Aurefira.* Nor did it uncover a region with boundless resources as the Royal Geographical Society had envisioned. Instead, the North Australia Expedition revealed the nature of a region that had been the home of over 40,000 years of complex Indigenous culture. The Victoria River, which runs along Kajerong, Ngarinman, Nungali, and Jaminjung country, and through Karangpurru, Bilinara and Gurindji land, was found to be an extremely fertile waterway.[25] Wilson reported that the Victoria could generate productive soil and a wealth of timber and edible fruits.[26] He estimated that the land contained over "5000 acres of well-watered pasture".[27] "In no part of the world" did Wilson see grass "grow so luxuriantly".[28] Despite the poor evaluations of land elsewhere, the description of the Victoria, and the lush environments in its surroundings, was enough to encourage British interest in the area.[29] However, what was also revealed by the explorers was the extent to which contact was made between the Europeans and Indigenous peoples. Gregory often saw signs of Indigenous peoples; he wrote how he would hear their calls and catch a few glimpses through the thick scrub.[30] These brief sightings turned into sophisticated parleys, complex encounters, hostile standoffs and friendly communications. Regardless of the overwhelming evidence that northern Australia was already inhabited, Murchison regretted that the land lay "waste" as it was ripe for occupation and incorporation into the British Empire.[31]

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[22] Gregory, *Journal*, 44.
[23] Gregory, *Journal*, 58.
[24] Gregory, *Journal*, 60.
[25] Darrell Lewis, *A Wild History: Life and Death on the Victoria Frontier* (Victoria: Monash University Press, 2012), 26.
[26] Wilson, "Notes," 212.
[27] Lewis, *A Wild History*, 12.
[28] Wilson, "Notes," 212.
[29] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 23.
[30] Lewis, *A Wild History*, 15, 26.
[31] Wilson, "Notes," 213.

Records of First Contact

Before the North Australian Expedition, European ethnographic descriptions of Indigenous Australians usually involved an ideological approach that was 'hard primitivism'.[32] This criterion portrayed Aboriginal groups as barbaric and not heroic, cowardly and not brave, and savage, not 'civilised'.[33] Indeed, prior records characterised Indigenous Australian's as "among the lowest, most bestial, of human beings".[34] The words of Watkin Tench, author and naval marine in Arthur Phillip's first settlement of New South Wales, were typical:

> If they are to be considered as a nation, whose general advancement and acquisitions are to be weighed, they certainly rank very low, even in the scale of savages.[35]

However, the emergence and evolution of scientific thought towards human societies and the purpose of western civilisation informed and transformed attitudes towards Indigenous peoples. Increasing knowledge of the region meant land and people became more real to the explorer, the reader, the coloniser and the settler. [36] This is evident in the professional, scientific and distinctive approach from the explorers of the North Australian Expedition, who sought to interpret and understand rather than categorise, denigrate and disparage. The expedition journals contrast in encounter tales. Wilson had numerous engagements with Indigenous people. He described these as "amicable" and naively believed that "no impression left on the minds of the native population" was "unfavourable to their English visitors".[37] In contrast, Baines believed they were encircled by hostile "savages" and was wary of bloodshed.[38] Nonetheless, The North Australian Expedition remains an example of the investigative nature in acquiring new knowledge in the nineteenth century.[39]

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[32] Waldron, "Rethinking Appropriation of the Indigenous: A Critique of the Romanticist Approach," 68.

[33] Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 150.

[34] Pauline Turner Strong, "Fathoming the Primitive: Australian Aborigines in Four Explorer's Journals, 1697-1845," *Ethnohistory* 33, no. 2 (1986): 175, https://www.jstor.org/stable/481773.

[35] Watkin Tench, quoted in Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 177.

[36] Tim Youngs, *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century: Filling the Blank Spaces*, ed. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, 1st ed., Nineteenth Century Studies, (London: Anthem Press, 2006), 203.

[37] Darrel Lewis, *A Wild History: life and death on the Victoria River frontier*, 1st ed. (Clayton, Victoria: Monash University Publishing, 2012), 38.

[38] Baines, Thomas Baines' Journal, 64.

[39] Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 333.

On 1 February 1856, Wilson gave a detailed account of an encounter with Indigenous people. He described the meeting between two cultures; a cautious and small exploratory party and an Indigenous group perhaps curious to discover the identity and intent of their encroachers and trespassers. After landing with a small party across a river and shooting down a wild cockatoo, an Indigenous group on the opposite side gave a yell of "admiration and astonishment".[40] The two parties crossed both the cultural divide and the river and met on a bank. According to Wilson, their counterparts were primarily young men except for one who stood before the others. This same man drew attention to a sore on his back. Wilson commanded his people to hold back as he believed the man came to have his "wounds healed rather than others added".[41] However, lacking the surgeon, Joseph Elsey, or any medicine, the party had to improvise a treatment for the Indigenous man in what became a theatrical, dramatic scene. Wilson referred to 'Jack', a sailor, who proposed to bandage tobacco to the sore as a remedy and chewed the tobacco and muttered gibberish.[42] Next, Jack performed "gymnastic movements", which culminated in him removing his shirt, looking at the sun and stomping on his hat.[43] Jack then applied the tobacco, which he bandaged with a strip of his torn shirt. Wilson wrote that the Indigenous 'patient' appeared "very grateful" for the assistance.[44] While this transpired, both the explorers and the Indigenous group, according to Wilson, reached an "amicable understanding".[45]

Wilson paints a vivid picture of the encounter where the explorers dramatically attempt to cure the wounded Indigenous man of his wound. Presuming the Indigenous people to be spiritual in their medicinal procedures and practices, the Europeans endeavoured to make their intentions to heal the man understandable to their 'exotic' counterparts. On the other hand, what made the Indigenous group believe that the European party could, or would, come to their aid? Regardless, Wilson does not end his ethnographic report there; he extensively details the physical features of the party he encountered. First, he noted that the group wore no clothing, only bark belts wrapped

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[40] James Wilson, "Journals, 1856-1857, kept during the North Australian Expedition," 17-19.
[41] "Journals, 1856-1857, kept during the North Australian Expedition," 18-19.
[42] "Journals, 1856-1857, kept during the North Australian Expedition," 18-19.
[43] "Journals, 1856-1857, kept during the North Australian Expedition," 18-19.
[44] Wilson, "Journals, 1856-1857, kept during the North Australian Expedition," 18-19.
[45] Wilson, "Journals, 1856-1857, kept during the North Australian Expedition," 18-19.

around them. [46] He detailed the description of two young "very slender" men who differed from the others as they had their two front teeth removed. The others are said to have had their "teeth ground down to an even surface". Wilson wrote that they had thin beards, except one, "who seemed the most intelligent", who had a Kangaroo tail tied to his. Wilson then added that "they practice the rite of circumcision" but did not ascertain whether for religious reasons.[47]

Inga Clendinnen wrote of a Baudin Australian expedition of 1801 where Europeans took it upon themselves to 'explore' a pregnant Aboriginal woman. The explorers searched for the same physical features that Wilson's party did, like signs of tooth avulsion. The Europeans controlled the encounter and monopolised the realm of ethnography and science until they were satisfied in their assessments. In contrast to the French expedition, both parties took on the part of scientists and explorers in the encounter between Wilson's party and the small group of Aboriginal men. The roles of observer and observed flipped, and the scales balanced, as described by Wilson:

> They examined us with extreme minuteness and observed that we had not all got hair of the same colour, but what seemed to astonish them the most was out superior muscular proportions which they observed with extreme admiration. The gentleman with the Kangaroo tipped beard became my inspector, he opened my shirt to see my chest and examined it…he next examined my arm from the shoulder down comparing each part with his own, he seemed a little better satisfied in finding that his hand was longer than mine and called another to witness the fact. [48]

Wilson allowed this ethnographic inspection to endure until one man laid his hand in his "to examine and compare it". While he was doing so, Wilson grasped his hand so tight to make his examiner wince and cry out. Although such an act seems callous, according to Wilson, it brought "much merriment" to the audience, and the man "looked both pleased and astonished". The Aboriginal inspector then described the sensation and experience to his comrades.[49] Indeed, the explorer's gaze is not a tool of European monopoly and can transcend the assumed roles of coloniser/colonised, explorer/explored, and ethnographer.

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[46] "Journals, 1856-1857, kept during the North Australian Expedition," 27.
[47] "Journals, 1856-1857, kept during the North Australian Expedition," 27.
[48] "Journals, 1856-1857, kept during the North Australian Expedition," 27.
[49] "Journals, 1856-1857, kept during the North Australian Expedition," 27.

Therefore, the concept of othering is challenged by the mutual inquisition of two cultures attempting to understand and interpret one another, where verbal communication was problematic and unreliable. The reality is that two groups of males acted as vanguards of their civilisations as they sought to understand one another at first contact across a cultural divide. Resultingly, it can be ascertained that both parties accrued a wealth of knowledge about the other. The Europeans? Aside from the ethnographical details, perhaps they thought Indigenous peoples as inquisitive as them? That they were not 'brutal savages' and stemmed from complex, sophisticated cultures. The Aboriginals—what did they conclude of their trespassers? That they were non-violent? That they were simple visitors? That they brought with them miracle cures for their ailments or ridiculous rites? Did they suppose them the harbingers of their dispossession? Regardless, Wilson summarised his observations on Indigenous Australians and informed the Royal Geographical Society that:

> [The] Natives are not numerous and are clearly of the same race as those in the South. Some break out their two upper front teeth, and some circumcise. They have no huts but live under screens of boughs. The natives carry no other arms than spears; one kind is short like an arrow, for killing birds, another is long and pointed with stone, a third is barbed for catching fish.[50]

Baines' relationship with the Indigenous people he encountered differed significantly from his colleague. Wilson wrote of encounters that were of a mostly peaceful manner. However, for Baines, his first act as leader of the camp in Gregory's absence was to have a fence erected so that they could "defend it without much danger" to themselves.[51] Additionally, the first encounter that he writes about with Indigenous Australians on the mainland was hostile. It involved explorers routing six who stood in "skirmishing order".[52] Nevertheless, 'hostile' acts and danger of attacks did not detract him from his ethnological and anthropological observations. Baines noted that most Aboriginal people he encountered had scars which, after being pulled open as they healed, "allowed the new flesh to rise and form a prominence as thick as a man's finger".[53] He detailed the sites of

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[50] Wilson, "Notes," 212.
[51] Baines, Thomas Baines' Journal, 21.
[52] Baines, "Additional Notes on the North Australian Expedition under Mr. A. C. Gregory," 6.
[53] Baines, "Additional Notes on the North Australian Expedition under Mr. A. C. Gregory," 4.

Figure 4: Thomas Baines. *Native paintings on sandstone cliffs on the S.E branch of the Victoria. Monday April 14 1856. The fish—and serpents though sketched into the same picture were on rocks nearly 1/4 mile from each other*, watercolour on paper, 1856. Kerry Stokes Collection.

their camps along the Victoria River.[54] He wrote cautiously of the intent of the Indigenous people. When bushfires were a frequent occurrence, Baines stressed that the expedition party was surrounded by "savages bent on our destruction".[55] However, he "wished it possible" to make it known that the party's object was but to "defend themselves".[56] It is justifiable to conclude that Baines' accounts suggest a contrast in Wilson's conclusion of 'amicable' relations. Baines' approach to ethnography and the documentation and interpretation of Indigenous Australians will be examined more thoroughly in Chapter Three with the interrogation of his artworks.

Although written wholly from a European perspective, the expedition's extensive records provide a rich insight into the contextual Aboriginal societies.[57] Some of this insight involved the observation and recording of the cultural practice of Aboriginal rock art. For

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[54] Baines, Thomas Baines' Journal, 50.
[55] Baines, Thomas Baines' Journal, 68.
[56] Baines, Thomas Baines' Journal, 68.
[57] Lewis, "'Invaders of a peaceful country'," 29.

example, on 14 April 1856, while exploring the southeast of the Victoria River, Gregory observed:

> several native paintings on the rocks. They consisted of rude outlines of men, fish and snakes, some in red ochre and others in white clay. Mr Baines sketched some of the most remarkable.[58]

Baines, also present, wrote:

> There were…several paintings in red, white, black, and yellow, on the rocks, some of them representing a snake with two horns and two fore-legs.[59]

Baines interpreted Indigenous Australian art and attempted to reflect it on the page. However, he noted in the painting's title that the two subjects—the fish and the serpent—were on "rocks nearly 1/4 mile from each other". To what extent could Baines have noted the link between the snake and the fish in Aboriginal culture, or did he cluster objects of interest to simply fill the frame of the paper? Likely, as they were depictions of art separated by distance, he saved resources by framing them together. Research into Aboriginal rock art in Australia's north has found that "painted fish are associated with types of waterways", like the Victoria River.[60] The same researchers found that in "the distribution of fish paintings by geographic zone", there is a "preference for sandstone hillsides", which is where Baines encountered such art.[61] However, paintings of snakes were less common than of fish, being present in just more than 20% of sites.[62] Unfortunately, no other mentions are made of Aboriginal rock art by those on the expedition, and so we have only Baines' representation as our source.

New Knowledge in the Records of First Contact

Gregory's team approached the venture intending to obtain new knowledge, and there is a consistency in their recorded observations and interpretations. Whether consciously or

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[58] Gregory, *Journal*, 70.

[59] Baines, "Additional Notes on the North Australian Expedition under Mr. A. C. Gregory," 7.

[60] Daryl Wesley, Tristen Jones, and Rose Whitau, *The Archaeology of Rock Art in Western Arnhem Land, Australia*, ed. David Bruno, vol. 47, Terra Australis, (Canberra: ANU Press, 2017). https://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n3991/html/ch02.xhtml?referer=&page=7#.

[61] Wesley, Jones, and Whitau, *The Archaeology of Rock Art*, 47.

[62] Wesley, Jones, and Whitau, *The Archaeology of Rock Art*, 47.

subconsciously, their evidence challenged the fictional narratives of exploration. Consistency in the explorers' reports cast legitimacy to their observations and claims, which meant the Society and other institutions of empire trusted the accuracy of their findings. I created a table to chart close chronology and cross-reference consistency in the reports. An extract of that data, in Table 3, demonstrates the comments made by the explorers regarding tooth avulsion in Aboriginal Australians:

Table 3. Journal references to tooth avulsion observed in Aboriginal Australians.

Date	Author	Extract	Positive/Negative Encounter
3 Feb 1856	James Wilson	they differed in having two of their front teeth knocked out. The others seem to have their teeth ground down to an even surface. They may be considered about the middle stature but are so very slender that they appear taller when at a little distance.[63] The natives are not numerous and are clearly the same races as those in the South. Some break out their two upper front teeth, and some circumcise.[64]	Positive—No hostilities and a healthy encounter between the two groups ensued
29 Feb 1856	Thomas Baines	An athletic savage…seemed to be a well made though not gigantic man, perfectly naked and without paint. His hair was thick and curly.[65] One of the oldest seemed to have lost a front tooth, but as none of the others had, it is probable this was the result of an accident rather than the custom like that prevalent in the south.[66]	Positive—No hostilities
2 Mar 1856	Joseph Elsey	Two upper front teeth knocked out and wore a tassel in front fastened around the loins…they were also freely but irregularly marked with scars across the breast and shoulder joint.[67]	Negative—an Aboriginal group had crossed the 'demarcation' line of the Depot Camp and caused expedition members to push them back.

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[63] "Journals, 1856-1857, kept during the North Australian Expedition," 19.
[64] Wilson, "Notes."
[65] Baines, Thomas Baines' Journal, 33-34.
[66] Baines, Thomas Baines' Journal, 402, 03.
[67] Lewis, "'Invaders of a peaceful country'," 36.

| 4-5 Sept 1856 | Augustus Gregory | In the evening, nine blacks came towards us and appeared incline to hostilities but after a short interview, retired up the river. These blacks were not circumcised, and their teeth were perfect; they had no ornaments nor clothing of any kind, and only slightly seared on the back and chest….a person unacquainted with their treacherous character might have thought them friendly.[68] | Positive—No hostilities |
| | | We attempted to converse with them, and they appeared to recognise some few words of dialect if the Victoria River…They were circumcised, and their front teeth were entire.[69] | |

The journals demonstrate that the explorers were actively engaged in recording ethnographic knowledge. The approach by all four explorers to provide data on Indigenous people's teeth legitimised the reliability of their observations and illustrated the scientific aspect of the expedition.[70] This was a process that Pauline Strong referred to as "fathoming the primitive"—the European attempt to discover and understand Indigenous physiognomy.[71] Baines, Wilson and Elsey note that the practice of tooth avulsion in the Victoria River region was also a cultural rite that was common elsewhere on the continent and south of the river. Although Gregory states that the Indigenous peoples he encountered had 'perfect' teeth, his very mention suggests he was aware of such an aspect in Aboriginal culture and actively sought evidence for it. Gregory had a similar encounter, in which recognised the "dialect of the Victoria River", and recorded that its people were "circumcised, and their front teeth were entire".[72] An archaeological study in the Northern Territory later revealed that the removal of teeth was primarily performed on Aboriginal men and possibly as a rite of passage into adulthood.[73] Contrastingly, Darrell Lewis argues that, in the Victoria River region, none of the rituals that transitioned boys to men included

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[68] Gregory, *Journal*, 102.

[69] Gregory, *Journal*, 84.

[70] Victoria Reyes, "Three Models of Transparency in Ethnographic Research: Naming Places, Naming People, and Sharing Data," *Ethnography* 19, no. 2 (2017): 205.

[71] Strong, "Fathoming the Primitive: Australian Aborigines in Four Explorer's Journals, 1697-1845," 175.

[72] Gregory, *Journal*, 84.

[73] Alastair H. Campbell, "Tooth Avulsion in Victorian Aboriginal Skulls," *Archaeology in Oceania* 16, no. 2 (July 1981): 117, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40386552.

tooth avulsion.[74] However, given the number of expedition members who identified the absence of teeth in some Aboriginal men, it can be ascertained that, historically, some Victoria River cultures did indeed practise such a tradition.[75] When Wilson identified the tooth avulsion of two men amid a group of six, he estimated that they were "very young men that belonged to another tribe up the River".[76] Additionally, Baines later referenced such a practice on his return journey to Sydney. He landed at South Goulburn Island and encountered three Indigenous people. Baines observed that "one of the oldest seemed to have lost a front tooth, but as none of the others had, it is probable that this was the result of an accident rather than of any custom like that prevalent in the south [north Australia]".[77]

The professional approach the explorers had towards reporting on their observations in the field could perhaps be a by-product of Gregory's professionalism, personality and leadership. Baines himself credited Gregory with being "well-adapted to conciliate the aborigines".[78] Russell Braddon acknowledged Gregory's 'native policy' and concluded:

> It being fashionable nowadays to accept that the attitude of all white
> men towards all blacks was, at best, callous and, at worst, genocidal, it
> must be admitted that Gregory's group behaved very decently.[79]

Indeed, Gregory consistently sought to describe and record all that he encountered, exemplary of his scientific approach to the expedition. On observing several stone huts, Gregory supposed that they were too small to enter as they were, in his observations, only three feet high.[80] The huts had rooves of wood and grass, and some of their entrances had been closed off with stones. [81] Gregory understood that "the custom of carrying the bones of their deceased relatives prevails in other parts of Australia" and supposed it possible that

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[74] Lewis, "'Invaders of a peaceful country'," 34.

[75] R.H Mathews, "Culture in Translation: the Anthroplogical Legacy of R. H. Mathews," ed. Martin Thomas (Canberra: ANU Press, 2007), 52-53.

[76] "Journals, 1856-1857, kept during the North Australian Expedition," 27.

[77] Baines, Thomas Baines' Journal, 402.

[78] Alan Powell, *Far Country*, 1st ed. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1992), 66. Extracts from a Letter from John Kent, Esq., F.R.G.S., to Dr. Shaw, dated Sydney, Aug. 12, 1855, giving information respectin the North Australia Expedition, in "Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London," 10-11.

[79] Braddon, *Thomas Baines and the North Australia Expedition*, 71.

[80] Gregory, *Journal*, 30.

[81] Gregory, *Journal*, 30.

Figure 5: Thomas Baines. *Native buildings, use unknown but supposed to be connected with some superstitious practice for the recovery of health, Saturday March 8th, South of Depot Creek Victoria River, 1856*, pencil and watercolours on paper., 1856. Kerry Stokes Collection.

these huts were temporary tombs. [82] Comparatively, Baines, who put an image to Gregory's words, came across similar huts which were "roofed with sticks and grass" and seemed "too small even for a man to sleep in". [83]

The systematic attempt of the explorers to accurately record their observations led to unique encounters with Indigenous people, who, perhaps, did not feel their lives were in immediate danger from their trespassers. Lewis proposed that encounters and experiences were almost "always amicable". [84] Indeed, Elsey described that Indigenous people he encountered rarely carried arms and, in some meetings, were "very friendly and merry". [85] Elsey endeavoured to interpret and record their languages as intercultural relations continued to improve. [86] He wrote of a unique encounter that exemplifies the cordial

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[82] Gregory, *Journal*, 30.
[83] Baines, "Additional Notes on the North Australian Expedition under Mr. A. C. Gregory," 7.
[84] Lewis, *A Wild History: life and death on the Victoria River frontier*, 38.
[85] Lewis, "'Invaders of a peaceful country'," 38.
[86] Lewis, "'Invaders of a peaceful country'," 38.

relations between the explorers and local Indigenous people. Two "old friends, Drand and Deartijero", whom Elsey had become "very intimate" with during voyages up the river, visited the Depot Camp on 13 April 1856.[87] According to Elsey, the camp "satisfied their modest desires, frightened them with a looking glass, and astonished them with a telescope".[88] Before the two visitors left, Elsey gave them both gifts of a waistcoat and a pair of cotton drawers, which he believed were suitable garments for bush wear.[89] Naturally, the expedition was not without miscommunication, hostility and cultural misunderstandings. However, in Elsey's letter, Aboriginal people appeared as individuals for the first time in the expedition records. They had names. They were humanised. They were sharing culture. This only reinforces the suggestion that intercultural relations were—at least sometimes—cordial and that the explorers held an objective-based approach towards the expedition.

Although such descriptions are one-sided, the reports provide valuable insights into the context of Aboriginal society —people's physical appearance, culture, community, and relationships with the land's intruders.[90] Nevertheless, such ethnographic information, which was documented and relayed back to the imperial metropole and scientific institutions such as the Royal Geographical Society, influenced the outcomes of the North Australian Expedition. The British, seeking to tighten their understanding of what their explorers had perceived, regardless of the nature of their encounters with the landscape and the people who lived within it, interpreted the land through a sociopolitical lens that was *terra nullius.*

(Re)Naming Places and the Power of Maps

Cartography has been a fundamental tool of empire-building and the more comprehensive colonial project of settlement and dispossession.[91] Throughout history, political devices like maps and charts became increasingly functional in acquiring knowledge and power.[92]

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[87] Lewis, "'Invaders of a peaceful country'," 38.
[88] Lewis, "'Invaders of a peaceful country'," 38.
[89] Lewis, "'Invaders of a peaceful country'," 38.
[90] Lewis, "'Invaders of a peaceful country'," 29.
[91] Reuben Rose-Redwood et al., "Decolonising the Map: Recentering Indigenous Mappings," *Cartographica* 55, no. 3 (2020): 151, https://doi.org/10.3138/cart.53.3.intro.
[92] Probasco, "Cartography as a Tool," 426.

Scholars have described the process of mapping as a "political technology" that enables "appropriation, demarcation, naming, and partitioning of territory".[93] Not only do maps assist in the comprehension of the world, but they also reflect their creators' imperial ambitions under the guise of objectivity.[94] They are analytic tools but also objects of fiction that support and enthuse the empire project. Maps and charts represent the world in correspondence to the strategic interests of their patrons, and therefore, are powerful illuminators of empire and science.[95] While other literature seeks to "decolonise the map", this section seeks to understand the nature and impact of the map as a product of the North Australian Expedition.[96]

Gregory's extensive map of the two-year-long expedition (Figures 7 to 10) exhibits the magnitude of the venture. The map illustrates the routes taken along the Victoria River and deep into the interior of the northern region of the continent. Through Queensland and towards Brisbane, the relentless traversal eastwards exemplifies the abilities of the explorers and the skills of Gregory. Gregory's journey is highlighted in red. Ventures from other exploring parties, led by people such as Baines and Wilson, are in grey. However, Gregory's map also demonstrates the beginning process of dispossession of Indigenous Australians in northern Australia. Many Indigenous nations lived off the Victoria River region. These include the Gurindji, Bilinara, Karangpurru, Ngaliwurru, Nungali, the eastern and western Wolayi, Ngarinman, the Jaminjung, Kajerong and the Mudbura. According to Lewis, these tribes were primarily hunter-gatherers. Originally, Aboriginal placenames were frequently based upon Dreamtime stories and the mythical figures that were believed to have once roamed the lands.[97] Traditionally, places may have had multiple Aboriginal names.[98] Suddenly, Gregory's map systematically retitled Indigenous places with names such as 'Baines River', 'Elsey Creek' and 'Mount Wilson', codifying them in cartography and

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[93] Rose-Redwood et al., "Decolonising the Map," 151.

[94] Shiloh Krupar, "Map Power and Map Methodologies for Social Justice," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 16, no. 2 (2015): 91-92. L. Katherine Smith, "The Power of Maps and the Politics of Boundaries (Review)," *Early American Literature* 55, no. 2 (2020): 582, https://doi.org/10.1353/eal.2020.0045, https://muse-jhu-edu.ipacez.nd.edu.au/article/759501/.

[95] Krupar, "Map Power and Map Methodologies for Social Justice," 92. Smith, "The Power of Maps and the Politics of Boundaries (Review)," 583.

[96] Rose-Redwood et al., "Decolonising the Map," 152.

[97] Harold Koch and Luise Hercus, *Aboriginal Placenames: Naming and renaming the Australian landscape*, vol. 19, Aboriginal History Monographs, (Canberra: ANU Press, 2009), 367.

[98] Luise Hercus, Flavia Hodges, and Jane Simpson, *The Land is a Map: Placenames of Indigenous Origin in Australia* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2009), 10.

eternalising the explorers of the party.[99] The European practice of over-writing Indigenous

place names (and understandings of place) was a symbolic and also practical action by

colonial powers.

The renaming of place was both an act of (dis)possession, and a means by which the

unfamiliar was made familiar to Europeans.[100] R.D.K. Herman found that "the politics of

language, of place names, and of sovereignty are intertwined".[101] The dual naming of

Judbarra-Gregory National Park, is but one example of the return of Indigenous placenames.

The Ngarinman, Malngin, Wardaman, Ngaliwurru, and Bilinara Aboriginal people are the

traditional owners of the land it spans. The park covers 1.3 million hectares of country, and

there, Gregory's Tree remains, with the camp details of the North Australia Expedition

carved into it. The tree survives as a living monument of the expedition—and a reminder of

how place was named and renamed. Elsey National Park, however, which forms parts of the

traditional lands of the Mangarrayi and Yagman Indigenous people, remains named such. As

scholars such as Patrick McConvell have stated, the extent of recognition Aboriginal people

receive regarding traditional placenames remains to be seen.[102]

In addition to (re)naming places, Gregory's map included the locations of valuable

land and geographic regions. Particularly along rivers, he outlined the nature of the

landscape in short descriptions from "level wooded country" to "grassy country" to "sandy

hills". The surrounds of the various waterways, however, were largely uncharted by the

expedition. Nate Probasco proposed that vacant space on maps "implied that territorial

claims could be made in that area".[103] However, vacant space, concerning maps of Australia,

was mostly irrelevant. Australia had, for at least a century, been mythologically termed *terra*

nullius. Famous expeditions had concluded that the continent's interior was "totally

uninhabited", while Tobias Furneaux, commander of one of the ships in Cook's fleet,

reported that he "never found more than three or four huts in a place".[104] Accounts such as

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[99] Koch and Hercus, *Aboriginal Placenames*, 19, 367.

[100] Koch and Hercus, *Aboriginal Placenames*, 19, 190. Jan Tent and Helen Slatyer, "Naming Places on the 'Southland': European Place-Naming Practices from 1606 to 1803," *Australian Historical Studies* 40, no. 1 (2009): 5, https://doi.org/10.1080/10314610802662995.

[101] R. Douglas K. Herman, cited in Tent and Slatyer, "Naming Places on the 'Southland'," 10.

[102] Koch and Hercus, *Aboriginal Placenames*, 19, 373.

[103] Probasco, "Cartography as a Tool," 433.

[104] Banner, *Possessing the Pacific: Land, Settlers, and Indigenous People from Australia to Alaska*, 16.

these, early in Australia's history of British exploration, formed the foundational rationale behind the doctrine of *terra nullius*. Therefore, uncharted land on maps fed into that myth. However, research by Lewis estimates that, at European contact, the Victoria River region was home to 11 to 13 Aboriginal language groups and a population between 5500 and 16,500 people.[105] In comparison, F.L. Jones' study approximates that their population stood at 35,000.[106] While the numbers are in contention, the fact remains that northern Australia was home to vast populations of Indigenous communities.

The blank sections and unexplored parts of Gregory's map encouraged further exploration of the region in the subsequent decades. Later incursions into the region found that, much like the assessments of Wilson and Gregory, the landscape was well grassed and suitable for agricultural purposes.[107] Stuart's 1862 expedition from Adelaide to Van Dieman's Gulf succeeded in finding land "suitable for the growth" of settlements.[108] In an 1864 expedition, the camera replaced canvas and paintbrushes. [109] Subsequent exploration of the north intended to expand on the knowledge acquired from the North Australian Expedition findings. Indeed, Gregory's botanist Ferdinand von Mueller noted the "desire to unveil the remaining unknown portions of Australia" underpinned Britain's interests in northern Australia.[110]

The Authenticity of the Written Word: Chapter Conclusions

This chapter has examined the North Australian Expedition's primary records and assessed the extent to which they reveal an acquisition of new knowledge that dispelled European fiction. In their systematic attempts to acquire rational knowledge, the explorers actively recorded information that correlated with the observations of their colleagues. In many instances, the explorers supported and legitimised the claims of their fellows by adding their observations in written format. This illustrates the level of consistency in reportage

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[105] Lewis, "'Invaders of a peaceful country'," 23. Lewis, *A Wild History*, 4.
[106] F. L. Jones, cited in Powell, *Far Country*, 26.
[107] "North Australia," *South Australian Register* (Adelaide), 13 October 1864, https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/39132397.
[108] Steve Farram, "Some Early Connections Between Timor and North Australia," *Journal of Northern Territory History*, no. 11 (2000): 66.
[109] "North Australia."
[110] Mueller, "Short A Historical Review of the Explorations of Australia."

throughout the expedition, which highlights the professionalism of the team. Gregory's and Wilson's reports on the landscape were based on its value in terms of British settlement, and therefore was an example of acquiring new knowledge as accurate information which could be applied to the colonial project. Additionally, the ethnographic approach towards the Indigenous peoples they encountered can also be said to be based on attempts to understand and interpret. The conscious effort to interpret the culture, diversity and traditions of the other and acquire knowledge differs fundamentally from creating and extending the European fiction. Therefore, as a whole, the expedition's written records do not conspire to create a utopian image, and they do not draw Indigenous Australians in forms that are reminiscent of the ancient world that neo-classicists of a century earlier may have done. Instead, the records are an attempt by the expeditionary team to document the geography and ethnography of the region objectively—and by so doing, inquire into the prospects of extending Britain's frontier into Australia's north. In summary, the records are evidence of the systematic acquisition of knowledge by Gregory, Baines, Wilson and Elsey, whom each documented and interpreted the landscape they traversed and the people they encountered. Although fundamentally, the written word is a subjective medium, especially when influenced by sociopolitical ideals, the explorers can be said to have conducted their work with an exceptional degree of objectivity. However, the same cannot be said for the visual records, particularly Baines' oil paintings, of the North Australian Expedition.

Figure 6: Augustus Gregory's mapped route of the North Australia Expedition, 1858, published within Gregory's journal by the Royal Geographical Society. This segment illustrates the beginning of Gregory's route from the Victoria River south towards the interior.

Figure 7: Augustus Gregory's mapped route of the North Australia Expedition, 1858, published within Gregory's journal by the Royal Geographical Society. This segment illustrates the continuation of Gregory's route from the River Burderkin to Port Curtis.

70
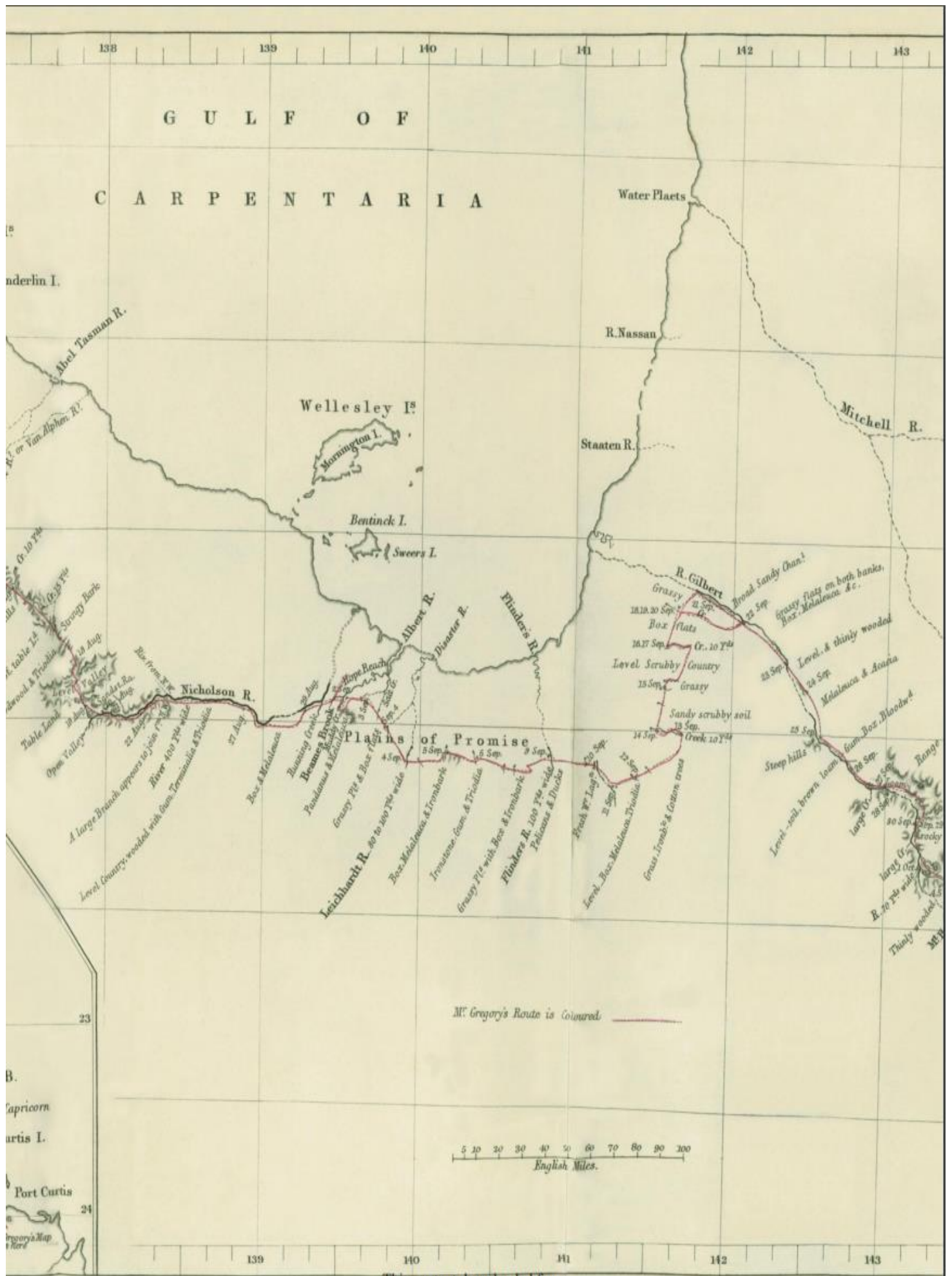
Figure 8: Augustus Gregory's mapped route of the North Australia Expedition, 1858, published within Gregory's journal by the Royal Geographical Society. This segment shows the route taken by Gregory across the north into Queensland, through the Plains of Promise and towards Brisbane.
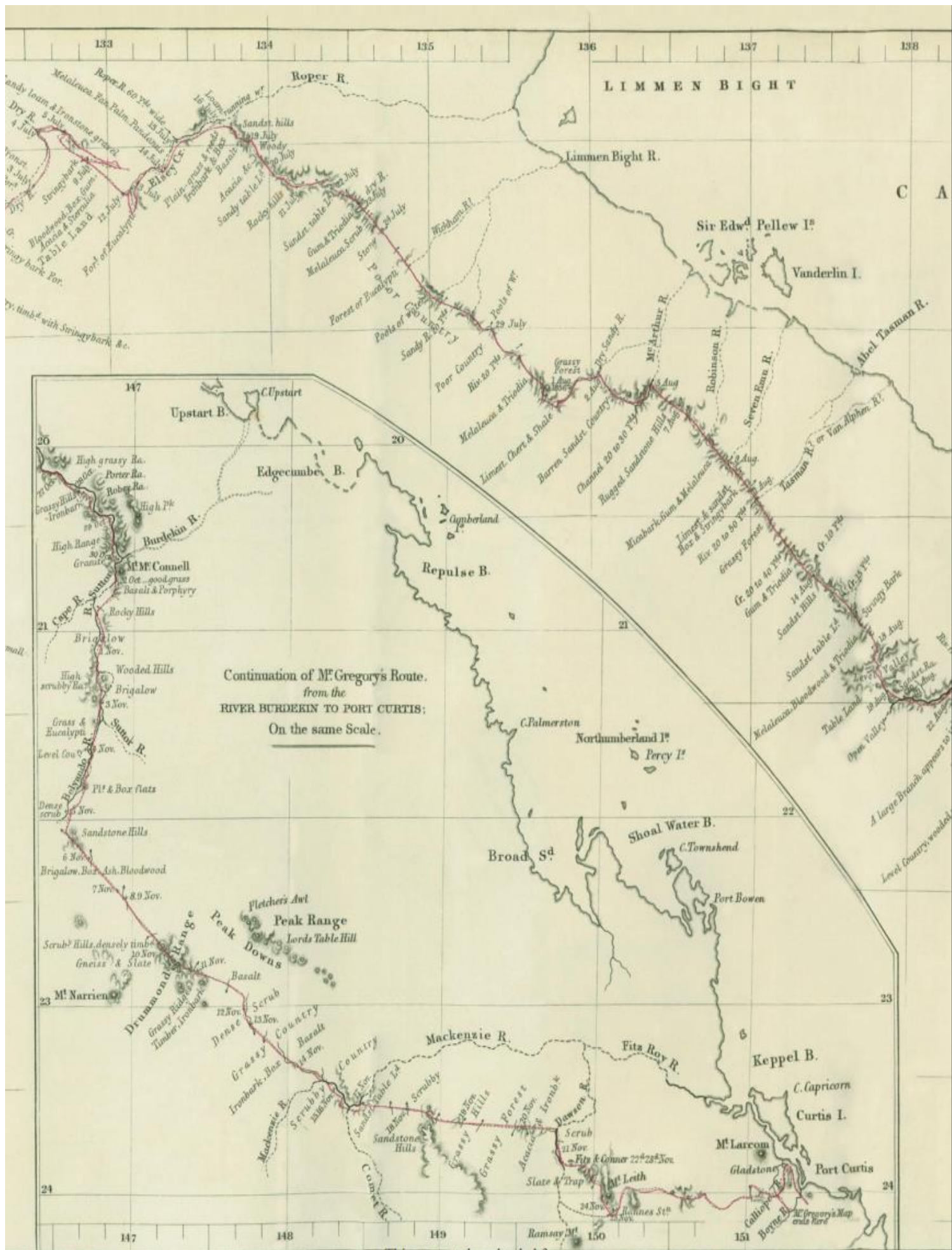
71
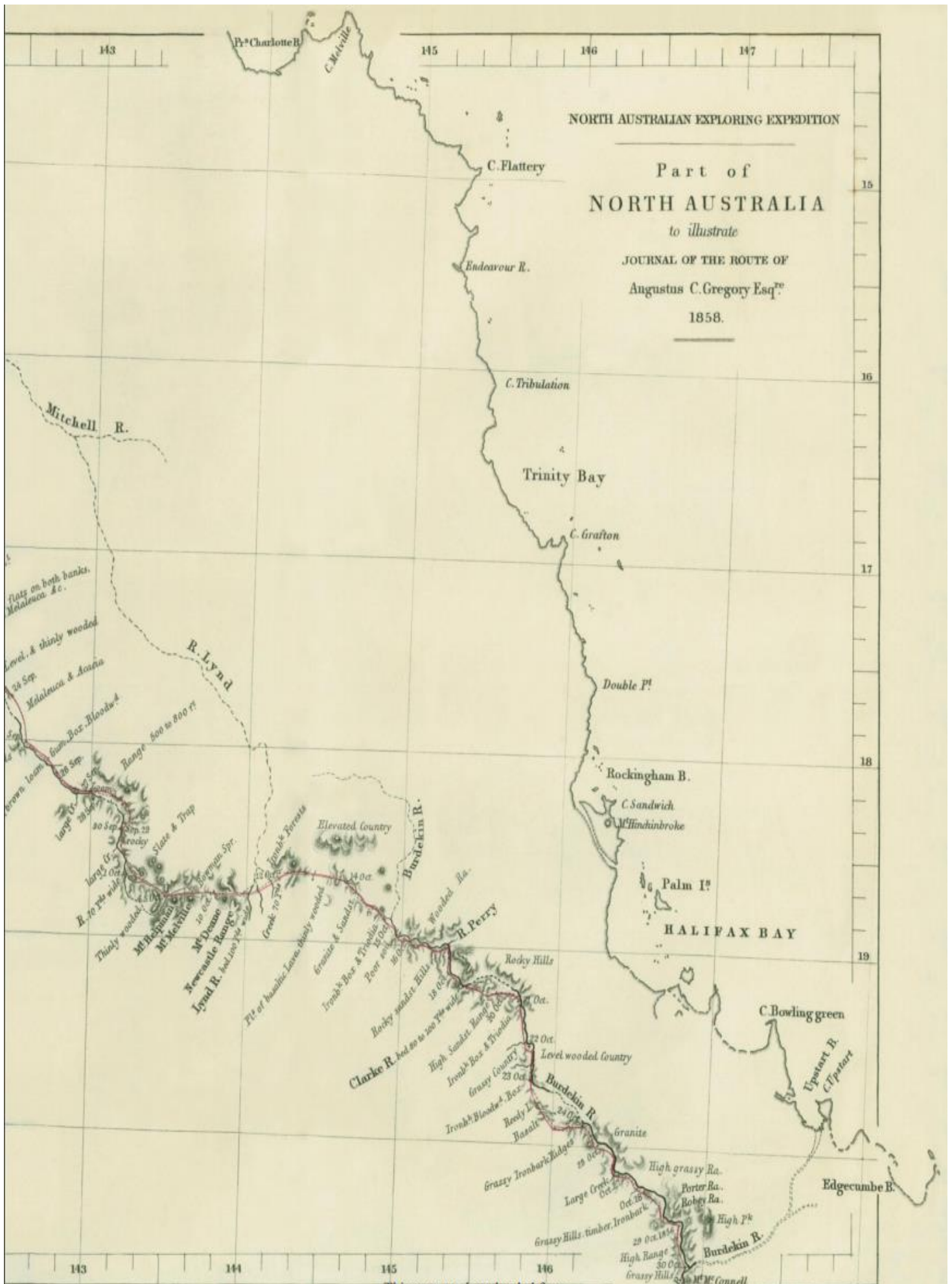
Figure 9: Augustus Gregory's mapped route of the North Australia Expedition, 1858, published within Gregory's journal by the Royal Geographical Society. This segment illustrates Gregory's journey towards Brisbane, where the expedition was completed.

Chapter Three
The Art of Fiction

History becomes visible in its visual evidence.[1] As Peter Burke notes, images are not usually created with a future historian in mind; instead, they are composed of the artist's messages, ideas, and observations.[2] People, places, events, and attitudes: fragments of time that are reflected and represented through graphic media act as insights into the past, able to be studied, and their value critiqued.[3] In this way, art becomes both the object and instrument, a creative tool to be seen, enjoyed, assessed, analysed, and interpreted.[4] Artistic images have been described as windows or mirrors which reflect the contextual world; however, as Gillian Rose asserts, "visual imagery is never innocent" as it is always contrived of subjective compositions.[5] Indeed, art is a socially produced form that is "quite unpredictable, invariably hybrid, and never really original".[6] Yet, as images often inform our understandings of human experience and social mentalities, then "any image may serve as historical evidence".[7]

Images offer the kind of evidence that may elude historical texts, becoming eyewitness sources of what cannot be put into words.[8] This is what Hayden White calls the "rest of the real".[9] Even the distortion and manipulation of history within images can be substantial evidence of social mentalities, political ideologies and identities, cultural assumptions and stereotypes.[10] After all, an image may place a viewer face-to-face with a historical viewpoint: what the artist chose to depict, how he or she organised space and

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[1] Driver, *Hidden Histories of Exploration: Researching the RGS-IBG Collections*, 49.
[2] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 34.
[3] "Seeing Images as History," History and Media: Perspectives on History (Article), The Newsmagazine of the American Historical Association, updated February 1st, 2006, accessed 23 August, 2020, https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/february-2006/seeing-images-in-history.
[4] Donald Preziosi, *In the Aftermath of Art: Ethics, Aesthetics, Politics*, Critical Voices in Art, Theory and Culture Series, (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 75.
[5] Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 32.
[6] Ryan, "Revisioning the Pacific," 17.
[7] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 16, 158.
[8] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 31.
[9] Hayden White, "Introduction: Historical Fiction, Fictional History, and Historical Reality," *Rethinking History* 9, no. 2-3 (2005): 147.
[10] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 30.

approached its form, all contribute to its meaning.[11] This chapter will examine and interrogate the visual evidence of Thomas Baines' North Australian Expedition collection. I will be using Rose's sites of modality framework for their analysis, chiefly the 'sites' of production, audiencing and the image, which were discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis.

John Berger identified the distinguishing features of oil painting, most notably, the "unique ability to render the tangibility, the texture, the lustre" and the "solidity of what it depicts". [12] Its potential to create scenes, fiction and narratives are due to its "potential for illusionism". [13] Objects possess colour, texture and temperature and space is filled with detail. [14] Baines' use of oil on small canvases allowed him to accentuate the landscape more effectively, reflecting its detail, expansiveness and its subjugation under European colonial rule. Indeed, the fashion of landscape painting was characterised by the "picturesque renderings of lands in oil paint", which provided renewed 'ways of seeing' and interpreting the world through the artist's eyes.[15] In addition to his oil collection, Baines created around 37 more minor works with pencil and/or watercolour in a portfolio. These, as we shall see, are a little different in style—not the contrived scenes of drama, but a collection of details and evidence relating to ethnography and place.

The influence of the age of imperialism is evident: Baines' oils on the North Australian Expedition positioned explorers as heroic conquerors of dramatic landscapes and other peoples.[16] They explore themes of masculinity, cultural supremacy and heroic individualism, which were commonplace in nineteenth-century British art and literature.[17] Indeed, for the nineteenth-century Western audience, "travel literature, ethnography and adventure novels were consumed indiscriminately".[18] Many people in Europe were then fascinated by images and reports of the 'exotic' South Seas, which enabled the construction

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[11] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 13.; Cosser, "Images of a Changing Frontier," 114.

[12] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 88.

[13] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 88.

[14] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 88.

[15] Margot Winer, "The Painted, Poetic Landscape: Reading Power in Nineteenth-Century Textual and Visual Representations of the Eastern Cape Frontier," *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers* 79, no. 5: 76.

[16] Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 78.

[17] Mary D. Sherriff, *Cultural Contact and the Making of European Art since the Age of Exploration*, 1st ed. (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 10.

[18] Ballard, "The Art of Encounter: Verisimilitude in the Imaginary Exploration of Interior New Guinea, 1725-1876," 223.

of myths and orientalism.[19] The art of exploration, including the dramatic scenes of encounter, captured the European imagination and was guided by Romantic themes and scientific thought. However, fantasy waned as Europeans became increasingly familiar with the region, replaced by a mindset that imposed power and dominance—perceptions of civilisation versus primitive savagery, a narrative prominently reflected in the art of exploration.[20] As such, we must understand Baines' interpretation of the northern frontier as being within this cultural and political context.

Janda Gooding, whose work analyses Baines' interaction with the landscape, considers his accuracy to be "questionable".[21] She notes his "lack of scientific training" and use of "generic characteristics".[22] Similarly, Cosser interprets Baines' work as being informed by the "rose-tinted spectacles of British Romanticism".[23] Nevertheless, Baines' attention to the otherness of the northern frontier contributes to the essential narratives of cultural supremacy, heroic individualism, and conquest that are pertinent to our understandings of nineteenth-century imperial ideologies.

The Landscape

Thomas Baines deeply engaged with the landscape through his artworks.[24] As an artistic device, Margot Winer suggests that landscape is a "cultural image" and a "pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings" which comprise the nation's identity.[25] In the age of exploration, placing plants, animals, and "primitive peoples" in their appropriate environment became an increasingly common technique of the landscape painter.[26] As the explorer and Romantic philosopher Alexander von Humboldt described it:

> The azure of the sky, the form of the clouds, the vapory mist resting in
> the distance, the luxuriant development of plants, the beauty of the
> foliage, and the outline of the mountains, are the elements which

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[19] Deborah Gare et al., "The Art of Contested Histories: In Pursuit of Venus [Infected] and the Pacific Legacy," *The Journal of Pacific History* (2020), https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/00223344.2019.1702516.
[20] Howe, *Nature, Culture, and History : The 'Knowing' of Oceania*, 15.
[21] Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 78.
[22] Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 78.
[23] Cosser, "Images of a Changing Frontier," 2.
[24] McAleer, "'The Eye of the Artist': Thomas Baines, the Eighth Cape Frontier War, and the Representation of Warfare," 313.
[25] Winer, "The Painted, Poetic Landscape," 75.; Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 42.
[26] Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 4.

> determine the total impression produced by the aspect of any particular
> region. To apprehend these characteristics, and to reproduce them
> visibly, is the province of landscape painting.[27]

Baines employed several compositions to represent the Australian landscape and to reflect and even shape its identity and future. This included thick scrub to represent Australia's fertility and uncultivated land, rich browns and sandy yellows to depict the harshness of the landscape the explorers traversed, and light and dark blues in the composition of skies to suggest a receding and expansive landscape. Bernard Smith understood these kinds of themes and approaches to the Australian landscape as the pictorial representation of a "wild, capricious thing, half-wild, half-tame, half-myth and half-reality".[28]

Baines' Australian landscapes act as an aesthetic framing device and backdrop for the expedition's dramatic scenes. Where members of the exploratory party are positioned in his images, they are inserted into scenes of drama, spectacle, inquiry and emotion.[29] The principal role of the artist-explorer was to collect information.[30] The "predominant mode of landscape painting in the nineteenth century arose from the need to discover", so Baines' reflection of the landscape the explorers traversed was a relay of geological, scientific, and political information.[31] However, Burke categorises these landscapes as "landscapes of empire" that evoke the theme of 'dispossession'.[32] The 'colonial gaze' commonly removed Indigenous figures from the landscape entirely or shaped them as passive inhabitants to reinforce the notion of *terra nullius.* Baines was different, and, as we shall see, several of his works position the explorers in sensational scenes of conflict with the Indigenous people of the Victoria River region. Additionally, Burke notes, possession of land through the 'colonial gaze' is assigned to the viewer, the artist, and the European conquerors. "With imagination", he adds, an untamed landscape can be presented as tamed and thus

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[27] Claudio Greppi, ""On the Spot": Travelling Artists and the Iconographic Inventory of the World, 1769-1859," in *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire*, ed. Felix Driver (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 42.

[28] "Writing the Life of Bernard Smith," National Library of Australia, 2016, accessed 3 February, 2021, https://www.nla.gov.au/unbound/writing-the-life-of-bernard-smith.

[29] Braddon, *Thomas Baines and the North Australia Expedition*, 57.

[30] Anderson, *The Legacies of Bernard Smith: Essays on Australian Art, History and Cultural Politics*, 3. Gare et al., "The Art of Contested Histories: In Pursuit of Venus [Infected] and the Pacific Legacy," 2.

[31] Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 5.

[32] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 45.

claimed".[33] In Baines' case, the landscape is framed as a 'neutral space' ripe for usurpation, for it bears little to no sign of agriculture, cultivation or habitation.[34]

Landscape In Oil: Adventures of the Heroic Individual

If there is one 'emblematic' oil painting from the expedition, it is that which tells of the encounter by Baines and Humphrey with a crocodile on the Horseshoe Flats, near Curiosity Peak, at Victoria River in 1856. In this scene, Baines presents himself as the heroic individual, with both revolver and rifle in hand, facing off against a ferocious crocodile.[35] The enormous beast is on the attack; its gaping jaws expose its razor-sharp teeth and its enormous gullet. To the right and safe from immediate danger, Humphrey clutches his rifle, ready to aid Baines. The explorers' longboat is beached in the distance behind Humphrey. In the background, a receding landscape conveys the immensity of the exotic environment in which they confront the beast. Baines wrote a heavily detailed piece of the theatrical event in his journal:

> On the Horseshoe Shoal between Broken Backed Hill and Curiosity Peak I saw an Alligator and telling Mr Phibbs to drop quietly down with the boats and pick me up on the other side, I waded ashore with Humphrey…As the creature began to move, I ran to cut him off from the deep water. Out of breath as we were both balls missed him, but Humphrey, who was first reloaded, hit him behind the jaw….[the crocodile] threw up his head in agony, I fired at his broad white chest and drawing my revolver, ran in and fired one shot striking him in the spine and another glancing from his skull…the monster turning as surely as his ungainly form would permit made a snap at me…his cavernous jaws coming together with a clash that caused me to congratulate myself on the agility of my retrograde movement.[36]

The flat terrain of earthy, sandy yellow-brown suggests an evenly matched contest between man and nature. The atmospheric perspective of the image, which gradually darkens towards the central background, alludes to a retreating landscape that adds to the scene's depth and breadth. The light grey smoke rising from Baines' revolver, aimed at the creatures head, indicates that victory is in grasp and acts as a snapshot of the killing blow of the beast.

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[33] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 45.; Winer, "The Painted, Poetic Landscape," 87.
[34] Cosser, "Images of a Changing Frontier," 72.
[35] Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 82.
[36] Baines, Thomas Baines' Journal, 96.

Figure 10: Thomas Baines. *Baines and Humphrey killing an Alligator on the Horse Shoe Flats, near Curiosity Peak, Victoria River*, oil on canvas, 1856. Kerry Stokes Collection.

Thus, as both the artist and the subject, narrator and actor, Baines stands between the viewer and the world he depicts, himself a part of the scene.[37] Gooding describes it as a 'jaws of death' image, which is composed of the same thematic qualities that resonate with European mythic tales from St George and the Dragon to Jonah and the Whale: good versus evil, man versus beast, with the heroic masculine displaying the necessary valour, courage and confidence to claim victory in a 'David versus Goliath' setting.[38] Man, and more specifically the white man, is challenged by the ferocity and threat of the natural world, which he attempts to win. Thus, Baines pursues his narrative of the European's cultural superiority. Whereas in other images of his series, the explorers conquer armed Aboriginal resistance, in this, they conquer nature and its environment.

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[37] Cosser, "Images of a Changing Frontier," 118.
[38] Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 83.

Evidence from Baines' journal would suggest that the painting is, at least partly, a fiction. Whereas in the painting Humphrey is but an eyewitness to the event, in Baines' journal, it is recorded that he killed the beast:

> I was at this time abreast of his hind legs and about two-thirds of his length distant when Humphrey, advancing in his turn, sent a bullet through his brain, deciding the contest in our favour and rather damaging the skin as a specimen.[39]

The artist's agency to reimagine, manipulate and fictionalise history allowed Baines to present himself as the unquestioned hero of the scene. Frederic Regard wrote that "narratives may betray secret, personal fantasies", which may help explain the image.[40] It also emphasises Gooding's valid point that explorers of this kind risked death and danger at all times.[41] The image, therefore, is both fact and fiction: it imagines the heroic nature of the artist-explorer while informing the Royal Geographical Society of the challenging environment. Baines never forgot his primary audience, which is reinforced by comprehending the intertextual relationship between the visual image and his journal. Baines wrote of the merit in vanquishing the beast, as the explorers performed an autopsy of the crocodile almost immediately to find that its:

> stomach contained the remains of a large fish, the half-digested skull of which we first thought was that of a young alligator, and two or three pounds of pebbles as large as a hens egg. We had not the time for a regular PM [Post Mortem].... The animal was eleven feet long...the aperture of the throat was so perfectly closed by a rounded cartilaginous valve that unless in the very act of swallowing no liquid could possibly enter, while its convexity seemed admirably adapted for throwing off the water while the animal was swimming with its mouth open.[42]

While conveying scenes of adventure in which the heroic individual and the masculine were emphasised, it was typical of Baines to include environmental information in his oil paintings for the Royal Geographical Society. Thus, the 'The North Australian Expedition crossing the Wickham River' (1856) shows a dramatic river crossing by men and horses that, at the same time, supplied the Society with evidence of geology, geography,

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[39] Baines, Thomas Baines' Journal, 96.
[40] Regard, *British Narratives of Exploration: Case studies of the self and Other*, 7.
[41] Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 84.
[42] Baines, Thomas Baines' Journal, 96, 99, 100.

Figure 11: Thomas Baines. *The North Australian Expedition crossing the Wickham River, a tributary of the Victoria River, Northern Territory, 1856.* Oil on canvas. 1856. The Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth.

biology and zoology. The explorers and their horses are eclipsed by the vastness of the landscape, dominated by the soaring geological formations that frame the scene. To reinforce the landscape's magnitude, Baines created a receding horizon in the centre of the image. The rock faces become gradually smaller and lighter in colour. The light blue hues of the sky and water contrast with the earthy browns and oranges of the rocks, sand and dry soils, while the rare greens of limited vegetation add life to the image. The exploratory party, within which Baines is the most discernible, dressed in white, is in the action of traversing the challenging and demanding landscape. Despite the explorers' scale in contrast to the landscape, they are seen to master it as they confidently navigate its hazardous conditions. This image and others (see Figures 13 and 14) continue to create a masculine and heroic adventure narrative.

The Gaze of the Artist-Explorer

Many of Thomas Baines' artworks reflect the ethnographic role of artist-explorers. Artists like Baines commonly interacted with, perpetuated and represented what Edward Said

would call the 'Other'. Over a prolonged period and through a complex process of representations, Said argues that the West (the Occident) constructed ideas of the Orient (the rest of the world) which facilitated its understanding, manipulation and subjugation, in what he terms 'Orientalism'.[43] As a feature of this construct, colonised peoples were characterised as a wretched, backward, and childlike other in opposition to the Occident.[44] As such, Orientalism was "a mode for defining the presumed mechanism of colonialism, designed to justify and perpetuate European dominance".[45] As Stephen Greenbalt rightly argues, as a sociopolitical construct, the Orient suggested "less about those native others than about Western practices of representation".[46] Indeed, the nineteenth-century image of the Orient was reflected in most aspects of Western life, from the leisure of reading romantic novels to museum exhibitions and to colonial administrations and tourism.[47] While this thesis is not an addition to the postcolonial debate, the concept of 'othering' is fundamental to understanding Baines as an artist-explorer of the nineteenth century.

Baines' ethnological inquisitiveness came to light in his texts and when he shaped Indigenous people of the Victoria River region as others. His journal, for example, includes a detailed account of an encounter that occurred on 29 February 1856:

> A doubtful track led us down the creek and while straining our eyes upon the ground Bowman, who was a little in advance exclaimed, "look out, here's a black fellow!" and in truth…stood an athletic savage who with his spear and woomera in hand…seemed to be a well made though not gigantic man, perfectly naked and without paint, his hair was thick and curly but I had no time to observe his features closely nor could I see if he was in any way disfigured by scars. His spear seemed to be of reed ten feet long and the throwing stick about thirty inches—in his left hand was a bundle of sticks or reeds four or five feet in length.[48]

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[43] Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and Unsaid* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2011), 4.

[44] Lindy Stiebel, "'Coeeing to the Natives': Thomas Baines' Encounters with the Other on the North Australia Expedition of 1855-57," in *Thomas Baines: Exploring Tropical Australia* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2012), 53.

[45] Linda Nochlin, *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 34.

[46] Stephen Greenbalt, cited in Ballard, "The Art of Encounter: Verisimilitude in the Imaginary Exploration of Interior New Guinea, 1725-1876."

[47] Donald Preziosi, *Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, 2nd ed., Oxford History of Art, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 409.

[48] Baines, Thomas Baines' Journal, 33.

Figure 12: *The Head of a New Zealander,* engraving after Parkinson, in Hawkesworth, *Voyages* (1773).

Figure 13: Thomas Baines. *Native of North Australia near the Main Camp, Victoria River, May 15 1856.* Pencil and watercolour on paper. The Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth.

Evidently, Baines attempted to recall as much ethnographic information as possible from his brief interaction with the lone individual. We can glean a few truths from his description. First, the explorers understood that they were trespassing on Indigenous country, which carried a risk of hostility. Indeed, Gregory even understood that reality, calling his team "invaders" of country.[49] Secondly, it reveals the ethnographic inquiry that was part of the scientific mission: Baines lists his observations and interpretations of the Aboriginal man that he and Bowman encountered, describing in detail his stature, appearance, weaponry and tools.

The explorer's choice of language implies that he was applying this new knowledge to existing understandings of Indigenous peoples. Baines noted that the man wore no paint, which can be thought to be in contrast to observations made of Australian Aboriginal people in New South Wales and earlier by Sydney Parkinson in New Zealand. Parkinson's famous engraving of a Māori man accentuates his facial tattoos and paints and dramatically emphasises the cultural dichotomy of the Occident and Orient. Ethnographic artefacts, such

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[49] Gregory, *Journal*, 98.

as clothing, jewellery and accessories, increase its effect. Baines' depictions of the Indigenous peoples he encountered near the Victoria River extend this practice in ethnography that Parkinson and other artist-explorers, including Allan Cunningham and Phillip Parker King, mastered in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[50] For example, Baines' portrait of 15 May 1856 positioned a lone Aboriginal man gazing into the distance. His casual lean against a tree stump suggests contentedness within his state of nature. His spear is his only armament, both a cultural and ethnographic accoutrement that was a practical tool for hunting and warfare.[51] Whereas Parkinson's drawings were often rich in humanising, facial details, Baines' (like King's) were less so, inevitably reducing the agency and individualism of his subjects. This is reminiscent of Bernard Smith's observations that Indigenous subjects of western art in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries "are no longer seen as individuals but as grotesque caricatures".[52]

Ethnography, Encounter and Conflict

Whereas his oil paintings contained dramatic scenes that extended European myth and fiction of the nineteenth century, Baines' portfolio of sketches, details, and small watercolours holds, instead, evidence of his acquisition and appraisal of new knowledge. It is, largely, an ethnographic exercise that thoughtfully studied the Indigenous peoples encountered throughout the expedition, which has not yet seen significant scholarly attention. One of the first images within the portfolio arose from an encounter between the *Tom Tough* crew and a small group of Aboriginal people in the Gulf of Carpentaria during the team's journey to the Victoria River. On 26 August 1855, Gregory recorded, "a canoe came alongside with seven natives who spoke a few words of English. They bartered some tortoiseshell and mother-of-pearl shells for tobacco and biscuit".[53]

> About 10am a canoe came alongside carrying 7 blacks, men and boys. It
> was about 30ft long hallowed from a single log and leaving a central

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[50] Tiffany Shellam, *Meeting the Waylo: Aboriginal Encounters in the Archipelago* (Nedlands: UWA Publishing, 2019), 140-154.

[51] Suzanne J. Nugent, "Sticks and Stones: A Functional Analysis of Aboriginal Spears from Northern Australia" (PhD thesis, The University of Queensland, 2015), 2.

[52] Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 221.

[53] Gregory, *Journal*, 7.

Figure 14: Thomas Baines, *Natives bartering with the crew of Tom Tough, August 26, 1855*, pencil and watercolour on paper, 1855. Kerry Stokes Collection.

> platform on which were their arms, food and a small fire. I procured
> from the natives, some tobacco and three fish spears.[54]

Baines visualised this encounter, in which six men are depicted in a canoe—commonly used for transport, fishing, and collecting birds' eggs from reeds—and approaching the barely visible *Tom Tough*.[55] In the centre of the image, the tallest figure of the six commands the viewer's attention, and he holds a spear and a bag of goods for trade. At the canoe's bow, an Aboriginal man reaches for a line tossed from the *Tom Tough*, which then pulls the vessels together for trade negotiations. Baines' intent in this sketch is an ethnographic study, as he did not include any landscape features, background, foreground or even a complete the sketch of the European man and the ship. The focus was solely on the representation of the Indigenous men as a collection of ethnographical information. Aside from the figure at the rear of the canoe, who wears a European-style hat, probably acquired

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[54] Birman, *Gregory of Rainworth: A Man in His Time*, 100.
[55] "Bark canoe from New South Wales," Australian Museum, 2019, accessed 31 August, 2020, https://australian.museum/learn/cultures/atsi-collection/cultural-objects/indigenous-bark-canoe-from-new-south-wales/.
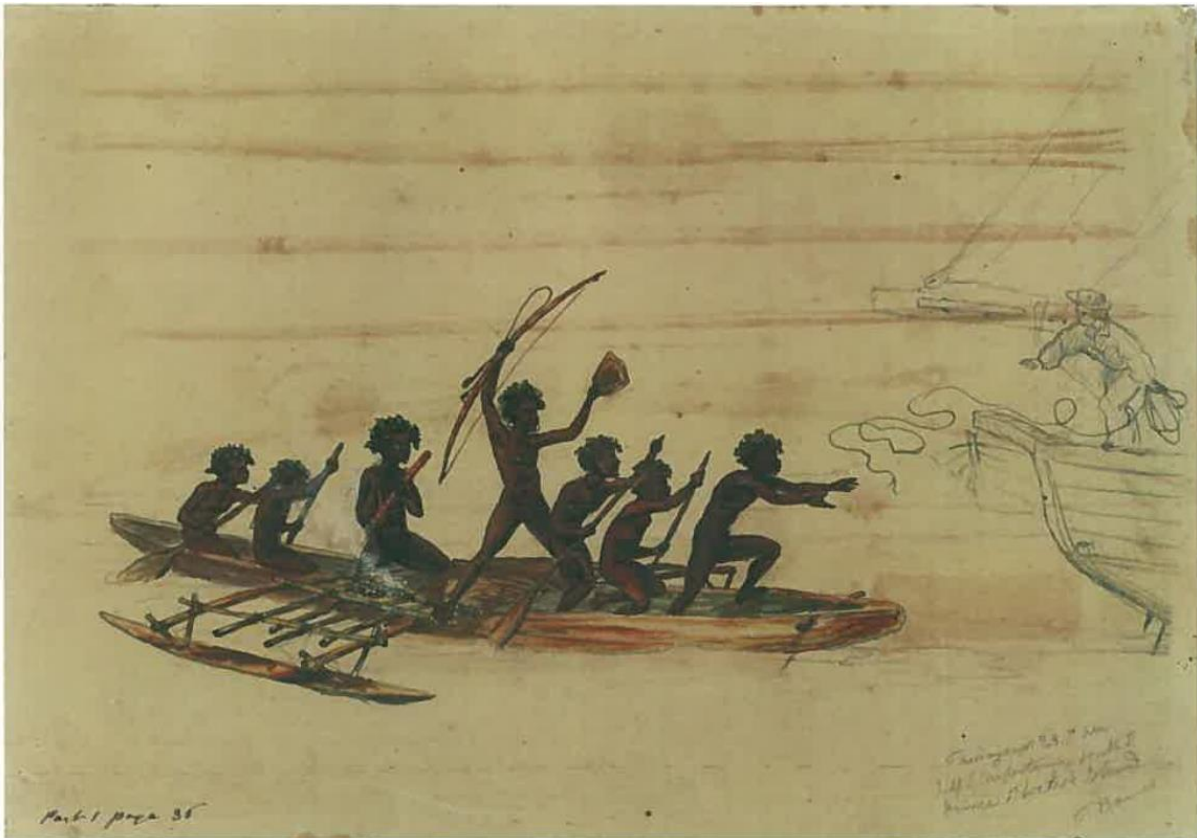
Figure 15: Thomas Baines, *Tuesday August 28th, 7am. Gulf of Carpentaria South of Princes of Wales' Island.* Pencil and watercolour on paper, 1855. Kerry Stokes Collection.

in a prior encounter, the people in this image are undifferentiated and uniform in their representation. All share similar features in frizzy, messy hair, nakedness and faceless, which emasculates and degrades their individuality, which, as shall be examined, became a common trope in Baines' representations of the other.

Two days later, another canoe approached the explorers in the *Monarch.* Gregory wrote that:

> A canoe came off from Prince of Wales Island, and bartered several articles with the schooner, and came alongside the Monarch. The Blacks spoke a few words of English and were anxious to obtain tobacco, which they smoked in a pipe of bamboo 2 feet in length and 2 inches in diameter.[56]

In an almost identical image to his first, Baines depicts seven men approaching the explorers. The central Aboriginal figure again dominates the scene and holds a bag of goods for trade. This time he grasps a bow. With a little more detail than before, the European

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[56] Gregory, *Journal*, 8.

throws a line out to the group. Again, landscape and background are irrelevant. There are subtle differences—the canoes and people are not the same—but, otherwise, these men are portrayed similarly: faceless, naked, undifferentiated. Though some of the figures face the viewer, their identities and individualism are removed by the lack of attention to their facial features. Therefore, any agency is stripped from their representation, as they become de-individualised and, in the words of Smith, "grotesque caricatures".[57]

The folio includes studies of cultural accoutrements that enriched the ethnographic inquiry of the expedition. In one, studies of faces and—importantly—body scars are made; the use of tobacco features, which Gregory noted was traded. In another, Aboriginal weapons and tools are recorded and codified in a style that is reminiscent of sixteenth and seventeenth-century encyclopaedias. The style of bow that was seen within a canoe is recorded by Baines, as well as other spears and hunting tools of the group. From these works, it is evident that Baines was collecting new knowledge for use by the expedition sponsors, the Royal Geographical Society.[58] Baines was relaying ethnographic information to the imperial metropole that told the Society, the Colonial Office and those in Whitehall that Indigenous people of northern Australia were similar to those in the south. And, if they were deemed to be similar in features and culture, then they could be similarly subjugated, dispossessed and conquered.

In 1856, Baines created his first landscape oil painting of an encounter with a 'hostile' Indigenous group: 'Baines and Bowman meeting a hostile tribe on the banks of the Baines River, 1855'. Lush greens and light blues form a verdant landscape that set the scene for a cultural collision. Smaller trees in the centre across the horizon suggest a receding landscape. The brighter foreground helps to add depth and draws attention to the Aboriginal group that resist the incursion of two explorers on horseback. The careful and strategic placement of trees screens and frame the warriors, implying an infinite line of 'hostile' Aboriginal people. Trees also frame the two Europeans on horseback, who are so small they would be easy to miss without this framing device. Numerous figures in the

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[57] Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*.

[58] Andrew S. Thompson, *Writing Imperial Histories*, Studies in Imperialism, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 100.

Figure 16 and 17: Top—Thomas Baines. *Scars on the shoulders of natives in the canoe*, pencil and watercolour on paper, 1855; Bottom—*Arms and Implements purchased from a canoe in the Gulf of Carpentaria off the South Coast of Prince of Wales Island, Tuesday August 28th 1855, 7am*, pencil and watercolour on paper, 1855. Kerry Stokes Collection.
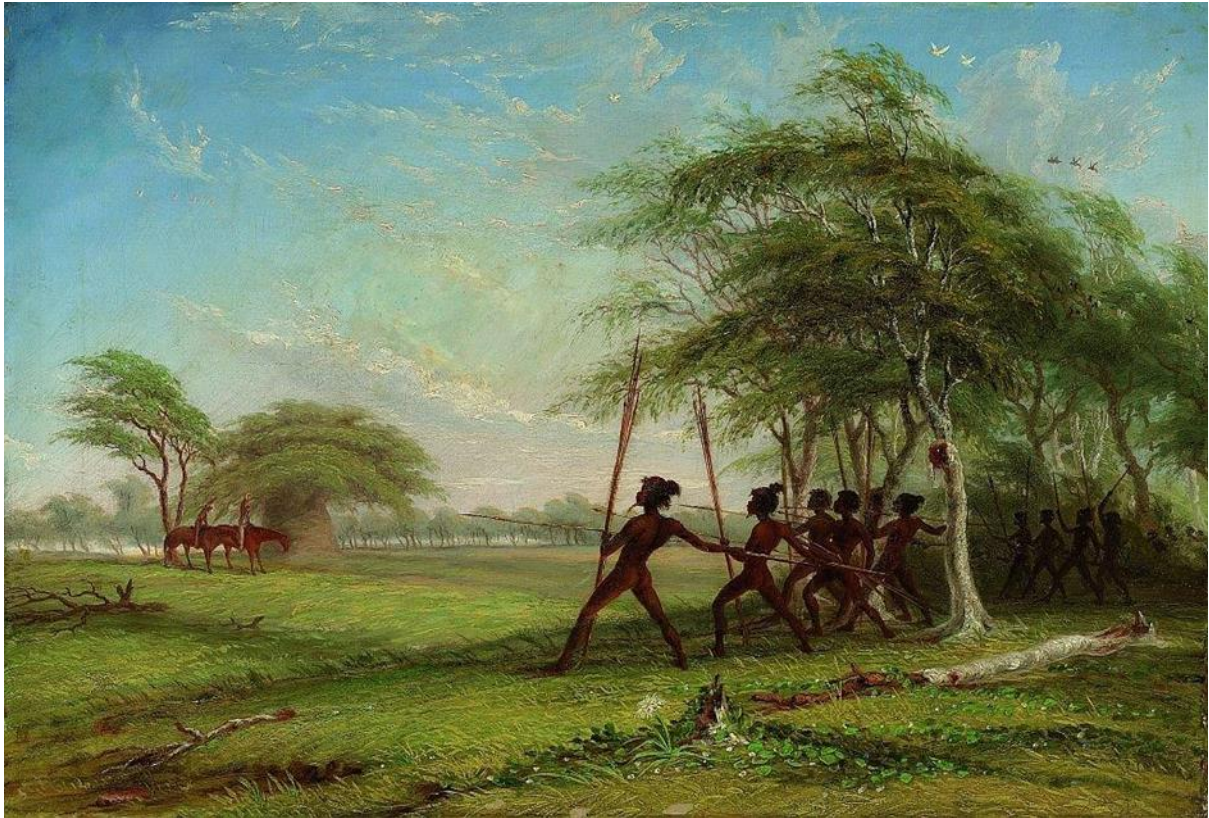
Figure 18: Thomas Baines, *Baines and Bowman meeting a hostile tribe on the banks of the Baines River,* 1855, oil on canvas, 1856. Kerry Stokes Collection.

foreground act as menacing antagonists.[59] The Indigenous figure in the front and centre of the battle line is the most defined; he is ready to throw his spear. In contrast, the two explorers—Baines and Bowman—are tiny, outnumbered and vulnerable in the open background and offer a friendly wave of conciliation and diplomacy to their adversaries, juxtaposing their unwelcoming reception.[60] Elizabeth Hartrick notes that even the explorers' horses lower their heads in timidity.[61] Baines wrote of the encounter:

> I had the good fortune to find a large stream, where we were met by a tribe of natives, six of whom stood out in skirmishing order, with their spears poised upon their throwing sticks; others stood in the rear as supports, and the rest remained in the bush close by.[62]

Baines places those six "in skirmishing order", but also places more figures in the scrub to the right of the image, exaggerating the claims of the written word. The artist's

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[59] Hartrick, "Short Thomas Baines: Empire Man and Magic Laternist." 549.
[60] Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 79.
[61] Hartrick, "Short Thomas Baines: Empire Man and Magic Laternist." 549.
[62] Baines, "Additional Notes on the North Australian Expedition under Mr. A. C. Gregory," 6.

Figure 19: Thomas Baines, *Meeting with hostile natives on a branch of the Victoria River, Thursday December 13th, 1855, near the Baines River*, pencil and watercolour on paper, 1856. Kerry Stokes Collection.

chosen viewpoint strategically faces the 'hostile tribe' away from the audience. This technique is an act of "perspectival distortion" which manipulates the viewer's perception of the Aborigines and renders them faceless, undifferentiated and emasculated.[63] A frontal view would reveal their individuality and evoke their humanity. Instead, their uniformity in appearance—nakedness, hairstyles, pointed beards, stances and lack of identity—contrasts with the named and known European explorers clothed in light shirts and trousers, carrying their wide-brimmed hats.[64] To Gooding, this contrast accentuates the 'primitive' representation of Aboriginal people, typified by their facelessness, nudity and proposed 'savagery'.[65] By contrast, Baines and Bowman are names already familiar to the viewer: they face the audience, and are named within the title of the painting. Both Baines and Gregory document the event, and the river on which this encounter occurred, in Ngarinman country, was later named 'Baines River'. Gregory wrote of the event on 14 December 1855:

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[63] Hartrick, "Short Thomas Baines: Empire Man and Magic Laternist."; Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 79.

[64] Hartrick, "Short Thomas Baines: Empire Man and Magic Laternist." 549.

[65] Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 78.

> This river, which I named the 'Baines River', has considerable pools of fresh water in its bed: it comes from the S.W. and flows into the large saltwater creek above Curiosity Peak. On one occasion Mr Baines and Bowman had halted to rest during the heat of the day when they observed some blacks creeping towards them in the high grass, but on finding that they were seen, retired, and shortly returned with augmented numbers, and approached with their spears shipped.[66]

In respect to the image's site of production, there is clear evidence of the narrative that Baines wished to convey: one of Western moral, cultural and technological superiority over Aboriginal societies. The oil painting began as a pencil sketch and watercolour in which ten Aboriginal men form a scattered line in the foreground and face the two white men on horseback. The folio painting is an act of inquiry—its composition, colour and nakedness invite its audience to study the Aboriginal people who are featured, spears drawn and in formation. [67] Comparison of the folio and oil paintings unveils a series of manipulations, changes and distortions during production. First, there are fewer Aboriginal figures present in the folio than in the painting. Baines may have added more to exaggerate both the explorers' vulnerability and their foes' aggression. Additionally, the figures within the folio are dispersed and casually arranged, whereas, in the oil painting, they are formed into a tight and aggressive battle line. The exhibited product—the oil painting—portrays a 'hostile tribe' as aggressive antagonists, spears raised and in battle 'formation', and is a precise narrative technique by Baines.

It can be no surprise that, within Baines' narrative, the moment of confrontation ended with the defeat of the Aboriginal resistance. The sequel to 'Baines and Bowman meeting a hostile tribe on the banks of the Baines River, 1855' is 'Dispersal of the hostile tribe near Baines River, N.W. Australia, 1855'. The name says it all. Baines and Bowman charge towards the 'hostile tribe', who scatter in fear. Light greens compose the lush vegetation of the 'battleground', and the tall trees which hang over the scene frame the cavalry charge of the two explorers. The explorers swiftly and simply disperse the threat of the group—not one gunshot had to be fired to seize victory.[68] The audience is encouraged, having their perspective placed behind both the Indigenous group and the scene, to look

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[66] Gregory, *Journal*, 34.
[67] Hartrick, "Short Thomas Baines: Empire Man and Magic Laternist." 548.
[68] Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 80.

Figure 20: Thomas Baines, *Dispersal of the hostile tribe near Baines River, N.W. Australia, 1855*, oil on canvas, 1856. Kerry Stokes Collection.

past the Aboriginal line and identify with the suggested protagonists in the explorers.[69] This places the viewer as an eyewitness to the scene, which Burke argues attempts to persuade or coerce the viewer into drawing particular conclusions and identifying with the victim or victor.[70] Baines wrote of the event:

> Our efforts to conciliate them were fruitless, and as in another minute they would have launched their spears, we charged them at full speed, revolver in hand. They fled immediately, and after chasing them a few hundred yards, we let them go, not thinking it necessary to fire on them.[71]

In this image, many more Aboriginal people are depicted fleeing than form the 'battle line' of the former image, increasing the impact of Baines' 'heroic' charge. Certainly, Baines' written and visual materials on this encounter denigrate the Aboriginal Australians as a group by portraying them as weak and inferior to the outnumbered white men. Indeed,

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[69] Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 80.
[70] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 179.
[71] Baines, "Additional Notes on the North Australian Expedition under Mr. A. C. Gregory," 6.

the audience is led to believe all that was required to shatter them was a simple charge on horseback. Baines thereby continues his artistic tropes with the representation of the Indigenous Australian—impersonal, homogenous, characterless, and generic; all figures are uniform in their action, poses, and physical depictions. This is to continue the narrative of the explorers' supposed cultural superiority over the other: only two explorers, lightly armed and in the open, are required to scatter a force of superior number from their landscape; a cavalry charge is an act associated with European war and conquest, and so suggests that the explorers are in the process of conquering the landscape they traverse and covet; the tribe flees from the scene without a fight, suggesting to the western audience that they will be susceptible to quick conquest and subjugation. This is the visual embodiment of a process in which Jane Lydon writes that "frontier violence became associated with white masculine heroism" and Aboriginal people were reduced "merely to primitive and emasculated stereotypes".[72]

Read as a pair, these two images on the 'hostile encounter' form a series that consists of multiple views of the same event. Burke has observed that creating a series or sequence of images is a common artistic form prevalent in propagating propaganda.[73] Moreover, Lydon argues that images which "map colonial blind spots" demonstrate the political intention to legitimise colonial interests by manipulating the audience's sympathies, in this instance, towards the white explorers.[74] Baines, therefore, records one of the first examples of frontier conflict in northern Australia, which adds to debates around the history of colonial violence.[75]

From Folio to Exhibition

We see a dramatic intensity of such propaganda when comparing Baines' folio images to the scenes within his oil paintings. Whereas his oils—the exhibited works—can be thought to extend a European fiction of the heroic explorer, the folio images appear to be a more careful act of inquiry analysis—even when they also share stories of encounter. One such

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[72] Jane Lydon, "Colonial "Blind Spots": Images of Australian Frontier Conflict," *Journal of Australian Studies* 42, no. 4 (2018): 414, https://doi.org/10.1080/14443058.2018.1526816.
[73] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 151.
[74] Lydon, "Colonial "Blind Spots": Images of Australian Frontier Conflict," 410.
[75] Lydon, "Colonial "Blind Spots": Images of Australian Frontier Conflict," 411.

Figure 21: Thomas Baines, *Mr Phibbs and Bowman engaging the blacks who attempted to burn us out, Saturday evening March 15th 1856 to the south of Depot Creek, Victoria River, North Australia*, pencil and bodycolour on paper, 1856. Kerry Stokes Collection.

example is his pencil and watercolour study of 'A Confrontation on the Victoria River, 4th June 1856'. Baines again depicts a tense sense between Indigenous people and the explorers. Baines represents the scene in which four crewmen of the *Tom Tough,* including Baines, Captain Gourlay, Dawson and Adams, went ashore to trade with a group of approximately 20 Aboriginal people. One person supposedly stole a tomahawk from the explorers' boat. In retaliation, they held another captive to ensure its return.[76] Baines recalled that "one [Aboriginal] tried to pass his hand behind me and catch the arm with which I held my pistol" while "another snatched the gun carried by Adams, but being a powerful man, wrested it from him".[77] Gourlay, who rushed to Adams in his struggle for the weapon, caused them to "run away into the surf", and the Aboriginals all 'decamped'.[78]

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[76] Lewis, "'Invaders of a peaceful country'," 41.
[77] Baines, "Additional Notes on the North Australian Expedition under Mr. A. C. Gregory," 8.
[78] Gregory, *Journal*, 77, 78.

According to Gregory, who was later informed of the confrontation by Baines, the tomahawk was later "found in the water near the spot where the boat landed".[79]

Framed by two thin and angled trees, Adams, eyeing his attacker as they wrest for control of his firearm, stands in the centre of the image. Behind Adams is Baines, dressed noticeably in red, surrounded by several featureless, unclothes and homogenous Aboriginal men. The *Tom Tough* sits in the river off to the distance, and before it, Aboriginal men surround the boat and its landing party. Baines' minimalistic approach with colour is enough to distinguish the subtle greens and browns of the landscape from the white space of the sky and water. Minimalistic colours ensure that the explorers contrast their dark-skinned, naked counterparts. Once again, the confrontation is a contest of race.

An echo of the series, two valiant and courageous Europeans stand against another 'hostile tribe' who, this time, wield fire against the explorers in an apocalyptic, hellish scene. Three Aboriginal figures are illuminated by the immense fire before them, expanding into the sky and out of the frame. A lone tree to the right of the fire accentuates its magnitude as the flames and smoke tower over it. Below the tree, numerous figures form a line along the centre and towards the peripherals of the scene, which resonates with the battleline of the series. Barely identifiable are the two Europeans to the centre-left, armed and on horseback, who confront their aggressors. The use of fiery reds, oranges and yellows perfectly frame the antagonists before it as the subjects of the burning landscape. The smoky, dark hues of black, blues, greys and earthy browns accentuate and magnify the intensity of the fire and reflect its brightness among random shadows along the foreground. The black and greys of the smoke lead up and out of the scene, suggesting that its enormous wrath could not fit on the canvas.

A month earlier, Baines' team experienced what Kelly has termed "one of the greatest misunderstandings of Australian history": firestick farming.[80] Also known as back burning, firestick farming is an Indigenous Australian practice that involves the regular and seasonal burning of vegetation to flush out game and rejuvenate the environment.[81] In his study of the expedition, Russell Braddon identifies March as a "time of plenty" for local

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[79] Gregory, *Journal*, 78.
[80] Kelly, *Hard Country Hard Men: In the Footsteps of Gregory*, 202.
[81] Henry Reynolds, *Lectures on North Queensland History* (Townsville: James Cook University, 1974), 155.

Indigenous people, who exploited the season for hunting game and collecting honey.[82]
Baines and his colleagues understandably failed to recognise this cultural practice. Instead,
they interpreted it as an attack on them. Indeed, Baines went so far as to claim that
Aboriginals sought the destruction of the party after witnessing fires from camp in mid-
March 1856.[83] However, Lewis asserts that Elsey's report, in which he claimed "since
Thursday 27th March there has been a brown fog all round the horizon", is clear evidence
that the wet season had ended and the practice of burning had begun.[84] In his journal,
Baines wrote of the event:

> Fahey called to my attention to a fire rising on the south side of the creek
> below the camp, and as it rapidly approached, we could see a number of
> blacks running with firebrands as if with the intention of encircling us
> with flame. I armed myself as Bowman and Mr Flood came in…with four
> horses and would have given chase to them but they appeared already
> to have turned away…I approached near enough to see that they had left
> the fire and that the grass was not dry enough to burn. In the evening
> Bowman and Phibbs…had seen the blacks renewing their attempts to
> carry a line of fire around us. [They] had shouted at them to desist and
> on the rattling of their spears and yelling in defiance charged and fired
> on them as they retreated to drop their brands…when so open an act of
> hostility was being committed, I think the men acted rightly in dispersing
> the enemy…Bowman thinks he wounded one as he dropped his torch.[85]

Baines created a dramatic folio watercolour of this scene, which he called 'Mr Phibbs
and Bowman engaging the blacks who attempted to burn us out, Saturday evening March
15th 1856 to the south of Depot Creek, Victoria River, North Australia'. In keeping with the
explorers' interpretations, the use of fire was an act of aggression (which cannot wholly be
dismissed as a possibility); Baines depicted the Aboriginal people in this folio work as
unjustifiably hostile. Aboriginal figures were composed in menacing activity, with their
hands and spears raised high and appearing to control the flames. Amid the chaos, two
explorers stand bravely against the onslaught, behaving with courage and civility. The scene
could almost be mistaken to depict an Indigenous rite or worship of fire, as they appear to
be encouraging or summoning the inferno. However, the presence of the explorers shifts
the themes and message of the artwork. Once again, the European explorer faces an

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[82] Braddon, *Thomas Baines and the North Australia Expedition*, 54.
[83] Baines, Thomas Baines' Journal, 64.
[84] Lewis, "'Invaders of a peaceful country'," 38.
[85] Baines, Thomas Baines' Journal, 52.

Figure 22: Thomas Baines, *A Confrontation on the Victoria River, 4th June 1856*, pencil and watercolour on paper, 1856. Kerry Stokes Collection.

overwhelming, hostile force that threatens their lives and the future of the expedition. The dark hues of the evening sky frame the protagonists against the saturated reds of flame. Such a composition conveys the message that the Europeans represent order and peace while their adversaries, framed by the fire, represent chaos, violence and death. Again, the Aboriginal figures are indiscernible; Baines, again, hides their faces by placing the audience behind the scene. Thus, Baines ensures the viewer can only interpret the Aboriginal figures within his work as he understood them—as a hostile group armed, this time, with fire.

These images provided the Royal Geographical Society with ethnographic materials which illustrated the supposed nature of the Aboriginal Australian. Even when the resistance occupied an advantage in conflicts, whether through numbers and an overwhelming force or the use of fire, they were always subdued and conquered. They were shaped by Baines to be weak, craven and dehumanised, which suggested to the Royal Geographical Society that Indigenous Australians were inferior to those of European stock. This message made the vision of further exploration, settlement and colonisation

increasingly appealing, as what resistance Aboriginals offered was consistently quashed without any casualties to the explorer.

Chapter Conclusions

"Empire distorts the identity of the other", and Baines achieved this through his homogenous representation of Aboriginal Australians, whom he consistently depicted in all his works to be unidentifiable, emasculated and dehumanised.[86] None of Baines' oil paintings represents an Aboriginal person with individualistic qualities—all shared similar, if not identical, stances, actions, body proportions and compositions. In contrast, his explorers are easily identifiable by their physical features and clothing, behaviours and accomplishments within a scene. In the denigration of the Aboriginal person, Baines lifts the explorer to the status of the 'heroic individual' with an emphasis on his moral character and heroism. [87]

Thomas Baines commenced most of his paintings and sketched many of his folio works at the Depot Camp on the Victoria River, where he spent most of his time. He commonly wrote in his journal, which he began in January 1856, about 'finishing' and 'attempting sketches'.[88] Indeed, the word 'sketch' is mentioned 64 times in his journal, with 19 references being stated at the Depot Camp.[89] Such references were made while on the voyage to Timor and the return to Sydney—at the end of the expedition. Hartrick writes that Baines reworked his scenes as oil paintings "at every opportunity" until his return voyage to England in September 1857. [90] The Depot Camp is a unique site of production—surrounded by the remote, undomesticated and tropical north Australian landscape, Baines immersed himself in the environment within which he could recreate dramatic scenes and memories of the expedition. However, as Baines was detached from many locations of such events, the authenticity and historical accuracy must be cast into doubt.

Hartrick argues that Baines' artworks of the expedition "contributed to a body of objective scientific data" that satisfied the audience of the Royal Geographical Society.

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[86] Regard, *British Narratives of Exploration: Case studies of the self and Other*, 5.
[87] Hartrick, "Short Thomas Baines: Empire Man and Magic Laternist." 544.
[88] Baines, Thomas Baines' Journal, 19, 23, 48.
[89] Baines, Thomas Baines' Journal.
[90] Hartrick, "Short Thomas Baines: Empire Man and Magic Laternist." 542.

However, as established, Baines created a subjective reinterpretation of personal and confrontational events and encounters.[91] Gooding observes that Baines' visual materials "clearly parallel the scientific concerns of the expedition", which would suggest that he intentionally directed the content and selection of his works to serve the interests of an institution based on the acquisition of scientific and empirical knowledge and data.[92] This subjectivity, all within an era of empire, imperialistic ideologies and the exploitation of geographical knowledge, cast Baines' and his fellow nineteenth-century exploratory artists' objectivity into doubt. An 'authentic' artist, as Linda Nochlin insists, would conceal his art by hiding the evidence of their touch and insisting on secondary sources to authenticate their work.[93] Baines often finds the falsity of his narrative exposed by the written accounts of his fellow explorers. This is evident, most notably, concerning the image of the crocodile and the 'hostile' line of Aboriginal men.

Baines' thematic representations of the heroic individual, suggestions of cultural superiority, masculinity and the European conquest of environments are not innocent in their intended conclusions, yet they are significant sources of historical evidence. Burke adds to this debate by acknowledging that painters may well be understood as historians in their own right, as they add to the interpretation of the past.[94] Baines' works serve as evidence of the imperial zeitgeist of the nineteenth century.[95]

Therefore, as both artist-explorer, Baines created complex visual art that served as ethnological and geological information to its audience and as historical evidence of the attitudes and values surrounding exploration and science, all while composed of tropes and narratives of nineteenth-century imperial ideologies. It is justifiable to conclude that, in some forms—and particularly in those oil paintings intended for exhibition—Baines extended a European fiction of the Australian frontier. His fiction places the European explorer at the forefront of the audience's gaze, surrounded by themes of masculinity, adventure, imperialism, conquest and cultural supremacy. He removed the historical interest in exotic Indigenous peoples who were once shaped to be "men like Greek Gods" by

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[91] Hartrick, "Short Thomas Baines: Empire Man and Magic Laternist." 542.
[92] Gooding, "Thomas Baines: The Heroic Figure in the Landscape," 81.
[93] Nochlin, *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society*, 38.
[94] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 158.
[95] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 16, 158.

further distorting their agency, shifting them to the peripherals of the image and placing them as the grotesque caricatures that intrude the scene. [96]

Yet in most folio works, and within his journal, he participated in gathering new knowledge. Smith proposed that artist-explorers "brought an aesthetic vision with them and applied it, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, to what they saw before them".[97] Nonetheless, Baines' folio sketches and watercolours can be considered acts of ethnographic inquiry, therefore serving the purpose of the Royal Geographical Society's expedition.

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[96] Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 1.
[97] Ryan, "Revisioning the Pacific," 19.

Conclusion
The Last Frontier

Britain's empire machinery drew upon the findings of the North Australian Expedition in its plans to harness the region's natural resources. In August 1858 Lord Stanley, the then Colonial Secretary, announced to parliament that the Royal Geographical Society was in possession of reports from the expedition.[1] These, we know, estimated that the Victoria River region was "an extent of country suited for squatting purposes".[2] With the intent to expand on the findings, Gregory's expedition was followed by other ventures predicated on linking Australia's north and south.[3] The first mineral discovery was gold, found in modest quantities in the 1860s. It was not until 1872 that a larger discovery of gold was made at Pine Creek, which led to an influx of settlers from South Australia and a spike in Chinese immigration.[4] "A very rich gold find" near Grove Hill was reported in 1888, the same year up to 2500 tonnes of ore was also found.[5] Other minerals discovered were copper in 1872, mica and wolfram in 1892, and tin in 1898.[6]

In 1863, the *Northern Territory Act* was passed, which annexed the region to South Australia.[7] *The North Australian* reported

> A despatch was received from the Secretary of State for the colonies, announcing that her Majesty's Government had resolved to place the lately explored territory under the governments of South Australia and Queensland until such time as it should be considered expedient to erect the territory under new colonies.[8]

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[1] House of Commons, *Question: Volume 149: debated on Friday 23 April 1858*, UK Parliament (1858).
[2] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 27.
[3] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 28.
[4] National Archives of Australia, Commonwealth Government Records about the Northern Territory, 10 (National Archives of Australia, 2011).
[5] "The Northern Territory," *South Australian Register* (Adelaide), August 6 1888, https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/46878858.
[6] Australia, Short Commonwealth Government Records about the Northern Territory, 11.
[7] Australia, Short Commonwealth Government Records about the Northern Territory, 6.
[8] "Annexation of North Australia," *The North Australian* (Ipswich), Tuesday 9th December 1862, https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/77292676.

Once untouched by Western civilisation, the Victoria River region became prominent cattle country that laid the economic foundations for further British settlement of the north.[9] Over 200,000 cattle and 10,000 horses were introduced within just a few years of its annexation by South Australia.[10] The introduction of such vast numbers of sheep and cattle placed both sides of the frontier into a "direct competition for land and water".[11] Western expansion had a profound impact on the region's Indigenous people, who were increasingly precluded from traditional land management, access to food and sources of water.[12] Tony Roberts termed the Northern Territory as Australia's 'last frontier' and estimated that at least 3000 Aboriginal people died in the prolonged conflict with the European settlers.[13] In the words of Larissa Behrendt, "in the end, the squatters had the law and firepower on their side".[14]

Resolution of the Research Problem

At the beginning of this thesis, I set out to resolve a simple research problem, which was to test whether the explorers of the North Australian Expedition extended the 'European fiction' of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or if they challenged that fiction by the acquisition of new knowledge. In the end, they did both.

The expedition created both written and visual records, which were mixed in their objectivity. The journals of Gregory, Baines, Elsey and Wilson provide relatively accurate firsthand accounts of the expedition and its findings. They tend to correlate in their observations and interpretations of the landscape and its inhabitants, and formulate a coherent and fluent narrative of the expedition. The reports of Gregory and Wilson, in particular, conspire to create an evaluation of the landscape, while all four authors provide numerous detailed ethnographic accounts. In addition to Gregory's charts, these journals provided by the Royal Geographical Society and the British government with enough new knowledge to shape the endeavour of a northern frontier.

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[9] Carruthers and Stiebel, *Thomas Baines*, 26.
[10] Reynolds, *Forgotten War*, 124.
[11] Reynolds, *Lectures on North Queensland History*, 155.
[12] Reynolds, *Forgotten War*, 125.
[13] Roberts, *Frontier Justice: A History of the Gulf Country to 1900*, 7.; Reynolds, *Forgotten War*, 126.
[14] Larissa Behrendt, *Indegenous Australia for Dummies* (Queensland: Wiley Publishing Australia, 2012).

Conclusion

On the other hand, Baines' visual records were mixed in their objectivity. While his folio works contributed to that new knowledge, his oil paintings—designed for exhibition and popular consumption—extended the exercise of myth-making and heroic individualism in the age of empire.

The European Fiction

The first aim of this thesis was to unpack the ideas first proposed by Bernard Smith: that the established European fiction of the Pacific endured a challenge from the objectivity inherent in scientific voyages of knowledge acquisition in the nineteenth century. Chapter One interrogated the nature of European explorational art of the eighteenth century and the contextual attitudes and approaches towards the Pacific. It found that Smith's ideas, although applied in an eighteenth-century context, remain pertinent to nineteenth-century European exploration. The European fiction shaped Pacific peoples as reminiscent of Europeans of antiquity and like "Greek Gods" of a "tropical Acadia".[15] This is evident in the writings of European explorers who ventured to the Pacific and relayed ethnographic information through art and records. Based on the embellishments and narratives of empire, exploration and the exotic, the spread of literature reinforced and legitimised the European fiction. However, towards the nineteenth century, the evolution and institutionalisation of exploration and the sciences encouraged a transformation in its practice. Professional artists were assigned to exploration vessels, tasked with relaying accurate information to their sponsors.[16]

These powerful sponsors were institutions of science and empire, knowledge and power. Institutions like the Royal Geographical Society monopolised explorations and regulated and formalised its practice. Combined with maps, charts, records, logs and journals, art visualised exploration and painted it as an eloquent drama of theatrical proportions.[17] Nevertheless, subconsciously or consciously, artists increasingly held the authors of exploration to account, and vice versa. However, explorers were not always faithful to reformed practice, as Stirling's embellished reports of the Swan River and its

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[15] Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 1.
[16] Gare et al., "The Art of Contested Histories: In Pursuit of Venus [Infected] and the Pacific Legacy," 5.
[17] Jones, "The Theatre of Contact: Aborigines and Exploring Expeditions," 90-91.

surrounds exemplify. After all, as John Gascoigne argues, science was trumped by the expense of service to empire.[18]

The Written Records as Knowledge Acquisition

The second aim of this thesis was to examine and interrogate the written records of the North Australian Expedition. The journals of Gregory, Baines, Elsey and Wilson and the expedition map were analysed in Chapter Two, as well as the minutes and articles arising from the venture. This uncovered the degree to which the explorers endeavoured to acquire as much accurate geographic and ethnographic information as possible. These records do not conspire to create a fiction reminiscent of a neoclassical utopian image; instead, they intend to interpret and understand what they encountered in northern Australia accurately. Geographically, Gregory and his geologist, Wilson, interpreted and relayed information of the landscape they traversed. Although Gregory wrote more critically of the landscape, it was his duty to record intricate details that could influence or hinder future British settlement. Wilson, who frequently worked independently of Gregory, wrote positively of the fertile land that surrounded the waterways of the Victoria River.

Ethnographically, the explorers provided an abundance of material concerning the interpretation of northern Australia's Indigenous people. They wrote of their physical features, detailed encounters and tried to interpret their sociocultural rites. My systematic audit of the expedition's journals demonstrated that the explorers were consistent in their interpretations and codification of information, which suggests they are a reliable source. Indeed, it is justifiable to claim that the written records of the expedition are examples of the scientific objective to acquire information, and therefore challenge the established fiction of exoticism.

Thomas Baines' Art as Fiction

The final aim of this thesis was to interrogate Baines' visual materials (in contrast to the expedition's written records) and assess the extent to which they contested a European fiction of the northern frontier. Baines' folio of watercolours, sketches and imagery, and his extensive oil paintings were interpreted, guided by the frameworks and concepts of Peter

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[18] John Gascoigne, cited in West-Sooby, *Discovery and Empire: the French in the South Seas*.

Burke and Gillian Rose. They reveal a systematic attempt to glorify the explorers, undermine Indigenous agency, and create theatre on canvas where nineteenth-century tropes and ideals were centre stage. Indeed, as an artist-explorer, Baines' was a subjective interpreter of an alien landscape, despite his instructions to relay geological and ethnographic data to his sponsors in the Royal Geographical Society. Baines created vast landscapes which represented northern Australia's expansiveness and acted as evidence of *terra nullius.* Its animals were pictured as exotic and alien, like the ferocious crocodile, while its Indigenous people were typically constructed to be aggressive but cowardly and craven. These, like the manufactured archetype of the 'romantic savage' Smith identified, are examples of a European fiction in northern Australia.

However, Baines' artworks did also acquire important new information. His watercolours recorded the typical physicalities of the Indigenous people he encountered, though they were extraordinarily stereotyped and repetitive throughout his works. Nevertheless, he recorded their tools, weaponry, clothing, and demeanour, which acted as ethnographic information that contrasted European explorers' culture. Similarly, his landscapes relayed geological and geographical information, from sprawling grasslands to magnificent rockfaces. These images captured the attention and imagination of the Royal Geographical Society and Colonial Office, who saw these images as evidence of northern Australia's potential for future explorations and settlement.

Significance of this Study

This thesis has added to knowledge concerning the North Australia Expedition and its significant impact on Australian history. The expedition remains a venture that is overlooked in colonial history, yet its impact was far-reaching. Its findings were laid on the table of the Royal Geographical Society and debated on by powerful and influential characters of the nineteenth-century empire. The frontier was extended into the north, and the Northern Territory was born out of supplementary expeditions that looked to extend on the success of Gregory's journey. This thesis has also added to the discussion surrounding the European approach to frontiers and the Pacific theatre of exploration. Smith's concept of the European fiction has been proved to be an applicable idea to the art and literature of the mid-nineteenth century.

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