Mapping Australia Felix: Maps, Myths and Mitchell

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Abstract

This investigation into the oeuvre of Thomas Mitchell, the Surveyor-General of New South Wales from 1827 to 1855, intends to reveal the remarkable opus of work he produced and enquire how he achieved it. The feat that won him fame was his discovery of the rich pasturelands and picturesque landscapes in an area that is now western Victoria, which he called *Australia Felix*. He matched this enthusiastic name with a finely illustrated and densely detailed two-volume journal of his three exploratory journeys - ostensibly to find where the River Darling met the Murray River. Mitchell learnt his trade as a surveyor and mapmaker in Wellington's army fighting the French in Spain and Portugal, that theatre of the Napoleonic Wars termed the Peninsular War.

The objective of this thesis is twofold. The first is the exposition of a rare and remarkable atlas of battlefield plans he was commissioned to survey at the conclusion of the war, a task which took him five years in the field, but was only completed and published 25 years later. There are only two known copies of this immense tome in Australian public libraries. The parallel plan is to relate it to the wealth of imagery with which he illustrated the journal of his expedition in 1836 that discovered Australia Felix. By the artifice of fusing the magnificent maps and landscapes in the atlas with the illustrations in the journals, together with his unpublished artwork, and commissioned structures, a metaphorical map of the new Promised Land can be attempted.

Set in a period of revolution and European expansion, it is a study encompassing histories of nationalism, exploration, cartography, colonisation, indigenous relations, warfare, art, and theories of landscape art, architecture, neoclassicism and romanticism, and the aesthetics of the sublime, the beautiful and the picturesque.

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It was the history research faculty of Federation University, housed in the residence of the former governors of Ballarat Gaol, under the benign aegis of Professor Reeves. Home to a constant flow of people exchanging ideas and projects, of communal research and impromptu seminars, much organised by the events and entertainment manager David McGinniss, not to mention diverting conversation, humour and wine, it was a true collegiate seat of learning. The more formal gatherings took place around the great horseshoe in the Barry Room of the former School of Mines over the road. CRCAH produced 18 PhDs in its short existence and published a first but only journal, *Before/Now,* a record of a true Horatian grove of Academe at the south end of Lydiard Street - blown away without notice or commemoration as the pandemic swept across the land.

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Statement of Authorship

Except where explicit reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been relied upon or used without due acknowledgement in the main text and in the list of references of this thesis. No editorial assistance has been received in the production of the thesis without due acknowledgement. Except where duly referred to, the thesis does not include material with copyright provisions or requiring copyright approvals.

Signed: Edward Coleridge Date: 16 March 2021

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Abbreviations

SLV State Library of Victoria

SLNSW State Library of New South Wales

SMB School of Mines, Ballarat (Town Campus, Federation University Library)

TNA The National Archives, Kew, West London

A Brief Biography

Thomas Livingston Mitchell was born in Scotland in 1792, to the shoremaster at Grangemouth on the Firth of Forth and his pious wife. Thomas always reckoned his second name connected him to the ancient lineage of the Lords of Livingston. His father died when he was young and he went to live with his uncle, John Livingston at Parkhall near Falkirk, who sent him to school at Edinburgh University, a normal practice then, where he showed an ability at drawing and mathematics. Thomas ran his uncle's colliery expecting to be his heir, but on his death it was not so.

He was in London probably as a clerk, records are few, until, at 19, he arrived in Portugal to join the British army fighting the French under Napoleon, who was trying to control Spain and Portugal hence known in English as the (Iberian) Peninsular War He was enlisted in the Rifle Brigade but his aptitude at drafting was spotted by the Wellington's Quartermaster General, Sir George Murray, who employed him in the Intelligence section where his senior officers taught him surveying, and mapping skills. Thus Mitchell spent much time away from his regiment although he saw action at Cuidad Rodrigo, Badajoz and Salamanca, the latter considered Wellington's most decisive victory. At the end of the campaign in 1814 Mitchell was employed by Murray to survey all the battle sites of the war, a long and lonely job, and it was five years before he returned home, now with a young wife, Mary, the daughter of General Blunt, a commander in the Anglo-Portuguese Army. She was to bear him 12 children.

In England he worked on the plans, illustrated army manuals and published a book on surveying while constantly badgering Murray for a captaincy, with no expected promotion gained from the labour of the Spanish surveys. Meanwhile he trained himself in sketching and watercolour and took painting lessons from well known artists, while cultivating friends who were leaders in the new natural sciences.

Finally Mitchell, promoted to major, sailed to Australia in 1827 with his growing family, to be the Deputy Surveyor General of NSW. The Surveyor General, Oxley, was sick, the

department in chaos, and mapping of the fast expanding colony woefully behindhand as settlement spread inland uncontrolled. Mitchell was on Mount Jellore in 1830, completing the triangulation of the inaccessible terrain south of Sydney, when Oxley died and he officially became the Surveyor General. The survey was to inform his vital *Map of the Nineteen Counties*. Mitchell began a major road and bridge building network and constructed a highway through the Blue Mountains in opposition to Governor Darling's preferred route. He continued this pattern of insubordinate behaviour and animosity towards authority with every governor he worked under, often dealing directly with the colonial office in London, especially when his patron, Murray, became the Colonial Secretary.

Mitchell made four lengthy exploratory expeditions in Australia:

1st 1831-2: to the north seeking a presumed large river flowing north west.

2nd 1835: to trace the River Darling from the point where Charles Sturt had left it in 1828, down to its possible junction with the Murray.

3rd 1836: to again seek where the Darling led and, if it met the Murray, to return up that river as far as possible to the settled area. Disobeying these orders Mitchell crossed the Murray and found his 'Australia Felix'. The events of this and accounts expedition are the subject of this thesis.

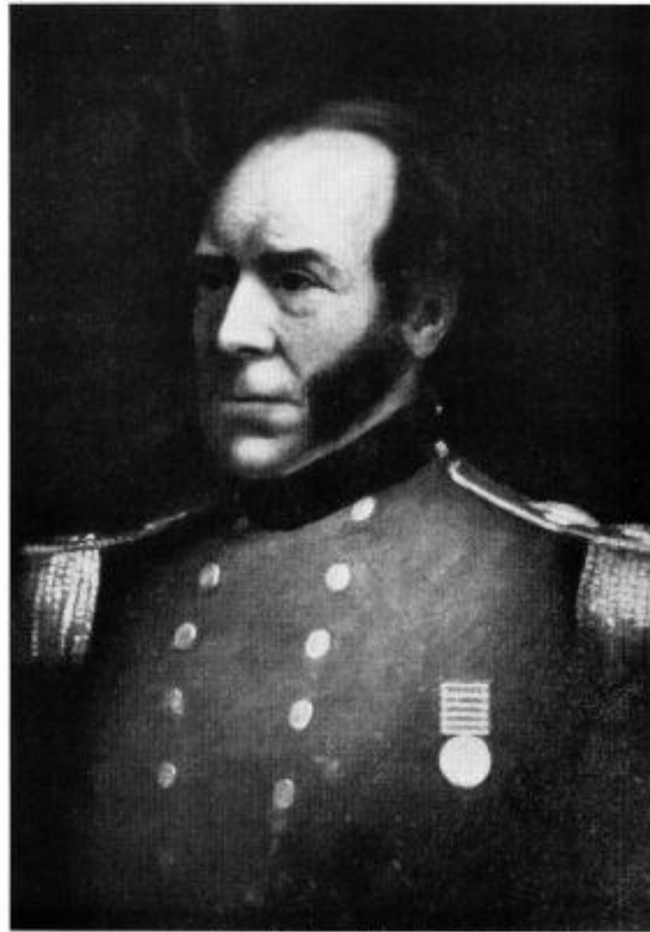
4th 1845-46 to the tropical north, again looking for a mythical great river that he was convinced flowed northwest providing a trade route towards India.

On all his expeditions Mitchell kept a meticulous journal recording the geology and botany as well as his surveys and topographical work with which he illustrated his published accounts.

In May 1837 Mitchell, took his family with him on 18 months leave to return to England to prepare the journals of his first 3 expeditions. The two volume *Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia* was published in 1838 to universal praise, particularly for the illustrations, and Mitchell put more work into revisions for the second 1839 edition. He then began the work for Murray on the great unfinished project, the Peninsular War surveys.

On 5 June 1839 the newly knighted Sir Thomas Mitchell received a Doctorate of Law from Oxford University alongside leaders in administration, diplomacy, astronomy and nautical surveying - and the poet William Wordsworth. The vast Atlas of *Maps and Plans…* was published by James Wyld after the Mitchells already very delayed return to Australia.

Mitchell took two more trips to England (even returning to the Peninsular), but the relevant facts to this thesis essentially end here. He died at home in Sydney on 5 October 1855, aged 63, from catching a chill obstinately surveying in wet and difficult conditions at Braidwood. He was due at a government inquiry into his mal-administration.[1]



Thomas Mitchell c. 1847.

Probably a self-portrait in pastel, the survivor of a fire (in 1959), which destroyed most of a collection of portraits by himself and his daughter, exhibited in Brisbane in 1948

Courtesy of the Royal Geographic Society of Queensland

[1] This synopsis of Mitchell's Life and Career is mainly based on DWA Baker's entry in *The Australian Dictionary of Biography* Volume 2, 1967 and William C Foster's *Sir Thomas Livingstone Mitchell and his World* 1792-1855.

Prelude

The Bait, the Line and the Hook

This investigation into the mapping and artwork of Thomas Mitchell, the Surveyor-General of New South Wales from 1827 to 1855, is intended to reveal the remarkable opus of work he produced and enquire how he achieved it. His crowning glory that won him fame was his discovery, on his third expedition, of the rich pasturelands and picturesque landscapes in an area of what is now western Victoria, which he called *Australia Felix*. He matched this enthusiastic name with a finely illustrated and densely detailed two-volume journal of his exploratory journeys. He also produced a magnificent atlas of battle sites of the Peninsular War which is vast and virtually unknown and requires exhuming.

The Bait – from Arapiles to the Zodiac

This is a tale of quests, as is most historical and art research, my quests and Mitchell's quests. The first was about Mount Arapiles in the west of Victoria, and the quest for the origin of its name. This isolated massif, rising from the Wimmera plain, is a haunt of rock climbers, and Australians preparing to climb Mount Everest even train on its cliffs.

My master's thesis concerned the painted identity of western Victoria, particularly through the work of Eugène von Guérard, whose paintings captured the region's unique character as well as the landscapes present at the time, which were under threat from widespread windfarm development (and to an extent still are – everything remains relevant).[1] As an exercise, my master's thesis scraped the surface of this landscape; I needed to dig deeper. During my research, I discovered that the early explorers were competent artists, particularly Thomas Mitchell, the Surveyor-General of New South Wales, who claimed to have discovered the region of western Victoria in 1836, and called it Australia Felix.

A friend, an antiquarian and bibliophile, who lived at Mount Mitchell, thoughtfully sent an article from a collector's magazine on Mitchell by Helen Proudfoot.[2] *Art and Topography: Major Mitchell (1792–1855)* is an excellent introduction to Mitchell, mapping and his artwork. The rediscovered article says everything about Mitchell in five generously illustrated

1. Edward Coleridge, 'Tilting at Windmills' (Master's thesis, University of Ballarat, 2009).
2. Helen Proudfoot, 'Art and Topography: Major Mitchell (1792–1855),' *World of Antiques*, 2007, 72.

pages. She even ends with an acknowledgement to an English academic ‘for his insight into the influence of the Ordinance surveyors on the art of landscape.’[3] The first bite.

I had always thought *Arapiles* was a name taken from Greek mythology (unaware that was a reasonable assumption as Mitchell’s writings are steeped in classical and biblical references) until I read that Mitchell, a veteran of the Peninsular War, had climbed the mountain on 22 July 1836 and later remembered the day was the 24th anniversary of the Battle of Salamanca at which, aged 20, he was present in 1812.[4] Why therefore had he not called it Mount Salamanca?

So for a long time I had imagined that Arapiles was a great peak rising from the plain in western Spain until a retired general, and ‘veteran’ of a Peninsular War Battlefields Tour, assured me there was no such mountain there. Spain, and the unlikely combination of its art and wind industry featured in my master’s thesis, so I was glad to have the chance and excuse to go, via the Prado, to the handsome city of Salamanca myself. There I found on that plain in Spain, outside the town by the little village of Los Arapiles, the two rocky outcrops of Arapil Chico and Arapil Grande, hardly bigger than the abandoned mullock heaps of Victoria’s goldfields, around which was fought Wellington’s first and most decisive battle against Napoleon’s forces, ‘The beating of 40,000 men in 40 minutes.’[5]

Thus this site contains some of the elements that make this doctoral study so intriguing; not only the strange connection to an apparently unrelated war in an exotic location in southern Europe but also Mitchell’s ability to produce two remarkable landscapes from his brief visit. These landscapes were a view up at the towering sandstone ramparts and a view down to the feature he aptly named Mitre Rock and the vast lake-strewn plain beyond, which show his understanding of the precepts of the picturesque and the sublime.[6] He was the first of many

3. Proudfoot, ‘Art and Topography,’ 3.
4. The English name for the engagements on the Iberian Peninsula, from 1808–1814, during the Napoleonic Wars which, apart from a few excursions elsewhere and the brief Waterloo campaign, was the British Army’s only land-based European theatre of war. The Spanish name for the conflict is *La Guerra de la Independencia*, Ian Robertson, *An Atlas of the Peninsular War* (New Haven:Yale University Press, 2010), 1.
5. William C. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World 1792–1855: Surveyor General of New South Wales 1828-1855* (Sydney: Institution of Surveyors NSW, 1985), 27.
6. Thomas L. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions in the Interior of Eastern Australia: With Descriptions of the Recently Explored Region of Australia Felix and of the Present Colony of New South Wales* (London: T. & W. Boone, 1839), 2:192, plate 33: ‘Western Extremity of Mount Arapiles’ and, 2:189, plate 31: ‘Mitre Rock and Lake from Mount Arapiles’.

artists drawn to that landscape in the decades to follow, most notably Nicholas Chevalier, and Eugene von Guérard.

The figure of the Duke of Wellington also hovers behind the story. Not just as a military figure but also politically for, as prime minister, he appointed his friend and Mitchell's longsuffering lifelong patron, the Quartermaster-General George Murray, as Colonial Secretary in 1828. Therefore Murray became Mitchell's ultimate chief for a few years.[7] More importantly for Australia, and still of great significance now, Wellington's Tory government was to reject the intentions of the evangelically inspired Whigs who, having won the battle to abolish slavery in British dominions, were focused on the physical and moral welfare of Indigenous peoples. They were determined that the Aboriginal owners of the land were to be treated decently and justly – which, of course, their Christian zeal would include being sure to deliver them from their state of godless ignorance. The members of Lord Melbourne's Colonial Office administration were all evangelicals – Sir George Grey, Charles Grant and James Stephen.[8] Grant was soon elevated to the peerage as the palindromic Lord Glenelg to whom Mitchell sycophantically dedicated *The Three Expeditions* – and, to be fair, produced one of his finer images of the river he named after the Secretary of State for the Colonies.[9] To this day, whatever the value of the other contracts, Australia remains the only British postcolonial state to have no treaty with its Indigenous peoples.[10] Although there are some who have contentiously argued that Batman's agreement with the Wathaurong by the Merri Creek in 1835 was as genuine a treaty as those in other lands.[11]

Thus Mount Arapiles can perhaps be considered as a *leitmotif* for Mitchell's ambitions, a gauge of his artistic prowess, a memorial to his wartime experience of his presence at a famous victory, and a metaphor for colonisation – the heroic conquest of a virgin and unoccupied territory – 'a land so inviting and still without inhabitants!'[12]

This becomes central to this study of Mitchell because of the evident contrast between his skill and abilities in several fields and the less attractive aspects of his character which

7. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 121.
8. James Boyce, *1835: The Founding of Melbourne & the Conquest of Australia* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2013), 37 and 38.
9. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions,* 2:225, plate 35: 'Boat on the Glenelg'.
10. Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the United States.
11. Boyce, *1835*, 72, concludes his chapter on 'The Treaty': 'We are prone to believe the treaty as a mere quirky footnote … because it was soon overtaken by events. But if we return to 1835 … then the landmark agreement with the Kulin can take its rightful place as a defining juncture in Australian history – one which signposts a road not travelled'.
12. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:159.

continually emerge in the reading – his jealousies, resentments, tempers, self-aggrandisement, importuning, insolence to superiors and abuse of inferiors and, not least, the callous treatment of his wife who bore him a dozen children. A review of Cumpston's 1955 biography points to the retired health inspector's dismay, having written a biography of Sturt at discovering the subject of his second study was a less attractive hero than he expected.[13]

First Contact

The lavish exhibition of Scottish settlement in the nineteenth century at the Art Gallery of Ballarat enabled my first proper encounter with Mitchell's art.[14] A selection of his work served as the introduction to the whole show and included the original exquisite watercolour, *Tombs of a Tribe, after some great mortality, probably from a disease resembling smallpox*. A mounted horseman (himself?) stands beside the elegant structures on a promontory overlooking a vast plain under an unsettled sky (see Figure 1). This was hung as a pair with the lithograph of the image (see Figure 2), from which comparison to the printed version's sombre monotone in fact achieves a more intense elegiac quality than the bright ochre washes. Adjacent was his *Cockatoo of the Interior*, the 'Major Mitchell cockatoo' for which he is famous – and, poignantly, for a man so keen on his own reputation, the only thing most people now remember him by.[15]

13. A. H. Chisholm, 'The Incorrigible Mitchell', *Southerly* 17, no.2 (1956).
14. *For Auld Lang Syne*, Images of Scottish Australia from First Fleet to Federation, 2014, curated by Dr Alison Inglis and Patricia Macdonald. The gallery even designed its own official tartan which is registered with the Scottish Register of Tartans (no. 10988)
15. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:47, plate 23: 'Cockatoo of the Interior'. Even that appears in Simpson and Day's *Field Guide to Birds of Australia* as the Pink, or Leadbeaters, cockatoo with no mention of Mitchell.

Figure 1. Mitchell, *Tombs of a Tribe*, ca.1835, watercolour.[16]

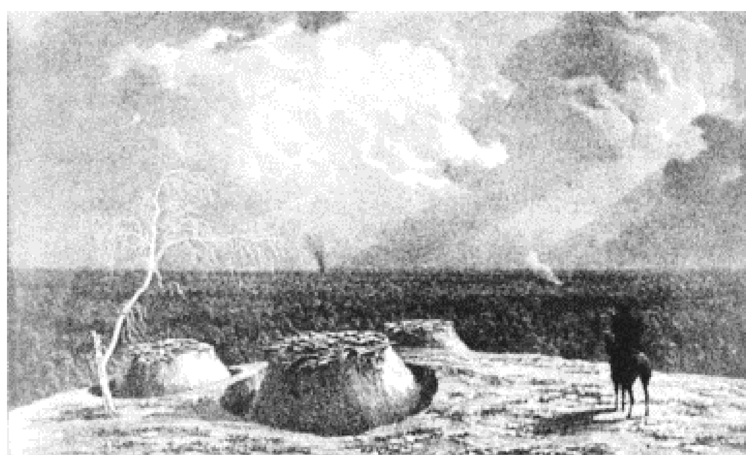


Figure 2. *Tombs of a Tribe, After Some Great Mortality, Probably from a Disease Resembling Smallpox*, 1839, lithograph.[17]

One of the two curators, Patricia MacDonald, who was present, having pointed out these works, led me over to what she said was the first map Mitchell made in Australia. It was something completely unexpected, not of the land at all, not terrestrial but celestial. The *Chart of the Zodiac and the Stars to the 4th magnitude* (see Figure 3) was, I think she claimed, the outcome of Mitchell's collaboration with Governor Thomas Brisbane, a keen astronomer who spent more time in his observatory gazing at the southern heavens than in running the colony, and when the map was shown in London it caused a sensation.

16. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of South Australia, accessed May 23, 2018, https://www.agsa.sa.gov.au/collection-publications/collection/works/tombs-of-a-tribe/30015/#gallery-2.
17. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1: 262, plate 16, engraved by G. Barnard.

Figure 3. Thomas Mitchell and John Carmichael, *Chart of the Zodiac, Including the Stars to the 4th Magnitude Between the Parallels of 24°½ Declination North & South*, ca. 1831.[18]

In fact Brisbane, a good administrator and an important astronomer, who had set up the Parramatta Observatory at his own expense, was summoned back to England in 1826, and Mitchell, who incidentally had befriended the astronomer John Herschel, son of the great William Herschel himself, arrived in the colony in 1827. However the chart, which seems to have been published around 1831, was due to his collaboration with Brisbane's astronomer, John Dunlop, who had returned to Australia that year, and John Carmichael, the brilliant deaf-and-dumb engraver who Mitchell housed with his own family.[19] Thus Mitchell was perhaps simply facilitating some unfinished business of Brisbane's. So here is another example of Mitchell's extraordinary range of talents, interests and personal connections, which makes him so much more than a surveyor and explorer and enriches the whole story of that colonial period. It is also worth remarking that these four men – the administrator, the surveyor, the astronomer and the engraver – were all fellow countrymen, products of that phenomenon known as the Scottish enlightenment.

As a final name-dropping 'cherry to the cake', Mitchell presented a copy of this star map to one Captain Robert Fitzroy in Sydney shortly before setting off on the Australia Felix expedition. Fitzroy was, of course, the commander of H.M.S. *Beagle*, which was conveying an inquisitive young Charles Darwin around the world. Whether the two ever met is not

18. National Gallery of Australia, accessed September 2, 2020, https://cs.nga.gov.au/detail.cfm?irn=128369.
19. Gregory C. Eccleston, *Major Mitchell's 1836 'Australia Felix' Expedition: A Re-Evaluation* (Melbourne: Monash University, 1992), 93.

recorded, but they did correspond and the fossils and paleontological findings Mitchell sent back to England were to influence Darwin's ideas on evolution.[20]

However, how the map came about – who commissioned it, and where and when it was presented in London – remains a mystery.[21] There is no direct reference to the chart by either Cumpston or Foster, Mitchell's two main biographers. The latter, in 500 pages, only uses a quote from Fitzroy's letter of thanks to Mitchell for the gift of it and his *Map of the 19 Counties*, which would have had less interest to the great naval cartographer, [22] but omits mention of the Zodiac chart.

Gregory Eccleston, however, does:

> Beagle, Sydney Cove, 28 Jany 1836
>
> My dear Sir, I thank you very much for the Map of N.S.Wales and the Chart of the Stars, which you have so kindly presented to me. I shall take great pleasure in showing them to my friends in England as proof of the very advanced state of the arts in this surprising country and as testimonials of your unwearied skill and zeal.
>
> Yours very sincerely,
>
> Robt Fitzroy [23]

What the reaction was to the chart when first presented in London I have not ascertained, but on a clear night the stars of the Southern Hemisphere ever remain a sensation. As a tuneful balladeer wrote of a fellow living under the same sky on the next landmass to the west:

> Joseph's face was black as night
> The pale yellow moon shone in his eyes
> His path was marked
> By the stars in the Southern Hemisphere.[24]

20. Kerry Heckenberg, 'Thomas Mitchell and the Wellington Caves: The Relationship among Science, Religion, and Aesthetics in Early-Nineteenth-Century Australia,' *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 33, no. 1 (2005), 203–218. https://doi.org/10.1017/S106015030500080X
21. I am most grateful to Susie Russell of the State Library of New South Wales for helping me in this quest and leading me to the information about John Carmichael's domicile with Mitchell. The library, in fact, dates the map as broadly as: 'c. 1830–1836'.
22. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 497: 'The celebrated hydrographer of much of the South American coastline'. It happens to be the very last line of the main text of Foster's encyclopaedic biography, where the last eight words only are used to illustrate a different point.
23. Eccleston, *Major Mitchell's 1836 'Australia Felix' Expedition*, 93.
24. Return Paul Simon …?

The Line – Of Men and Mountains

On 30 June 1836, Major Thomas Mitchell climbed a rocky outcrop in the flat plain of north-west Victoria he named Pyramid Hill and looked south across a verdant landscape. The view confirmed the rightness of his decision to ignore his vice-regal instructions to follow the Murray River upstream as far as possible and thence return to Sydney. After the hard journey through the harsh country of the Darling River and unhappy encounters with the inhabitants, what he saw enchanted him:

> After surmounting the barriers of parched deserts and hostile barbarians, I had at length the satisfaction of overlooking from a pyramid of granite a much better country… It was no longer my hopeless task, as on the banks of the Darling, 'to describe stagnation and delineate vacancy. The view was exceedingly beautiful over the surrounding plains, shining fresh and green in the light of a fine morning. The scene was different from any I had ever before witnessed, either in New South Wales or elsewhere. A land so inviting, and still without inhabitants! [25]

He had entered the Promised Land.

The explorer standing on a mountain gazing at a virgin landscape is a powerfully romantic image. It is personified in Caspar David Friedrich's painting of a lone man seen from behind standing on a rock gazing across a chasm at cloud-girt snowy mountains, *Wanderer above a Sea of Fog* and Mitchell himself could be considered as the subject (see Figure 4).[26] Friedrich, Germany's great romantic painter of strangely moody canvases, often showing figures standing in contemplation of dawn or dusk, was little known in Britain in the nineteenth century, and, in fact, was forgotten in his own country for a century after his death (as was von Guérard in Australia). [27]

This image in particular has frequently been reproduced in popular culture. It has truly entered the *zeitgeist* to use the German word itself.[28] Friedrich executed the work in 1818 when Mitchell was 26 and modelled 'the Wanderer' as a young man of similar age – orange hair colouring even suggests a distinctly Scottish heritage![29]

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25. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:159.
26. Simon Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 91. Ryan considers the back view a Romantic technique, 'the observer also being observed'.
27. The only Friedrich work in a British collection, *Winter Landscape,* entered the National Gallery in 1987.
28. Werner Hofmann, *Caspar David Friedrich* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 9–13. The book's introduction, 'The Painter and the Zeitgeist', discusses this very image and its conscription by *Der Spiegel* in 1995 onto the cover of the magazine has the man contemplating the horrors of Germany's past.
29. The great international contemporary art exhibition held in West Berlin in 1982 at the Martin Gropius Bau, which stood right beside the Wall, was titled simply *Zeitgeist*. Robert Hughes' review of the exhibition, 'There's No Geist like the Zeitgeist', was published in the *New York Review of Books*, October 27, 1983.

Figure 4. Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer above a Sea of Fog*, 1818, oil on canvas.[30]

The rigid, organised surveyor and expedition commander was a considerable artist and draughtsman, his art influenced by the rules of the picturesque, that very English precursor of romanticism, and his visual response to the scenery he was about to witness was undeniably romantic. He was the first man with a sketchbook to enter a region that was to inspire generations of artists, and within three weeks, he had drawn views that he later worked into classic romantic landscapes for his journal of the expedition. It could be argued that his maps of the Peninsular War battlefields, with their bold composition and dramatic chiaroscuro, are essentially romantic images, which he was surveying when Friedrich was painting the east German landscape.

Typically, Mitchell sketched Pyramid Hill, a symmetrical cone of rocks he measured as rising 300 feet above the plain to a crown of a single block of granite, as a strong simple image drawn in ink and inserted directly into the text (see Figure 5).[31] It was to be sketched again 24 years later in a poignant but illuminating image by the doomed Ludwig Becker, looking down from Mount Hope as he travelled in the opposite direction (see Figure 6);[32] poignant

30. Courtesy of the Kunsthalle Hamburg, Germany, accessed September 10, 2020, https://www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/.
31. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:159.
32. Marjorie Tipping, ed., *Ludwig Becker: Artist and Naturalist with the Burke & Wills Expedition* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1978).

because the fine-cultured German, the official artist of the Burke and Wills expedition, was to perish on that unfortunate excursion; and illuminating because it clarifies the scene. In contrast to Mitchell's rosy description of promise, Becker shows a differently nuanced view of a lone rock in an apparently desolate plain. Other pioneers were to take issue with Mitchell's ebullient prose that gave misleading descriptions of bountiful country.[33]

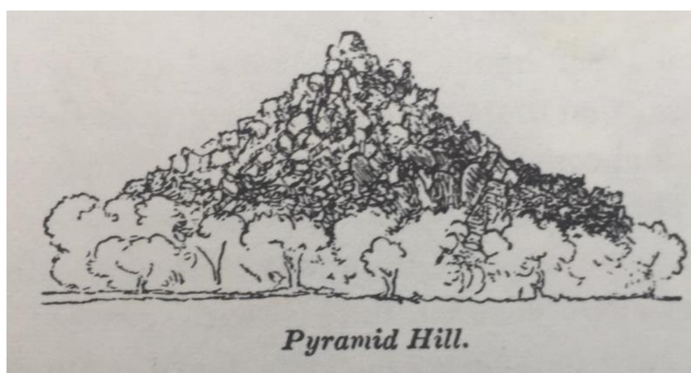

Figure 5. Mitchell, *Pyramid Hill*.[34]

Figure 6. Ludwig Becker, *No 4. View from Mt Hope. Pyramid Hill bearing S.30 W.Sep. 1.60 from Mt Hope*.[35]

A few days after his serendipitous experience on Pyramid Hill, Mitchell and four companions were passing a far from comfortable night in subzero conditions without food or shelter on the bare summit of the highest mountain in the region.[36] At dawn they found themselves truly, and disappointingly for any surveying work, above a sea of fog: 'The sun rose amid red and stormy clouds, and vast masses of a white vapour concealed from view both sea and land, save where a few isolated hills were dimly visible.'[37]

Given the extremely perilous ascent he describes,[38] it seems remarkable Mitchell had any instruments with him, but to the north, whence he had come, he records:

> During a short interval I took what angles I could obtain. To the westward the view of the mountains was truly grand, but before I could observe the angles so desirable, cloud again enveloped the mountain, and I was compelled to quit its summit without completing the work.[39]

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33. Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), 109–111.
34. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:159.
35. Courtesy of the SLV, Becker's sketch book.
36. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:175.
37. Ibid., 2:177.
38. Ibid., 2:174.
39. Ibid., 2:177.

Ludwig Becker's close friend, Eugène von Guérard, who was directly influenced by Friedrich as an art student in Germany, was to paint Mount William, as Mitchell had named it, as a classically sublime image. *Mount William from Mount Dryden* (see Figure 7) could have been a poster for Australia Felix, the serene massif bathed in a warm evening glow while wildlife disports in the groves below. The painting also reveals von Guérard's following of Humboltian ideals, a discipleship of the great German explorer, naturalist and philosopher he shared with Becker.[40]

Explorers standing on virgin mountains are expected to say something profound and historic. Mitchell had plenty of time to refine his published thoughts on Pyramid Hill, though, curiously, the words Australia Felix do not enter the narrative here. Mitchell's passage that opened this section reads:

> As I stood, the first European intruder on the sublime solitude of these verdant plains, as yet untouched by flocks or herds; I felt conscious of being the harbinger of mighty changes; and that our steps would be followed by the men and the animals for which it seemed to have been prepared. [41]

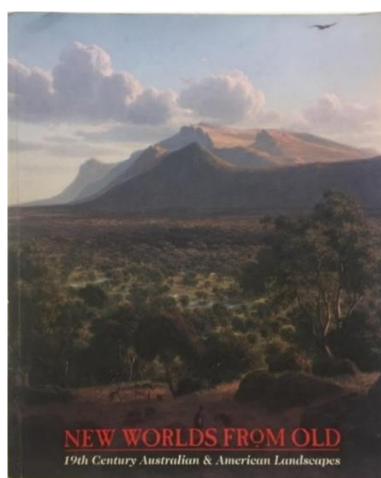

Figure 7. Exhibition catalogue cover, *New Worlds from Old.*[42]

40. Alexander von Humbolt's writings were enormously influential in the period and Becker even organised an anniversary celebration of Humbolt among the German community in Melbourne. Humbolt's influence on von Guérard was discovered by Dr Ruth Pullin in her doctoral thesis and exhibited in the von Guérard retrospective, *Eugène von Guérard: Nature Revealed*, which she curated at the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) in 2011.
41. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:159.
42. The exhibition, *New Worlds from Old: 19th-Century Australian and American Landscapes*, which compared Australian and American colonial landscapes, was shown in Canberra and Melbourne in 1998 and Hartford, Connecticut, and Washington DC in 1999. The catalogue cover is a detail of *Mount William from Mount Dryden* by Eugène von Guérard 1857(Art Gallery of Western Australia). The fact that an image of a painting by von Guérard was used for the cover of the catalogue instead of a painting by a better known American artist was a significant step in the restoration of von Guérard's reputation from a century of oblivion, and not least in setting Australian colonial art on a par with American. Mitchell's ascent and naming of Mount William is mentioned in the catalogue entry.

So was sealed the fate of – a land so inviting and still without inhabitants![43] The argument runs that the land grab would have happened anyway, with or without Mitchell, and indeed the returning expedition met the first pioneer settlers coming from the other direction. They only had to follow the tracks of Mitchell's heavy bullock carts to find the way to his Australia Felix, but the publication of the *Three Expeditions into Eastern Australia*, particularly Volume II, was to ensure the fame of the antipodean arcadia and the invasive settlement of the future western Victoria.

Lines

On 20 June 1921 a humbler man, who became a different sort of surveyor, on a hill in the deeply bucolic English county of Herefordshire had a very different sort of vision. Alfred Watkins, a merchant of Hereford and an antiquarian, had an experience that the whole countryside, which he knew intimately, was connected with a web of golden wires.[44] They seemed to connect all the ancient half-buried features in the landscape. Mounds, burial barrows, Neolithic hill forts, standing stones, crosses, churches built on pre-Christian sites, sacred trees, moats and holy wells were all united in straight lines. From his youth Watkins had travelled on his father's business all over the county, a region long undisturbed by modern transport. He talked to all the country folk, who lived where they were born, and knew their local legends handed down through generations. Thus he learnt the stories that gave meaning or mystery to the features in the landscape. Now he discovered they were aligned: 'In one moment of transcendental perception, Watkins had entered a magic world of prehistoric Britain, a world whose very existence had been forgotten.'[45]

Watkins was able to plot the lines on British ordnance survey maps, convinced that they would show the pathways that ancient man had travelled on. Frequently names would reoccur – White, Black, Cold, Cole, Dod and Ley – and this last he termed the alignments by, hence Ley Lines.[46] His book, *The Old Straight Track,*[47] expounds on his field research and his theories, which mostly occurred in that English-Welsh border area. The importance of the Ordnance Survey in this narrative will be returned to later in the thesis. Watkins was quite

43. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:159.
44. John Michell, *The New View over Atlantis: The Essential Guide to Megalithic Science, Earth Mysteries, and Sacred Geometry* (Newburyport, MA: Hampton Roads Publishing Company, 1969), 22.
45. Ibid., 23.
46. Ibid., 24.
47. Alfred Watkins, *The Old Straight Track: Its Mounds, Beacons, Moats, Sites and Mark Stones*, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen, 1945; reprinted, Garnstone, 1970).

specific: 'You must use Government Ordnance maps. One mile to the inch is the working scale.'[48] The equivalent for today's Ley hunter, and any ordinary hiker, cyclist, or holidaymaker in Britain, is the OS 1:25,000 series. Watkins gained an enthusiastic following, and groups of amateur archeologist-surveyors explored Britain with maps and poles plotting ley lines in the 1930s, their meaning never solved. Watkins always believed the leys were only routine walking tracks, and indeed he did uncover lost roads and pathways, but he could not explain the impracticability of travelling in rigid lines over rugged terrain, especially when crossing mountains or bodies of water.

Watkins' ideas were taken up by New Age mystics in the 1960s particularly John Michell who, in *The View over Atlantis*, reinterpreted the leys as lines of an earth energy, long forgotten, connecting ancient sites all over Britain, most notably Stonehenge and Glastonbury. It was the dawning of the Age of Aquarius. These ideas he argued existed in other ancient cultures such as the Chinese with their *feng shui*, pagodas and dragons, and the pre-Columbian Americans with their pyramids, and plumed serpents. There is no reason to doubt they existed here in Australia by a people so attuned to their own landscape. Michell points to the *tjuringas*, or ceremonial totems, carried by Aboriginal Australians carved with lines and circles as sacred route maps for travelling through the country.[49] Once Mitchell had proclaimed his discovery of Australia Felix, the settlers moved in and fenced off the land with no regard for the existing inhabitants and their estates along with their subtle, successful management of the land. Clark and Cahir describe where ceremonial stone alignments are to be found in Victoria, [50] but if there had been any other obvious evidence of Aboriginal leys and ancestral memories, they had probably been swept away in the dispossessions and massacres that had been inadvertently initiated by Mitchell. It was a negation of Yi-Fu Tuan's ideal:

> Landscape is personal and tribal history made visible … he (the native) finds recorded in his land the ancient story of the lives and deeds of the immortal beings from whom he himself is descended and whom he reveres. The whole countryside is his family tree.[51]

The quest remains for what, if anything, now lies beneath.

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48. Ibid., 219.
49. Michell, *The New View over Atlantis,* 36, 37.
50. Ian D. Clark and David A. Cahir, *Tanderrum, Djadjawurrung the Goldfields*, 2.
51. Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, 25th ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 157.

The Hook – The Atlas

This thesis started out with a map, or rather a collection of maps, an atlas and the quest to find it.

Intrigued by glimpses of Mitchell's story and his mapmaking, which coincided historically with the development of the British Ordnance Survey, I saw references to an atlas of battlefields of the Peninsular War. Mitchell had started his military career as a young lieutenant in the Wellington's army fighting Napoleon's forces in Spain and Portugal.

Seconded into the intelligence department by the Quartermaster-General, Sir George Murray, he proved his worth as a surveyor and draftsman. So when the Allies had pushed the French back into their own country in 1814, Murray commissioned him to survey and draw up all the battle sites of the campaign. Mitchell was young and relatively inexperienced but none of his senior officers, exhausted from the five-year campaign and keen to get home, were willing to take on the task. It took him five years of single-handed work across the Iberian Peninsula, but he proved more than equal to the challenge. There was a book somewhere of the maps Mitchell had produced. I must have had a hint of what the collection was like because hunting for this 'atlas' became a personal quest. Its generic name was *Atlas of the Peninsular War*, but where was it?

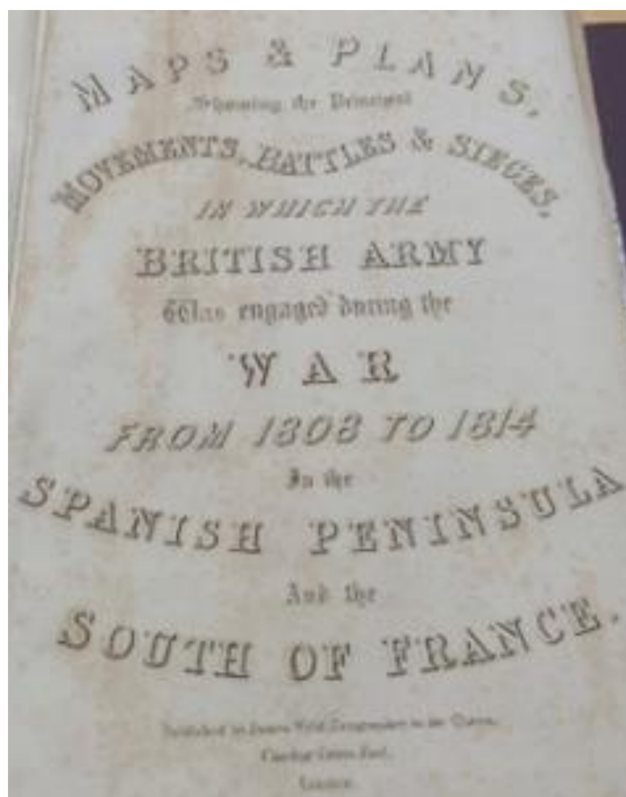
There were two books with similar titles – *An Atlas of the Peninsular War 1808–1814* by Ian Robertson [52] and the weightier, *The Peninsular War Atlas* by Colonel Nick Lipscombe. [53] Both had been published in 2010 (which must have vexed their authors), with each referring to Mitchell's Atlas and Robertson also including tantalising cartographic reproductions. However, entering 'Mitchell' and 'Atlas of the Peninsular War' in catalogues produced nothing.

Visits to the Maps Room at the British Library when on a trip to the UK involved much grappling with the cataloguing system and help from the assistants as well as waiting the 90 minutes or so each time for orders to be delivered. The only concrete find was a 'memoir' to the Atlas written by a General Murray, whose name meant nothing at that stage. This slim book was getting close to the hidden artefact but contained no maps or images at all. There were references to a James Wyld, who was a leading cartographic publisher of the period,

52. Ian Robertson, *An Atlas of the Peninsular War 1808–1814* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).
53. Nick Lipscombe, *The Peninsular War Atlas* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2010).

even to the Queen it was claimed. Finally, on my last day – somehow the correct identification was eventually unearthed – and with further assistance from a librarian after another long wait, a vast battered leather-bound tome was wheeled out on a trolley for me to take away to a table and peruse unsupervised.

The elaborate title page revealing a 33 word title explained the book's obscure cataloguing:



MAPS & PLANS,
MOVEMENTS, BATTLES & SIEGES,
IN WHICH THE
BRITISH ARMY
Was engaged during the
WAR
FROM 1808 TO 1814
In the
SPANISH PENINSULA
And the
SOUTH OF FRANCE.

Figure 8. Title page of *Wyld's Atlas*.[54]

Among the overwrought profusion of different typefaces, setting it stylistically in its, by now, Victorian age[55], there was no mention of Mitchell, an Atlas or the Peninsular War. Nor, for that matter, was there a date. This was, in fact, 1840 – 26 years after Mitchell had received the commission in Bordeaux.[56]

54. *Maps & Plans Showing the Principal Moments, Battles & Sieges in Which the British Army Was Engaged during the War from 1808 to 1814 in the Spanish Peninsula and the south of France* (known as Wyld's Atlas) (London: James Wyld, 1840).
55. Mitchell's life and work straddled the Regency and Victorian periods with their different tastes, attitudes and aesthetics. An example of the change in the quality of design has best been expressed by Nikolaus Pevsner in contrasting the exhibits at the *Great Exhibition* of 1851 with the dynamically innovative Crystal Palace that housed them: 'The aesthetic quality of the products was abominable'. Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (London: Palazzo Editions, 2011), 40.
56. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 40.

On elephant-sized folios within the book, lay the most astonishing maps and illustrations: great bold dramatic chiaroscuro designs swirling across double pages rendering the maps as virtual landscapes in themselves (see Figure 9). They were accompanied by topographical panoramas, picturesque scenes and plans of towns together with the jagged abstract forms of forts and redoubts. There is even an eerie night battle scene (see Figure 10). Robertson judges the Atlas: 'Anyone who has perused this elaborate and visually impressive work will agree that it is a magnificent example of military cartography at its finest period, however cumbersome it may be.'[57]

I could only hurry though the great volume, taking a few notes. I had been privileged to have discovered a hidden treasure. The quarry had not been a disappointment. Mitchell was worth continuing with.

I needed to find how he produced such a remarkable work of art. How did he achieve these huge images? What were his techniques, his abilities, his influences? Where was the groundwork for these great examples of cartographic art? Why was the Atlas so little known? Would the processes be hard to find? And, for a layman, the doubt arose of what military purpose the maps had actually served. In reality, on many pages the tiny lines and blocks of regiments of the opposing armies – blue for the French and red for the British and their Portuguese and Spanish allies – seemed lost in a deeply contoured landscape. On that brief encounter I had little time to notice such detail (see Chapter 9).

Figure 9. *Battle of Fuentes d'Oñoro. Wyld's Atlas.*

57. Robertson, *An Atlas of the Peninsular War 1808–1814*, 6.

Figure 10. *Night Storming Party. Wyld's Atlas*

This theme of opposites – of beauty and conflict, aesthetics and bloodshed – is echoed in Mitchell's work here in Australia. My research has led me to the remarkable sketches that Mitchell drew on his expeditions, which often show a great sensitivity towards the Aborigines he encountered and befriended, and which empathy is echoed in his writings. The images worked up into lithographs vary between an idealisation of an individual into a noble savage and cruder depictions. However, the dynamic compositions of groups dancing, assembling or threatening in *corroborees*, peaceful encounters or particular violent events can border on the pejorative and prejudiced. Often he puts himself in the scene – bravely, as if alone, confronting Indigenous throngs. His frequent use of the word 'savage' seems to diverge in the texts between meaning a fierce barbaric person or, simply, an Indigenous individual. In his journal, Mitchell's second-in-command, Stapylton, described them less generously and wrongly as 'cannibals', a common fallacy at the time.

Mitchell's drawings and watercolours of the Australian landscape, which illustrate his enthusiastic prose, show his technical and creative ability and sheer enjoyment of this newly encountered scenery. The engravings of these, in some cases by his own proficient hand (for he had trained himself in the techniques of lithography and etching), when published in his journals manage to evoke the vast spaces within the confines of a small-book format. Those landscapes and those people's lives, so celebrated by Mitchell, were about to be irrevocably and violently changed, and it is only now, within nearly two hundred years since Mitchell found his Australia Felix that present-day historians, including Bill Gammage and Bruce Pascoe, are revealing how sophisticated Indigenous management of the land was and how

extensive was the bloodshed.[58] The picturesque and destruction, art and carnage are conflated.

As Mitchell was riding back into Spain in 1814, the greatest Spaniard of the age was commenting on contemporary warfare. Francisco Goya began work on the horrific images of his series of 80 etchings, *The Disasters of War*, and painted his grim masterpiece, *Third of May 1808*, that year, depicting the reprisals when the French first seized Madrid (see Figure 11).

Robert Hughes describes the overpowering canvas as having 'lived on for two centuries as the undiminished and unrivalled archetype of suffering and brutality in war.'[59]

Figure 11. Francisco Goya, *Third of May 1808*, 1814, oil on canvas.[60]

58. Bill Gammage, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2011); Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu: Aboriginal Australia and the Birth of Agriculture* (Broome, WA: Magabala Books, 2018).
59. Robert Hughes, *Goya* (New York: Vintage Publishing, 2003), 313. The intensity of the painting suggests Goya's immediate response to the historic events of the 2nd and 3rd of May, but it was not safe to paint such an image until Wellington, whose portrait he had sensitively drawn, had driven the French out for good in 1814.
60. Museo del Prado, Madrid, accessed September 7, 2020, https://www.museodelprado.es.

Introduction –
Mapping Australia Felix

This investigation into the mapping and artwork of Thomas Mitchell, the Surveyor-General of New South Wales from 1827 to 1855, is intended to reveal the remarkable opus of work he produced and enquire how he achieved it. His crowning glory that won him fame was his discovery, on his third expedition, of the rich pasturelands and picturesque landscapes in an area of what is now western Victoria, which he called *Australia Felix*. He matched this enthusiastic name with a finely illustrated and densely detailed two-volume journal of his exploratory journeys.

Thomas Mitchell was a controversial character, talented, ambitious and a cultivator of the right people to further his career. He was an extremely hard worker and constantly tried to learn new techniques, and even invent new technologies, as well as educate himself in both the classics and the new sciences. He was not able to control a volcanic temper which made him many enemies, and, to borrow a term from the Peninsular War of which he was a veteran, he had a pattern of fighting an ongoing guerrilla war with each colonial governor he served under. At the same time, he befriended some of the greatest minds of the age and, from the perspective of this enquiry, he produced the most varied and remarkable artwork of any Australian explorer and arguably the most beautiful maps by any surveyor.

Finding an Atlas to Map Australia Felix

This thesis aims to expose the plans and images in Mitchell's Peninsular War atlas by endeavouring to treat them as the detailed maps that Mitchell did not have time to make of his expedition – so that they can be said to 'map' Australia Felix. There is, of course, a requirement to justify the relevance of this work to the present day and what will be attempted is to show that all of Mitchell's surveys, maps, artwork, writings, even buildings – his whole *oeuvre* – inform and contribute to the mythology of Australia Felix and its part in the Australian cultural landscape nearly two hundred years later. At the time, he was working within the two opposing, but complementary, movements of neoclassicism and romanticism and expressing both ideologies in his art and writings, and even in his buildings and bridges. The aesthetic theories of the time – the sublime, the beautiful, and the picturesque – are expounded to see how much they underlie his artistic output.

Spatial History – A New Framework

Thomas Mitchell's life and expeditions – particularly the Australia Felix expedition, which was his third – have been much written about, especially by himself, but there has been little analysis of his artwork and this thesis presents all aspects of his oeuvre and his means and preparation for achieving it. The intention is to endeavour to establish Mitchell as not just an explorer who sketched a bit on his travels, but that he was a serious, trained artist in his own right, in fact arguably one of the leading illustrators in Australia of the colonial period. This has been implemented by seeking and analysing his landscapes, topographical studies, compositions, portraits, and tableaux of events often crowded with well-realised figures.

In addition to his drawing up of the vitally needed, first properly surveyed, cadastral map of the settled parts of the nascent colony, the Map of the Nineteen Counties, the engineering projects he commissioned for the colony's infrastructure should not be ignored; the road passes, boldly blasted through the mountains, and the Lennox bridges, still standing and of great elegance, all of which he drew and painted.

However, there is a problem with this model as titled. The fact is that apart from a small-scale map of the eastern side of the continent showing the routes of his first three expeditions, albeit very accurately surveyed, Mitchell produced no maps of Australia Felix per se. On the other hand Mitchell did produce this cartographic masterwork, and ends the Preface to the whole trilogy of the expedition journals with the admission (writing as 'the author'), that he would have preferred delaying the task of working on them:

> … till he had completed another,* of a national character, which connected as it is with the days of his early service in the cause of his country, may naturally be supposed to have stronger and more attractive claims upon him.
>
> * Plans of the Fields of Battle in the Peninsula. [1]

He then did work on the publication in London immediately after completing the *Three Expeditions,* so the two works are concurrent and coexistent in his creative drive.

Therefore a suggested framework for this project was to treat the Atlas, in spirit, as the mapping of Australia Felix that Mitchell never made, a metaphysical filling in of his traverse. A template for this was Paul Carter's contention that Mitchell's long and lonely surveying and drawing up of the battlefields in Spain and Portugal was his method of reliving the campaign he missed with his regiment when seconded to General Murray's intelligence

1. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions,* 1:iv.

department, and that his approach to each expedition was that it was a military campaign and was to be managed as such.[2] Part of the motive for the third expedition in particular was to avenge the losses and aggression experienced during the second:

> The five years that Mitchell spent after the event (the Peninsular War) in meticulously surveying, sketching, painting and finally engraving the battlefields of Wellington's campaign represented in a sense the active service he had not known during the campaign itself. But they also represented something more, of course: they were a way of possessing the country permanently – as Wellington himself had never done.[3]

While that last point is questionable, for the British had no claims on Spanish territory and Wellington was granted Spanish estates anyway, this conceit might channel Carter's theory of spatial history. This idea is taken further with an attempt to thematically use Mitchell's forgotten Spanish and Portuguese maps as surrogate plans for his Australia Felix.

Carter begins his alternative account of the exploration of Australia with Cook arriving at Botany Bay:

> Before the name: what was the place like before it was named? How did Cook see it?... Ahead it was dense, cloudy; the report of small waves behind. The sound of voices calling to each other out of sight, displaying the invisible space making it answer. Birds with human voices. The legend of giants.[4]
>
> Such spatial history – history that discovers and explores the lacuna left by imperial history – begins and ends in language. It is this which makes history rather than geography.[5]

The language is lyrical, romantic, but it is not always easy to follow Carter's ruminations; however, they do apply to, and distinguish, Mitchell:

> For Mitchell's personality cannot be dissociated from his spatial experience, he did not just become a surveyor he made himself one. In the process he came to recognise that the survey did not simply imitate physical space; it translated into a symbolic object where properties were as much historical as geographical. Similarly to be a surveyor was inevitably to annex oneself to a future history. For Mitchell, biography and history emerged dialectically from the survey.[6]

Because Mitchell's narrative is so detailed and so expansive, and as he puts himself centre stage of the chronicle, it will be seen that the journal becomes a history unfolding with himself as its hero.

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2. Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, 294.
3. Ibid., 115.
4. Ibid., 1.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 101.

But unlike other explorers, whom he despises for taking sightings on linear progressions unfixable on a map, Mitchell methodically surveyed the land using his technique of triangulation. He reserved an unreasoned enmity for Sturt but scorn, in particular, for taking random readings as he floated down the Murray River, not knowing where he was until he reached the coast. Thus Mitchell's whole traverse, carefully chained from a base line, was rigidly fixed by Euclidian geometry accurately describes the space of a journey of some 2000 kilometres. As described by Carter: 'For Mitchell, the survey, with its triple artillery of map, sketches and journal, was a strategy for translating the space into a conceivable object, an object that the mind could possess long before the lowing herds.'[7] The mind is presumably intended to be that of the writer or that of anyone who had read and had been inspired by his description. By implication his survey had become an imperial project, the land being transferred to the Crown from unaware and unconsulted traditional owners. Mitchell, in fact, was always petitioning to be granted land in New South Wales he thought his right as Surveyor-General.

It is possible, however, to interpret this spatial theory as a framework for an exposition of Mitchell's legacy. He had overlaid an area of south-eastern Australia with an imaginary space named Australia Felix, an area conveniently ill-defined to suit people's different mythologies. Although he plotted his progress through it extremely accurately, the only map of it is presented on a small-scale fold-out sheet of the whole of eastern Australia, which outlines his three expeditions north, west and south, in 1831–2, 1835 and 1836 respectively (see Figure 27). On a practical level, the sheet is vulnerable to tearing and misfolding. Furthermore, for the inconvenience of readers, Volume II of *Three Expeditions*, which is the 1836 Australia Felix expedition, the List of Illustrations for all three books, as well as the map, is in Volume I. In the facsimile copy of Volume I which, for this research, is currently on loan from the library of a prestigious Melbourne university, the maps have been neatly razored out.

Spatial history is a discipline that is sometimes as fleeting and intangible as space itself, and its proponents appear to have worked independently without reference to each other. Carter bases his work, *The Road to Botany Bay*, on the concept, devoting a whole chapter to Mitchell, which is aptly entitled 'Triangles of Life' in reference to the surveyor general's accurate and defining surveying methods. Carter appears to credit no one else with any input into the theory and tends to puzzle the reader with remarks like those quoted above.

7. Ibid., 113.

Clive James memorably excoriated *The Road to Botany Bay* in a review titled 'Bullshit and Beyond', where he played on Carter's use of the word to describe 'the famous Australian taciturnity':[8] '"Bullshit" they say to any kind of intellectualising. Bullshit is the result of chewing the cud, the repetitive detritus of trying too hard to conjure oneself from the ground.'[9]

Simon Ryan posits in his book, *The Cartographic Eye*, that the colonisation of Australia was wholly concerned with space and the explorers and surveyors command or understanding of it.[10] Ryan, more than anyone, has expounded in detail on Mitchell's artistic output, but has analysed it in a highly critical manner as if Mitchell's sole occupation was as an artist and has used carping postmodernist language to interpret his encyclopaedic vision. Of Mitchell's smaller-scale male 'gaze', he conjures the elaborate metaphor of it penetrating a feminised landscape, which cultural historian Michael Cathcart exposes as a concept taken from misread feminist literature.[11]

Joanna Guldi writes on spatial landscapes and history, each sentence dense with references.[12] She describes historians rediscovering their own history on foot, experiencing a 'spatial turn' by looking anew at the vernacular architecture of commonplace buildings and the buried forms of agriculture. The viewpoint is English and European and is, therefore, not so readily applicable to Australia, although it is a method that could be used by Indigenous historians, looking far back beyond Mitchell's time.

The concept of a spatial turn is carried by European texts on spatial history, possession of space being central to Michael Foucault's later thinking. Stuart Elden suggests Foucault was inspired in his ideas on the relationship between space and history by Nietzsche, mediated through studying Heidegger, who also uses the concept of a spatial turn: 'Concerning the putative "Kehre" (a turn), I suggest that the privilege accorded in *Being and Time* is corrected in Heidegger's later works and that the ontology of 'Dasein' is historicised to become a

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8. On reading this I cannot help remarking that my private nickname for a grumpy imperious Australian brother-in-law is *Taciturnitus*.
9. Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, 294.
10. Simon Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
11. Michael Cathcart, 'Eyes of the Beholders', The Australian's Review of Books, 1996.
12. Joanna Guldi, 'Landscape and Place,' in *Research Methods for History*, eds., Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 66–80.

historical ontology.' [13] Elden also says: 'Space is inherently political; politics is inherently spatial.'[14]

Of course, the awkwardness with discussing Heidegger is the unavoidable fact of the rector of Freiburg University's apparently unrepentant membership of the Nazi Party from which he never resigned. Thoughts naturally turn to theories of historical spatial landscapes having such meanings as 'lebensraum' … and other regrettable solutions.

Of course, grim humour apart, it could be argued that was precisely what Mitchell was advertising in Australia Felix – living space for Europeans with an apparent disregard for the people who had been occupying that space for millennia. In fact, it is how he introduces the idea:

> The land is, in short, open and available in its present state, for all the purposes of civilized man. We traversed it in two directions with heavy carts meeting no other obstruction than the softness of the rich soil; and, in returning over flowery plains an green hills fanned by the breezes of early spring, I named this region Australia Felix, the better to distinguish it from the parched deserts of the interior country, where we had wandered so unprofitably for so long.[15]

This suggests a manifesto for occupation. The next paragraph continues:

> This territory, still for the most part in a state of nature, presents a fair blank sheet, for any geographical arrangement, whether of country divisions – lines of communication – or sites of towns, &c.& c. (sic) The plan of a whole state might be arranged there like that of an edifice, before the foundation in laid, and a solid one seems necessary, where a large superstructure is likely to be built.[16]

He was always thinking spatially, and he includes a second map for a new New South Wales stretching from the Tropic of Capricorn to the south coast and bordered on the west by the Darling and Murray rivers, thus including most of the eastern half of the continent. There was little modesty about Mitchell.

The moral problem has to be kept in mind, but for the time being discussions on German philosophy have been set aside to try to proceed with this framework. Richard White of the Spatial History Project at Stanford University sees in the different methods of historians and

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13. Stuart Elden, *Mapping the Present: Heidegger, Foucault and the Project of a Spatial History* (London: Continuum, 2001), 4.
14. Ibid., 6.
15. Thomas L. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions in the Interior of Eastern Australia: With Descriptions of the Recently Explored Region of Australia Felix and of the Present Colony of New South Wales*, 2nd ed. rev. (London: T. and W. Boone, 1839; Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1965), 333.
16. Ibid.

geographers that the former, by definition, only focus on time and 'write history as if it took place on the head of a pin.'[17] He quotes Henri Lefebre, claiming that space is not simply natural geography or an empty container filled by history; it is something human beings produce over time. White considers that all the questions posed about the different forms of representing space have one answer: it is about movement.

This idea of movement can be usefully explored as the motivation for Mitchell's modus operandi. On a basic level, he was always on the move, not only on his four major expeditions, and his frequent returns to Britain at a time when the trip took several months, as well as his intense involvement in different interests, but also in his method. By surveying his routes meticulously as he went, and noting and sketching every geographical feature he passed (all the while recording all the aspects of geology, botany, anthropology, astronomy and meteorology as he moved through the country), he fixed the linear progress historically in his published journals. Throughout this thesis it will be seen that the places associated with him in Victoria – the landscapes that he drew and left his mark on in naming all the mountains, ranges and rivers –he never lingered in. At, say, Mount Arapiles where he made three major images, of great complexity, influential on succeeding artists, and did much exploring and surveying of unusual lakes on the plain to the north, he arrived one evening, spent two days in the vicinity, and moved on. In other words, this creation of spatial history and a cultural identity had been done on the run, with rather more skill than recording everything on a mobile device.

Landscape

The various related concepts that underpin the ideas behind this thesis are basically covered in each chapter but, inevitably, underlying all, both and literally and figuratively, is landscape. Landscape as something experienced, something lived in and travelled through; landscape as something managed, tilled, mined and exploited; landscape as something enjoyed, illustrated and celebrated so that it becomes a metaphysical representative of a culture and its people. Simon Schama's book, *Landscape and Memory*, is a seminal text, an immense and rich telling of the relationship between land and people, art and history, and national mythologies. He ranges far and wide, having a fascination for the evolution behind

17. Richard White, *What is Spatial History*? (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Spatial History Lab, 2010).

different cultures and the idiosyncratic personalities that have made, told or painted their stories. He also gives the imprimatur for a discursive approach to research and exposition.

Ken Taylor also echoes these sentiments of the need for a sense of identity and belonging and how identity is found in landscape and place:

> Landscape therefore is not simply what we see, but a way of seeing: we see it with our eye but interpret it with our mind and ascribe values to landscape for intangible – spiritual – reasons. Landscape can therefore be seen as a cultural construct in which our sense of place and memories inhere.[18]

The challenge of exploring the physical reality of Australia Felix is how much it is still part of the Australian or Victorian cultural identity, albeit diminishing in common memory; a place of grand landscapes out there in the west of Victoria where much of it belongs to a few, while attitudes are changing towards giving a voice to those who are the spiritual inheritors of the place.

Taylor points out, however, that, internationally, there has been an increasing attention given to the study of cultural landscapes, even to the extent of recognition in 1992 of world-heritage categories of outstanding cultural landscapes. What is, in fact, little realised is that this already happened in Australia when UNESCO declared the Kanawinka Geopark in 2008 which occupies the whole volcanic southern half of what might be considered Australia Felix through to limestone landscapes of South Australia.[19]

Mitchell was the first to recognise the volcanic nature of the landscape. He evidently thought it important enough to make a superbly romantic image of the *Crater of Murroa* (*Mount Napier*) the frontispiece to Volume II of the *Three Expeditions* journal.

It is as if he is standing there, declaring, ‘This is Australia Felix’. The actual sweeping statement at the end of the book confers a spatial history on both his account and the region. Mitchell does not reveal how and when exactly he invented the phrase, but looking at the text, it was evidently hatched on his return journey around the time when writing on 23

18. Ken Taylor, *Landscape and Memory: Cultural Landscapes, Intangible Values and Some Thoughts on Asia* (Canberra: Australian National University, n.d).
19. Kanawinka Geopark. Accessed May 23, 2020. http://www.globalgeopark.org/aboutggn/list/australia/6460.htm.

September of advancing towards a range which 'resembled very much some hills of the lower Pyrenees, in Spain, only they were more grassy and less acclivitous….'[20], he added:

> Our way lay between distant ranges, which, in that direction, mingled with the clouds. Thus I had both the low country, which was without timber, and the well wooded hills, within reach, and might choose either for our route … Certainty a land more favourable for colonisation could not be found.[21]

Even the prose is poetic and spatial: 'distant ranges … mingled with the clouds' or as Taylor suggests, 'intangible – spiritual', and there was more euphoric prose in the following days. Mitchell arrived back in Sydney on 3 November 1836. On 8 November *The Australian* announced:

> The late journey, of Major Mitchell has been replete with the most important discoveries; the details of which will, there is no doubt, be laid in due time before the public. Suffice it to say therefore, for the present, that the principal object of the Major's discovery has been a tract of country some 400 or 500 miles square, and replete with the finest of possible pasturage, whether for sheep or horned cattle, irrigated by innumerable streams. The centre of this beautiful tract of country consists of a magnificent mass of mountains ; the highest of which, a peak of 7000 feet, the Major ascended. This mountain formation extends about 60 miles in length, and 30 or 40 in breadth, and forms the centre of innumerable beautiful streams, radiating in every direction from it, and watering the country above briefly described; and to which, from its surpassing beauty and fertility, the Major was induced to bestow the name of 'Australia Felix'.

This is probably the first time the term 'Australia Felix' appeared in print, together with the overenthusiastic height for Mount William in the Grampians/Gariwerd.[22] However, in the next sentence the celebration is straightaway clouded with a less happy tale:

> We are sorry to be called upon to animadvert upon a circumstance attending the expedition which, in our opinion, more than counterbalances any advantage the Colony may derive from the results of the journey in other respects ; we allude to the destruction of the Aborigines by the party in question.[23]

The Dispersion, as Mitchell called it, is addressed in Section 3.5 in Chapter 3.

Before proceeding, the writer who must be given special credit is William C. Foster, whose encyclopaedic biography of Mitchell, while not well known, is a bible for researchers into his

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20. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:277; T C Sargent *Some Peninsular Names in Australia Felix* (Ormond: Military History Australia, 1968).
21. Ibid., 2:272.
22. Mount William is 1167 m high which is only 3828 feet. 7000 feet which would make it just marginally lower than Mount Kosciuszko at 7310 ft (2228 m).
23. *The Australian*, Sydney, 8 November 1836, Trove.

life.[24] Like Cumpston with his earlier account, he died before finishing and his wife and a son had to complete the forty year labour so it is unfair to criticise. While every detail of Mitchell's life that could be found is usefully revealed, there does seem to be a preponderance of correspondence between the Colonial Office and respective governors, and names are dropped of veteran generals Mitchell might have met. Their formal portraits are all displayed, while relatively little of Mitchell's artwork is shown.

Argument

The original intention of this thesis was to expose and reveal Thomas Mitchell's remarkable but unknown work in the rare atlas of Peninsular War battles, which he assembled but was published anonymously by James Wyld in 1840. The concept was to set the maps, landscapes and battle scenes beside the illustrations in his expedition journals and his preparatory work for those; in other words to explore his whole *oeuvre.* This includes such diverse fields as delicate sketches and watercolours, the reproductive technologies of both traditional etching and innovative lithography, to the infrastructure of roads, buildings and bridges he commissioned.

This thesis began as an intellectual exercise that became a broader doctoral examination, and expounding of, the philosophies, theories and art movements of the Regency era that influenced Mitchell and his contemporaries. This approach, that might seem 'magpie' in its randomness and 'albatross' in its broad sweep, establishes that Mitchell, and his antipodean world, were interconnected with so many aspects of the Old World and the New, with the conflicts and art, ideals and industry of Europe and the Americas.[25]

Thus an understanding has to be made of the historical context of the period, particularly the major upheavals influenced by political and philosophical ideas, which had spread worldwide. The American revolution closed the British depository for convicts, for which Port Jackson was the solution, and the French revolution led to the Napoleonic wars, which drew in every nation to a global conflict. That determined the development of military cartography, and on the personal level shaped, and ultimately made, Mitchell's career. As an

24. William C. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World 1792–1855: Surveyor General of New South Wales 1828–1855* (Sydney: Institution of Surveyors NSW, 1985).
25. 'Magpie' not in terms of the mellifluous, carolling, Australian bird but the European traditional thief of bright objects.
'Albatross' because it has the widest, non-migratory, range of any bird, and because its serene unflappable appearance, following the ship, was the first sign for the voyagers to Australia that they had left the tropical doldrums and were entering the antipodes.

official, indeed senior officer, of the British colonial project in the current shifting political and social climate it is also timely to critique Mitchell's work and what he stood for.

Thesis Structure

The methodology deployed throughout this thesis is an analytical primary source study of Mitchell's writing, maps and artworks. This is evaluated using the biographies and critical essays about him and his contemporaries. In doing so this approach explores the extraordinary extent and variety of his graphic work. What emerged was a realisation of the extent of Mitchell energy, curiosity and interests combined with an ambition, self-confidence and sheer chutzpah that had him communing with, and befriending, several of the great minds of the age.

The research necessitated hunting for, with many false trails, and study of files in archives in libraries and galleries in Australia and Britain as well as an earlier visit to Spain and particularly the area around Salamanca. Initially it was to find how Mitchell made the maps but a bigger picture emerged of the extent of his artwork, and his active involvement in the cultural and scientific life in New South Wales and Britain. This led to a study of the theories and aesthetic ideas of the time that shaped his approach and artistic output. The methodology chosen is to illustrate these various philosophies or ideals through an examination and critique of the visual and literary images that Mitchell produced.

A Plan of Campaign

The first two chapters set the context of maps by a brief history of their European evolution from Greek origins to the space race, but particularly the advances in surveying and mapping by the rival nations of France and Britain in Mitchell's time; and secondly an account of the myths that pervade the maps, and the mythologies that underpin all cultures; the myths that the colonisers brought with them, and invented here; and the mythologies of the Indigenous population are considered all in the context of Mitchell's own myth-making.

Chapter 3 examines Mitchell's work and production through the lens of spatial history and the conceit of using of his Peninsular War atlas as an imitation document for his creation of the land of Australia Felix. Thus battles and peaceful encounters, landscapes and portraits can be revealed and considered in parallel, together with the work of artists who inspired Mitchell. Consequently the richly illustrated journal of his third expedition in 1836 can be

used to show the campaign, his military concept of the enterprise when he set out, as a form of mapping Australia Felix.

Chapters 4 and 5 study neoclassicism, the style and culture that coloured the art and dressed the architecture of the period, and formed the ideals of the 'Augustan' circles Mitchell moved in. The second part, chapter 5, deals with the anomaly of the central role of the nude to neoclassical art, when the human body was invisible in the European social concourse, and the irony of the ubiquitous and unselfconscious availability of nude models for an artist like Mitchell in the antipodes.

Chapters 6 and 7 investigate the other artistic theories of the time, induced by romanticism, which had been essential to Mitchell's aesthetic; the picturesque, the sublime, and the beautiful as promulgated by Burke and much debated by his followers. Thus Mitchell was able to conceptualise and publicise Australia Felix through these aesthetic theories.

The final chapters can then be understood in terms of these aesthetic principles: Chapter 8 following Mitchell's ecstatic and productive progress through Australia Felix and his return home; and Chapter 9 exploring the influences on him from his talented senior surveyor officers in the Peninsular War, revealed by the remarkable maps in the British National Archives. These enabled his work on the Atlas of the battle sites. The second part of Chapter 9 finally reaches Mitchell's work at Mount Arapiles ending the quest that started at Los Arapiles on the battlefield of Salamanca in Spain.

This happens to be at a time when the Victorian resort and climbing mecca has itself become central to a discourse about Indigenous and white Australian use of a revered landscape.

…

Chapter 1
Maps

This chapter outlines the Western development of geography and mapping from the discoveries of the ancient Greeks to the space race. In doing so it contextualises how politics and warfare had fuelled the advances in mapmaking of the eighteenth century, which produced the Ordnance Survey. It was the Napoleonic Wars, the first global conflict, that led to Thomas Mitchell's involvement in mapmaking on the Iberian Peninsula. It is by definition a spatial history because mapmaking is an art that translates space, until recently that is, onto a two-dimensional plane. It is also an aesthetic study because for maps to work it is best that they be clear and useful and interesting, and if so, they become works of beauty.

At the outset (of each chapter) it must be stated that the themes of myth and art and landscape and identity, and even the apparent prosaic delineated nature of maps, constantly intertwine and are therefore difficult to corral into discrete chapters. Simon Schama reveals how to weave such textures into a coherent narrative. His work, *Landscape and Memory*, is a profound and essential text that takes the reader through nations and cultures via their art and histories in a rich expansive narrative:

> National identity … would lose much of its ferocious enchantment without the mystique of a particular landscape tradition: its topography mapped, elaborated, and enriched as a homeland.[1]

Naturally, making maps is creating spatial history, and each stage described here that leads to Mitchell's career involves creating a national identity by domination, self-preservation or exploration. Maps and mapping are central to an account of Mitchell's life. On becoming Surveyor-General of New South Wales, he was the first to efficiently survey the spreading settled area of the colony around Sydney. He was living at a time when cartography was being developed to the standard that held until the space race which, seeded in Hitler's wartime missile development, produced modern methods of satellite technology.

1.1 From Sumer to Space

The Times Atlas of the World reminds one of the significance of maps to human existence:

1. Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Knopf Publishing, 1995), 15.

> There is a measure of truth in saying that map-making is older than agriculture. Orientation was as essential to the pre-historic hunter as was observation of the length of the day or a knowledge of the coming seasons. If the definition of a map embraces any depiction of terrain features, whether traced in sand or scratched on stone or bone, then cartography must be reckoned among the most ancient communications, preceding any system of writing by millennia.[2]

The subsequent history since a Sumerian 'world' map was chiselled on a tablet with Babylon at its centre is evidence of the both the vulnerability of maps and the venerability of cartographic science.

The Greeks used topographical methods in their colonial settlements but their main contribution to cartography was theoretical. Pythagoras and Aristotle were convinced the Earth was a sphere and Eratosthenes, a mathematician and librarian at Alexandria, calculated the circumference of the globe remarkably accurately circa 250 BC. Given the scale and breadth of the Roman Empire, it is remarkable that no map of that intercontinental expanse appears to have survived, even carved in marble or cast in bronze.

In the second century AD, Claudius Ptolemy, also at the great Library of Alexandria, set out detailed cartographic guidelines in his *Geographica*, which included how to make the distortions and compromises required to transfer the curved reality of the world onto a flat surface. These projections, as they are known, were taken up again during the renaissance when *Geographica* was rediscovered and the Portuguese, Dutch and English mariners had begun to circumnavigate the globe. The principle was perfected in 1569 by Flemish cartographer Gerard Mercator whose world map, the universal *Mercator's Projection*, is still in use today. It was Mercator who first coined the term 'atlas' to refer to a bound collection of maps.

It must be mentioned here that two Greeks were the first historians of Western culture, and in the context of the following sections, they were both writing about war. The Greek word for 'inquire' is *historein* and Heroditus was the first person to make a methodical inquiry into the past and write the first book of Greek history, namely an account of the Persian Wars.[3] In the next generation Thucydides, a military commander himself, wrote the history of the Peloponnesian Wars, the Athenians' power struggle with Sparta, from 478 to 431 BC, known as 'the Athenian Half-Century', the difference being he was analysing and recording events

2. *The Times Comprehensive Atlas of the World,* 13th ed. (London; Collins Geo, 2011), 52.
3. M. I. Finley, 'Introduction to Thucydides,' in *History of the Peloponnesian War*, M. I. Finley, ed., Rex Warner, trans. (London: Penguin Books, 1954; revised 1972), 14.

as they happened and in which he was involved. He holds great relevance not only because he clearly explains his aims and his methodology of diligent inquiries, but he is considering the broader context of Greek civilisation.

When Mitchell was starting his career that would eventually lead to his atlas it was a time when mapmaking was reaching a spatial turn, to borrow Guldi's expression.[4] Like so many improvements in life, it was warfare that encouraged developments in surveying and cartography which produced the Ordnance Survey maps.

Bonaparte's brief empire introduced all over Europe, not only the ideals of the French Revolution, but the metric system and French cartography and surveying methods, developed by Cassini in the seventeenth century. The metre was adopted in 1790 and was intended to be a proportion of the circumference of Earth which French surveyors measured at the time.[5] The complex 'imperial' system of inches to miles still feels more comfortable and human. A foot is a foot, a yard is an arm's length, a stride. It is ancient and sacred. Twelves and threes and sevens, holy and magic numbers, reoccur. Apostles – inches to a foot; the Trinity – feet to a yard, miles to a league.

Immediately notions of myth and mystery intrude on reason. The metric system is rational but meaningless. Given that the terrestrial measurement was inaccurate, inevitably with the methods then available, it has no intrinsic worth, excepting the basis of the ten digits on our hands, the decimal system. And for an irrational but practical 'yardstick', a chain of 66 feet was what Mitchell used to measure the entire traverse of Australia Felix, not that he had to handle the laborious chaining himself.[6] His team of convicts was invaluable and cheap. During a time when the Whigs had succeeded in 1833 in passing the Abolition of Slavery Bill throughout British dominions, Mitchell used convict labour on his expeditions and engineering projects, though these slaves had some redeeming chance of freedom.

4. Guldi, 'Landscape and Place,' 66–80.
5. Gabriella Bernardi, *Giovanni Domenico Cassini: A Modern Astronomer in the 17th Century* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 95–108.
6. Ann Moyal, 'Surveyors: Mapping the Distance, Early Surveying in Australia,' in *The Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, 2017), accessed 21 November 2018, http://adb.anu.edu.au/essay/22/text34969.

1.2 Knowledge and Power in France

J. B. Harley quotes Panofksky's *Formulation of Iconography*, which proposes that political power is most effectively reproduced, communicated and experienced through maps.[7] He posits that in the sociology of knowledge, knowledge is a social product of ideas brought to bear on empirical examples derived from Michel Foucault who provides a useful model for the history of map knowledge in his critique of historiography. The quest for truth is not an objective and neutral activity but is ultimately related to 'the will to power' of the truth seeker. 'Knowledge was thus a source of power, a way of presenting one's own values in the guise of scientific disinterestedness.'[8]

> Cartography can be a form of knowledge as a form of power just as the historian paints the landscape of the past in the colours of the present, so the surveyor, whether consciously or otherwise replicates not just the 'environment' in some abstract sense but equally the territorial imperative of a particular political system. Whether a map is produced under the banner of cartographic science – as most official maps have been – or whether as an overt propaganda exercise, it cannot escape involvement in the processes by which power is deployed. [9]

Louis XIV needed a proper map of France so he would know what land he controlled, or would need to possess, to make his kingdom secure. His adolescent reign was troubled by frequent regional revolts and his creation of Versailles had a practical reason of keeping his nobles under his eye in a gilded cage, away from their estates and power bases. For the man who claimed *L'etat, c'est moi*, it could be argued Rigaud's famous portrait of him, swathed in acres of ermine, velvet and golden *fleur de lys* is a depiction of France. Indeed, the Sun King constructed his vast palace as the symbolic centre of France, with sightlines of roads and avenues radiating out in every direction into infinity – the grandeur of the baroque employed to denote absolutism.

As Foucault states: 'In a society like the 17th century, the King's body was not a metaphor, but a political reality. Its physical presence was necessary for the functioning of the monarchy.'[10] Hence, though Foucault does not illustrate the concept further, at the fulcrum of the whole complex where the main axis leads to Paris, Louis placed his bedroom. Here were

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7. J. B. Harley, 'Maps, Knowledge, and Power,' in *The Iconography of Landscape*: *Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, eds. Dennis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 279.
8. Michel Foucault, 'Questions on Geography,' in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–77 by Michael Foucault*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 178.
9. Mark Poster, 'Foucault and History,' *Social Research* 49, no. 1 (1982): 116.
10. Michael Foucault, in conversation, Power/Knowledge, selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977, edited and translated by Colin Gordon and others, Pantheon Books, New York, 1980, 55.

enacted the diurnal court ceremonies of the Sun King's rising and retiring, the monotony of the ritual echoed in Mansart's repetitive facades for the constantly spreading palace, and Le Notre's rigid *parterres* and waterways.[11] Figure 12, Patel's *Aerial View of Versailles,* demonstrates this spatial control of the country, the sightlines extending far beyond the horizon.

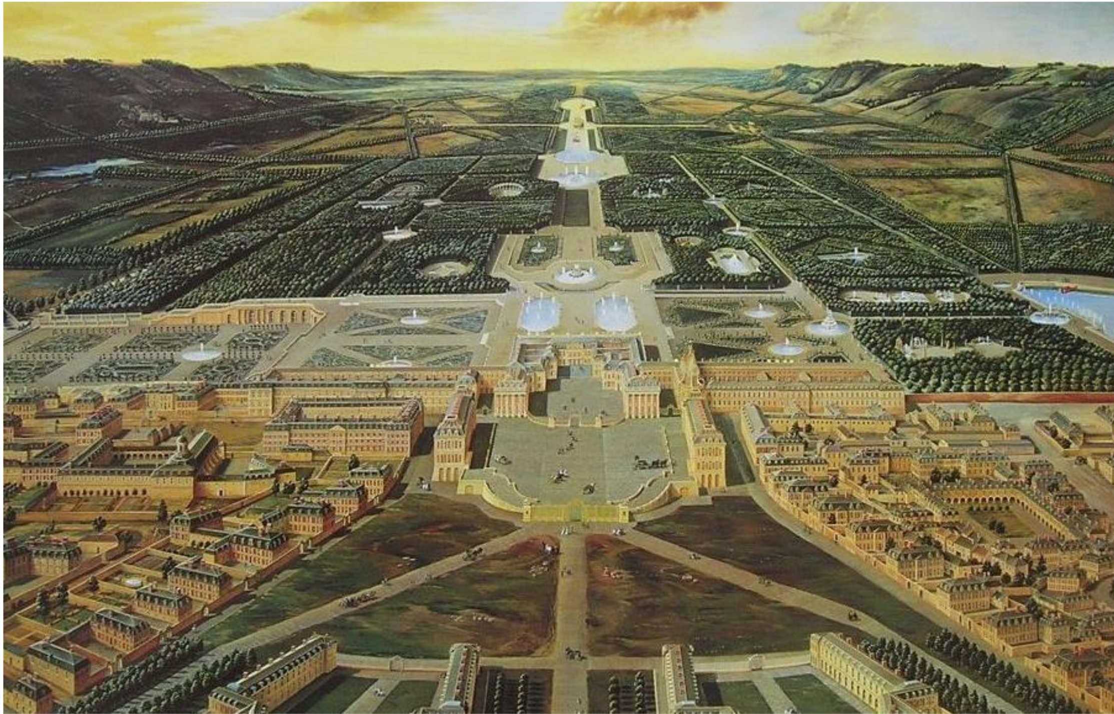

Figure 12. Pierre Patel, *Aerial View of Palace of Versailles,* 1668, oil on canvas.[12]

It has to be remembered Louis reigned for a royal record of 72 years, sleeping at the hub of his countrywide web, outliving his son and grandson, and perhaps even the ceremony itself. This map of the myth of kingship was borrowed by every court and petty princedom across Europe at the time. As a methodology for absolutism, it ultimately failed but is still imitated by despots wielding power in their own benighted countries, perhaps without the *levées* and *couches*. In fact the same geometry can be seen in the layout of such purpose-built democratic centres of power as the American and Australian national capitals, the debating chamber replacing the bedchamber – as the home of the body politic.

11. Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*, 17th ed. (London: Athone Press, 1961), 769. Jules Hardouin Mansart, 1646–1708, architect, André Le Nôtre, 1619–90, garden architect.
12. https://www.voltaire.ox.ac.uk/about-voltaire/building-castle-building-king. Patel's aerial view of Versailles was painted over a century before the Montgolfier brothers flew their balloon at Versailles, but aerial views of estates and towns were a genre of landscape painting in the seventeenth century.

For the practical methodology of political control, Louis brought the foremost astronomer of the time, Giovanni Domenico Cassini from Bologna, to set up the Paris Observatory and, in 1670, to commence the first comprehensive mapping of France.[13] Due to the accuracy of his initial astronomical measurements, France's physical extent proved to be smaller than thought at the time, and Louis was said to have grumbled that he lost more territory from Cassini's surveying than he had gained through warfare.

Using the triangulation method, Cassini and his son, and later grandson, methodically produced topographical maps of the whole of France. In fact it was the fourth generation of the Cassini family who completed the vast project of 182 sheets at the, not insignificant, date of 1789. The British Ordnance Survey, which did not come into being until the middle of the eighteenth century, would soon be put into action surveying the southern counties of England under threat from the now revolutionary French nation. In this conflict lay the seeds of Mitchell's career.

1.3 The Ordnance Survey of Scotland

In 1747 a young artist was sent north from the Tower of London as an important member of a mission to subjugate the Scots. Paul Sandby was 16 years old. His brother, Thomas, worked at the headquarters of the Ordnance Survey department in the Tower of London under the command of the Duke of Cumberland. He recommended his younger brother to the Duke to accompany the surveying team to produce sketches of the landscape to help make topographical maps of Scotland.

The Catholic Stuart rebellions had much vexed the English and when the Young Pretender, Charles Stuart, the Bonnie Prince Charlie of romantic myth, led a highland army deep into England in 1745, the Protestant Hanoverian monarchy was severely threatened. The Jacobites had reached as far south as Derby before being halted. The response was ferocious, a 'turning point' for both countries and both dynasties. The Stuart cause was crushed at the bloody Battle of Culloden in April the following year, where Cumberland acquired his sobriquet of Butcher. The Stuarts died out in exile and the Hanoverians, essentially, still remain on the throne. The Highlands could now be brought under English control. 'Redcoat' patrols had frequently been lost and ambushed in the glens, the English army having no idea where they were. The wilderness and its inhabitants required pacification. Colonel David Watson, the

13. Bernardi, *Giovanni Domenico Cassini*, 95–108.

Quartermaster of North Britain (the same military administrative office as Mitchell's intelligence commander, General Murray, would have in the Peninsular War) decided the survey would begin in the far north and work south. So the precocious younger Sandby travelled into the recent war zone, far into the highlands north of Inverness, to start working with the team of surveyors as well as make his own sketches for pleasure.[14]

Apart from the boy-artist's tender age, the remarkable fact of this operation was that it shows the immediate alliance between surveying and art, between the science of cartography and the art of landscape, and that this symbiosis feeds through to the results on the sheets of paper, the appearance and iconography of the maps themselves. This was happening just as the English interest in landscape emerged, with the first homegrown school of art, notably artists working in watercolour out in the landscape, and Sandby, with a long career ahead of him, became known as the father of English landscape art.

Schama points out the changes in taste in Sandby's career. The early views of the mountains have their wilder appearance tamed to more gentle rounded English contours. His *View in Strathtay* of 1747, for instance, he would later rework as an engraving to emphasise the craggier aspects with higher, more jagged peaks, the picturesque giving way to romanticism, to an enjoyment, not fear, of harsher more dramatic landscapes.[15] Sandby's prolific output of large-scale watercolours are always well executed and charming but never quite achieve the bold compositions of the next generation of artists such as Turner, Girtin and Cotman. Later in life he was to teach draughtsmanship at the Artillery school at Woolwich, showing the direct involvement of artists with the military.[16] The cadets were taught how to draw topography and so learn how to describe and interpret the landscape.

George B. Campion, a member of the Royal Institution, was also the Drawing Master at Woolwich Military Academy. His *Coastal Artillery Battery* (Figure 13) shows how the trainee gunners would have been taught how to draw in a loose, confident style, essential for giving a rapid but clear impression of the topography in the field on campaign.

14. Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 465.
15. Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 467.
16. Huon Mallalieu, *Country Life*, December 2018.

Figure 13. George Bryant Campion, *Coastal Artillery Battery Overlooking the Medway*, ca.1840, pencil and watercolour.[17]

Thus from its inception the Ordnance Survey was closely allied to art. This produced a mapping methodology of great clarity, convenience and beauty, which is still in use today in Britain. It became the system to manage the country for taxation and the cadastral information of property boundaries. The Scottish 'colonisation' was part of the exercise to bring Scotland into the English fold, recruiting clans into the Georgian kingdom by ennobling their chieftains. It is notable that many of the historical characters in this thesis from the Peninsular to Australia were fellow Scots to Mitchell. As Linda Colley neatly puts it: 'Scotland ceased to be a nuisance and became the arsenal of the Empire.'[18]

1.4 The Ordnance Survey of England

J. P. Harley, taking a Foucaultian view, argues that mapping is entirely about establishing power and domination, whether domestic or colonial.[19] This was obviously true in Scotland after 1745, but the first co-ordinated Ordnance Survey in England was conducted of the southern counties when under direct threat from Napoleon's intention to invade. And the OS maps as they are known continue to be used today, by the general public to get around their own country, with regular publishing of new editions, the meaning and connotation of the word ordnance long forgotten.

17. Courtesy of a private collection.
18. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 130.
19. J. B. Harley, 'Theoretical perspectives,' 279.

This mapping term is not familiar in Australia and, with regard to the iconography of maps, is markedly absent. The maps of Australia may be accurate, with a good variety of scales and the contours demonstrate the labours of generations of noble and energetic surveyors, but they give little sense of the lie of the land. The most commonly used interpretation of the surveys are the road atlases. The maps within give minimal information beyond the roads themselves. The terrain is a blank, invisible, literal space, a negation of a platform for spatial and cultural history.

The One Inch to the Mile Scale maps describe the land in clear but intimate detail – every copse and house, church and school, ancient hill fort and motorway service station is shown within the easily readable contours of the topography. They have been superseded by the 1:25.000 series with the same format and clear iconography. Each map can be read like a book. They are the favoured possession of hikers and cyclists and explorers, the origin of the word 'ordnance' long forgotten. Figs A and B compare an English and an Australian map of the same 1:50,000 scale, an area of the county of Somerset in the West Country and an area to the north west of Ballarat.

Figure 14 shows the southern half of the UK 1:50.000 scale Ordnance Survey map of *Weston-super-Mare and Bridgwater Sheet 182* map showing an area of Somerset including the cathedral town of Wells, the abbey town of Glastonbury and the low-lying Somerset levels. It is of particular interest because it is traversed by the so-called St Michael ley line, which extends across southern England at an angle of 22 degrees from St Michaels Mount near Lands End in Cornwall to Bury St Edmunds in East Anglia. It transects several churches named for St Michael and St George, the dragon slayers. It is shown here exactly crossing the symbols for the parish churches of North Petherton, Westonzoyland,[20] Greinton, Ashcott, a church in Glastonbury and, most spectacularly, along the nave of the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey (see Figure 15). The Tor, with its picturesque tower, stands to the east. It could be a coincidence but six alignments on the same map is curious. The area is steeped in legend; of Arthur and Avalon and Joseph of Arimathea and continually evoked at every singing of Blake's *Jerusalem.* The line continues in a north easterly direction to the Neolithic site of

20. The site of the Battle of Segdgemoor in 1685, the defeat of the Monmouth Rebellion against James II. There is a parallel with events in Australia in the ruthless treatment of anyone suspected of involvement with the uprising. At the infamous 'Bloody Assizes', conducted by Judge Jefferies, hundreds were sentenced to be hanged, or drawn and quartered, but hundreds more were sent to penal servitude in America. And for the 'indigenous' population of the West Country the episode has never been forgotten, the places of execution, such as oak trees and arches, pointed out in passing.

Avebury in Wiltshire and to the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk on the other side of the county, a monastery the equal in power and wealth to Glastonbury before the Reformation.

Figure 14. Ordnance Survey map of *Weston-super-Mare and Bridgwater*, 1:50.000, Sheet 182, southern half.

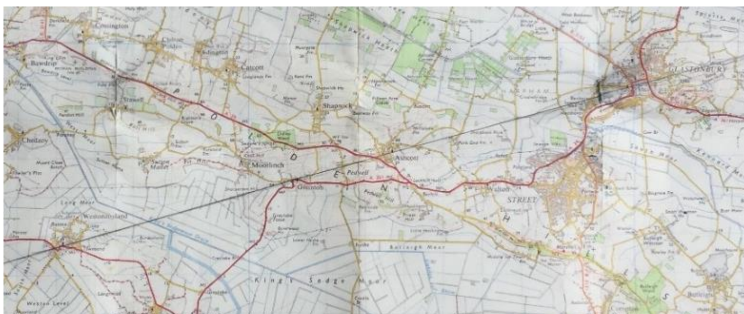

Figure 15. Detail from Figure 14: Westonzoyland to Glastonbury.

Figure 16. Detail of top left of map in Figure 14

If the St Michael line is said to contain the dragon power, in an ancient cycle of death and rebirth, perhaps the source of the modern dragon power could be thought to emanate from top left of this section of the map on the coast of the Bristol Channel (see Figure 16). This is the site of Hinkley Point power station, currently largest such nuclear reactor in the world.

Figure 17, Vicmap *Creswick 7623* 1:50.000 scale Topographic Map Series, shows the area to the north west of Ballarat, traversed by the Sunraysia Highway travelling north-west from Ballarat off the map and Learmonth towards Lexton.

Figure 17. Vicmap Creswick *7623* 1:50.000 scale Topographic Map Series, showing the area to the north west of Ballarat, traversed by the Sunraysia Highway from Learmonth to Lexton.

Figure 18 shows the north west corner of the Creswick map. Mitchell's easterly returning route passed through today's Lexton and on past Mount Mitchell, a hill he did not himself name, or mention.

Figure 18. Detail of the NW corner of the Creswick map.

'Ordnance' as the Oxford dictionary simply states means 'weapons' or 'artillery'. Each OS road or hiking map, an apparently peaceful artefact, is in theory, and name, a military map. This might seem a morsel of interesting trivia, but it illustrates a central theme of this thesis: the close relationship between mapping and art and war. Mitchell continued this tradition in his own work. In fact, this thesis contends that his maps are works of landscape art in themselves.

1.5 Peninsular War Mapping – An Erratic Archival Methodology

> A copy of the Ordnance Survey map of Spain and Portugal may be viewed in the Department of Special Collections in the University of Liverpool's Sydney Jones Library.[21]

Colonel Nick Lipscombe's bald statement in a footnote to the Preface of his hefty guide to the Peninsular War battlefields grabs attention. It was apparently the only reference linking an Ordnance Survey to Spain and Portugal, where Mitchell cut his teeth as a military surveyor and mapmaker. Earlier online research in the Liverpool University Library website reached nowhere until an email before an impending visit to the UK produced a helpful answer for a map which however had no mention of Ordnance Survey in the title. Much correspondence with the University of Liverpool took some time to establish what sort of a map it was, for there was nothing of that precise title. A helpful librarian did send a link to what he thought might be the correct catalogue reference. No image was available and no further information forthcoming, so arrangements were made to view the artefact if a visit to Liverpool was feasible. In the UK, a window of opportunity opened, and the Sydney Jones Library was eventually found in a fraught expedition into an unfamiliar city. After intense security checks the artefact was waiting in a large black box on a low table in a small room.

The 1812 small-scale chart of the whole of the Iberian Peninsula indeed had no apparent mention of the word ordnance, and apart from its antiquity, fine condition, and the illegibly ornate calligraphy of its title, it seemed of passing interest. Studying the few hastily snapped photographs afterwards, the title is worded exactly, in elaborate cursive script, as the catalogue entry (see Figure 19):

> *Military Map of Spain and Portugal compiled from the Nautical Surveys of Don Vincent Tofiño, the New Provincial Maps of Don Thomas Lopez, the Large Map of the Pyrenees by Roussell and and various original documents. London, published by John Stockdale, Piccadilly, 1812.*

21. Lipscombe, *The Peninsular War Atlas*, 10.

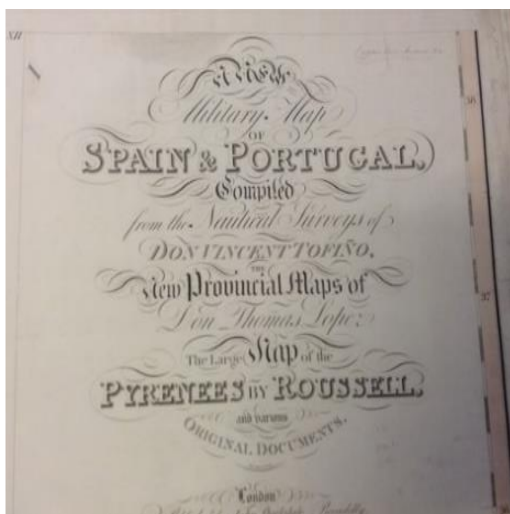

Figure 19. Title page of the *Lopez Map of Spain and Portugal*, 1812.

Figure 20. The *Lopez Map of Spain and Portugal*

It was, I presumed, produced for Wellington and Quartermaster-General Murray and the army command in general. The words Military Map are inscribed in sloping script, so fine as to be almost unnoticeable, but if Lipscombe had only been able to read the catalogue reference one can only assume he equated the word 'military' with 'ordnance'. After the severe shortage of maps in the earlier part of the peninsular campaign it would have been some use in the latter two years but it is too small a scale for detailed information on the ground. If Mitchell had access to a copy it would have been little help for his detailed surveys.

Later, re-reading Richard Smith's extensive research in his article 'Peninsular War Cartography' so many questions were answered.[22] At the outset, he explains who López and Tofiño were. Tomás López Vargas de Machua trained in Paris for nine years under d'Anville, the leading French cartographer of the eighteenth century, and produced the 36 provincial maps of Spain of which both Wellington and the French general, André Masséna, possessed sets. López based his data on the results of questionnaires sent to local dignitaries, who were mostly priests, which was a somewhat hit-and-miss methodology to say the least, and he calculated his distances had on an average an error of 12 percent.[23] Vicente Tofiño de San Miguel charted the entire Iberian coastline using two survey ships and employing

22. Richard H. P. Smith, 'Peninsular War Cartography: A New Look at the Military Mapping of General Sir George Murray and the Quartermaster General's Department,' *Imag\o Mundi: The International Journal for the History of Cartography* 65, no. 2 (2013): 234–252.
23. R. Smith, 'Peninsular War Cartography,' 250.

triangulation methods and astronomical observations. It was the first scientific mapping of the Iberian Peninsula, and his charts were of great value to the British naval captains.

Now I knew the characters in Smith's account better and the events they were involved in, I could read their actions, not as footnotes in another's history project, but as personalities interacting in my own narrative. I could even see gaps in Smith's telling, understandable given the breadth of the subject for one person researching material in half a dozen countries in as many languages for one conference paper. His extensive endnotes reveal that of Sir George Murray's archive, which he bequeathed to the National Library of Scotland, 'those relating to the Peninsular War period exceed 10,000 folios.'[24] Describing a rare sketch map, Smith remarks: 'The vast majority of the sketches of this type were undoubtedly destroyed soon after use. We owe it to Murray's squirrel instinct that so many have survived.[25]

He refers to 'many small-sized sketch maps held in the manuscripts department and 76 large-sized cartographic documents held in the map department', a possibly invaluable resource of great extent requiring a trip to Edinburgh. Of the other archives he accessed, the most mentioned are at the British Library and the British Army Museum as well as national libraries and archives in Madrid, Lisbon and Paris. The Royal Green Jackets Museum, in Winchester, Mitchell's regiment, is even mentioned for a quote. Of the National Archives, Smith admits he has relied heavily on Dr John Peaty of the UK Ministry of Defence for relevant maps, and separately cites a paper Peaty presented at an international congress of military history in Oporto.[26] It is not clear if that is the same source. Either way, it suggests he might not have even seen that remarkable cartographic trove in Kew, for the reader is not led there, particularly to the fine artistry of Sturgeon, Bainbrigge, and Pierrepoint whose work he describes in other archives.

When writing about *Wyld's Atlas,* Smith credits Murray with organising 'the most important QMG cartographic historical record of Peninsular War battles'[27] and tells of him sending Mitchell back to the Peninsula to improve on existing surveys of battle sites and make new ones. However, it reads as if that expedition took place sometime between 1814 and 1840, and Smith seems unaware of how Mitchell was able to work with Murray on the publication

24. R. Smith, 'Peninsular War Cartography,' 249.
25. Ibid., 241
26. John Peaty, 'Wellington's Surveyors and Mapmakers in the Peninsula' (paper presented at the 35th International Congress of Military History in Oporto, Portugal, August 31–September 5, 2009, and published in the corresponding *Acta*, (Lisbon, Commissaõ Portuguese de Historia milita, 2012).
27. R. Smith, 'Peninsular War Cartography,' 246.

26 years after the campaign ended. In fact, he concludes the article with the strange statement that *Wyld's Atlas* 'played no part in the outcome of the Peninsular War.'[28] In the same sentence, while setting the Atlas as an excellent tribute to the memory of Murray (though Wyld had carelessly, or perversely, omitted both his name and Mitchell's from the credits), he muses 'why Murray did not lavish the same care and attention on the more practical cartographic activities required in the field during the war.'[29] Having said at the outset that Murray 'was no mapmaker'[30] and 'completely ignorant of what a military plan should be,'[31] the reason would appear to be that he was fully occupied with the whole business of running the management and provision of an entire army on campaign while overseas for six long years.

Not quite for the full term, for the proof of his abilities was evinced when he was arbitrarily removed from his post by the Duke of York who, without consulting Wellington, appointed the incompetent and untrustworthy Sir James Willoughby Gordon as QMG. The infamous retreat from Burgos to Ciudad Rodrigo in November 1812 led to the deaths of thousands of soldiers from starvation, cold and exhaustion when rations sent in the wrong direction meant the army went hungry. An unhappy Mitchell reconnoitring the route in torrential rain wrote that 'at one time I did go without having food or rest for four nights in succession.'[32]

To Wellington's relief, Murray was reappointed and returned to the Peninsula in March 1813.[33] For this thesis, Murray's employment of such talents as Sturgeon, Bainbrigge, and Pierrepoint, but above all his constant support of Mitchell throughout his life, completely negates any criticism of Murray's mapping abilities. Curiously, Smith cites Ian Robertson's elegant *An Atlas of the Peninsular War* of 2010, but does not mention Col Nick Lipscombe's much heftier *The Peninsular War Atlas* published in the same year.

Smith also puts myopic chauvinism into perspective when he compares the mapping training for British officers with other nations. Judging by their maps, the Spanish and Portuguese military cartographers, all trained engineers, had better accuracy and draftmanship, and provided better information. Meanwhile, France was the leading cartographic nation in the

28. Ibid., 249.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., 237.
31. Ibid.
32. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 29.
33. Ibid., 33.

eighteenth century, and Napoleon improved on the standards set by Louis XIV and the generations of the Cassini family.[34]

Conclusion

This was where the methodology of mapping had advanced to when Mitchell was starting his career, an inevitable development of the contest between two main powers of the time, France and Britain. The next chapter delves into the myths behind maps and traces how the imagined lands beyond the known world dropped away as navigators surveyed new coastlines and cartographers sought to not only record their findings accurately but to ingeniously present the curved globe on a flat sheet. The myths that the colonisers brought and the beliefs the Indigenous inhabitants held are considered along with Mitchell's self-mythologising of his place in history and his ultimate mythological creation of Australia Felix.

34. This is further explored in Chapter 9.2.

Chapter 2

Myths

Myths are as much a part of history as the facts for all myths hold essential truths and the memories that feed myths are what a community's or a country's identity is made of. Spatial history was legend. Maps feature much here because the myths used to fill in the blank spaces on the maps. Thus while history and mythologies interweave and do not just belong to the past, maps do map a historiographical progress towards truth and enlightenment.

This chapter will look at the variety of myths from mediaeval speculations about a southern continent to Mitchell's own self-mythologising. The mythologies of the different groups in Australia are examined from the Indigenous populations as recorded by the Dawsons, to the Squatters own myths and the whites affecting an indigeneity. The origin of the intangible term Australia Felix itself is discussed and finally a descent into a cave of fossils reveals changes in Mitchell's belief systems. The question of songlines is considered in relation to the myth of ley lines and whatever 'lies beneath' in our varied histories.

2.1 The Myth of a Southern Continent

Australia was a myth before it became a reality.

The first myth concerns the continent itself, for in European minds, Australia was a myth long before it was ostensibly discovered by Europeans. Most mythologies happen the other way round. The stories of events that took place, and of people who might have lived, get distorted into fantastical accounts that form the folklore and self-identity of a society. Like many facets of Australia things happened the other way round, it is part of the antipodean mythology itself, a national perversity, an upside-down world where the trees shed their bark more enthusiastically than their leaves, the swans are black, and strange creatures, unlike any others on earth, cavort and crawl.

Early Western geographers considered that the world was divided into three parts – Asia, Europe and Africa – and in the Middle Ages the map representing this concept was the ingeniously simple diagram of the *Orbis Terrarum*: a T inside a circle (see Figure 21). As the name implies, the idea that the world was a sphere, which the ancient Greeks had realised, was generally accepted, but that obviously led to conceptual problems. The map shows the upper part of the globe, with the outer circle representing the unnavigable river 'ocean' that,

according to Macobean geography, girdled the earth. Asia lies above the crossing of the T with the east at the top where the sun rises, where the Garden of Eden was thought have been, and where Paradise lay. Europa and Africa, each half the size of Asia, fill the respective lower left and right quadrants. The vertical trunk of the T represents the Mediterranean Sea and the horizontal arms the Red and Indian seas. This tripartite geography was biblical, with the segmentation of the world being between Noah's three sons after the Flood: Shem received Asia; Ham, Africa; and Japheth, Europe. It was a simple Christian diagram, and Jerusalem lay at the centre. Everyone had their place in God's order of the world – but things would get complicated thanks to curiosity and trade, let alone the Tower of Babel, that origin of languages and conflict.

Figure 21. *Orbis Terrarum*, 15th century.[1]

Figure 22. Burgo de Osma, Spain, 1096.[2]

Most national myths evolve from a collective memory of events that had happened long before recorded history and form part of a nation's, or region's, consciousness. The Indigenous inhabitants of Australia had their own myths but care has to be taken with the belief systems of other people's cultures, to not confuse myth and religion, or superstition with profound spirituality.

What makes a belief a myth – as opposed to a religious canon, a superstition, or science – is the property of the people who hold that belief. Aristotle established the earth was a globe in the third century BC and Eratosthenes of Cyrene accurately calculated the circumference of

1. Copy of Isodore of Sevilla's 'T and O' map, ca. 636.
2. Accessed May 23, 2020, https://www.catedralburgodeosma.com.

the earth around 200 BC.[3] Magellan did not circumnavigate the globe in 1522. He was killed in the Philippines, trying to convert the locals to Christianity, but his completed expedition, 'captured the increasing global awareness of the earth, and gave its rulers a powerful object, the orb, to hold in their hands as they proclaimed dominion over the whole world.'[4]

A version of the T and O map, the *Osama Beatus*, showed a fourth continent, for it was considered that there had to be a southern landmass to counterbalance the weight of the other three. (Figure 22) The logical problem with this theory was the question it posed. What was to stop the Antipodes, the name for the people living on the other side the world, from just falling off? Thus everything about that region would have to be outlandish and bizarre, an inversion of the known world. The inhabitants would have feet on their heads, they would perhaps be hermaphrodites, and everything abnormal could be attributed to the Antipodes as a place. A variation on the feet and the 'upside-down-ness' enigma were the frequently illustrated 'skiapods' – one-legged inhabitants of the antipodes with an enormous foot they used as a shade from the scorching sun in the torrid regions.[5]

Thus an Austral continent existed in the European mind long before it was 'discovered'. Another continent had to be down there, and even as cartography rapidly became more sophisticated, due to the findings of Portuguese and Dutch navigators. As Simon Ryan styles it, 'The mercantorial revolution in cartography failed to dislodge the notion of the necessity of an antipodal balancing landmass.'[6] In other words, the fourth continent remained as an imagined feature, and *Terra Australis Incognita* began to appear on world maps.
Ortelius published his *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, which is considered to be the first modern atlas, in 1570, the year after his friend, Geradus Mercantor, produced his world map that employed his influential projection. This invention, which portrays the curved surface on the flat plane, was invaluable for navigators who could not easily plot a course on a curved surface; the co-ordinates would remain accurate, but of course, it would progressively distort landmasses the closer they were to the poles. It is still in use today. It is unpopular in contemporary thinking because it makes the northern European former colonial powers appear larger than in reality when compared to the truer proportions of their tropical colonies.

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3. Jerry Brotton, A History of the World in Twelve Maps (London: Penguin, 2013), 30–32, 36–38.
4. Ibid., 232.
5. Ryan, The Cartographic Eye, 108
6. Ibid., 114.

Ortelius's world map (see Figure 23) achieves a compromise, evoking the latitude and longitude of the globe on the level page. And across the south stretches a vast continent, not quite as inflated as by Mercator's method, called *Terra Australis Nondum* (not yet) *Cognita*.

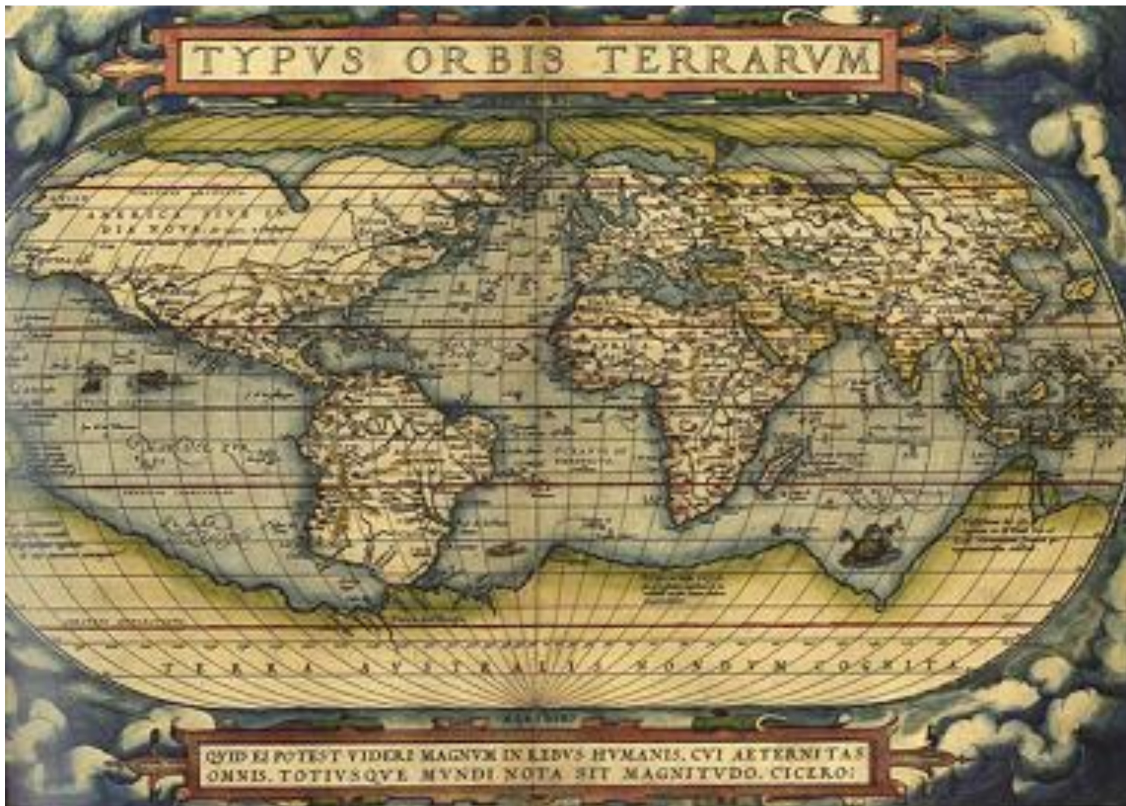

Figure 23. Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, 1570.[7]

The inscription Ortelius has placed under his map is by the Roman orator, Cicero, which translates as: 'What can seem of moment in human occurrences to a man who keeps all eternity before his eyes and knows the vastness of the universe?'[8]

This is the humanist choice of a freethinker. It is easy to forget the troubled times Mercator and Ortelius lived in, when being caught in the wrong city in Flanders with the wrong prayer book or harbouring heretical views, such as an un-biblical cosmology, could mean arrest and being burnt at the stake. Mercator, philosophically a Stoic, was imprisoned for eight months in 1544 for suspected Lutheran sympathies and released without charge as others were being executed.[9] William Tyndale had met that unhappy fate eight years before for the heinous crime of translating the Bible into English. These violent religious struggles about mythical

7. Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, 1570, in John Hessler, *MAP: Exploring the World* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 2015), 229.
8. Brotton, *A History of the World*, 258.
9. Ibid., 240.

and trivial matters to the rational mind were to tear central Europe apart. The conflict between the Catholic Habsburg controlled states and the Protestant independent Netherlands and German principalities within the Holy Roman Empire were not to end for another century when the Peace of Westphalia wound up the most destructive of modern conflicts, the Thirty Years War, with the bravely forged emergence of the ideal of the Nation State.

It is worth mentioning these apparently remote issues because the Europeans who 'invaded' Australia, a word which seems reasonable in context, came from a continent defined by warfare to one where the population lived in a carefully self-managed, relatively harmonious state that did not have destructive conflict or ambitious rulers. Mitchell and his ilk were players in the next major pan-European struggle, the Napoleonic wars, and there had been no lack of other wars during the intervening century and a half since Westphalia. In contrast, on his fourth expedition Mitchell wrote of his guide Yuranigh showing him an acacia tree and telling him that a bough of this tree is thrown into a waterhole to poison fish. He added: 'They are too honest and fair in their fights to think of poisoning their weapons.'[10]

Blaeu's immense, and very beautiful, world map printed in Amsterdam in 1648 to celebrate the independence of the Dutch Republic gained in one of the Treaties of Westphalia, is the first to show Australia (see Figure 24). As official cartographer to the Dutch East India Company, Blaeu had access to 50 years of Dutch commercial voyages.[11] His map shows the outline of the western half of the continent from the Great Australian Bight to the Gulf of Carpentaria, called *Hollandia Nova detecta* 1644, together with Abel Tasman's plotting of the south coast of an island far to the south-east, which was named after that adventurer 200 years later (see Figure 25). There is no attempt to fill in the blanks with imagined lands. Tasman's coast floats in the void, a symbol of myth being dispelled by rationalism.

10. Thomas L. Mitchell, *Journal of an Expedition into the Interior of Tropical Australia: In Search of a Route from Sydney to the Gulf of Carpentaria* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1848), 372.
11. Brotton, *A History of the World*, 261.

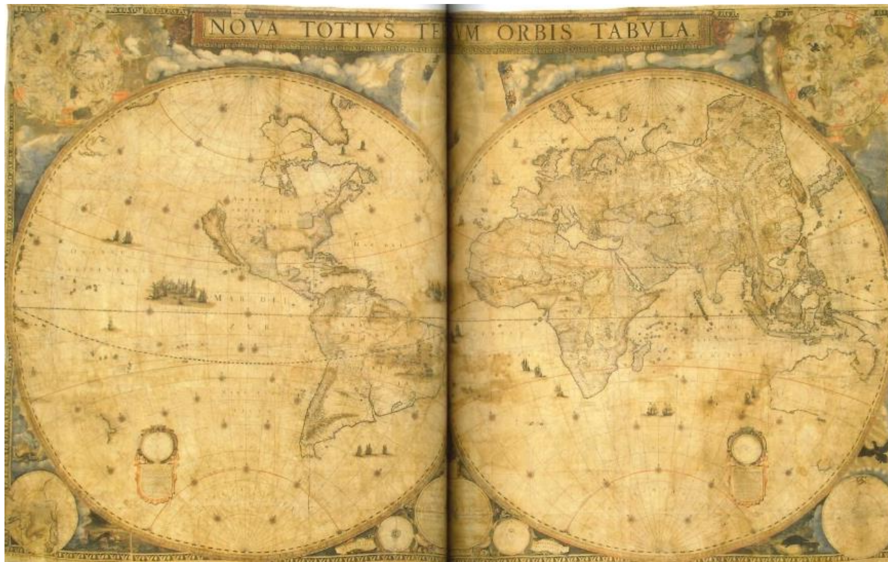

Figure 24. Joan Blaeu, *Nova Totius Terrarum Orbis Tabula* World Map, 1648. Brotton, *A History of the World,* 132, plate 40.

Figure 25. Joan Blaeu, detail of Figure 24, showing the south Tasmanian coastline.

In Amsterdam, the proud burghers re-created the whole map in marble to form the floor of the new city hall – now in less republican times the royal palace – for a king who happens to be a modern navigator, a professional airline pilot with KLM.[12]

12. KLM inflight magazine, October 2019. The initials happen to translate as Royal Dutch Airlines.

2.2 Mitchell's Self-Mythologising

> A network of classical and medieval myths is found in explorers' constructions of Australia, and especially in the metaphoric references to mapping within their texts.[13]

Mitchell's accounts of his expeditions in the three volumes he published are laced with biblical allusions and classical and British mythologies, which is understandable given that they were the reference points of an educated man of his time. He had made sure he was well read following up on his curtailed attendance at Edinburgh University, which he left the while still of school age. The records are scant but evidently that was quite normal at the time.[14] As a skilled and experienced surveyor, he would have been keen to impress his readers with his erudition and knowledge of subjects far outside his profession. Indeed, his translation of the Portuguese epic poem of love and seafaring, *The Lusiad of Luis de Camoens*[15] was a work of scholarship and poetry, written, he was delighted to boast, 'under water, in a small clipper, during a voyage round Cape Horn'[16] – thus confecting and enhancing his own mythology.

What a brave and intrepid fellow Mitchell was, and by linking his name to both the subject of the poem, the first great Portuguese mariner and discoverer of the route to India, Vasco da Gama, and the author of the seminal work of Portuguese literature, he was weaving himself into a mythology of exploration, pioneering seafarers, adventure, poetry and romance. Camoens was himself a soldier and adventurer in India and the Orient, holding posts in Goa and Macau, and in writing *The Lusiad*, an account of da Gama's voyage of discovery, which established a sea route to India, in the form of a Homeric epic poem, he became the greatest poet of the Portuguese language.

It was typically enterprising and audacious of Mitchell to attempt such a feat, the translation of the centrepiece of another nation's culture. Mitchell had learnt about Camoens when in Portugal carrying out the Peninsular War surveys, and he became especially moved by the tragic love story between the Lusiad of Dom Pedro and Ines de Castro. While convalescing from an illness in Coimbra, brought upon by surveying in harsh conditions, a friend took Mitchell to the Quinta de Lacrimas (Garden of Tears) where Ines had been murdered at the

13. Ryan, *The Cartographic* Eye, 105.
14. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 7.
15. Thomas L. Mitchell, *The Lusiad of Luis de Camoens,* closely translated (London: T. & W. Boone, 1854).
16. Ibid., viii.

Fonte dos Amores.[17] Mitchell must have sketched the scene for it is the only illustration in his version of the poem.

The publication received high praise in the *Illustrated Sydney News*, where it succeeded 'in placing before the English reader *The Lusiad* itself – as Camoens would have given it, if it had been written in the English language,'[18] while Richard Burton, the explorer, Arabist and writer,[19] himself a translator of the work in 1880, dismissed the endeavour as 'rude literalism.'[20] What it certainly established was a masterwork in Mitchell's crafting of his own mythology, of putting himself in the same league as national heroes and cultural leaders.

He introduces the poem with an elaborate preface written in the third person:

> The historical comparisons and classical allusions by which the poet elucidates events and dignifies his reflections seem not the least important features in the poem. His mythological and allegorical personages may perhaps be allowed to belong to the scenery, machinery, dresses and decoration, while –
>
> The poet's eye in a fine phrenzy calling
> Glances from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven.
>
> Never overstepping withal the modesty of nature in describing natural phenomena – but on the contrary imputing to the most truthful descriptions of the grand and sublime conceptions of poetic and potential(?) genius; while he never fails to do as much(?) justice to what is ideal, immortal and invisible. The effect of contrast is also of seafaring in that uttermost sub-Antarctic passage named after Magellan himself. He was associating himself with the great pioneering Portuguese seafarers who, with the Dutch mariners, opened up the world to Europe and charted it.

Ross Gibson writes of the mythmaking of both Mitchell and his rival, in Mitchell's resentful eyes, Charles Sturt; that of setting out on a quest and travelling through Purgatory to a 'reward land'. Mitchell's jealousy of Sturt began when he was kept in his official post in Sydney while Sturt, whom he considered an amateur, was given the commission to explore the Murray River. Gibson notes the remarkable similarities between the achievements of the two writers in contrast to their very different characters. Sturt had the glory of reaching the mouth of the greatest of Australia's rivers, though Mitchell was highly critical of him not surveying his route. Mitchell's reward was finding and taking possession of the Paradise of

17. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 64–65.
18. Ibid., 466.
19. Or as Wikipedia describes him: (Sir Richard Francis Burton KCMG FRGS; 19 March 1821 – 20 October 1890) explorer, geographer, translator, writer, soldier, orientalist, cartographer, ethnologist, spy, linguist, poet, fencer, and diplomat. He was famed for his travels and explorations in Asia, Africa and the Americas, as well as his extraordinary knowledge of languages and cultures. According to one count, he spoke 29 European, Asian and African languages.[1]Wiki. - which perhaps qualifies him to critique the Surveyor-General.
20. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 465.

Australia Felix. Gibson quotes Mitchell: ‘Of this Eden it seemed I was the only Adam; and it was indeed a sort of paradise to me.’[21]

Gibson analyses the contemporary literature on the Aborigines who lived in this garden, mostly expressed in biblical and classical terms, from idealised noble savage in Arcadia to their degradation and loss, citing Mitchell again:

> We cannot occupy the land without producing a change, fully as great to the Aborigines as that which took place on man’s fall and expulsion from Eden … we bring them punishments even before they know the shame of nakedness.[22]

In fact Mitchell wrote this, not about Australia Felix, but during, or after, his fourth expedition in 1846 into the ‘tropical’ north when he had had time to consider the inevitable and irreversible consequences of occupation of the land he had promoted with such enthusiasm.

That last expedition was an extravagant example of Mitchell’s mythmaking. He was convinced that a great river ran north west across the continent, or at least to the Gulf of Carpentaria which would somehow give passage to a trade route to Singapore and India.[23] He had to make do with the discovery of a seasonal stream he called the River Salvator, after his favourite artist, Rosa, which flowed past a row of rocky peaks he named the Martin Range after his tutor in sepia.[24] On his black and white map of the area this has expanded to a Lake Salvator highlighted with an exclusive application of aquamarine blue.[25] Carter points out that Mitchell actually constructs his account of the discovery of the adjacent Victoria River in the same manner as Camões describes da Gama’s discovery of India in the *Lusiads*.[26] Prospective settlers seemed equally convinced by Mitchell’s mythology. Of Lake Salvator, Finlayson reports: ‘So compelling has been the myth that Mitchell started that it has been accepted unquestioningly by all who have subsequently been associated with the area.’[27]

21. Ross Gibson, *The Diminishing Paradise: Changing Literary Perceptions of Australia* (Sydney: Sirius Book, 1984), 119.
22. Ibid., 172. Quoting from Mitchell, *Journal of an Expedition into the Interior of Tropical Australia,* 65–66.
23. Mitchell, *Journal of an Expedition into the Interior of Tropical Australia*, 1–3.
24. Ibid., plate 8, *The River Salvator, 5th Sept*.
25. Ibid., 189. Map V.
26. Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, 129.
27. Ibid., 135.

2.3 Squatter Mythology

The white dominant mythology of the occupation of a bountiful virgin land and the creation of the Western District became somewhat tarnished in the last century and was never such a popular national story compared to, say, that of the American West. It was in a smaller area, and the successful squatters settled on their sheep runs, built their homesteads, and worked hard. The ones that prospered enlarged their properties and their homesteads and, as celebrated by Margaret Kiddle, these squatters, the majority of whom were dour Calvinist Scots, became a homegrown ascendancy known as the squattocracy.[28] This ruling class, many of whom entered parliament, replaced the failed version of an English gentry society transplanted from Britain, who lost wealth in the 1842–44 depression and were further diminished by the goldrushes.[29]

Cathcart makes a point that the pioneer settlers in NSW who moved out beyond the mountains and beyond the reach of government inspectors, were naturally hard working tough men of few words who didn't write their own histories. The 'first hand' accounts of the early squatting era were written by their children from interviewing their parents. The history of the early expansion into the hinterland was written by the explorers 'an elite who in number were about the size of a football team,'[30]

The local Indigenous population was decimated all too quickly by epidemics of smallpox or other infections which had spread ahead of white settlement, but it took a long time for the truth of the other reason for their disappearance to be remembered. This was the ruthless slaughter of whole Aboriginal groups and families as reprisals for the stealing of sheep and cattle and the murder of settlers. It was a frontier war, which unlike the Wild West, slipped from the general consciousness. As Stanner said in his 1968 Boyer Lecture, 'The Great Australian Silence', about what was missing from the mainstream histories, what he called a 'national memory loss':

> Inattention on such a scale cannot possibly be explained by absent-mindedness. It is a structural matter, a view from a window, which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape. What may well have begun as a simple forgetting of other possible views turned under habit and over time into something like a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale. We have been able for so long to

28. Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria, 1834–1890* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996).
29. Paul de Serville, *Port Phillip Gentlemen* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980).
30. Michael Cathcart, *The Water Dreamers: The Remarkable History of Our Dry Continent* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2009), 123.

> disremember the Aborigines that we are now hard put to keep them in mind even when we most want to do so. (Stanner 1974, pp. 24 and 25) [31]

There was a considerable amount of political and legal activity from the foundation of Mebourne in 1835 and the spread of settlers westward over the confrontation between the newcomers and the Bunurong Boon Wurrung and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung nations who had occupied there land for millennia. Charles Grant, who was appointed the Secretary of State for the Colonies and ennobled as Lord Glenelg, had family connections to the Clapham Sect, the group of evangelicals led by William Wilberforce who had succeeded in passing the Abolition of Slavery Bill. They were now in power in Lord Melbourne's government and were determined that the Indigenous Australians would be treated properly. Is it a myth that there could have been a treaty made and effected as happened in New Zealand? It is only in the second decade of the twenty-first century that it has become an issue again. The reality was that whatever Glenelg tried to institute, the passage of information to and from London could only travel at the rate of the four or five months of a sea voyage and ideals and practicalities could not keep up with events. The slaughters continued with very few participants held to account, with the survivors being taken into government missions, their culture and traditions erased.

The Other Side of the Frontier saw Henry Reynolds introduce Australians to another perspective and the reality of the Frontier Wars. In his book, *This Whispering in Our Hearts*, he wrote of the few brave humanitarians, the 'friends of the blacks' from G. A. Robinson onwards, and their attempts to change the behaviour of their fellow Europeans and encourage them to treat the Aborigines with 'distinguished humanity' and above all to eschew 'the indiscriminate and disproportionate violence of the punitive expedition.'[32] Nearly 40 years later and some 180 since the events became maps of massacre sites being plotted, the density of dots in western Victoria makes Australia Felix look as diseased as a smallpox victim.[33]

In discussing the Aboriginal situation Geoffrey Blainey emphasises disease as devastating the Aboriginal population more than killings, but he does use the words, 'Aboriginals were massacred.'[34] He details revenge reprisals for the killing and stealing of stock, and mentions

31. Ann Curthoys, 'W. E. H Stanner and the Historians,' December 7 2018, https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/products/book/an-appreciation-of-difference-sample.pdf.
32. Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier, Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia* (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1982).
33. Henry Reynolds, *This Whispering in Our Hearts* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998), xvii.
34. Geoffrey Blainey, *Our Side of the Country* (Sydney: Methuen Haynes, 1984; Reprint edition, Sydney: Pan Macmillan), 29.

that wool prices collapsing in a depression during 1842 and 1843, might have given some respite, but it would have been a brief if anything.[35]

One of Kiddle's subjects, like most of them a Scot, was Niel Black. A devout Calvinist, he was a successful grazier and managed properties for investors who remained in Scotland. His property Glenormiston became an agricultural college. He is of great help to historians because he kept a journal alongside his meticulous account books and voluminous correspondence with his investors.[36] He advises the prospective buyer of a run that it is better to make sure it has been 'cleared' before purchasing, and his biographer, Maggie Black, who is also a descendant, points the reader to an unsettling statement. He wrote to one of his Scottish investors, Thomas Gladstone, a cousin of the future Liberal prime minister:

> It is regarded as an impossibility to take up a new Run without being necessitated – for the protection of life and property – to shoot many of these poor ignorant creatures. They are thus deliberately though quietly slaughtered in unknown numbers.[37]

He was appalled by such activity and tried to avoid being involved, but he did not want his sheep stolen and his shepherds speared. It was a moral dilemma. He could not break the fifth commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill', but he had to let others do it if he was going to run a successful business. Somewhere there is a reference to the remark that a particular Sunday was 'an ill-spent Sabbath', with the reader being left to surmise what that meant.

The appearance of rigid fences, and later straight roads across the landscape, ignoring their subtle paths and carefully created hunting grounds, would have been the most bewildering shock to the traditional owners of the land. They would not see the grid of boundaries on the cadastral maps of the new occupants, who came, ironically, from a country where no roads had been straight since the Romans left and walls and hedgerows followed the lie of the land.

The launch of a book about this tribe, the Western District families that have retained their estates from the nineteenth century, illustrated a societal turning point.[38] The sponsor of the history, a successful Queen's Counsel and major local benefactor and art collector, who was also the Catholic son of a previous local butcher, invited the descendants of the squattocracy to the bluestone woolshed on his property, Mount Sturgeon Station, in the shadow of the

35. Ibid., 30–31.
36. Niel Black letters, SLV, manuscript collection.
37. Maggie Black, *Up Came a Squatter: Niel Black of Glenormiston, 1839–1880* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2016), 19.
38. Richard Zacharia, *The Vanished Land* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2019).

eponymous mountain, the spectacular abrupt finale of the southern spur of the Grampians range. The butcher's son, whose car was the largest in the driveway, addressed the assembled graziers and reminded them that their homesteads, their properties, and their status, had been built on blood.[39] The removal of the Indigenous population from the landscape and their disappearance, and how it was effected, was no longer only being whispered about. Many farmers would have found skulls and bones in their paddocks, especially when ploughing, and no doubt would have felt some unease, but they did not advertise their accidental dis-interments.[40]

One of the Western District farmers' quainter mythologies is of the many who claim that Mitchell's expedition crossed their land. During the 1936 centenary of the expedition, many local councils and communities erected memorials at points where the caravan crossed main roads. Although the day-to-day course was a regularly straight traverse, the return from Portland was in a different direction, so travellers passing across the state could get the impression from the plethora of bluestone monuments that Mitchell was meandering about. In addition, in their enthusiasm some groups may have erected cairns in the wrong places:

> If we are to believe local Western District farmers, every second paddock within ten kilometres of the actual route still bears ruts made by Mitchell's boat carriage, such is the admiration with which they regard Mitchell.[41]

Surveyor Gregory Eccleston, who was commissioned to make a feasibility study for a Major Mitchell Long Distance Walking Trail, was aware that he had to make a geometric survey using Mitchell's own field books and other original material now held in the SLNSW. He was careful not to trust historians' interpretations of the printed word that had been 'embellished by the plethora of local folklore that had developed over the last 150 years.'[42] Both Michael Cathcart and Eccleston, whose academic and published works have been studied and compared, deal with mythologies; Cathcart with the legends of an inland sea in the unknown interior and the search for a cross-cultural meaning; Eccleston, in effect, with re-creating Mitchell's expedition as a secular pilgrimage route. Cathcart's writing is notable for needing no alteration of his text in the transfer of the PhD thesis to the book, *The Water*

39. Tony Wright, 'Children of Victoria's Western District Squatters Revisit Their Gilded History,' *Age* (*Melbourne*), August 25, 2017.
40. Heard by word of mouth from a magistrate who grew up on a soldier settlement in the area. Dunkeld Association pamphlet
41. Eccleston, *Major Mitchell's 1836 Australia Felix Expedition*, 44.
42. Ibid.

Dreamers, apart from the beautiful subtitle, *How Water and Silence Shaped Australia*, which was inexplicably altered to the mundane one it has. [43]

2.4 Songlines

> Landscape is personal and tribal history made visible. The native's identity – his place in the total scheme of things – is not in doubt because the myths that support it are as real as the rocks and waterholes he can see and touch. He finds recorded in in his land the ancient story of the lives and deeds of the immortal beings from whom he himself is descended and whom he reveres. The whole countryside is his family tree.
>
> Yi-Fu Tuan.[44]

Lynne Kelly takes Yi-Fu Tuan's theme further, researching her theories of how cultures without a written language manage to remember their names and facts and so learn their language and lore.[45]

She links that ability to use the landscape and all the objects in it as a memory code, hence the Aboriginal tradition of ritual routes through the country, 'the songlines', and the absolute importance of 'country'. Kelly considers that ancient European man used the same system and built the Neolithic structures as memorising systems; indeed, she experienced her intuition of the concept at Stonehenge itself.

The Prelude spoke of the British Ordnance Survey maps being used to trace ley lines. It was an original intention of this project that in studying the myth of Australia Felix a deeper mystery could be uncovered. This was the hope that equivalent alignments to the ley lines found in Britain could be unearthed here – and, remarkably, evidence of one was discovered by chance in the faculty during this research when showing an English OS map to a colleague.[46] However with insufficient knowledge here, thinner maps, and ignorance of possible markers, the exercise had to be abandoned. One thing is clear. Songlines are not ley lines, nor are they, any longer, a myth.

2.5 Dawson's Kangatong Mob

Long distance communication is evidenced by James Dawson, who is an important figure in the early history of settler/Indigenous relations. Dawson befriended and studied the customs

43. Cathcart, *The Water Dreamers*.
44. Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place*, 157–158.
45. Lynne Kelly, *The Memory Code: The Traditional Aboriginal Memory Technique That Unlocks the Secrets of Stonehenge, Easter Island and Ancient Monuments the World Over* (Sydney: Allan & Unwin, 2016).
46. Four churches found in direct alignment on the Oxford and Newbury One Inch OS map seeming to confirm the existence of the St Michael Line.

and languages of the Aboriginal populations in western Victoria, particularly those who lived on his run at Kangatong, During a very long life, Dawson tried to advance their cause, both in and out of parliament, at a time when their numbers were being decimated by disease starvation and the gun. Only now in the third decade of the twenty-first century is the extent of the massacres being assessed and mapped. So Dawson's study, *Australian Aborigines*, is a unique account because it documents everything he could learn about them, their customs, and their languages. He was assisted by his daughter, Isabella, who learnt to speak the Chaap Warrong language of the Aborigines at Kangatong. Dawson was friends with Eugène von Guérard who made several visits and painted the *Cattle Muster* there.

Figure 26. Eugène von Guérard, *Cattle Muster (Cutting Out the Cattle, Kangatong)*, 1856, oil on canvas.[47]

His first visit was notable for the artist having his portrait sketched in watercolour while at work by Johnny Kangatong, a rare reversal of roles, of the European being studied by the Indigenous inhabitant, in a 'a shared artistic collegiality.'[48] It is not known if Mitchell ever extended such an opportunity to any of his indigenous companions.

As a source for the Indigenous myths of Mitchell's geographical Australia Felix, Dawson's book should be invaluable. However, Dawson was not an anthropologist, a discipline only in its infancy at the time, but an amateur ethnologist at a time when the tribal culture of the Western District Aborigines was already 'a thing of threads and patches.'[49] His work is valuable, however, because he alone dealt in detail with the Western District tribes and their customs. Although he was almost unique in being able to question the Aborigines in their

47. Courtesy of the Benalla Art Gallery, accessed September 1, 2020, https://benallaartgallery.com.au/benallacollection/collection-view/1053095/
48. Ruth Pullin, *The Artist as Traveller: The Sketchbooks of Eugene von Guérard* (Ballarat: Art Gallery of Ballarat, 2018), 174, 175.
49. Critchett, 'Introduction,' The editor rather inappropriately quoting W. S. Gilbert's 'Wandering Minstrel' from *The Mikado*, 1885.

own languages, according to his critics, he was misled into thinking there was a system of tribal chieftains and he 'was led astray by allowing Aborigines, now well versed in our ways, to impose on him as Aboriginal a number of ideas which have resulted from their connection with Whites.'[50] Thus the theory is that by this date their beliefs would have been infected by European mythologies.

As Dawson himself writes in the chapter, the nearest to deal with beliefs, which is unfortunately titled 'Superstitions and Diseases', 'every care has been taken to exclude any superstitious notions which might have been impressed on their minds since they came in contact with the white race.'[51] For instance, the good spirit Pirnmeheeal, a gigantic man, who lives above the clouds, is of a kindly disposition, harms no one, and is seldom mentioned, but always with respect. His voice is thunder and listened to with pleasure as it brings rain so good for man and beast. 'But the Aborigines say that the missionaries and government protectors have given them a dread of Pirnmeheeal, and are sorry the children and old are now terrified of him.'[52] Muuruup is the bad spirit and is always spoken of with dread. He comes in the form of lightning, striking trees and killing people. Dawson reports: 'He flits and darts from place to place with the rapidity of lightning, is very mischievous and hungers for the flesh of children.'[53]

This flitting, mischievous side of him sounds like the Norse God of Fire – Loki or Loge – in Wagner's interpretations of the same canon. Loge is the background manipulator of the whole *Ring Cycle* of operas and his rare appearances are welcome for his 'leitmotif', signature tune, is the loveliest and liveliest music in the dramas. Fire is essential to Aboriginal life, and the magical ability to conjure it up would seem to have been a power granted by a Loge-like spirit; instead, Dawson describes Muuruup thus:

> He dwells deep underground in a place called Ummekullen'[54]. No one has ever returned to tell what kind of place it is. There is a belief, however, that there is nothing but fire there, and the souls of bad people get neither meat nor drink, and are terribly knocked about by the evil spirits.[55]

50. Ibid. Quoting Curr.
51. Dawson, *Australian Aborigines*, 49.
52. Ibid., 49.
53. Ibid., 50.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., 60.

This sounds too similar to the biblical idea of hell to not suspect Dawson has suggested it, or that the missionaries and protectors 'having given them a dread of Pirnmeheeal', had converted the Aborigines' benign spirit to the vengeful Jehovah of the Old Testament.

Dawson also writes of the epidemics of smallpox or similar diseases being disastrous for the Aborigines with fatal 'visitations' [56] in 1830 and 1847. The first could perhaps account for the few people Mitchell encountered in Australia Felix in 1836, and why he could claim the land was completely unoccupied and therefore so perfect for settlement – 'a land so inviting, and still without inhabitants!'[57]

Of great interest with this unhappy fact is Dawson's following comment:

> The very small remnant of old Aborigines now alive who escaped the first of these epidemics describe it as an eruptive fever resembling small pox (presumably not their words).They still have a very vivid recollection of its ravage, and of the great numbers cut off by it in the Western District.
>
> In remembrance of it they chant a wail called Mallae Mallaeae, which was composed in New South Wales, where the disease first broke out, *and is known to all the tribes between Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide*. (italics added)[58]

Is this the first tantalising mention of a songline? Dawson makes this comment almost in passing and goes on to describe the ravages of the disease. He does not ponder how the 'wail' was taught or learnt, and he positions the song as if running along a telegraph line between the white men's cities.

Mitchell's *Tombs of a Tribe* (see Figure 1) is a poignant image of the devastation of perhaps the 1830 epidemic. Some writers believe it demonstrates the imperial conquest and occupation. Ryan picks out the lone figure on horseback observing the landscape with a telescope as a 'generically required 'Monarch of all I survey' moment in the exploration journal.'[59] Mitchell's own words about the scene indicate that he had been genuinely moved, and the elegance and profundity of the work itself suggests he was simply trying to express a great sadness. The skeleton of a dead acacia tree, which Mitchell had sketched elsewhere, has been placed symbolically beside the burial, balancing the white limbs with the dark horseman. Often in Mitchell's volumes, the published lithograph of an artwork loses the subtleties of the original, making for a cruder image, but here the cheerfully golden

56. Ibid.
57. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:159.
58. Dawson, *Australian Aborigines*, 62.
59. Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye*, 169.

watercolour has been skilfully converted by lithographer Barnard to a suitably elegiac monochrome, where the vast horizon lies under a brooding sky. It is an elegantly melancholic memorial and, tiny as it is, arguably one of Mitchell's masterworks. In fact, by expressing so much so simply and articulating the immense space in such a minute format, it becomes a mythical image, encapsulating a spatial history.

2.6 The Arabian Origin of Australia Felix

Mitchell, in weaving his mythologies around his discoveries, achieved his masterstroke when he invented Australia Felix. It is not clear when or how he conjured up the term, or what his idea of its boundaries were. Is it the 'Western District'? - which came to mean the domain of the squattocracy; the whole of western Victoria south of the Murray River? or a more general term for Australia?

The underlying mythology to consider is in the etymology of the title, Mitchell's own confection of Australia Felix. It was such a shrewd and ingenious slogan it immediately marketed the offer of a vast area of Australia for agricultural development, particularly grazing and arable. This was at a time when the expansion of the colony beyond the 19 counties around Sydney, which Mitchell had mapped, was beginning to run out of fertile land with reliable rainfall. The name was sufficiently unusual and short to attract attention. Once comprehended, it meant 'happy' or, to use its derivative, 'felicitous'. The Oxford Dictionary defines felicitous as:

> *Happy, showing or marked by great happiness. Formerly also, fortunate, prosperous, successful. M18.* (M = mid, 18 is the 'date', so whether this means the 18th century or the 1800s, these three senses of the word would not have been unfamiliar in 1836).

Thus Mitchell would have been aware of an adjacent word to 'felix' that means exactly what he intended. This part of Australia would, he claimed, be fortunate, prosperous, and successful.

When exactly he came up with the word, and if he knew of its classical/Roman use, is a mystery, which only adds to the mythology of Australia Felix. His first use of the term in the published volumes is towards the end when he declares, after describing the nature of the different parts of the country, 'I named this region Australia Felix, the better to distinguish it

from the parched deserts of the interior country, where we had wandered so unprofitably for so long.'[60]

His first use in the text is not obvious in the rhapsodic accounts of moving across glorious landscapes on the course from the Grampians in a north-easterly direction. The words 'Australia Felix' first appear in the press in the Sydney newspapers on his return.[61]

The word *felix* has a long history. The Romans divided the Arabian Peninsula into three parts according to the topography of each: Arabia Petraea for the mountainous northern part, which included the Sinai Peninsula with Petra as its capital; Arabia Deserta (forsaken) for the vast central region of empty desert; and Arabia Felix for the southern part that in those times was green and fertile and prosperous.[62] The mythical biblical Queen of Sheba came from there to visit Solomon. It was only in later Roman times that felix came to mean happy and fortunate, though the name of the main port, Eudaemon. the trading point between the Roman world and the East, probably today's Aden, means fortunate or happy in Greek.[63] The present war-torn region is far from being in that condition.

Mitchell was not unaware of the history of Arabia. Eccleston points out that Mitchell, in describing the dust-throwing habits of some Aboriginal youths, refers not only to King David but also to Sir Henry Light's *Travels in Egypt* and Simon Ockley's *History of the Saracens.* Ockley recounts the Arabia Felix name.[64] Did Mitchell know of the double meaning of Felix as, originally, 'green and fertile' and later as 'fortunate and happy' (see Figure 27)?

60. Thomas L. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions in the Interior of Eastern Australia: With Descriptions of the Recently Explored Region of Australia Felix and of the Present Colony of New South Wales*, 2nd ed. rev. (London: T. and W. Boone, 1839; Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1965), 333.
61. The Australian, 8 November 1836
62. Eccleston, *Major Mitchell's 1836 Australia Felix Expedition*, 126.
63. Ibid.
64. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:246 (though Eccleston refers to an 1848 5th edition of Ockley).

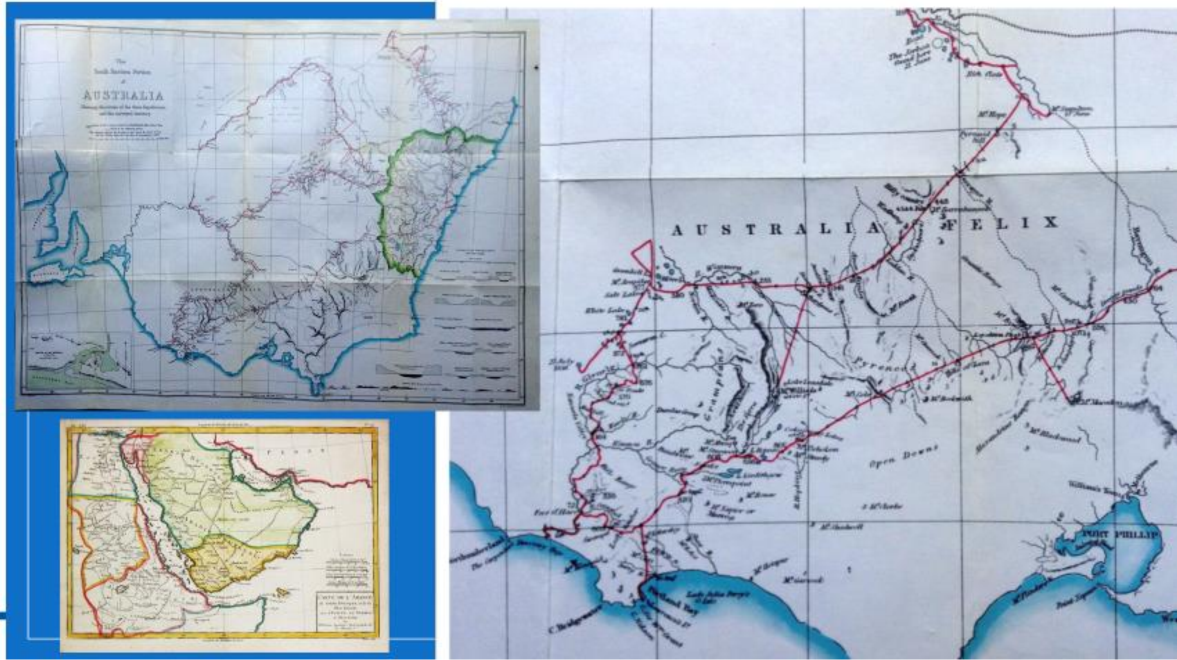

Figure 27. The Australia Felix expedition route: *Three Expeditions*, Vol. I. Inset, map of Roman Arabia, Arabia Felix in yellow.

Mitchell's concept for Australia Felix can be seen evolving during the expedition. What he ignored, or missed, as he travelled through his enchanted land between the Murray River and the Southern Ocean, were the legends that belonged there. He claimed his Australia Felix was uninhabited anyway and thus ideal for colonisation thereby creating the somewhat specious myth that contributed to the creation of the monstrous policy of *Terra Nullis*. Curiously, while Mitchell's party did have several encounters with Aboriginal groups both friendly and less so, including one violent engagement, in the barren country of the Darling, he met few of these groups in the verdant lands of the south-west of present Victoria.

It is noticeable that compared to the numerous drawings of Aboriginal inhabitants of other regions encountered on previous expeditions and in 1836, both in individual portraits and elaborate tableaux re-creating events, Mitchell drew no scenes with figures and only one portrait of an inhabitant after he crossed the Murray River. On 10 August 1836, in an idyllic valley that he celebrates with a page of purple prose – 'as we went on our way rejoicing' [65]– he saw a shy woman with a baby boy and ran after her. He 'prevailed on her to stop until the two gins of our party could come up.'[66] The woman's finely woven bag and circular mats impressed him, the latter being strapped on her back to hold the child in a kind of papoose.

65. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:211.
66. Ibid.

Turandurey and Kitty were able to converse with her and were equally interested in her 'Wándo costume' while Mitchell inspected the contents of her stylish carrier bag.

He asked for the name of the river nearby, which she called Temiangandgeen,[67] and he somehow got her to stand for him while he drew her and her child (see Figure 28). It makes a nice pair with his other mother and child portrait, *Turandurey and Ballandella* (see Figure 28). In enthusing about the setting on the Glenelg River near present-day Casterton,[68] Mitchell wrote 'such was the only inhabitant of this splendid valley, resembling a nobleman's park on a grand scale.'[69] Perhaps they were on what is now the estate of a sixth-generation grazier.

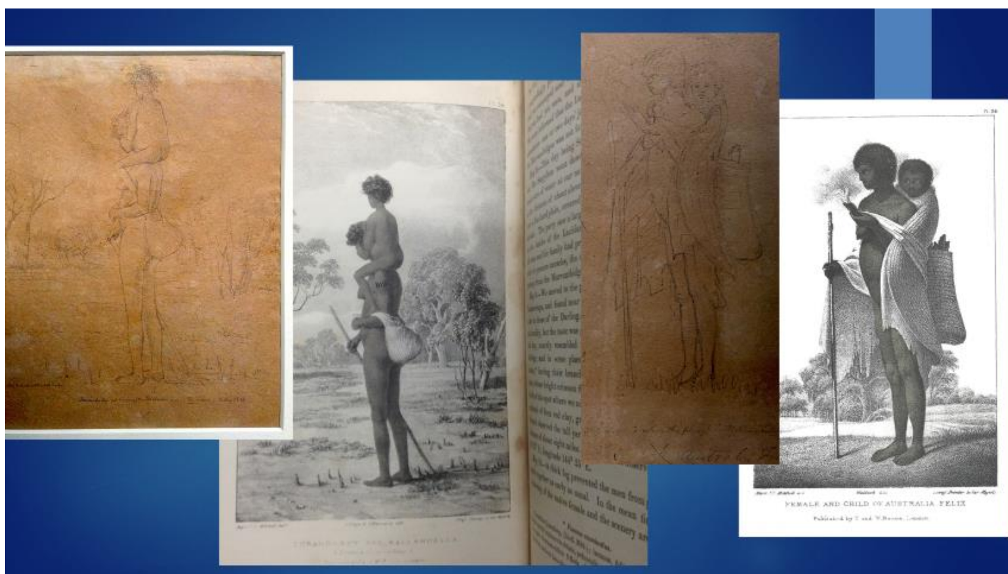

Figure 28. Mitchell, left, *Turandurey and Ballandella*, pencil drawing, Barnard's lithograph; right, *Female and Child of Australia Felix*, pencil drawing, and Waldeck's lithograph.[70]

The fact that that Mitchell met few residents from whom he could glean the local customs and culture meant that he could impose his own mythology on the country. A couple of months earlier on the Murray River, he started hinting at his idea for naming the new-found land. He was in the same ebullient mood after a tense and precarious couple of weeks, the climax of which was the event he called The Dispersion, which is covered in 3.6 and leads on from the events at Benanee which will be described in 5.7.

67. Ibid., 2:212.
68. Eccleston, *Major Mitchell's 1836 'Australia Felix' Expedition*, 64–66.
69. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:212.
70. Mitchell, drawing, 'Turandurey and her daughter Ballandella,' SLNSW File No. DLPXX22f/1; *Three Expeditions, Turandurey and Ballandella,* 2:69, plate 24; Mitchell, drawing, 'Barraway,' SLNSW File No. DLPXX22f/9; *Three Expeditions, Female and Child of Australia* Felix, 2:212, plate 34.

When gold was discovered in 1851, the 'Lucky Country' was born; Melbourne became 'Marvellous' and the legend of Mitchell's Australia Felix was confirmed.

Of course, for the peoples who had been living there for millennia, Australia Felix was not so felicitous. As Margaret Kiddle, writing a history of the settlers and squatters during the 1950s, gently or, rather, genteelly, put it: 'They never thought of the land of the cockatoos as belonging to the people who already occupied it, and whose felicity must prove incompatible with their own.'[71] For the basketweaver and her son beside the River Temiangandgeen, and all her people, the advent of Australia Felix was to be a sort of holocaust.

2.7 The Missing Figure in the Wellington Cave

Mitchell ends the second volume of his expeditions into eastern Australia, the Australia Felix Expedition, with an account of the caves in the Wellington Valley 'about 170 miles west of Newcastle' [72] in New South Wales, which had no direct connection with his expeditions. He visited and surveyed them in 1830 and sent a commissioned paper to the Geological Society in London, which was read on 13 April 1831: '… but the particulars respecting the animal remains found by me, have derived great additional importance from the discoveries made by Professor Owen, since my return to England.'[73]

Owen was a leading light in the study of fossils, and the materials Mitchell brought him were to prove groundbreaking. When Mitchell was working on the publication of his travels back in England in 1838, he realised the growing interest in the whole subject of the Earth's age and the age of fossilised remains and decided to include his findings in the caves. He had taken tuition on how to draw and render fossils and the brecchia formations they were buried in, and he had been sending the information to experts in Britain. His interest was such that he surveyed the whole cave system and included fold-out plans and sections in the volume. The skilfully rendered drawings of the fossils give a realistic three-dimensional effect, and these finds were of great interest to geologists and palaeontologists in England.

Mitchell also includes images of people exploring the caves, and one plate in the book shows three men in slouch hats silhouetted against the glowing interior. This is of particular interest because it replaces another earlier version of a single figure in the same grotto (see Figure

71. Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday*, 13.
72. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:359.
73. Ibid.

29). Kerry Heckenberg investigated this seemingly trivial fact, perhaps just the whim of the artist, and found, in fact, that it points to profound changes that at the time were connected to the whole science of geology and palaeontology, the status of science itself, and Mitchell's own philosophy and faith.[74]

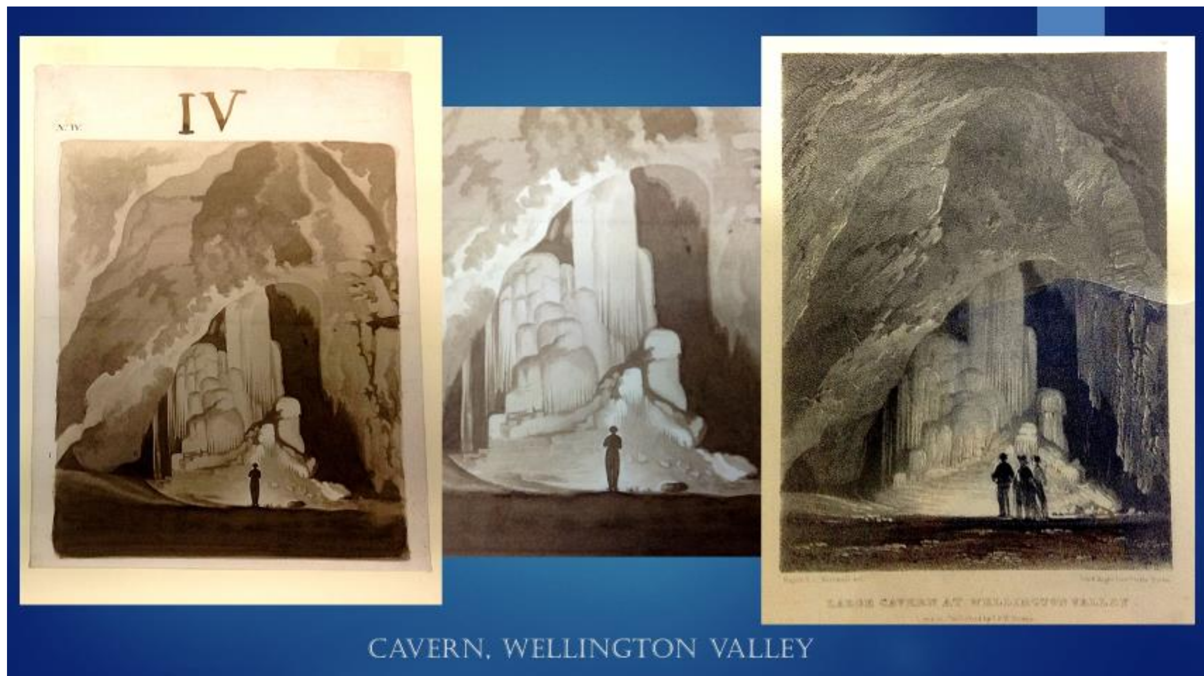

Figure 29. Mitchell, *Large Cavern at Wellington Valley, New South Wales*, ca. 1836, sepia wash on paper (left and centre); lithograph (right).[75]

The original image is a sepia watercolour of a lone figure standing in awe in front of the mysteriously lit inner part of the cavern. It has the religious undertones of a devout pilgrim worshipping in a candlelit chapel in the apse of a dark cathedral. In fact, Mitchell describes the analogy of a chapel with an altar and stalactites as broken columns as in his field notes.[76] Although the tall person is of subtly indeterminate gender, is it Mitchell portraying himself admiring the wonders God had created on, and beneath, the earth? It is a strange and evocative scene in the 'sublime' manner, and in its simple power and mystery, it has the elements of being a mythical image.

However, it was dropped from the published volume. Heckenberg suggests this illustration was redrafted for Mitchell for the final publication of *Three Expeditions* due to 'changing

74. Heckenberg, 'Thomas Mitchell and the Wellington Caves,' 203–218.
75. The left and centre images are Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ballarat; the lithograph is from Mitchell's *Three Expeditions*, 2:360, plate 43 (superimposed).
76. Ibid., 208. Heckenberg quotes Michael Shortland, 'Plumbing the Depths: On Caves and the Men of Geology,' *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of NSW* 125 (1992): 383–408.

attitudes towards science, in particular its relationship towards religion and aesthetics in the early nineteenth century', whereas the worshiper evinced 'an unproblematic blend of science and religion'. She considers the final version is 'evidence of the influence of the most advanced scientific thinkers of his day.'[77]

In the published image, Mitchell has replaced the single otherworldly figure with three men in slouch hats. These are evidently gentlemen with an active interest in the geology of the cave. They are also shown in silhouette in a row discussing the formations, with the light of their lanterns glowing brighter. However, in spite of the stronger chiaroscuro, there is less a sense of awe. Mitchell has worked the slope at their feet into a more curved, step-like formation as if suggesting the remains of a grand, upward-sweeping staircase, but that is the extent of the fantasy. The accompanying paragraph informs matter-of-factly:

> That this cave had been enlarged, by a partial sinking of the floor, is not improbable, as broken stalagmite columns and pillars like broken shafts, once probably in contact with the roof, are still apparent. (See view of the largest cavern, plate 43)[78]

Whichever passage refers to the plate, neither gives any hint of the sublime or the spiritual connotations that the sepia image possesses.

The great discussion among the thinkers, geologists and natural historians at the time was about the age of the Earth and whether the findings in the cave were deposited during the Flood. This could be dated from the Bible, Bishop Ussher having calculated the Creation to have occurred 'at around 6 pm on 22 October 4004 BC.'[79] Or was it something considerably older? Heckenburg has analysed the change happening in thought, science and society at the time, and that if the second image shows enthusiastic amateur geologists, it also the heralds the appearance of a distinct professional class of scientists. Mitchell had himself become a Fellow of the Geological Society of London in 1827 just before leaving for Australia as the Assistant Surveyor-General. He had also taken instruction in drawing fossils and geological matter.

The fossils that Mitchell sent to Owen were reckoned to be prehistoric ancestors of current marsupials. This was all proof to the Diluvialists and Catastrophists that there had been a sudden worldwide destruction of animals, while Owen believed they belonged to an extinct

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77. Ibid., 203.
78. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:361.
79. Wikipedia, *James Ussher*, accessed August 23, 2019, https://en wikipedia.org/wiki/James Ussher.

giant marsupial he called a Diprotodon and suggested the much longer gradual changes in the Earth as proposed by Buckland and Lyell during the 1830s.[80] Mitchell was communicating with the leaders in scientific thinking of the day and was thus party to, and assistant to, the profound changes in knowledge and belief breaking on the world at the time.

The romantic image of the single figure rapt in mystical devotion has given way to a more mundane image of three quasi-scientific explorers analysing geological formations. The rational succeeding the spiritual. Mitchell's findings directly influenced Darwin who, wrestling with his own devout Anglican belief, published *The Origin of Species* in 1859. The theory of evolution could be said to have partly evolved from these caves with the assistance of Thomas Mitchell.

The abandoned sepia watercolour did not become lost at the publishers in London nor does it even repose in the main Mitchell archive at the SLNSW in Sydney. It is held by serendipitous chance, along with a first edition of the journal and other items, in the collection of the Art Gallery of Ballarat, a city which could be called the gateway to Australia Felix. Thus up the street from the Camp Street Campus of Federation University Australia lives Mitchell's self-portrait as a simple awe-struck pilgrim before doubt then truth had begun to dawn on his philosophy.

Having studied the various myths that pervade this story and seen the triumphalist mythos that Mitchell brought to his narrative and become aware of alternative opinions and new historical facts, it becomes awkward to share and celebrate the same enthusiasm for the adventure. The next chapter, which begins to outlay the intentions of the thesis, does attempt to address the fact that the 1836 expedition was, in part, an act of war. Mitchell says so himself. This makes it easier to bring in the facts of the Peninsular War to help map out Australia Felix and confront realities.

80. Heckenburg, 'Thomas Mitchell and the Wellington Caves,' 206.

Chapter 3

Mitchell's Atlas: Peace and Warfare

This chapter examines Mitchell' s Atlas and the Australia Felix expedition in tandem so that his maps of the Peninsular War can be treated as surrogates for the maps of Australia Felix that he never made. In doing so the chapter examines how the maps, images and myths, which together comprise a metaphorical landscape, enable spatial history. For the purposes of this thesis it is the cultural transmission of ideas, particularly his tableaux and scenes of warfare, that Mitchell developed during the Peninsular campaign that contribute to his later rendering of Western Victoria as Australia Felix.

The account in Mitchell's journal is well illustrated by his lithographs and drawings, as is the Atlas. In the book they always accompany the text as closely as possible, and so can also be considered as the visual mapping of Australia Felix.

In this chapter, the battlefield plans are tested as suitable maps for Mitchell's semi-imaginary country. If this seems implausible, and even unpleasant for the squeamish, a few points need to be made.

The plans are bird's-eye views of landscapes, in fact of an eagle's eye, for they often cover so vast an area it is difficult to see the diagrammatic lines of opposing troops. As little or no text accompanies most of the maps, it is also difficult to see how useful the maps actually were for military instruction at the staff college and other academies of warfare.

3.1 Spatial History

These maps remain simply very beautiful objects that need exposing to establish if they can be considered works of art, and, as such, whether they contribute to the spatial history of both Iberia and Australia.

The fact Mitchell worked on some of the publications of the Peninsular War plans after he completed the Australian expedition journals means the chronology of the two projects cannot be strictly applied, and a nicely messy scrambling of ideas and intentions can be suggested between the two publications. It is the same artist working with the same energy.

In later chapters, Mitchell's work in Iberia and Australia can be run past the aesthetic principles of the picturesque and the sublime, and the contemporary theories of neoclassicism and romanticism, and Mitchell's understanding and handling of these styles.

There is, of course, a requirement to justify the relevance of this work to the present day and what this thesis attempts to demonstrate is that all of Mitchell's surveys, maps, and artwork – his whole oeuvre – have continued to inform and contribute to the mythology of Australia Felix and its part in the Australian cultural landscape nearly 200 years later.

Paul Carter contends the following:

> For Mitchell the survey, with its triple artillery of map, sketches and a journal, was a strategy for translating space into a conceivable object, an object that the mind could possess long before the lowing herd.
>
> The five years Mitchell spent in Spain and Portugal, meticulously surveying, sketching, painting and finally engraving the battlefields of Wellington's campaign represented, in a sense, the active service that Mitchell had not known during the campaign itself…. They also represented something more, of course: they were a strategy for occupying the country permanently – as Wellington had never done.[1]

Of course, as stated before, they could not be in the Foucaultian sense of mapping as power because Mitchell and the British nation as a whole had no claims to ownership in Portugal or Spain.[2] Ironically, Wellington was given estates in Spain, which his descendants still possess, and the heir to the dukedom has the Portuguese title of Marquis of Douro.

Carter posits that 'strategy immediately suggests the idea of military manoeuvres, the picture of a general deploying his troops.'[3]

In part, a pointer to this is that although the surveys were all completed in Spain and Portugal, and many drawn up in Lisbon and intermittently worked on back in England, the plans remained unfinished when Mitchell left for his new posting in Australia in 1827. When Mitchell returned to London in 1837 to work on the publication of the journals of the three expeditions, Murray saw a chance to complete the unfinished project and arranged for him to return to the task after the second edition of the journals, which was necessary due to the success and sell out of the first, went to press in February 1839. Mitchell wrote in the preface

1. Ibid.
2. Except Gibraltar taken in 1704 by an Anglo–Dutch force in the War of the Spanish Succession and ceded to Great Britain in perpetuity under the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713.
3. Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, 113.

to the journals that he had wanted to finish the Peninsular surveys first, 'a task of national character', which cannot be entirely true as he was determined to deal with the three expeditions from the day he arrived.[4] The statement was undoubtedly intended as advance publicity for the Atlas.[5]

The question as to whether Mitchell on his expedition saw himself in this military light suggested by Carter is answered by Robert Dixon almost immediately: 'The third journal begins not as a philosophical epic but as a military one.'[6]

And one does not have to go far into the text to find confirmation of Carter's theory. On the fourth page of the volume, having described his preparations for the expedition, Mitchell writes of the proper commencement of the expedition:

> March 17. I put the party in movement towards Buree, and rode across the country, on our right, with Piper.[7] … Dr Johnson's Obidah was not more free from care on the morning of his journey, than I on this, the first morning of mine.[8] It was also St Patrick's Day, and in riding through the bush, I had leisure to recall past scenes and times, connected with this anniversary.
>
> I remembered that on exactly that morning, twenty four years before, I marched down the glacis of Elvas, to the tune of 'St Patrick's Day in the morning,' as the sun rose over the beleaguered towers of Badajoz. Now without any of the 'pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war', I was proceeding on a service not very likely to be peaceful, for the natives here had assured me that the Myalls were coming up ('murray coola', i.e. very angry) to meet us.[9]

Thus as he set out on the first day of his new adventure, he was fondly remembering, as a junior lieutenant, his first experience of marching out to fight the French in one of the bloodier engagements of the Peninsular War. At the same time, he was confident of the combat ahead, in which he would be the commander of his own militia, one which he had armed and uniformed.[10] That he was 'free from care' and proceeding into a potentially violent situation suggests he was relishing a bit of warfare, or at least a skirmish or two.

4. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, Preface to the First Edition.
5. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 312.
6. Robert Dixon, *The Course of Empire: Neoclassical Culture in New South Wales 1788-1860* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986), 117.
7. The Aboriginal guide on the third expedition.
8. Samuel Johnson, *Obidah and the Hermit: An Eastern Story*, 1750, accessed November 4, 2019, http://www.johnsonessays.com/the-rambler/obidah-hermit-eastern.
9. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*,2:4. The 'pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war,' is from Othello. Glasis: Shallow slope down from a fort, on which attackers are exposed to fire. *Concise Oxford Dictionary*.
10. Dixon, *The Course of Empire*, 117.

In fact, Mitchell opens Volume II of the journals with a description of preparing his 'army':

> On following day, I organised the party, and armed the men. I distributed to each a suit of new clothing; consisting of grey trowsers (sic) and a red woollen shirt, the latter article, when crossed by white braces, giving the men somewhat of a military appearance.[11]

He lists the 24 members of the brigade and the muskets, carabines and pistols with which they have been issued, the only rifle being allocated to himself. Piper, his Aboriginal guide, is also given a carabine, which to Mitchell's disappointment he is later happy to use on his fellow man.[12]

However he had announced at the start of the expedition: 'This was the army with which I was to traverse unexplored regions, peopled as far as we knew by hostile tribes.'[13] The suggestion of a military campaign was inevitable, for Mitchell was putting his years of training and war experience to good use. He knew how to organise and run an expedition with a party of 25 men, excluding Aboriginal guides and assistants, in uncharted territory for close on a year, with the loss of only one man to a drowning during a river crossing, swimming on horseback against his advice.[14] And Mitchell was not alone in this ability. What has not been appreciated until recently is the extent of the influence of the veterans of the Peninsular War on the colony. Christine Wright has brought to light this important facet of Australian history by showing how many army officers, who had fought under Wellington, were employed in the administration and development of the colony.[15] This subject will be returned to.

Dixon continues with the bellicose analogy by referencing Mitchell's later 'defeat' of the hostile tribe on the Murray (or rather the shooting of several, including the headman, ensuring the group's dispersal and their no longer troubling the expedition) at the spot he euphemistically named Mount Dispersion. The military theme dominates the narrative until this 'overthrow of our enemies' and the subsequent safe passage across the Murray River into

11. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:2.
12. Ibid., 2:143.
13. Ibid., 2:3.
14. Ibid., 2:296–297. Mitchell devotes two pages to the death of Tally-ho, James Taylor, the groom and trumpeter; of his charging into a river to find the best crossing point, but only the horse coming out; Piper finding the body after six to eight minutes of diving; followed by three hours of attempts to revive him, and a deep burial. 'I was myself confounded with the most heartfelt sorrow, when I turned on from the grave of poor Tally-ho',never to hear his bugle blast again.'
15. Christine Wright, *Wellington's Men in Australia – Peninsular War Veterans and the Making of Empire c.1820–40* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Australia Felix. 'We had penetrated the Australian Hesperides,' Mitchell boasts, 'although the golden fruit was still to be sought.'[16]

Dixon explains the significance of the mention of the Hesperides at that climactic turn in the chronicle, as it suggests the following:

> Mitchell was entertaining a parallel between the events and the eleventh labour of Hercules, when he was ordered to break into the fabled gardens in the far west and steal the golden apples from the nymphs and dragon who guarded them.[17]

Carter adds:

> Mitchell saw the expedition as a rhetorical campaign. The trigonometrical survey, the sketch and the words of description were instruments of cultural conquest, not scientific observation. Mitchell was a geographical Wellington, or so he liked to think.[18]

Carter points out, as do all who comment on Mitchell, his habit of scattering names from the Peninsular campaign all over the features of western Victoria: battles, British generals, surveyors, and the king, as well as Spanish mountains and rivers, onto Australian hills. The comment dismissing the scientific observation is unfair given that Mitchell's extensive reports on geology, botany and zoology were invaluable to the new expert scientists in those fields.

> Communemque prius ceu lumina solis et auras
> Caiutus humum longo ignavit limite mensor.
>
> *And the ground which had hitherto been a common possession like the sunlight and the air, the careful surveyor now marked out with long drawn boundary line.*[19]

Mitchell voiced the above lines from Ovid in his *Outlines of a System of Surveying* [20] and he uses them to introduce the book of his fourth expedition, *The Journal of an Expedition into Tropical Australia,* but they apply as Mitchell was following Murray's instructions as when he started the Peninsular War surveys working at Fuentes d'Oñoro as they applied to his

16. Dixon, *The Course of Empire*, 117. Referencing Mitchell's *Three Expedition*, 2:127.
17. Ibid., 117.
18. Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, 117–18.
19. Mitchell, *Journal of an Expedition into Tropical Australia*, vi.
20. Thomas L. Mitchell, *Outlines of a System of Surveying for Geographical and Military Purposes, Comprising the Principles on Which the Surface of the Earth May Be Represented on Plans* (London: S. Leigh, 1827).

roads and other engineering projects in New South Wales, and as he mapped the Nineteen Counties.

Fundamentally, they applied to the painstaking chain measurements of the third expedition's traverse (which so frustrated Stapylton)[21] given that Mitchell was constantly imagining himself in the role of universal surveyor creating Australia Felix; and as he named parts of the country as if in the original Pyrenees (the Victorian shire that this thesis was written in), or on the rocky outcrops outside Salamanca – the origin of Mount Arapiles – or the Dos Casas River at Fuentes d'Oñoro, flowing just north of the Grampians; or his brilliant military artist-surveyor mentors – Bainbrigge, Pierrepoint and Sturgeon – the latter two killed in the Peninsular War, remembered as Grampian mountains; and so on, so that the great maps of the forgotten Atlas could be seen as the imagined maps of Australia Felix. As Carter says: 'Mitchell's imaginary country was more real than any empirical one. It had, after all, provided a legend from which history could flow.'[22]

3.2 The Battle of Fuentes d'Oñoro

In September 1814, Mitchell commenced his commission from General Murray with a survey of the site of the Battle of Fuentes d'Oñoro. This was the first instruction Murray gave him, and while he was waiting for permission from the Spanish authorities to make the surveys, Mitchell began his great task here high on the Spanish–Portuguese border. This study might as well start here, too. It was in fact the longest running engagement of the Peninsular War, extending over three days.

There is the problem of how to deal with the battles themselves and one's cavalier (perhaps an apt term in this context when the cavalry was a major contingent of an army)[23] – treating each event as just a name, as the roll call of the Peninsular War battles rolls so pleasantly off the tongue, especially a romantic sounding one such as this, where a beautiful map is adorned with a lyrical sounding title, and all that matters for posterity is the result. Who won? Who lost? Or was it a draw?

In this case, Arthur Wellesley, who had been recently ennobled as Lord Wellington, had a combined British and Portuguese force that chased Marshal Masséna's French army from the

21. Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, 105.
22. Ibid., 135.
23. Ian Fletcher, *Galloping at Everything: The British Cavalry in the Peninsular War and at Waterloo, 1808–15: A Reappraisal* (Mechaniscurg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1999).

lines of Torres Vedras, his impregnable defence of Lisbon, to the Spanish border. The armies engaged just over the border in and around the village of Fuentes d'Oñoro from 3 to 5 May 1811. On the first day, there were 650 casualties of which 250 were of the Allies. 'There was a lull next day during which some of the contending troops discretely [*sic*] fraternised while collecting their wounded and burying their dead.'[24] Half time. In early spring, at 2400 feet up on the barren border, there were presumably no oranges for the teams.

A French cavalry charge in the misty dawn of 5 May surprised Sanchez's guerrillas and drove Wellington's cavalry back, and General Craufurd, due to be Mitchell's brief commander (before he was mortally wounded leading the storming of the fortress at Cuidad Rodrigo), conducted a brilliant retreat using mobile battalion squares, manoeuvring as if on parade, into which the Light Division skirmishers could sprint when charged by French cavalry. It was a masterly textbook withdrawal, which drew gasps of admiration from watching staff officers – both British and French.[25] The worst fighting was in the village itself with 'the blood-soaked lanes being the focus of horrid hand-to-hand fighting, with bayonets driven home and volleys exchanged at point blank range. The struggle was over by early afternoon.'[26]

3.3 The Realities of War – The Statistics

These are just two celebrated scenes in a complex, long-running engagement involving four corps of the French Army of Portugal, with an 800-strong cavalry reserve against six divisions of the British–Portuguese infantry and cavalry brigades. Ian Robertson states the French casualties were 2850 to the Allies loss of 1800. [27] These figures usually mean both dead and wounded, but given the state of field surgery in those days, many of the wounded would not have survived or would have been maimed for life. Of the many historians of the Peninsular War, Charles Esdaile gives French casualties as 2844 to the Allies 171; [28] Michael Glover 650 to 225, presumably for the first day only; [29] and Roger Parkinson 2192 to 1345. [30] If this trawling of figures seems morbid and ghoulish to dwell on, it is an attempt to work out what this mayhem behind Mitchell's project and his 'pride, pomp, and circumstance of

24. Robertson, *An Atlas of the Peninsular War 1808–1814*, 58.
25. Roger Parkinson, *The Peninsular War* (London: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 2000), 134.
26. Robertson, *An Atlas of the Peninsular War 1808–1814*, 60.
27. Ibid.
28. Charles Esdaile, *The Peninsular War: A New History* (London: Penguin Group, 2003).
29. Michael Glover, *The Peninsular War 1807–1814: A Concise Military History* (Exeter, UK: David & Charles, 1974).
30. Parkinson, *The Peninsular War*, 134.

glorious war' really was. Each writer gives differing accounts, though most seem to defer to Sir Charles Oman, who in Volume IV of his seven-tome encyclopedic history of the war, quotes 1452 Allies casualties to 2192 French. He, helpfully, breaks the figures down to give a clearer picture: Allies – 192 killed, 985 wounded, 25 captured; French – 267 killed, 1878 wounded, 47 captured.[31] Adding the casualties for 3 May – Allies: 259 and French: 652 – to the total figure for 5 May of 1452 and 2192 respectively gives the total casualties for the battle as 1711 for the Allies and 2844 for the French. Among the many actions of the combat, the same report relates an incident of 'friendly fire', when a French infantry unit in the smoke of battle mistook their allies, the red-coated Hanoverian legion, for English 'redcoats'. They opened fire killing over 100 of their own side.[32]

Accounts fail to relate what happened to the inhabitants of the village of Fuentes d'Oñoro. It would not have been a happy return. Wellington described the battle as 'the most difficult I was ever concerned in against the greatest odds … if Boney had been there we should have been beaten.'[33]

Of the close combat in the village, it was said:

> Among the dead that covered the streets, it was quite common to see English and French soldiers with their bayonets still in each other's bodies and their fists convulsively grasping the butt ends of their muskets lying on top of each other.[34]

Recalling the clearing of the dead in the aftermath of the first day's slaughter:

> So thick were the bodies that those buried underneath were still warm and soft. Enemies worked together and passed one another with averted eyes, though not through hostility but as if ashamed of the atrocity which they had committed and which they knew would soon start again.[35]

And all this was but one battle among some 50 major engagements in the Peninsular War, if the longest in running time, by no means the costliest.[36]

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31. Charles Oman, *History of the Peninsular War* (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1983).
32. Wikipedia, *Battle of Fuentes d'Oñoro*, accessed June 17, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Fuentes_de_O%C3%B1oro.
33. Roger Parkinson, *The Peninsular War*, general editor, Ludovic Kennedy, 137.
34. Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, 353.
35. Ibid.
36. Robertson, *An Atlas of the Peninsular War 1808–1814*, 66. Robertson gives mapped accounts of at least 50; Lipscombe 150.

Only 10 days later,120 miles to the south at the Battle of Albuera, the casualties numbered 5915 Allies and 7000 to 8000 French:[37] 'The most sanguinary encounter of the war in proportion to the numbers engaged.'[38] And the war on the Iberian Peninsula, Napoleon's 'running sore,'[39] was itself a microcosm of, and sideshow to, the whole European-wide – indeed worldwide – Napoleonic conflict.[40]

3.4 The Map of Fuentes

In contrast with the carnage on the ground, the map Mitchell produced of the Battle of Fuentes d'Oñoro is an elegant design spread across three pages by means of a fold-out accompanied by a small vignette of the landscape. Because of his method of using the natural boundaries of watersheds as edges to the physical map, it takes on a form of its own, unconstrained by the geometry of the page (see Figure 30):

Figure 30. Mitchell, *Map of the Battle of Fuentes d'Oñoro.Wyld's Atlas*.

> A ridge or chain of heights affords the most favourable line for the boundary of a plan, or for joining two plans together. Mountains divide the sources of rivers, govern the direction of roads, and bound the visible horizon.[41]

37. Ibid., 66.
38. Ibid., 64.
39. or the Spanish Ulcer.
40. Ute Planert, ed., *Napoleon's Empire: European Politics in Global Perspective* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
41. Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, 108. Quoting from Mitchell's *Outlines of a System of Surveying*.

It becomes an organic floating abstract image given a three-dimensional effect by the rich shading of the topography. There is an awful dichotomy between the artwork of the map and the art of warfare. This was to be repeated over every page of the Atlas: serene topographical views of landscapes and billowing maps, some inviting exploration of their valleys, streams and roads, others darkly brooding mountainscapes, which once echoed with battle cries and cannon fire.

There is a separate view of the landscape, strongly rendered, showing the rough terrain of the rocks and scrubby trees under a lowering sky (see Figure 31). The script reads: 'View from A showing the face of the country on the banks of the Dos Casas as far as the village of Fuentes d'Oñoro.' The village is difficult to distinguish but the general landscape seems to fit Parkinson's clear description: 'The main road from Ciudad Rodrigo crosses the Dos Casas into Portugal at the village of Fuentes d'Oñoro, with narrow streets climbing the hillside to the boulder littered plateau stretching back two miles to La Turones.'[42]

Figure 31. *View from A Showing the Face of the Country on the Banks of the Dos Casas as Far as the Village of Fuentes d'Oñoro,* inset detail of Figure 30.

Mitchell had made no attempt to show any imagined figures in combat, and he places the village of Fuentes d'Oñoro, in which some of the most intense fighting took place, undefinable in the distance. Presumably it was a ruin anyway, and the scale of the plan is so big, it is difficult to spot where the village lies. The three-day ebb and flow of the battle would be very complex to show on a single map. Robertson and Lipscombe both use two maps.[43]

42. Parkinson, *The Peninsular War*, 132.
43. Robertson, *An Atlas of the Peninsular War 1808–1814*, 59; Lipscombe, *The Peninsular War Atlas*, 61.

It is notable that there has been a virtual industry of publishing histories of the war since the nineteenth century, one of the earliest authors being Robert Southey, the Poet Laureate no less, and brother-in-law of S. T. Coleridge. Interest seems to continue unabated, with at least a dozen books being published in this century, including a reissue of Oman's monumental seven-volume *History of the Peninsular War*, originally published from 1902 to 1930, and the two 'atlas' versions by Lipscombe and Robertson, which both came out in 2010. Lipscombe's hefty *The Peninsular War Atlas* is too heavy to be a field guide but interestingly, for Fuentes d'Oñoro, his commentary makes no mention of the salient, dramatic scenes of the battle: Craufurd's brilliant retreat, the bodies plied high in the bloody hand-to-hand combat, the mutual truce for clearing of the bodies in the village, and the 'friendly fire' massacre of the red-coated Hanoverian legion in the Napoleonic army by French troops thinking they were British.

Finally, it has to be asked why all the books referred to, and many others, about a distant war fought over 200 years ago have been published in the past 20 years. It suggests that this part of Mitchell's story still has some relevance today, and as the surveyor and artist of its first atlas, the more so.

It is also worth considering that Mitchell, armed with Murray's dry precise measuring instructions, would probably have known very little of these details when working alone on the remote site. Murray's commands were matter-of-fact and precise:

> It should include the village of Nave de Ave on the right of the sketch – the boundary should go from thence to Quinta de Aguila including that farm it should thence extend to the village of Alameda leaving Fuentes d'Oñoro within the line – it should include the village of… The ground within the above line on which it is necessary to bestow particular pains is that of Fuentes d'Oñoro and Poco Velho, and above the village Formoso. The rocky and wooded heights also which look toward….[44]

Not a hint of conflict, death or passion. Presumably, he was fed details of the engagement in the same prosaic manner. The survey was to occupy Mitchell on site and drawing up the plan in Alameida from September 1814 to February 1815.[45]

44. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 45.
45. Ibid., 44–47.

3.5 Warfare in Australia Felix – The Dispersion

To compare a Peninsular battle with an Australian event there is an image in *Three Expeditions* that vividly depicts a violent incident, smaller in scale, but of historic and national importance. It demonstrates Mitchell's skills as an illustrator and his conflicted ideas about the Indigenous population. It is, arguably, a turning point in Mitchell's life. Following the convention of the time, at the head of each chapter he gives a useful, or spoiler perhaps, precis of the narrative. However here he starts Chapter 5 with the following words:

> New and remarkable shrub – Darling tribe again – Their dispersion by the party – Cross a tract intersected by deep lagoons – Huts over tombs – Another division of the Darling tribe – Barren sands and the eucalyptus dumosa – etc, etc.[46]

Blink and you might miss it, but 'Their dispersion by the party' was his account of the incident which had repercussions for Mitchell and haunts his reputation to this day. The first time I learnt something about him, beyond the name and the cockatoo (in conversation, it is always the cockatoo he is remembered for), was at an exhibition about Mitchell's expedition at a festival in Castlemaine, where the artist of the naïve-style paintings gave a talk, attended by many Mitchell descendants, where she expressed her ambivalence about him, decrying his shooting of Aborigines.[47] In fact, he never did; he never pulled a gun on anyone (except at a duel in Sydney),[48] but his team of convicts was issued with guns, and in a tense and perilous situation some of them fired when cooler heads might have held back. Ultimately as the leader, he was responsible, and with the Dispersion he changed his story during the investigation, which forever questions his legacy. There was no official inquiry on the Darling River incident the year before. Nor was there an inquiry, let alone mention until recently, of the countless massacres of unaccountable numbers of the traditional owners of the lands of Australia Felix.

Having disobeyed the Governor's instruction to follow the course of the Darling to seek its presumed junction with the Murray, the official objective of the expedition, Mitchell crossed country via the Lachlan and Murrumbidgee rivers. Nearing the Murray River, he put his second-in-command, Granville Stapylton, in charge of a pleasant depôt camp at the appropriately named Lake Stapylton. Turandurey's child had fallen under a cartwheel. Her

46. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, ???.
47. Eliza Tree, *Major Mitchell Expedition: Re-Tracing T. L. Mitchell's 1836 Expedition* (Castlemaine, Vic: Castlemaine Town Hall, 2011), exhibition.
48. John H. L. Cumpston, *Thomas Mitchell: Surveyor General & Explorer* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 208–9. Allegedly the last duel fought in Australia. They both missed. See Section 8.9s on page 269.

broken leg was not mending and had to be reset. In the context of the forthcoming events, it is worth mentioning this major restructuring of the expedition partly on behalf of a little Aboriginal female child.

On 23 May 1836 Mitchell set off with a party of 15 to find the Murray and seek its confluence with the Darling, leaving 'eight trusty men' with Stapylton, Turandurey, Ballandella and the other useful Aboriginal members who had joined the expedition. A combative tribe, the 'Mayalls', who Mitchell had met on the previous expedition on the Darling, had reappeared. Mitchell reckoned that he recognised them and their leader, and thought they had come over 200 miles to seek revenge for an unfortunate incident there when tensions had escalated, and once one Joseph Jones was bludgeoned by 'King' Peter, one Thomas Jones shot at him. There were further shootings at 'the mob' during which a mother and her baby died.[49]

After a tense gathering at Lake Benanee, where the large tribe had acted in an overfriendly and menacing manner, they met a family who told Piper that the Darling tribe were intruders and upsetting the peaceable local groups. The events at Lake Benanee are described separately because they are well illustrated in a complex image which is analysed in Section 5.6. Having encountered the Murray, the party started following the impressive river downstream. This passage picks up the narrative two days later:

> We proceeded on our journey as usual, but had not gone far, when we heard the voices of a vast body of blacks following our track, shouting prodigiously, and raising war cries.

Mitchell's account continues with an over complicated explanation of the unfolding events, especially without the reader knowing the geography of the situation, but they were considerably outnumbered two days walk from their camp, and a very long way from any other help.[50]

> It now became necessary for me to determine, whether I was to allow the party, under my charge, to be perpetually subject to be cut off in detail, by waiting until these natives had again actually attacked, and slain some of my people, or-whether it was not my duty to, in a war which not my party, but these savages had virtually commenced, to anticipate the intended blow.[51]

49. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:278.
50. Baker reckons there were 400 warriors each armed with bundles of spears.
51. Ibid., 2:101.

For his team of a dozen men in a completely alien country, the situation would have been alarming.[52] Donald Baker suggests there were four hundred warriors each with bundles of spears.[53] Yet the Mitchell's crew had guns:

> I sent the overseer Burnett and Piper and half the party into the scrub, which skirted our line of route… I directed the men to allow the tribes to pass along our track towards me, as I intended to halt the carts, after crossing a low hill. Piper recognised the same people he had seen at Benanee.
>
> The natives however having immediately discovered our ambuscade, by the howling of one of their dogs, halted and poised their spears; but a man of our party (King) inconsiderately discharging his carabine, they fled, as usual, to their citadel, the river, pursued and fired on by the party from the scrub. The firing had no sooner commenced, than I perceived from the top of the hill, which I ascended, some of the blacks who appeared to be a very numerous tribe swimming across the Murray.[54]

3.6 *The Murray – 27th of May 1836*

This sets the scene for Mitchell's tableau, titled simply – too simply – *The Murray* and the date (see Figure 32). In a way, the image is remarkable in that Mitchell has chosen to illustrate the controversial event, though the bland title would suggest to the uninformed viewer this was the scene on that date when a party of Aboriginal men brandishing spears decided to go for a swim in a beautiful stretch of the river. And the artist-commander hidden behind a hill missed witnessing much of the action.

52. Ibid., 2:101
53. Donald W. A. Baker, *The Civilised Surveyor: Thomas Mitchell and the Australian Aborigines* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 1997), 122.
54. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:101–2.

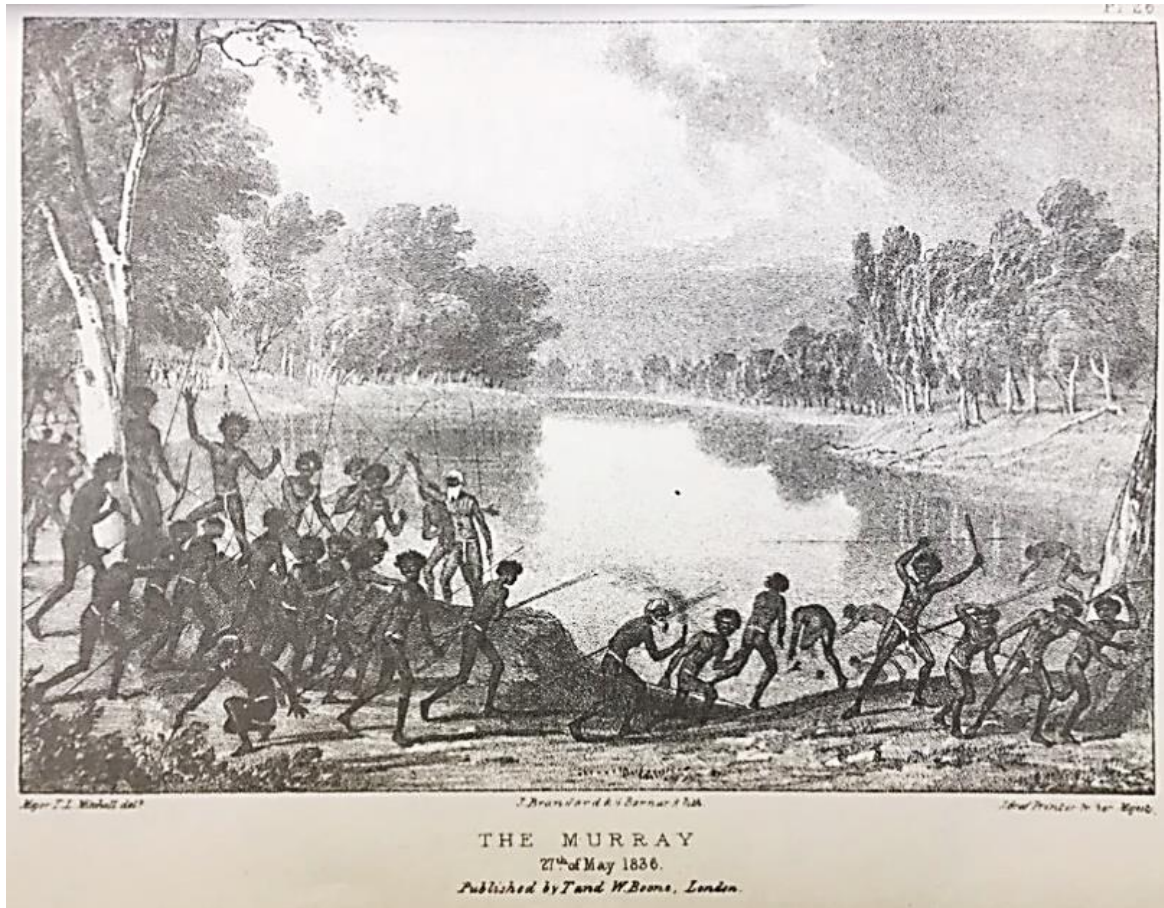

Figure 32. *The Murray*, *27th of May 1836*.[55]

The landscape of *The Murray* is rendered in a perfectly picturesque manner down to the convention of the *repoussoir* tree on the left that leads the eye in, though the emphasis is on the un-picturesque figures filling the foreground who are too big, busy and numerous to be staffage. They are all very much the same model, but Mitchell has given a great variety of poses and a convincing sense of movement across the picture counterbalanced by the swimmers diving in the opposite direction. The single individual figure of the white-bearded man is either the chieftain or the man in the previous image of Piper at Benanee,[56] which is later discussed in terms of Mitchell's neoclassicism. On the same theme, the war party are all attired in matching minimal, laundered white loincloths, which, it can be assumed, are entirely Mitchell's invention.

The incident was taken very seriously by the authorities and a governor's inquiry was held after the main expedition had returned to Sydney at which those involved, including Piper,

55. Ibid., 2:104, plate 26.
56. Ibid., 2:92, plate 25.

were questioned.[57] His testimony of counting seven dead in the river could have been an exaggeration or an understatement. Later when the Sydney newspapers were celebrating the news of Mitchell's discovery of Australia Felix, they also felt compelled to animadvert the readers to the incident that became the subject of the inquiry.[58]

3.7 Finding the Darling and the Hesperides?

Continuing the expedition they found there was no 'River Darling' – or rather only an empty river bed encountered some days later, which by travelling its meanderings 'upstream' eventually revealed the familiar soft red sandhills and shrubs from the previous expedition.[59] Satisfied it was the course of the right river, Mitchell turned and ventured down to where the two rivers meandered side by side for some miles until their confluence, although the still water in the Darling bed was the Murray's turbulent flow backed up.

He had found the point that Sturt had sketched on his river voyage down the Murray, so the first objective of the large enterprise had been achieved, but he had not surveyed the river. He had not travelled down the whole way from Boree to the Murray as instructed, so there were gaps on the map. He could not be entirely sure it was the Darling River he had found. However, Mitchell had other plans. He had to return from a third expensive expedition with better news than this. Meanwhile his immediate concerns were the continued presence of the menacing tribe now between him and Stapylton's party at the depôt camp, unaware of the danger they were in.

Thus when, without serious further incident, the party returned to the depôt at 'Lake Stapylton' to find the residents untroubled, Mitchell's heart lifted:

> Mr Stapylton and his party were well; and during the whole time that we had been absent, the natives had never approached the camp. Such singular good fortune was more than I could reasonably have expected, and satisfaction was complete when I, again, met Stapylton and saw the party once more united.
>
> The little native Ballandella's leg was fast mending, the mother having been unremitting in her care of the child. Good grass had also been found, so that the cattle had become quite fresh, and indeed looked well.

57. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 180–186.
58. *The Australian*, 8 November, 1836.
59. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:113.

> I was ferried over Stapylton's creek in a bark canoe by Tommy *Came-last*, who also, by the same simple means, soon conveyed every article of equipment, and the rest of the party, across to the depôt camp.[60]

This enthusiastic passage reveals many things about Mitchell: the lifting of his immediate worries about their safety, for, greatly outnumbered, they had been in genuine peril and were not to encounter any large and unfriendly groups again (and he had lost men on the previous expeditions); his fondness for the Aboriginal members of the party; his concern for the infant girl whose leg was broken when she fell off a cart and was run over; his admiration for Tommy's ingenuity and usefulness; and, significantly, his implicit mythmaking.

He continues:

> We had now got through the most unpromising part of our task. We had penetrated the Australian Hesperides – although the golden fruit was still to be sought.
>
> We had accomplished so much however with only half the party, that nothing seemed impossible with the whole; and to trace the Murray upwards and explore unknown regions beyond it, was a charming undertaking, when we had at length bid adieu, for ever, to the dreary banks of the Darling.[61]

Mitchell is showing his knowledge of, and grounding in, a classical education. The Hesperides were the Greek isles of the west, *hesperos* meaning western or evening, Hesper or Vesper, the evening star; vespers, the evening service. In Greek mythology, the Hesperides were nymphs, the daughters of Hesperus, who guarded the golden fruit in the fabled garden on the Isles of the Blest in the far west of the earth.[62] Their name came to mean the isles themselves or the Fortunate Isles. 'Fortunate' transforms to lucky to happy and, perhaps therefore, to felix.

Of course, Mitchell was writing up the incidents just described much later for he could not have been sure that they were out of danger nor that he would have his epiphany on Pyramid Hill three weeks later– 'I felt conscious of being the harbinger of mighty changes.'[63] The changes were to be remarkable; he could be fairly sure of that since the rapid ruthless settlement of Victoria had started from the embryonic camp cities of Melbourne and Geelong and Portland, and Stapylton met the first groups following his cart tracks when he got to the Murrumbidgee River with the main party on its return. And when he was editing his publication back in London, Mitchell found his time so taken up with acting as the unofficial

60. Ibid., 2:126–127.
61. Ibid., 2:127.
62. Eccleston, *Major Mitchell's 1836 Australia Felix Expedition*, 125.
63. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:159.

agent for the colony advising a stream of visitors about Australia that he had to hire a doorman to make appointments.[64]

3.8 Dance at the Report of a Pistol

Mitchell had already executed a similar illustration of a comparable situation on his first expedition to the Darling in 1835 when he met an unfriendly group he called the Spitting Tribe. Their demeanour stayed hostile with various gestures and actions including waving branches, normally a sign of peace, in the explorers' faces:

> As a peace offering I then presented the man who appeared to be their leader with a tomahawk, the use of which he immediately guessed by turning round to a log and chopping at it. Two other stout fellows then rudely demanded my pistols from my belt; whereupon I drew one, and, curious to see the effect, I fired it at a tree. The scene which followed I cannot satisfactorily describe or present although I shall never forget it.[65]

He makes a determined effort in prose and imagery with a lengthy description:

> demonic looks, hideous shouts and a war-song – crouching, jumping, spitting, springing with the spear, and throwing dust at us, as they slowly retired … all to the tune of a wild song, with the fiendish glare of their countenances … all eyes and teeth, seemed a fitter spectacle for Pandemonium … all the while dancing in a circle like the witches of Macbeth …[66]

Mitchell qualifies his melodramatic words:

> The manner and disposition of these people were so unlike those of the aborigines in general, that I hoped they might be the exception to the general character of the natives we were to meet with. The difference between tribes not very remote from each other was often striking.67

but adding 'it was too probable they might ere long force upon us the painful necessity of making them acquainted with the superiority of our arms.'[68]

---

64. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 321.
65. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:247.
66. Ibid., 1:248.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.

Figure 33. *Dance at the Report of a Pistol*.[69]

The *Dance at the Report of a Pistol* tableau is a skilfully rendered composition in a romantic woodland setting that Mitchell had learnt from Dutch and English landscapes, with the trees looking decidedly European (see Figure 33). The circling figures, while all of a type, are all individually drawn and to a convincing scale, the rhythm of the rotating dance skilfully evoked with the departing figures drawing the eye into the distance. He has managed to suggest light coming from the centre of the circle, thereby conjuring a moonlit night-time scene that adds to the gothic atmosphere. It is a remarkable work, not the image Ryan dismisses as 'crudely portraying an enraged and unindividualised group.'[70] His contention that 'the construction of the Aborigine as inherently evil' and 'Mitchell's obsession with portraying them as devils'[71] ignores Mitchell's comments mentioned previously that point to him believing this group, the Spitting Tribe, and the 'Myalls on the Darling', are the exception to the rule. It also ignores the sensitivity and empathy of Mitchell's drawings of

69. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:248, plate 14.
70. Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye*, 141.
71. Ibid.

individual Aborigines. And surely Mitchell could be forgiven for wanting to dramatise the narrative where he could, allowing for the standard attitudes of almost two centuries ago.

How did Mitchell achieve this spectacle? An influence for the imagery might have been John Martin, his tutor in sepia landscapes. In fact, a clue is Mitchell describing the tribe as '… a fitter spectacle for Pandemonium.'[72] Martin, a master of producing huge dramatic biblical disaster scenes, was commissioned to illustrate an edition of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, where Pandemonium is Satan's city in Hell, a subject the artist often returned to (see Figure 34). The print is a large-scale reworking of Martin's earlier engraving of the subject for the *Paradise Lost* series. The scene of Satan surveying his Palace of Hell is based on Milton's description.

Figure 34. John Martin, *Pandemonium*, 1831, mezzotint.[73]

3.9 Corrobory-Dance of the Natives

A more stylised war dance opens the Australia Felix story as the title page to Volume II of the Three Expeditions. It is equally dramatic and advertises the entertainment on offer in Australia Felix for the enterprising traveller. Named 'Vignette' – C*orrobory-dance of the*

72. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:248.
73. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, accessed September 2, 2020, https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/419.2009/

natives, as described in pages 4 and 5, it depicts a night scene of warrior- or hunter-dancers composed in perfect formation theatrically lit by fire (see Figure 35).

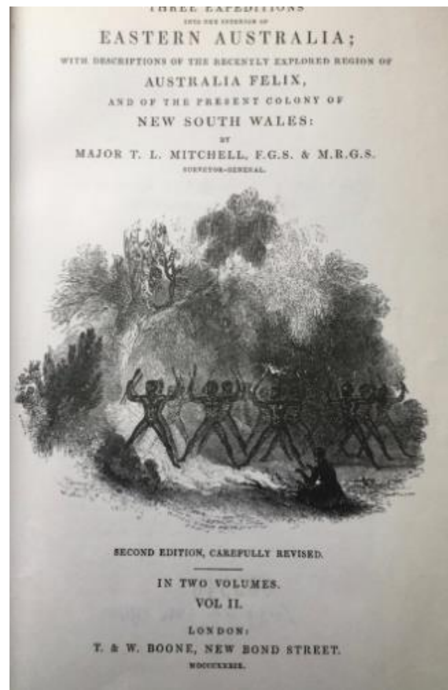
EASTERN AUSTRALIA;
WITH DESCRIPTIONS OF THE RECENTLY EXPLORED REGION OF
AUSTRALIA FELIX,
AND OF THE PRESENT COLONY OF
NEW SOUTH WALES:
BY
MAJOR T. L. MITCHELL, F.G.S. & M.R.G.S.
SECOND EDITION, CAREFULLY REVISED.
IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL II.
LONDON:
T. & W. BOONE, NEW BOND STREET.

Figure 35. Title Page of Volume II of *Three Expeditions*.[74]

The repetitive poses of the athletic dancers could be criticised, but Mitchell is describing receding 'chorus lines' of tightly choreographed performers and using proper perspective. He would not have seen a Maori haka but the stance is similar. It has to be remembered that Mitchell had been employed to illustrate drill manuals for the army,[75] and in the Atlas there is his extraordinary night scene of the 95th infantry holding serried lines under French bombardment during the Siege of Badajoz lit by an arcing flare (Fig 41).

Mitchell describes arriving at Buree where Captain Raine was to provide 'a hundred sheep and five fat oxen'[76] for the expedition:

> In the evening the blacks having assembled in some numbers entertained us with a 'corrobory,' their universal and highly original dance. – (See the vignette title page to this vol.) – Like the rest of their habits and customs of this singular race of wild men, the 'corrrobory' is peculiar, and, from its uniformity on every shore, a very striking feature in their character. The dance always takes place at night, by the light of blazing boughs, and to time beaten on stretched skins, accompanied by song.[77]

74. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:Title page, Vignette.
75. Thomas L. Mitchell, *Ninety Figures Shewing all the Motions in the Manual and Platoon Exercises, and the Different Firings, According to His Majesty's Regulations* (London: William Clowes, 1825).
76. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:4.
77. Ibid.

This sounds like an article for a contemporary travel magazine:

> The dancers paint themselves white, and in such a variety of ways that no individuals at all are alike. Darkness seems essential to the effect of the whole; and the painted figures coming forward in mystic order from the obscurity of the back-ground most tastefully, while the singers and beaters of time are invisible, have a highly theatrical effect.[78] Each dance seems tastefully progressive; the movement being art first slow and introduced by two persons, displaying graceful movements of arms and legs, others one by one join in…[79]

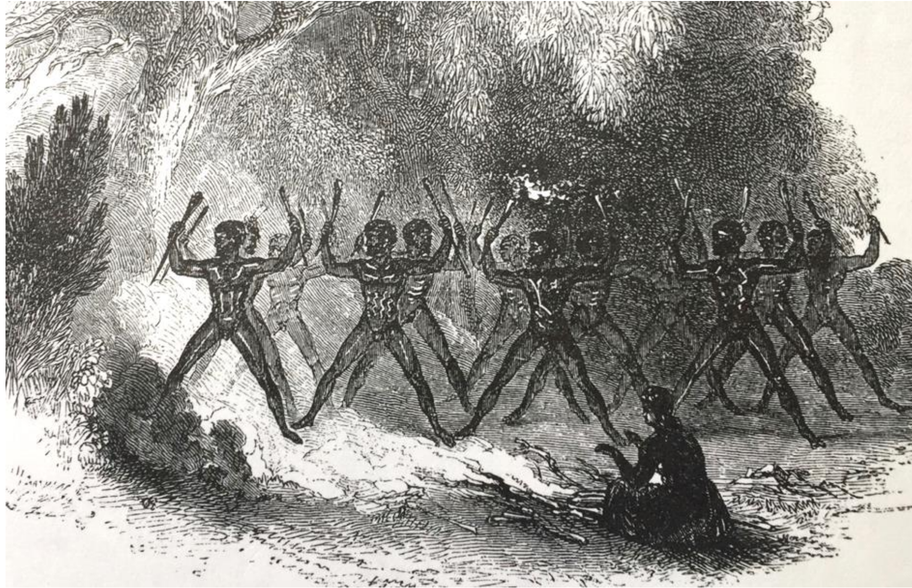

Figure 36. Title Page of Volume II of *Three Expeditions*, detail – *Corrobory-Dance of the Natives.*[80]

And so on. He continues for another page, including a detailed footnote on the construction of drums. Figure 36 is taken from the facsimile edition of the second 1839 edition of the *Three Expeditions*. A comparative study of the two volumes of the two original editions in the Rare Books collection of the State Library of Victoria (SLV) reveals some interesting variations. The idea that a second edition was required because of poor printing of the illustrations in the first is not entirely true. The important portraits of Mitchell's Aboriginal friends are of fine quality, particularly the very first illustration (Cambo) on the frontispiece of Volume I, and the study of Turandurey and Ballandella, (see Figure 28)

Lynne Kelly describes the importance of dance as a vital means of learning and memorising actions, practices and events in all Indigenous societies without a written language, and in a male performance, such as this, preparing for hunting or fighting: 'In oral traditions, dance at as a complementary memory cue to the sung narratives of memory. Not only do dances

78. I wrote 'theatrically' above before reading this detail.
79. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:5.
80. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, facsimile ed., 2:Title Vignette

entertain but information can also be encoded in dance that defies clear expression in words.'[81]

What is quite extraordinary is the unexplained replacement of *Corrobory-dance of the natives* on the title page of the 1839 edition with a portrait of one King James I of England and VI of Scotland. Was this a sudden prurience and coyness at the depiction of naked natives dancing?

3.10 The Spanish Sieges

Mitchell enjoyed the challenge of creating night scenes and a precursor, historically, of the *Corrobory-dance of the natives* is his astonishing illustration of the storming of the citadel that ended the Siege of Badajoz. Which came first: the *Corrobory-dance* or the *Storming Party*? One is a ritualised battle, the other a fight to the death. Which informs the other? Though the siege occurred in 1812 and Mitchell experienced the dance in 1836, the images were not necessarily made in that sequence. Mitchell had probably not acquired the technical ability to produce the complex shading and chiaroscuro of the battle image until many years later, and, moreover, the Atlas was published after the Australian expedition journals. Perhaps he conceived it in 1839–40 when preparing the *Maps and Plans* for publication, so *Corrobory-dance* and *Dance at the Report of a Pistol* (see Figure 33) could have influenced the *Storming Party* (see Figure 41). On the other hand, did Mitchell, more likely, use his knowledge gained from creating the siege nightmare to conjure up the expedition night scenes? Either way, the link between the war and the expedition, the concept of two co-existing campaigns, is demonstrated.

3.10.1 The Siege of Ciudad Rodrigo

Before examining the Siege of Badajoz, and to set the contrasts in Mitchell's image making, his illustration for the Atlas of the previous siege, that of Ciudad Rodrigo, is a straightforward townscape dominated by baroque-domed churches, apparently undamaged from the fighting (see Figure 37). He has taken great trouble with the architectural details and shown the zig-zagging walls, ditches and the *glacis*[82] of the fortifications very clearly in convincing perspective. The image is titled *Ciudad Rodrigo, 20th January 1812*; in other words, supposedly the scene on the day after the surrender when the unbridled sacking of the city would have been in full swing. However, apart from a stray cannon in the right foreground

81. Kelly, *The Memory Code*, 4.
82. A gently sloping ramp designed as a killing ground for the defender.

(placed as a device to draw the eye in), some troops in a long file in the far distance, and a bit of crumbling city wall, all seems at peace, even with groups of sightseers (albeit in uniform) standing around as staffage to give scale to the composition.

Figure 37. *Ciudad Rodrigo, 20th January 1812. Wyld's Atlas.*

Given that Mitchell was with his brigade and would have been expected to have regimental duties to attend to, one could assume that he would not have had time to sketch in the immediate aftermath of the bloody Allied victory, especially on the stated 20 January 1812, when the city was apparently being sacked. There would presumably been have been the removal and burial of the dead.[83] He was also at Ciudad Rodrigo in November 1812 on the disastrous retreat from Burgos, which was not a happy time for the army, and when Mitchell was beset with his own problems.[84] He would have passed through Ciudad Rodrigo often on his surveys in the five years after the war and would have had plenty of opportunity to draw the city in peacetime as it appears in the lithograph. Besides, he had no idea in early 1812, in fact no one did, that he would be asked to survey and draw all the battle sites of the war. Mitchell's account of the battle was recorded by Kincaid: 'As soon as we turned the corner of

83. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 24.
84. Ibid., 29–30.

the convent wall, the space between us and the breach became one blaze of light with their fireballs.'[85]

If that was his first experience of action against the enemy, it is hard to imagine him calmly sketching the next day. If true, he could certainly be called a 'war artist', and he would go on to successfully reproduce the blaze of light in the Badajoz night scene.

However, in the Mitchell files in the SLNSW is a sketch of a cannon on a separate sheet of paper, which is without doubt the one in the foreground in the print (see Figure 38). Close inspection of the sketch reveals that there is a body lying beside the gun and others beyond.

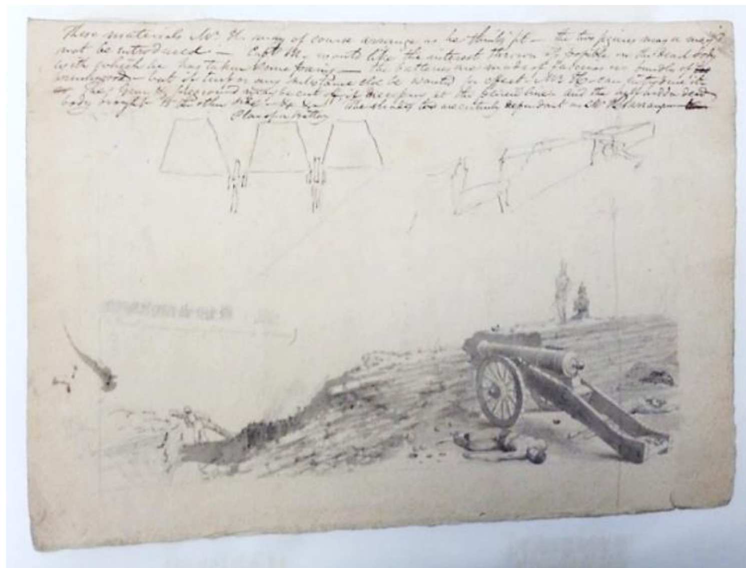

Figure 38. *Sketch of a Gun Battery*, undated, sketch (January 1812).[86]

There is a body, white and stripped, in the foreground and other corpses beside the wall beyond the gun (see Figure 39). When did Mitchell draw them? From 'life' on the spot on 20 January 1812? From imagination later onto a sketch made on the spot? Was he instructed to make the study at the time, or did he draw for his own interest?

85. Ibid., 38. Note 108, quoting Kincaid, *Adventures in the Rifle Brigade.*
86. Courtesy of the SLNSW, cannon sketch, File No. DG*21, 16.

Figure 39. Detail of Figure 38, showing corpses.[87]

The note at the top of the sheet, written in ink, is both revealing and enigmatic, about both Mitchell's methods and the publishing process. It appears to be instructions to a printer or a lithographer:

> These materials Mr H(?) may of course arrange as he thinks fit – the two figures may or may not be introduced – Capt. M – would like the interest thrown if possible on the dead body with which he has taken some pains – the batteries are made of falcines(?) or bundles of brushwood – but if turf or any substance else be wanted for effect – Mr H can introduce it. The gun and foreground(?)may be cut off, if necessary(?) at the pencil lines and the half hidden dead body brought to the other side. [88]

Thus it would seem Mitchell drew the gun and the bodies at the same time, very likely on 20 January 1812 or soon after, but that the note was doubtless written over the top in London during the publishing development stage in 1840, 28 years later. Evidently, the drawing and the presenting of the unfortunate corpses was important to him, and he wanted it made known to the printer. Did Mitchell stand at this point and draw the cannon and the bodies as we see them? Were they French gunners? If an Allied artillery battery, surely they would not have been left there?

In another drawing in the SLNSW collection is a wonderfully free sketch of a tragic scene (see Figure 40). Four figures are sheltering behind a low wall looking at a wagon train crossing in front of a grand church. Was it Salamanca Cathedral perhaps? Comparing images, it proves to be a lively confident outline of Ciudad Rodrigo's churches, and the low-sloping wall seems to be in the same position as the cannon's wall. It is that wall.

87. Courtesy of the SLNSW, File No. DG*21, 16.
88. Courtesy of SLNSW, cannon sketch, File No. DG*21, 16.

Figure 40. Untitled sketch, Ciudad Rodrigo.[89]

Instead of the gun and some corpses, there is a family, with the father staring out in despair, the wife clinging to him, a small child bawling her eyes out, and an old woman huddled in the shadow of the wall. It is a brilliantly observed reportage of refugees fleeing their home in despair and terror. Due to the febrile urgency of the drawing, one can only assume Mitchell drew it from life. He was being a war artist. He expresses the title of Goya's *The Disasters of War* series of etchings, which the great Spanish artist began secretly working on at that time.[90]

3.10.2 The Siege of Badajoz

While Mitchell was at Ciudad Rodrigo there was correspondence about Mitchell's placement in Murray's survey department. Henry Sturgeon, the veteran surveyor, wrote to Mitchell:

> Almeida Feby the 8th
>
> I am much obliged for the plans, etc, you have sent me. I should think your stay in the Regiment might now be dispensed with since in the course of a very short time you have witnessed a siege and an assault. I shall be glad to hear of your retuning to us.[91]

Were the plans Sturgeon was thanking Mitchell for the ones of Ciudad Rodrigo, or of unrelated surveys he had given the new recruit as 'homework'? Another question that this scenario poses is how would Mitchell have been able to work at them while on campaign. However, he would have been proud and happy to get this warm and welcoming letter from a senior and very accomplished member of Murray's survey department. He had to make the decision about whether to stay with his regiment or give his skills to the Quartermaster-

89. Courtesy of SLNSW, cannon sketch, File No. DG*21, 16.
90. Hughes, *Goya*.
91. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 24.

General, the important matter being which route gave him a better chance of promotion. He wrote to his patron, Sir Archibald Campbell, who replied:

> 55 Estremoz 13 February 1812
>
> It afforded me much satisfaction to find the attention paid by Genl Murray to my recommendation, and the more so that it seems you are deserving of it.
>
> You ask my advice as to remaining with the Genl. Hesitate not moment in doing so. It will lead to your rise and emoluments in the army sooner than anything you can possibly look for, or expect as a Regt officer – as to what regiment of the Line you are in signifies not one sixpence…[92]

It is worth emphasising this correspondence because it is a lynchpin in Mitchell's career. His skill and enthusiasm was being recognised by very senior people who had befriended the young lieutenant for what he was. At the same time, promotion was vital to one who could not afford to buy preferment, and he had to make his own way, having no grand contacts to help push him forward.

However, Murray did not immediately summon him, which was fortunate in a way, because it meant he was with the regiment at Badajoz from which experience he produced a masterwork and after that for the Battle of Salamanca. Although his regiment was kept in reserve during the action, it did mean that Mitchell was present at Wellington's most decisive, and arguably greatest, victory against Napoleon's forces, for Waterloo was a narrow win at the cost of enormous casualties. Mitchell's enigmatic naming of Mount Arapiles to commemorate Salamanca inextricably binds that plain in Spain to Australia Felix and the quest for its meaning led, in a convoluted way, to this thesis.

The facts of the Siege of Badajoz are that the city was an important border town on the road from Madrid to Lisbon, which the Spanish had surrendered to Marshal Soult in March 1811. With the capture of Ciudad Rodrigo in January 1812, Wellington turned his attention to Badajoz, 100 miles to the south, though to confuse his adversary, he did not himself follow the Allied army there until early March. The fortress was invested by 17 March and the heavy guns started bombardment, with the outer fort, Picurina, being captured on 25 March.[93] The main assault on the night of 6 April was successful, although it was at the cost of very heavy casualties: 3713, of which 806 were killed, 2855 wounded and 52 missing. Of these, 178

92. Ibid.
93. Robertson, *An Atlas of the Peninsular War 1808–1814*, 72–73. Invest: to lay siege to.

were killed and 741 wounded from the Light Division, and of Mitchell's own 1st Battalion, 30 were killed and 194 wounded.[94]

A brief record in Mitchell's diary – 'Lieutenant Haggup and I attempted the breach alone, in which attempt he was wounded'[95] – quoted by Foster points to his being there and thereby witnessing the scene he so vividly portrays despite it being written over eight years later. Undoubtedly Mitchell would have worked up the scene years later when he had acquired all the tuition and skills to produce such a powerful image of war. He had also been illustrating drilling manuals for the army, so he was practised in drawing ranks of uniformed troops.[96] The foreground is quite surreal with the rows of rigid toy soldiers all the same height and slim build, silhouetted against the light of flares and fire, holding their lines – but they are trained not to break rank even in such danger (see Figure 41).

Figure 41. *Advance of the Light Division & Repulse of the Storming Party on the Night of the 6th April*. *Wyld's Atlas*.

94. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 26.
95. Ibid., 38.
96. Mitchell, *Ninety figures Shewing All the Motions*.

The formations loosen and figures fall and lie prone on the slope up to the breach, then beyond just light and death and glory, and above floating dimly in the smoke 'the beleaguered towers of Badajoz.'[97] It is a masterful film-set depiction of warfare that reveals the lessons he had learnt from John Martin and his studies of Salvator Rosa. The elegant arc of the flare is electrifying for it establishes time and motion as well as suggesting sound. There will be a bang and the darkness and confusion will resume in a second. It is not insignificant that Martin's paintings have inspired the designers of Hollywood cataclysmic blockbusters.[98]

Badajoz was notorious for the behaviour of the victorious troops, who in the aftermath, robbed and raped and murdered in an uncontrollable rampage that lasted for three days all against a Spanish, and therefore allied, citizenry.[99] Was Mitchell trying to impart the horror of that event into his depiction of war? He must have been disappointed when he received his copy of the Atlas that this ambitious image is printed as a small appendage to the map of Badajoz.

3.11 'An Art Which Owes Its Perfection to War'

Christine Wright, listing Mitchell's attributes, singles out a line in a letter Mitchell wrote to Murray, linking his expertise as a surveyor to his extreme entry into the profession on the battlefields of the Peninsular War:

> Thomas Mitchell had many skills when he arrived in New South Wales in 1827, those of a surveyor, geologist, geographer, explorer, naturalist, botanist and anthropologist; though it was his expertise as a surveyor that qualified him for appointment as Deputy Surveyor General.
>
> Mitchell acknowledged this in a letter to his patron, Sir George Murray, and commented that it was his long experience in 'an art which owes its perfection to War' that qualified him for his new appointment.
>
> Mitchell and other British army officers had proved themselves resilient under adversity, and had developed the ability to 'rough it' in the Australian environment, similar in some respects to that of the Iberian Peninsula. Both officers and men alike had learnt the art of adapting themselves to new and unexpected conditions and tasks.[100]

97. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:4.
98. Tate Britain, *Martin and Hollywood* (London: Tate Britain, 2017), exhibition.
99. Esdaile, *The Peninsular War,* 386–7.
100. Wright*, Wellington's Men in Australia*, 93. Mitchell to Murray, 13 April 1831, Mitchell Papers, National Library of Scotland, MSS 46,8,16, f.11.

Of Mitchell's fellow surveyors who were veterans of the Peninsular War, William Light, Surveyor-General of South Australia and the designer of Adelaide, learnt his trade in the war and had done reconnaissance work affiliated to Spanish guerrilla units.[101] William Dumaresq, who Governor Darling, as his brother-in-law, tried appoint as Surveyor-General instead of Mitchell, earning Mitchell's eternal distrust, was another veteran, as was Mitchell's assistant surveyor, Samuel Perry.[102] He had the misfortune to be friends with the Dumaresqs, so was always treated with contempt by his boss. Darling himself, Mitchell's *bête noir*, was also a veteran as were governors Brisbane and Bourke, and Mitchell's successor at his death, George Barney, was involved in the defence of Gibraltar and Tarifa in Spain during the war.[103] Lastly, and not least, the most remembered veteran is Charles Sturt, the butt of Mitchell's unreasoned rivalry and scorn as an explorer, whose expeditions were far more arduous and trod the ground much lighter than Mitchell's. It was he, not Mitchell, who named the Murray River after Wellington's QMG and Mitchell's patron.[104]

There were many more leaders in the fields of politics, administration, business, engineering, and medicine, and founders of libraries and learned institutions, who had served under Wellington, to be documented, but the next chapter deals with another useful attribute Mitchell shared with some of these men and another cohort in the colony – his Scottishness. This chapter has shown Mitchell's skill at illustrating significant violent episodes, or scenes of ritualised violence, witnessed on his expeditions and compared them to wartime events which he experienced during the Peninsular War. The next chapter analyses Mitchell's role as a beneficiary of the eighteenth-century phenomenon known as the Scottish enlightenment and how he was instrumental in the neoclassical development of New South Wales.

101. Ibid., 97.
102. Ibid., 102.
103. Ibid., 101.
104. Ibid., 97.

Chapter 4

Neoclassicism: Part 1 – The Scottish Enlightenment in Australia (and Mitchell's Part in It)

This chapter maps out the cultural and aesthetic world Mitchell moved in by exploring his awareness, and use of, the current artistic trends of his time and how and where he acquired the ability to express and illustrate his experiences visually; in other words, to see where he was positioned within the art world of his day, and, as a professional surveyor and administrator, does he also qualify to be considered on a par with his contemporary professional artists? His Scottish education and heritage appear to have given him advantages and connections he made full use of, and he continually sought to 'improve' himself while awaiting the military promotion that he had long expected.

Mitchell's reading was broad and thorough, and he used the time to befriend, and take lessons from, among others, a famously ambitious artist, the Astronomer Royal, a leading botanist, and the president of the Geological Society. Thus with all his surveying on the Iberian Peninsula and work in the army, he made himself fit to take on whatever posting he was eventually offered. Paul Carter writes as if Mitchell was preparing for empire-building expeditions all his life hitherto, but he was not to know he would be going to Australia until shortly before he was posted there.[1] How different would his life had been if he had been sent to join his regiment in India?

4.1 Australian Augustans

The fashion for neoclassicism pervades the period, and its broad reach in Britain, France, and America is explained in order to give a picture of the wider world Mitchell moved in, together with an exposition of Robert Dixon's theory, *The Course of Empire*, of the founding of a civil society in Australia and Mitchell's part in it as a product of the Scottish enlightenment.[2] The standards that James Cook and Joseph Banks set for making contact with and studying Pacific peoples is examined and how the artists approached the concept of the noble savage. The opposing values of rivalry and respect between the French and the British through revolution, war, and empire building dominated the period and determined Mitchell's path. The French Revolution is the defining event of the era and its aesthetic style is

1. Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, 115.
2. Dixon, *The Course of Empire*.

predominantly neoclassical, thanks to such figures as Napoleon and two of the artists he patronised – the painter, Jacques-Louis David, and the Italian sculptor, Antonio Canova.

Dixon considers that 'the course of empire was a dominant theme of literature and the visual arts' during the 'brief neoclassical period from 1788 to about 1840', [3] which, therefore defines the most fruitful years of Mitchell's presence in Australia as being neoclassical.

Richard Aitken points to the educated early settlers in the colony modelling themselves on the gentlemen of eighteenth-century England who were versed in the works of Roman lyric poets of the period of Augustus Caesar (63BC – 14AD). Cicero, Horace, Pliny the Elder, and Virgil inspired the 'New Augustan' writers and poets, such as Dryden, Swift, Addison and Pope:

> In New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land this educated elite saw themselves as Australian Augustans trying to a pastoral life in an antipodean Arcadia.
>
> Horace's *Odes* celebrated friendship, love, good wine and the contentment of rural life, while the timeless tradition of Virgil's *Georgics* and *Pastorals* became models for the contemplation of nature and the human condition through the poetic prism of husbandry.[4]

James Macarthur eulogised his father John by saying that 'he had formed himself too much on the old Roman model.'[5] As well as introducing merino sheep, John Macarthur started an Australian wine industry and encouraged Mitchell to plant vines on his ten acres at Darlinghurst, where he had built his pastiche Parthenon, *Craigend*. In fact, Mitchell took viticulture so seriously that on his last trip to Europe he returned to Spain to study the wine industry and employed a French winemaker to manage the vineyard he had established at his country estate, *Parkhall*.[6] So if viticulture is considered Augustan, it implies another neoclassical credential.

4.2 Preparation

For all Mitchell's efficiency at surveying and conducting expeditions into unknown territory; for all his self-acquired knowledge of such diverse sciences as astronomy, geology and botany; for all his brilliant mapmaking; and for his ability to illustrate his ideals of finding

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3. Ibid., 3.
4. Richard Aitken, *The Garden of Ideas: Four Centuries of Australian Style* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2011), 35.
5. Ibid.
6. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 364.

new lands to colonise – or rather, as Carter pronounces it, 'making himself a man fit to found and not merely find' a new country,[7] the questions that need to be asked are as follows:

1. How good an artist was he?
2. Was his illustrative work just a set of competent explorer's sketches to enhance his published journals, or does it express his ideals and put him on a par with contemporary professional artists?
3. In order to have greater authority, does his work express the art movements and philosophies of his time?
4. As this section does not involve cartography as such, and therefore an identifiable spatial theme, can his illustrations be considered a fundamental part of the mapping of Australia Felix?
5. In extending the scope a little further, did his work contribute to the cultural and aesthetic enhancement of the colony?

The answers to these questions begin with Mitchell's background. His patron, General Murray, in recommending him to a compatriot for an army secondment, wrote: 'I need not tell you, he is a Scotsman.'[8]

Although his nationality served him well for being noticed in Wellington's army on the Iberian Peninsula, it ran much deeper than that. Mitchell was a true beneficiary of the eighteenth-century phenomenon known as the Scottish enlightenment, that flowering of philosophy, literature, art and architecture, as well as advances in science, engineering and medicine, that earned Edinburgh the sobriquet of the 'Athens of the North'. The Edinburgh Royal College of Surgeons was, for instance, the pre-eminent medical school in the world, with Scotland having five universities at the time while England still only had two.[9] The sixteenth-century Calvinist reformation, inspired by the author and preacher, John Knox, stressed the requirement of the Bible to be read in English. His advocacy for a national education system that had a school in every parish produced a well-educated and widely read population in Scotland.[10] The Scottish enlightenment was all the more extraordinary for

7. Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay,* 114.
8. Alan E. J. Andrews, ed., *Stapylton:With Major Mitchell's Australia Felix Expedition, 1836 – Largely from the Journal of Granville William Chetwynd Stapylton* (Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1986), 8.
9. Albeit quite large ones. The third university in England, Kings College, London, was founded in 1839 by Mitchell's former commander, the Duke of Wellington, accessed August 23 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King%27s_College_London.
10. Margaret Drabble, ed., *The Oxford Companion to English Literature,* 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 539–40.

continuing to proceed during the disruption of the Catholic Stuart uprisings, which had only ended in the middle of the century at the gory battlefield of Culloden near Inverness with the annihilation of the Jacobite cause.

In addition to the English language, Mitchell himself wrote in a draft 'Memorial', a form of curriculum vitae of the period as an application to join the British Army, that he had received 'a liberal and classical education qualifying him to fulfill the Duties of a Gentleman and a Soldier.'[11] Edinburgh University was renowned for the teaching of Latin, and Mitchell was to frequently make use of Latin quotations in his writing in later life.

Although the records of his attendance are vague, Mitchell was at Edinburgh University at school age, which was not unusual at the time,[12] and, thereafter, he took every advantage he could to better his education further, seeking advice, tuition and often friendship with leading experts in their field. For instance, just starting alphabetically, for astronomy Mitchell was introduced to John Herschell – the son of the great astronomer, William Herschell – and who, following in his father's footsteps, was made Astronomer Royal in 1827.[13]

The man who introduced them, Dr William Fitton, president of the new Geological Society, had welcomed Mitchell to the society and taught him much about the new science, giving him a book on the geology of New South Wales.[14] He had also introduced Mitchell to Robert Brown, the botanist who had sailed with Matthew Flinders as he charted the coastline of Australia, and Mitchell spent much time with Fitton and Brown in the days before his departure for Australia.[15] These valuable friendships bore fruit in terms of the wealth of botanical and geological information with which Mitchell filled the two fat volumes of the *Three Expeditions* tome. In fact, the first map Mitchell produced in Australia was not terrestrial but a chart of the stars of the southern hemisphere (see Figure 3). Twelve years later at Oxford University on 12 June 1839, Sir Thomas Mitchell and Sir John Herschell were in the same group of nine men, distinguished in their different fields, who received an honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law from the university. [16] Alphabetically, the last on the list of the recipients to be honoured that day, but the most culturally significant for the age,

11. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 8.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 107.
14. Ibid., 106.
15. Ibid. Mitchell's friendship with the leading botanist, Dr John Lindley, who instigated Kew Gardens is recognised in Section 6.8.
16. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 315.

was one William Wordsworth, of Ambleside, Westmoreland, the romantic poet, and the next Poet Laureate.

His first two published poems were attempts at the picturesque and the sublime, which appeared in the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, the collection which he and S.T. Coleridge, had produced in 1793 'a landmark in the history of English Romanticism.'[17]

4.3 Art Education

So, returning to Mitchell's self-education, his keen interest in the visual arts was more than just dabbling. Because he had read all the appropriate literature on current landscape theory and sought out tuition and advice from English artists before coming to Australia, he was able to illustrate his books lavishly and proficiently.[18] At the Royal Military College at Sandhurst he took lessons in watercolour from a 'Mr Cooper' who, of all the nineteenth-century Cooper artists, was probably the precociously talented young Thomas Sidney Cooper then 22, who went on become the longest living member of the Royal Academy, dying in 1903 at 99.[19] Mitchell's notebooks show he 'familiarized himself with the methods of Mr Payne, Mr Varley, Mr Nicholson, and Mr Gilpin,'[20] all proponents and practitioners of the picturesque – and he put his research into practice.

In October 1825, Mitchell, leaving his poor, regularly pregnant, wife, Mary, who he never took anywhere (except all the way to Sydney), took himself off on a painting trip to the Lake District for five weeks. This Cumbrian magnet for seekers of the picturesque produced some unsuitably 'sublimely' violent weather for sketching, which gave the determined artist severe rheumatism in his back.[21] He was certainly suffering for his art and conducting himself seriously, if perhaps selfishly, as rather more than just an amateur artist. Given his interest in poetry, and his well-documented chutzpa, one wonders if he called on the Wordsworths at Ambleside while there. He was in fact doing what the poet had advised for students of nature in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*:

> The principal object was to choose incidents and situations from common life … and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of the imagination … and

17. Drabble, *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. I cannot help but be grateful for Foster's typically exhaustive research in revealing a very tenuous connection to Mitchell.
18. Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, 115.
19. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 97.
20. Carter, *The Road to Botany* Bay, 115. Mr Payne is probably the dilettante and writer Richard Payne Knight.
21. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 100.

> above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature…[22]

Foster, describing Mitchell working on the Lakes paintings back in London, adds enigmatically: 'There were occasions when he visited the usual places of enjoyment, and he joined the 'anatomical classes' at the Royal Academy, but these were mainly interludes.'[23] Apart from intriguing the reader with what the first part of the sentence exactly means, to throw in a mention of the more serious life classes at the RA, if that is what they were, is a perplexing aside. If true, it could give a clue to his accomplishments at drawing the Aboriginal figures for his journals. How easy was it to attend classes at the RA? And what sort of sessions were they? Did he draw from plaster casts of Greek antiquities or from life? If the latter, were the models dressed or disrobed?

The most prominent tutor Mitchell went to, and undoubtedly the most notorious personality for sheer showmanship (a trait matched only by James Wyld, his Atlas publisher)[24], was John Martin, whose enormous canvases of apocalyptic biblical scenes were designed to cause a sensation at each unveiling. It was characteristic of an ambitious young Mitchell to go to a leading figure to take lessons in sketching and working in 'seppia'[25] Martin's peaceful Eden scene in Figure 42 stands in complete contrast to the apocalypse in Figure 43.

Figure 42. John Martin, *The Garden of Eden*, 1821, sepia wash on paper. [26]

22. Michael Rosenthal, *British Landscape Painting* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1982), 74.
23. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 101.
24. Wyld's Great Globe in Leicester Square 1851- 1862. Accessed March 4, 2021, http://www.engineering-timelines.com/scripts/engineeringItem.asp?id=1367
25. Ibid., 85. His or Mitchell's spelling.
26. Courtesy of the Tate Britain, London, accessed, September 5, 2020, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/martin-the-garden-of-eden-t01007

Mitchell was later able to use this medium to great effect in his unpublished sepia wash study of the lone figure in the Wellington Caves (see Figure 29).[27]

Mitchell may not have seen Martin's last major canvas, his extraordinary *The Great Day of His Wrath,* when he was in England in 1853 (see Figure 43). He was too preoccupied with trying to get his boomerang propeller invention tested on ships. It is worth studying Martin's images, particularly the picturesque sepias, to see what influence he may have had on Mitchell. The fact that as well as becoming a hydraulics engineer, Mitchell also published his translation of the Portuguese epic, the *Lusiad of Luis de Camoens*, on the same trip, neither diverse enterprise being much related to his profession, shows what a Renaissance man he strove to be throughout his life.

Figure 43. John Martin, *The Great Day of His Wrath*, 1851–3, oil on canvas.[28]

Though Martin has not been taken seriously as one of the great British artists and was derided by the Victorian Art establishment, he was hugely popular at the time, and Mitchell, being Mitchell, was not shy about approaching him. And Martin has not been forgotten due to the direct influence he has had on the imagery of Hollywood epics, where directors of

27. See in Myths chapter, Section 2.8.
28. Tate Britain, London. Centrepiece of *The Art of Ray Harryhausen, 1920–2013* exhibition, October 2017.

blockbusters have been inspired by his paintings in their visualisation of Old Testament stories, Roman epics and modern disaster movies.[29]

4.4 Neoclassicism in Built Form

The Scottish enlightenment was not some remote intellectual and aesthetic occurrence but, according to Robert Dixon, had a direct effect in the antipodes. His *The Course of Empire – Neo-Classical Culture in New South Wales* 'concerns a theory of social and economic progress, normally associated with the Scottish enlightenment of the 18th century, that played a central role in the early formulations of Australian nationalism.'[30]

Thus Mitchell in his work as a surveyor, mapmaker and engineer was a major player in this process. His extensive road and bridge building – as well as his survey of the inhabited areas of New South Wales, which he published as the *Map of the Nineteen Counties* in 1834 – were fundamental to the successful development of the new colony.[31]

Much of the impetus for the influence of neoclassicism in early Sydney came from Governor Lachlan Macquarie, who wanted to build a fine imperial city to improve the lot of the emancipists (the freed convicts) against the wishes of the parsimonious colonial authority who only saw the colony as a dumping ground for convicts. Macquarie believed emancipists had the right attitude to make better citizens than the self-interested free settlers. In Francis Greenway he was fortunate to find a West Country architect on a 14-year sentence for forgery, a man who could design a dignified neoclassical city centre.[32] The scheme was laid out in an ordered logical manner, with the public works represented around a grand quadrangle – the church in the centre for religion; the barracks to house convicts (not the military), thereby representing discipline and order; the roads and quay representing commerce; and the park demonstrating the beneficence of the government.

In St James' Church, which Macquarie commissioned in 1819, Greenway created a gem of a late-Georgian place of worship: light, airy and restrained, with an original and imaginative employment of neoclassical forms (see Figure 44). It was a fitting symbol of Macquarie's

29. Tate Britain, 'Ray Harryhausen on John Martin,' (video), accessed August 12, 2020, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/john-martin-371/ray-harryhausen-on-john-martin.
30. Robert Dixon, The Course of Empire - Neo-Classical Culture in New South Wales 1788-1860, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, 1.
31. Wikipedia, *Nineteen Counties*, accessed May 12, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nineteen_Counties.
32. Dixon, *The Course of Empire*, 32–33.

autocratic though enlightened rule: 'The belief in the moral value of public works was not merely incidental to the design – it was the ultimate justification for even the 'comparatively little expense' they anticipated.'[33]

Figure 44. St James' Church, Sydney, 1819–24, East Front.[34]

Figure 45. St James' Church, Sydney, 1819–24, North Portico.[34]

St James' Church was memorably chosen by the architectural critic and historian, Dan Cruickshank, for his television series *Around the World in 80 Treasures*, along with rock art in Kakadu, as one of only two man-made treasures to represent Australia – rather than a flamboyant opera house nearby.

Thus this neoclassical range of buildings set a high standard of philanthropic quality not often followed, which was a major feat for Macquarie given the parsimony of a colonial authority that was not interested in developing the colony beyond a penal settlement.

The development was in a way a small-scale version of the neoclassical city rising on the banks of the Potomac as the national capital of the new nation on the North American continent. In fact, there is a theory that many of the early buildings of the United States were the first to express a true classical architecture because they were made of wood.[35] The original Greek temples were timber structures, with the columns being tree trunks supporting

33. Ibid., 33.
34 Wikipedia, *St James' Church, Sydney*, accessed September 8, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_James%27_Church,_Sydney
35. Bruce Allsopp, *A History of Classical Architecture* (London: Sir Issac Pitman and Sons Ltd, 1965), 45, 46 and 50.

beams and a pedimented roof, and the form of all the details evolved from fitting logs of wood together and refining the joints. Thus the Parthenon**,** being made of stone, albeit honeyed Pentelic marble, is a false construction. Stone has completely different structural qualities to timber, which makes for very inefficient beams, while all the metopes and triglyphs and other decorative parts of the entablature are marble copies of beam ends and other wooden details (see Figure 46).

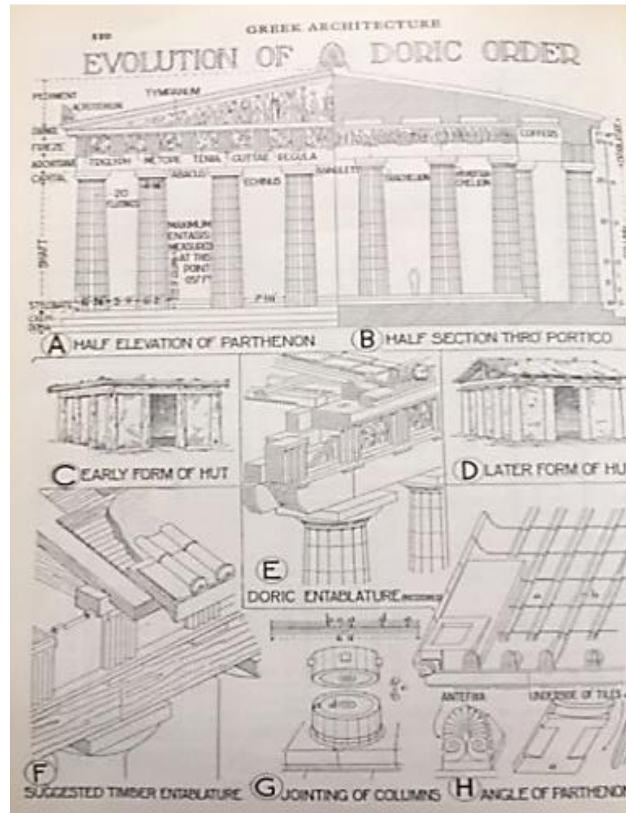

Figure 46. *Evolution of the Doric Order*.[36]

The genius of the Parthenon's Doric Order is the use of 'entasis', which is the subtle convex curving of the component elements to optically correct the natural visual distortion that would occur on that vast scale, making the base appear to sag and the columns to fall outwards.[37]

So it could be argued that the houses and churches of the American South, and Washington itself which was intentionally sited on the border with the north, are truer classical buildings than those on the Acropolis or in the Roman Forum. Thomas Jefferson, who planned the layout of Washington and built his own home, *Monticello*, in a neoclassical style with a

36. *Evolution of the Doric Order*, in B. Fletcher, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*, 110.
37. Ibid., 95.

timber Doric portico (see Figure 47), memorialised himself as a patriot and an architect rather than as a former president.[38] It has to be added that the spectre of slavery, which Jefferson did not ignore, casts a common shadow over all these buildings; even St James' was, no doubt, built with forced labour, giving rise to unfortunate common connotations with the architecture of both ancient and neo classicism. And it should not be forgotten that the loss of its American colonies forced Britain to find an alternative dumping ground to send its convicts, which was promoted and campaigned for by the American loyalist James Matra who had sailed with Cook and Banks as a midshipman on the *Endeavour*.[39]

Figure 47. Thomas Jefferson, *Monticello*, Virginia, 1770–84.[40]

Mitchell, as soon as he had established himself in Sydney, acquired a prime plot to build his own house in Darlinghurst. *Craigend* (see Figure 48), named after his birthplace in Scotland,[41] arose on Woolloomooloo Hill and was considered 'one of the finest estates in Sydney at that time.'[42]

38. Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation: A Personal View* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1969), 264–8.
39. Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: The Epic of Australia's Founding* (London: Collins Harvill, 1987), 61–3.
40. H. W. Janson, *A History of Art: A Survey of the Visual Arts from the Dawn of History to the Present Day*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962), 460.
41. Cumpston, *Thomas Mitchell*, 1.
42. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 187.

Figure 48. *Craigend*, Darlinghurst, Sydney, ca. 1915.[43]

So what sort of style did he build in?

> From the main road a noble approach …brought the visitor to a portico, which copied with such fidelity the Parthenon, that the elevated site became known as 'The Acropolis of Sydney'… with a spacious colonnade in the chastest style of Doric architecture… with its exquisite tessellated pavement, copied from the ruins of Herculaneum.[44]

So Mitchell was a dedicated neoclassicist. A photograph of the house in 1915 shows a grand colonnade of defiantly un-weathered columns, tapered, at least, but it is difficult to tell if they have the subtlety of entasis, while the frieze of triglyphs above looks more like a decorative plastic trim from a hardware store than having any fidelity to the Parthenon.

In fact, the original plans for *Craigend* show a house with much more interesting elevations. It would have had a nicely modelled main façade with a very high *piano nobile* approached by a grand staircase leading to two rooms twice the height of the ground floor, with a recessed cental bay featuring, what looks like, the Palladian concept of a Venetian window.[45] Pretentious perhaps, but there was an imaginative play on neoclassical architectual themes, while in contrast at the back, an odd long low range of rooms extends out like shearers' quarters – presumably to house the regularly appearing children, a dozen in all (see Figure 49).

43. State Library of New South Wales, *Craigend*, in Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 182.
44. Ibid. Quoting *The Colonist*, 1 December 1836 when Mitchell put the house on the market. A caveat: Of course, knowing Mitchell, he could have written the sales pitch himself.
45 A tripartite window with a central higher arched window, associated with the architect Andrea Palladio (1508–1580) who did not invent it.

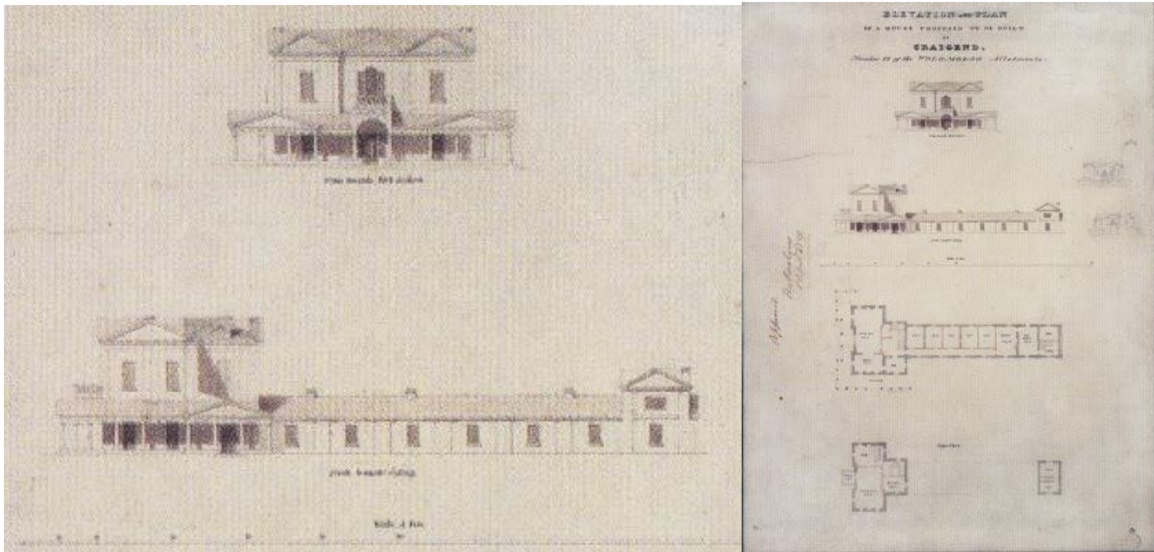

Figure 49. Elevation and Plans for *Craigend*, 1829.[46]

The grand design is definitely Palladian in influence, but is that Mitchell's touch or an architect's? Could it even have been Greenway? Sadly, cost savings must have demanded a compromise, resulting in the plain, boxy upper storey that was built. It would be interesting to know if and how the columns were made at that stage of the Industrial Revolution, and whether cast-iron structures were brought out as ship's ballast at that stage as had happened with cast-iron grillwork. One should not be too critical. His master stonemason, David Lennox, was busy building his bridges, and Sydney sandstone would have been far more expensive to build with and would never have weathered so well.

The artist Conrad Martens, who had arrived in Sydney in April 1835, made a drawing of the house signed and dated September 1835, when Mitchell would have just returned from his second expedition (see Figure 50). Pompously, or in gentle mockery, he titles it the 'Seat of Major Mitchell' and he does enjoy concentrating on the Doric details of the portico rather than the house itself. By suggesting that it is rising from rough rock-strewn ground, Martens gives it an ambience of classical antiquity. However, the scale is more appropriate to the Propylea, the entrance to the Acropolis rather than of the colossal Parthenon itself (see Figure 51).

46. Violet Tingle, 'Villas of Darlinghurst: Craigend,' *My Darling Darlinghurs*t (blog), accessed May 7, 2020 http://mydarlingdarlinghurst.blogspot.com/2011/09/darlinghurst-blog-villas-of.html.

Figure 50. Conrad Martens, *Craigend, seat of Major Mitchell.*[47]

Figure 51. Propylaea, Acropolis, EC.

For his next houses – *Carthona* at Darling Point, and *Parkhall* on his country estate near Appin – Mitchell understandably chose a modified, asymmetrical, Scottish-baronial style, which had come into fashion. However, to have his house called the Acropolis of Sydney certainly gives Mitchell some extra neoclassical points.

4.4.1 Indigenous Architecture

It is worth pointing out at this stage Mitchell's interest in Aboriginal structures. He had seen well-built dwellings on his expedition to the Darling and commented on them. Clark and Cahir reference his description of villages he encountered, realities that have been ignored in public discourse until recent writers have picked them up.[48]

'Mitchell has provided us with some descriptions of these villages':

> There were also permanent huts on both banks [of the river Darling] the first of the kind I had seen; these were large enough certainly to contain 15 persons;
> … they were semicircular, and formed of the branches of trees, well thatched with straw, and forming altogether a covering of about a foot in thickness: these afforded a ready and dry shelter for a whole family, in bad weather for instance …
>
> On the Lower Darling we found a native village, in which the huts were of a strong and permanent construction…. the more modern had been recently thatched with dry grass. Each formed a semicircle; the huts facing inwards, or to the centre, the open side of the curve facing east. (Mitchell 1839, pp.194, 261).

47. Courtesy of the SLNSW, File No. DL PX 24.
48 Cahir, F, I.Clark & P.Clarke, *Aboriginal Biocultural Knowledge in South Eastern Australia*, 2018, p157-8.

These are descriptions by an interested knowledgeable observer appreciative of a vernacular architecture varying in style and planning from region to region. It was near the focal point of this thesis, Mount Arapiles, that Mitchell gives a more precise description of different homes and storehouses which,

> we had on this day noticed were of a very different construction to those of the aborigines in general being large, circular and made of straight rods meeting at an upright pole in the centre; the outside of which had been first covered with bark and grass, and then entirely coated over with clay.[49]

Unfortunately he did not appear to find time to draw these and other structures, at least for publication. Cahir observes that Mitchell's deputy, Stapylton, had noted on the same day …

> passed today several Guneaks [huts] of very Large dimensions one capable of containing at least 40 persons and of a vey superior construction.' (1836, Andrews 1986, p.146),

From this, Cahir continues,

> Gerristen (2000) contends that Stapylton and Mitchell's accounts taken together appear to strongly imply that: Aboriginal people in the southern Wimmera built well executed dome, tepee or tent-shaped structures capable of holding 40 people …. [50]

4.5 Artists' Fellowship – Conrad Martens and Friends

Mitchell formed a close association with Conrad Martens, who had arrived in Australia from across the Pacific having been the artist on Captain Robert Fitzroy's *Beagle* voyage, which carried a young naturalist by the name of Charles Darwin.[51] Martens was invited to join the *Beagle* in Montevideo as the ship's artist to replace Augustus Earle who had fallen ill, and stayed on board for a year until a change of crew required him to leave in Valparaiso.[52] He spent time in Tahiti before sailing to northern Australia. He worked his way south to Sydney not long before the *Beagle* also berthed there and he renewed his friendship with Darwin.

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[49] Mitchell, 3E p194, quoted by Cahir, in Cahir, F, I. Clark & P. Clarke 2018. *Aboriginal Biocultural Knowledge in South Eastern Australia*. CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood. 157

[50] Mitchell, 3E p247, quoted in Cahir, I. Clark, and P.Clarke, 158

51. Dixon, *The Course of Empire*, 102–7.

52. Susanna de Vries-Evans, *Conrad Martens: On the Beagle and in Australia* (Brisbane: Pandanus Press, 1993).

Both he and Captain Fitzroy commissioned work from Martens while the *Beagle* was in Sydney.

Martens who became the pre-eminent landscape painter in New South Wales, famous for his serene atmospheric views of Sydney Harbour. He painted landscapes and properties all over New South Wales, as well as in Brisbane and the Darling Downs area but as never visited the southern states, he is an unfamiliar figure in Victorian galleries.

Dixon points out that some of Mitchell's and Martens' landscapes are indistinguishable, and whether Martens had an effect on Mitchell's illustrations in the journals is worth considering.[53] Susanna Vries-Evans doubts he did for she considers Mitchell was an accomplished artist in his own right.[54] However, Martens had received far deeper artistic training than Mitchell. Although born and raised in London, Martens was half-German, his businessman father being the German consul, who himself had grown up in Venice where his father had also been the German consul, so an emissary to a city not entirely devoid of art. It is not surprising, then, that the three grandsons all became artists and Conrad lived in his brother Henry's tiny studio in Soho when starting his career. He was taught in the studio of John Copley Fielding, where John Ruskin was also a pupil on the way to becoming the most influential writer on art and architecture of the nineteenth century, and the champion of both a certain Joseph Mallord William Turner and the gothic buildings of Venice.

Living a short distance from the Royal Academy, Martens would probably have attended Turner's free lectures there. It was a time in Britain when landscape artists were making watercolour their own, and very English, medium. Martens was able to see the ground-breaking work being produced by the likes of Girtin[55], Cotman[56], Bonnington[57] and Turner[58] in exhibitions at the Society of Watercolourists, of which Fielding was a president.

Girtin and Bonnington had brilliant but brief careers, dying in their 20s, but deserve mention here because they, as well as Cotman, Constable[59] and Turner, pushed the modest medium to new fields. Like Ruskin, Martens was a great admirer of Turner and his work echoes with the

53. This is investigated in Chapter 8
54. Susanna de Vries-Evans, *Conrad Martens*, 133, footnote 295. She adds the worrying note that it is difficult to judge because many of Mitchell's drawings have been destroyed by fire.
55. Thomas Girtin, 1775–1802.
56. John Sell Cotman, 1782–1842.
57. Richard Parkes Bonnington, 1802–28.
58. Joseph Mallord William Turner, 1775–1851.
59. John Constable, 1776–18.

misty atmospheric lights of the great master, though, as he never returned to England, he would not have seen Turner's vaporous limpid paintings of Venice and the Alps, except in colourless lithographs.[60] Given Mitchell's proficiency with the medium suggests that in any conversation with Martens these artists would have been discussed, and he would have recollected seeing their work at exhibitions in London. Coincidentally his brother, Henry Martens, was painter of military scenes and portraits of officers, for which he was nicknamed 'Battle' Martens.[61] Would Mitchell have known of his work, and would Mitchell's work have aided and influenced him, or vice versa?

4.6 Eugène von Guérard

The artist who could be called the Victorian equal to Conrad Martens, in being the first to studiously paint the Victorian landscape, was Eugène von Guérard. As his name suggests, he was also of German paternity, but the style of the two artists could not be more dissimilar. While Martens had absorbed the soft-edged romantic English manner so suitable to watercolour and gouache, but also sustained the proto-impressionist technique in his oils, von Guérard's method is utterly Germanic. Influenced by Caspar David Friedrich and the German Nazarene School in Rome,[62] there is in von Guérard's canvases none of the English (or Dutch) free spontaneous brushwork that evinces fleeting light across the landscape; every blade of grass is painted; and every cloud is static and formulaic, floating in a serene crystalline sky. So, with great irony, the principal interpreter of Mitchell's grand project, the artist who gave Australia Felix a 'painted identity', portrayed its landscape in an alien, quite un-English, manner.[63]

Like Martens in NSW and the Darling Downs, von Guérard painted the new properties of the settlers of the Western District, creating a valuable record of the times, especially due to his meticulous detail, as these settlers established their estates; the Manifolds, the MacArthurs, and the Ware brothers among his patrons and friends.[64]

Dixon emphasises the importance of the *Three Expeditions*:

> A carefully organized epic narrative that reveals the full philosophical significance of Mitchell's journey across 'the continental page' of a new nation. The engravings …

60. De Vries-Evans, *Conrad Martens*, 19–20.
61. Ibid., 10.
62. Ruth Pullin, *Eugène von Guérard: Nature Revealed* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2011), 50.
63. Coleridge, 'Tilting at Windmills,' Chapter 2.
64. Coleridge, 'Tilting at Windmills,' Chapter 3.

> establish the basic iconography of inland exploration and were to influence the subject matter of colonial landscape painting for decades to come.
>
> In many respects, *Three Expeditions* is one of the central texts of Australian colonial culture.[65]

Thus Dixon essentially defines the creation of a spatial history.

While Mitchell, in a way, in establishing a high literary and aesthetic standard, confirms and consolidates the process that had been started by Macquarie in his enlightened classical layout of Sydney, itself a project to instigate an ordered imperial spatial history. The far reach of the Scottish enlightenment had come clothed in neoclassicism and the aesthetic themes found in Mitchell's work. Von Guérard took notes from the *Three Expeditions* and copied Mitchell's images into his own notebooks, so this is directly true.[66]

Of course, the further sad irony for von Guérard was that with the advent of the Australian impressionists, whose work Martens presaged, he fell out of fashion in his own lifetime due to the ebullient work of his own homegrown pupils at the National Gallery School, who had become frustrated with his pedantic teaching methods. However, the restoration of von Guérard's reputation from a century of oblivion can be first attributed to Marjorie Tipping[67] and then to Ruth Pullin with her full exposition of his work, which is now viewed differently.[68]

Von Guérard's story is an important and instructive part of the history of Australian art because it is an illustration of the way public tastes can change, not just in accepting new art, but in re-appreciating the old and forgotten. In a way, von Guérard's dogged clarity of vision is more neoclassical in interpretation and method than the elegiac Claudean mood in Martens' views. Von Guérard's technique of 'leaving nothing to the imagination' parallels the icy-white marble of Antonio Canova's statues and the often bizarre, comical nudity in the signature neoclassical tableaux produced by artists such as Mengs, David and Ingres.

65. Dixon, *The Course of Empire*, 102.
66. Pullin, 'The Thistle and the Eucalypt', in Inglis and Macdonald, *For Auld Lang Syne*, 161.
67. Marjorie Tipping, ed. *An Artist on the Goldfields: The Diary of Eugène von Guérard* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1992).
68. Pullin, *Eugène von Guérard: Nature Revealed*.

4.7 Picturesque

Dixon, in continuing his argument, proposes the following:

> During the brief neoclassical period in Australia, from 1788 to about 1840, the course of empire was the dominant theme of literature and the visual arts, providing the painter, the poet, and the explorer, with a rhetoric with which to announce the imperial destiny of a young nation – whose origins were considered by many to be tainted or eccentric.[69]
>
> In painting, the local landscape was generalised in conformity with the rules of the picturesque. The object was not to record unique features of the antipodean scene but to indicate those aspects of which confirmed the normal advance of civil society.[70]

Hence in Martens' views, the settlers' properties often nestle in a peaceful, tamed, undefined landscape, whilst in others he enjoys washing in the sublimity of a dramatic forbidding sky. His favourite subject was where he lived, Sydney and its Harbour, which he often showed with a stormy or misty atmosphere.

The view from Balmoral towards the Heads (see Figure 52) is a typically moody and romantic example of his technique. The nearest to cobalt and cerulean hues one might associate with the scene are only hinted at by a small tinting of Prussian blue beyond the Heads.

Figure 52. Conrad Martens, *North Head, Sydney Harbour from Balmoral,* 1854, oil on canvas. [71]

69. Dixon, *The Course of Empire*, 3.
70. Ibid., 4.
71. Courtesy of a private collection.

Martens was extremely prolific producing glorious landscapes in both watercolour and oils over a long career with few rivals. As a disciple of Turner he was a master of light, but his oeuvre was mostly limited to just that – landscapes with big skies, sometimes serene, often sublimely forbidding. He painted portraits of landowners properties and the urban fabric of Sydney. In all his landscapes figures appear as distant staffage. Mitchell, conversely, studied and drew a multitude of subjects: flora, fauna, geology, fossils and people, both as portraits and in tableaux or dramatic scenes, as well as landscapes. He also drew portraits of the Aborigines he met or who accompanied him on his expeditions. It is evident that they are primarily ethnographic studies because he rarely drew portraits of his convicts, though they regularly appear as actors in narrative scenes.

Figure 53. Conrad Martens, *Lansdowne Bridge over Prospect Creek near Liverpool, NSW*, 1836, watercolour.[72]

Martens made a fine tribute to an important example of the infrastructure Mitchell established for the colony, which was Henty Lennox's magnificent Lansdowne Bridge on the Great South Road(see Figure 53).[73] Martens' serene watercolour shows the dilapidated old wooden bridge beyond which, Dixon notes, signifies the progress of colonial society. Being a frontal view it cannot show the subtle upward curve of the design as it rises from the ground to the parapet, giving a modernist aerodynamic aesthetic to the form, astonishing for being built by

72. Conrad Martens, *Lansdowne Bridge over Prospect Creek near Liverpool, NSW*, in Peter Freund, *For Auld Lang Syne* (Art Gallery of Ballarat in association with the National Library of Australia, 2014), 141.
73. Dixon, *The Course of Empire*, 103.

Lennox's convict crew. The structure has all the strength and elegant simplicity of the pure Euclidian geometric designs envisaged by the French neoclassical architects, Ledoux (see Figure 54)[74] and Boullée (see Figure 55).[75]

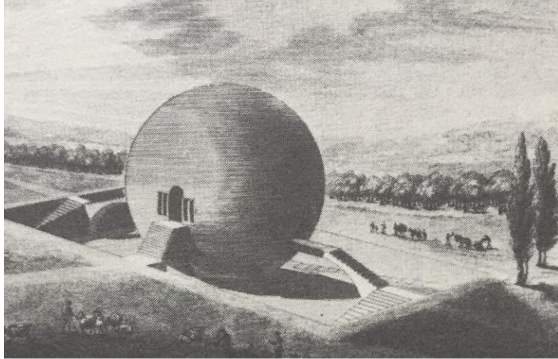

Figure 54. Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, *Ideal House*, ca. 1770.[76]

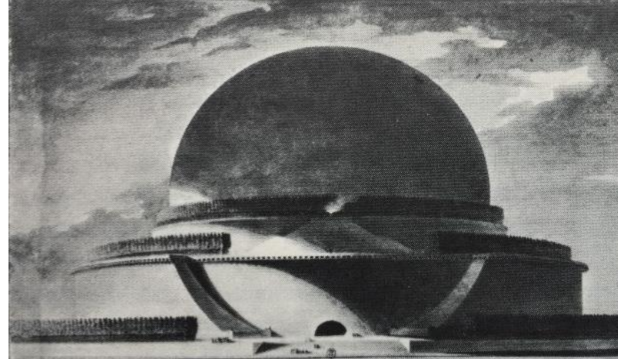

Figure 55. Etienne L. Boullée, *Cenotaph for Newton*, ca. 1784.[77]

It could even be suggested that the indigenous builders of the architectural forms Mitchell was describing as he saw them on the Darling and near Mount Arapiles and elsewhere, (Section 4.4.1) were following the same geometric principles.

Cahir observes that Mitchell's deputy, Stapylton, had noted on the same day …

> passed today several Guneaks [huts] of very Large dimensions one capable of containing at least 40 persons and of a very superior construction.' (1836, Andrews 1986, p.146)

From this, Cahir continues,

> Gerristen (2000) contends that Stapylton and Mitchell's accounts taken together appear to strongly imply that:
>
> Aboriginal people in the southern Wimmera built well executed dome, tepee or tent-shaped structures capable of holding 40 people …[78]

Thus it could be argued that, with these pure forms of dome and cone there is a commonality of design principles between the French neo-classicists and Aboriginal builders, whose work Mitchell witnessed.

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74. Hugh Honour, *Neo-Classicism* (London: Penguin Books, 1968; reprint 1991), 133.
75. Ibid., 138.
76. Emil Kaufmann, Three Revolutionary Architects Boullee Ledoux and Lequeu.pdf. https://monoskop.org/images/3/38/
77. H.R. Hitchcock, ed, *World Architecture - an illustrated history*, Hamlyn, London 1963, 300
78. Cahir, in Cahir, F, I. Clark & P. Clarke 2018. Aboriginal Biocultural Knowledge in South Eastern Australia. CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood. 157

Figure 56 and Figure 57 show similar views of passes in the Blue Mountains by the two artists. Martens was recording bold progress in the colony by using dramatic scenery. Mitchell made numerous drawings, prints and watercolours of the Victoria Pass because, with convict labour and much explosive, he removed half a mountain to drive a road through seemingly impossible terrain in defiance of taking Governor Darling's preferred route, which he thought unsafe.[79] It was typically insubordinate behaviour by Mitchell and he probably needed to keep a full record of the progress. It would be rare for a superintending official to celebrate the achievement with such a picturesque watercolour.

Figure 56. Thomas Mitchell, *Victoria Pass*, ca. 1830, watercolour.[80]

Figure 57. Conrad Martens, *Crown Ridge, Blue Mountains,* NSW, 1873, watercolour.[81]

4.8 Engineering

The Lansdowne Bridge was built by a stonemason one David Lennox, who Mitchell spotted one day in Macquarie Street and watched him cutting a coping stone for a wall with such skill that he immediately employed him. He had worked on such important structures in Britain as the Menai Suspension Bridge and the Severn Bridge at Gloucester under the direction of the great engineer, Thomas Telford.[82] In photographs, it appears to have an even more slender span than Martens portrays and was rivalled only by the first Princes Bridge in Melbourne.

The first bridge Lennox built for Mitchell with a team of 20 convicts, which is the oldest on the Australian mainland, was in a cutting at Lapstone Hill on what was to become the busy Great West Highway (see Figure 58). It has the first scientifically constructed stone arch of

79. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 140–144; Cumpston, *Thomas Mitchell*, 60–68, and plate V.
80. Courtesy of the SLNSW, File no. DLPXX 20/4.
81. Courtesy of the SLNSW, Call No. ML 1370.
82. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 173-175.

any magnitude on the mainland of the continent,[83] which has the pure geometry and solid grandeur of a Roman triumphal arch. Now relieved of the burden of heavy traffic it carried for a century, the bridge has settled back into the bush and has the appearance of the subject of an eighteenth-century engraving of Rome by Piranesi, whose views of Rome influenced neoclassicism, and were much collected in the early colony (see Figure 59).[84] It appears from photographs to even fit into a subtly curving viaduct, but that may be due to the distortion of the camera.

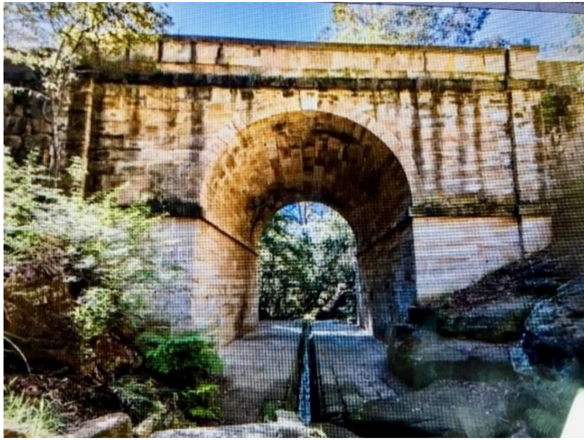

Figure 58. Lennox Bridge, Lapstone Hill, 1833.

Figure 59. Giovanni B. Piranesi, *Arch of Drusus, Rome*, ca. 1748, etching.

Conrad Martens visited the site on a painting tour and painted one of the bridge 'which was presented to Governor Bourke by some gentlemen previous to his departure.' [85] De Vries-Evans surmises this was to show colonial officials in London a major development completed during Bourke's governorship.

What Martens' view of the Lansdowne Bridge (see Figure 53) cannot capture is the subtle modelling of its profile; the stonework appears to be skilfully carved into a concave curve rising in one arc from the water to the balustrade. It gives the structure the modernity of aerodynamic design. It is also immensely sophisticated proof of Dixon's theory, expounded in *The Course of Empire* of the 'course of empire' being fuelled by a neoclassical culture.

Dixon hints at 'the rich poetic and philosophical associations'[86] the image contains and highlights Martens' inclusion of the dilapidated wooden bridge beyond the arch, as signifying

83. Ibid., 174
84. Holden, *Piranesi's Grandest Tour: From Europe to Australia* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2014).
85. De Vries-Evans, *Conrad Martens*, 101.
86. Dixon, *The Course of Empire*, 103.

'the progress of colonial society',[87] while 'the fallen tree in the foreground celebrates the triumph of civilised man over nature.'[88] He even gives the image the alternative title of *The Lansdowne Bridge, with the old wooden bridge beyond,* which is not how it is catalogued by the National Library.

Needless to say Mitchell was at war with Bourke who had succeeded Darling as Governor and refused orders to attend the official opening of the bridge which was a great celebration of progress in the colony. Though not mentioned in Dixon's treatise, Lennox was, of course, a fellow Scot of Mitchell's, and furthermore, his mentor the great engineer, Thomas Telford, was yet another Scotsman. Thus the Scottish enlightenment had struck again in NSW.

Mitchell himself found time to paint an elaborately drawn and completed watercolour of another similar bridge by Lennox at Berrima where the structure of curved stonework is clearly shown, and fully integrated into the landscape (see Figure 60). The children running along the empty road, who provide a useful scale to the bridge, are too young to be his own, and such a strange addition suggests they appeared as he was working. Mitchell dated it very precisely 3 April 1855. Six months later exhausted by survey work in rough terrain and poor weather near Braidwood he passed through Berrima again, in heavy rain, on his way home. His last diary entry was of 16 September, the day before. Foster reminds the reader,

> In difficult country he attempted to work in that vigorous and tireless way which characterised his conduct of surveys in Spain and Portugal in his twenties…but by 1855 many and lengthy labours in the Colony, and anxieties, public and private had made him older than his sixty three years.[89]

Within three weeks he was dead.[90]

Unusually for Lennox's skill, this particular bridge fared no better, losing the parapet in a storm before being repaired and then being washed away in a greater flood.[91]

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87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. Foster, Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World, 485.
90. 5 October 1855.
91. https://www.southernhighlandnews.com.au.20 October 2014

Figure 60. Mitchell, *Berrima Bridge*, 1855, watercolour.[92]

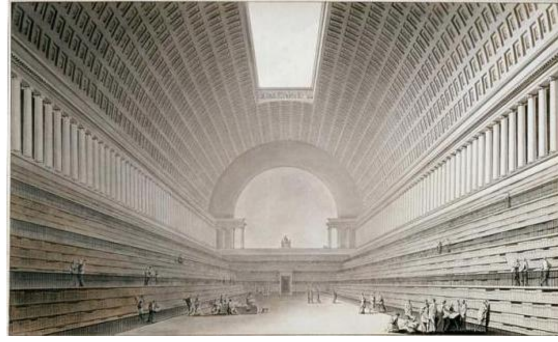

Figure 61. Etienne L. Boullée, *Interior of a Library*, ca.1780-90.[93]

The pure geometric forms that Ledoux and Boullée (see Figure 61) designed are echoed in the structures that Lennox built.

4.9 Inspiring Darwin

Through Conrad Martens, Mitchell had a connection with his remarkable friends on the *Beagle*, Captain (later Admiral) Robert Fitzroy and Charles Darwin. He gave the great navigator and hydrographer a copy of his Zodiac star chart and the *Map of the Nineteen Counties*.[94] Darwin, who travelled inland exploring and became one of Australia's first tourists, admired Mitchell's road- and bridge-building achievements. When he visited Martens' studio he was inspired to go exploring by seeing Martens' paintings of scenery in the Blue Mountains and, significantly, one of the Grose valley.[95]

Both Fitzroy and Darwin commissioned work from Martens while in Sydney. Mitchell supplied Darwin with geological information and fossils, which would influence the development of his theories. He also lent Darwin a small stone, which Darwin identified as a tektite, making it the first recorded australite.[96]

This was thought to have been found in 1835 when Darwin wrote 'on the great sandy plains between the Darling and the Murray.'[97] Eccleston, who has researched the history of its interest, explains that it was probably found on 21 June 1836 near Lake Boga. He identifies

92. Courtesy of the State Library of New South Wales, DLPXX 20/9.
93. Courtesy of the Morgan Library & Museum, New York, accessed September 8, 2020, https://www.themorgan.org/collection/drawings/247385
94. Gregory C. Eccleston, 'New Light on Major Mitchell's 1836 "Australia Felix" Expedition,' (Master's thesis, Monash University, 1991).
95. De Vries-Evans, *Conrad Martens*, 118.
96. Cumpston, *Thomas Mitchell: Surveyor General and Explorer*, 52–3.
97. Ibid., 157. Cumpston quoting Darwin in his *Geological Observations on the Volcanic Islands*.

the reference in a brief sentence of the journal where Mitchell is describing surveying on his own, south of the lake: 'Near the margin I found a small fragment of highly vesicular lava.'[98] Stapylton records it also in his journal as 'a peice (sic) of Scoria, or Lava, found near one of the Salt Lakes …'[99]

Both men realised the significance of the object being found so far from any volcanic region. Mitchell lent the tiny stone to Darwin, who identified it as obsidian and had a woodcut made of it. By moving the date to a year later means that Mitchell could not have given it to Darwin when the *Beagle* was in Sydney but when he was in London in 1838. Darwin wrote it up in his *Geological Observations on the Volcanic Islands*, published in 1844, as an 'obsidian bomb,' [100] which led to its identification as having a celestial origin.

So this tiny mysterious finding that was initially insignificant, made at the threshold of Australia Felix, thanks to arguably the most influential man of the nineteenth century, made a neat heavenly portent for Mitchell a week before his revelation on Pyramid Hill.

4.10 Movements and Terms

Before going on the ground with Mitchell into Australia Felix, the broader picture of the cultural movements of the time need to be looked at as it is the metaphysical and aesthetic background to the period that colours Mitchell's whole story. In attempting to analyse and dissect these overlapping theories and styles, they could perhaps be grouped under the titles of the picturesque and the sublime, romanticism and the noble savage, and neoclassicism and the nude, and even the relevance of these ideas to current Australian culture sought.

The sublime is discussed in contrast to Burke's beautiful, and the picturesque is perhaps just as much an expression of romanticism as the sublime, while it is too artificial and artfully tame to tip the viewer into the thrill of terror, Burke claimed, as is sought in the sublime.

Meanwhile the nude is just as much a part of the concept of the noble savage as neoclassicism by one of those strange concurrences of seemingly unrelated happenings, the nude was being celebrated in European art exactly as inquisitive, elaborately dressed Europeans were encountering populations who had no need for, and no concept of, wearing clothes. This especially applied to Australia, where the Indigenous population was, for the

98. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:142.
99. Eccleston, *Granville Staplyton*, 52.
100. Ibid., 52–3.

most part, unencumbered with clothing, at least for conventional European and Asian modesty, and rejected it when given. The same attitude to the comforts of civilisation by the forest-dwelling German tribes, and the Scythians, had Tacitus decrying the decadence and greed of his fellow Romans compared to the wild men in the 'bush', giving the concept of the noble savage a neoclassical credential.[101]

4.11 Neoclassicism and the French

The fashion for neoclassicism was all-pervasive in European art and architecture in the latter half of the eighteenth century, partly as a result of the discoveries at Pompeii, Herculaneum and Paestum in Italy; the influence of Rousseau, and the French 'Philosophes' on social and political thought; and a rejection of the frivolities of Rococo art and decoration for a more restrained and serious style.[102] In fact it was a German, the art historian Winckelmann, who was most influential through his writings on painting and sculpture, fulfilling his ideals about classical art.[103] In particular, he extolled the ancient Greeks worship of the human body and gloried in the idea of perfectly formed athletes exercising naked in the gymnasia.[104] That he was clearly emotionally uninterested in the female nude confers a strange bent, if that is the right word to much of the academic iconography of the movement.

This might seem a long way from Australia Felix, but a picture needs to be given of the culture Mitchell was living in, the essence of which was being transplanted to New South Wales by Macquarie, Greenway and Martens – and, yes – Mitchell.

The movement reached an apogee during the revolutionary period in France. The severe and serious style was a reaction against the excesses of luxurious ornament that decorated the court at Versailles, so the modes of neoclassicism became symbolic of the overthrow of the French monarchy. Jean-Honoré Fragonard's decadent *The Swing* and François Boucher's cheeky bare bottoms were replaced in favour by the heroic stoic Romans in David's *The Oath of the Horatii* and the smooth icy marble of Canova's nudes. The latter's quintessentially neoclassical marble portrait of Napoleon's sister, Pauline Borghese, commissioned by herself is rather more heroic for the sitter's sangfroid (Figure 62).

101. Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 100–1. Tacitus, *Germania.*
102. The simplest example of which is the straight-legged Louis Seize chair that replaced the cabriole bow-legged Louis Quinze chair.
103. Johann Johachim Winckelmann (1717–1768).
104. Kenneth Clark, *The Nude, a Study of Ideal Art (in Ideal Form)* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1956; republished, 1960), 23.

Figure 62. Antonio Canova, *Pauline Bonaparte*, 1805–1808, white marble.[105]

The style and the ethos of neoclassicism coloured and clothed the world Mitchell grew up and fought in. Two empires locked in combat with all the insignia and battle regalia of ancient Rome, with modern ordnance. While in civilian life, conveniently for the emerging middle class, powdered wigs and silk stockings gave way to short-cropped hair and trousers, and women adopted the truly revolutionary, high-waisted, un-corseted, plain 'empire line' of Roman matrons – excepting Signora Borghese who took informality a bit further.

What this has to do with Mitchell entering Australia Felix is a fair question, but he was part of a universal culture and his world was shaped by the struggle with the French.[106] His lifelong regret was missing the fighting with his regiment at Waterloo, though given the casualty rate at that battle, especially in his regiment the 95th Rifles, his story could well have ended there. 'My absence from the glorious battle of Waterloo (in which my brother officers suffered so much) is a sacrifice I shall ever regret as a soldier.' [107]

And, in fact, initially the French were almost more interested in Australia than the English, who only wanted somewhere to dump the contents of their prison hulks. Stapylton

105. Antonio Canova, *Pauline Bonaparte as Venus Victrix,* Carrara marble, 1805–1808, in H. W. Janson, *A History of Art: A Survey of the Visual Arts from the Dawn of History to the Present Day* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962), 486.
106. It is notable that the majority of costume dramas in film and television seem to be set in the period, Jane Austen aside.
107. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 53; Cumpston, *Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor General and Explorer*, 17. Cumpston, who unlike the otherwise meticulous Foster, establishes the remark was in a letter to Sir Benjamin d'Urban, who, as quatermaster-general of the Portuguese Army, was Mitchell's commanding officer during the peninsular surveys, but misquotes 'my brother officers' as 'my brother and others'.

complained that there were too many French names along the coast.[108] Nicolas Baudin's expedition surveyed and named many features when he was circumnavigating Australia's landmass. (He met Matthew Flinders travelling in the opposite direction doing the same in April 1802.) [109] Why else would a suburb of Apollo Bay on Victoria's Great Ocean Road be called Marengo? In fact, while Baudin died in Mauritius on the way home, Flinders had not determined his nomenclature before he himself was captured and imprisoned in Mauritius for ten years, and so the French charts were published before the British. However, this was without the moderate Baudin's choices, but those of his republican successor; hence, the commemoration of Napoleon's first great victory by a small seaside community in Victoria. Stapylton was celebrating Mitchell naming Mount Arapiles after the rout of the French at the Battle of Salamanca in 1812 at which Mitchell was present.

An earlier meeting of the French and English on Australian soil was the extraordinary simultaneous arrival of La Pérouse's fleet and Arthur Phillip's First Fleet at Botany Bay in January 1788. La Pérouse was leading a scientific expedition sponsored by Louis XVI, who had been inspired by Cook's voyages of botanists, geologists, artists and other experts, while Phillip was looking for somewhere to offload over a thousand pickpockets, felons and forgers as labour for a new colony. Of course, at that early stage, there was no certainty that the colony would have been British, but the French, who would soon be able to overrun all of Europe, did not have the same lines of supply.[110] Five years later, the last words Louis XVI allegedly uttered at the foot of the guillotine was 'is there any news of La Pérouse?' His question was never answered.

One of the great turning points in history is that an ambitious sixteen-year-old Corsican student at the Military Academy in Paris captivated with the romance of La Pérouse's expedition applied to join *volontaire*. At the time, he was more interested in serving in the navy than the army because of his proficiency in mathematics and artillery, both valued skills on warships. However the honour went to a friend and two of his teachers joined as astronomers.[111]

108. Eccleston, *Granville Staplyton*, 76. 'Another good hit at the Frenchmen who have been very active with their designations of Capes etc on the Southern Coast of our Territory.'
109. Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*, 121.
110. Geoffrey Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance* (Sydney; Macmillan Australia, 2001).
111. *Napoleon: Revolution to Empire*, Ted Gott and Karine Huguenaud, NGV International, 2012, National Gallery of Victoria, 2012, 1.

Later, Napoleon Bonaparte was able to fill his wife Josephine's garden at *Malmaison* with Australian flora and fauna collected by Baudin, who he sent to look for La Pérouse, but that and Baudin's charts of the Australian coastline was about the extent of the French influence on Australia. Thanks to Napoleon's ambitions in Europe, Lieutenant Mitchell's adventures commenced – and Australia has its Anglo-Celtic story. So Victoria lost its first European name, *Terre Napoléon*.[112]

The artist who personifies the spirit of neoclassicism and forged it into a political aesthetic, is Jacques-Louis David, who was closely involved with the revolutionary movement in Paris. His cold, immaculately finished, didactic canvases, from being acquired by the Crown (the King had bought *The Oath of the Horatii*) became the propaganda for the revolutionary government and part of the imagery of the French Revolution. His drawings chronicled the events as they happened such as *The Tennis Court Oath*.[113] David's portrait of his murdered friend, *The Death of Marat* (see Figure 63), converted the ruthless Jacobin, assassinated in his medicinal bath, into a secular martyr for the new belief system – the liturgies and calendars being made up as the Directory, of which David was a member – consolidated power. The note in Marat's hand names Charlotte Corday as the person who had stabbed him. The myth is that it was a list of his recommended candidates for the guillotine, which fate she met four days later.

Figure 63. Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Marat*, 1793, oil on canvas. [114]

Figure 64. Mitchell, *Donohoe*, 1830, charcoal and chalk.[115]

112 Ibid.
113. The meeting of the Third Estate locked out of the Estates General at Versailles on 20 June 1789, a turning point of the French Revolution.
114. Courtesy of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, accessed September 8, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Death-of-Marat.
115. Courtesy of Mitchell Library SLNSW, File No. DGP2/23.

With its neoclassical economy and stillness after violence, it has an uncanny echo in Mitchell's drawing of the corpse of *Donohoe*, Jack Doolan, the Wild Colonial Boy, in the Sydney police morgue after his final shoot-out (see Figure 64). In Mitchell's charcoal rendition, even the undertaker's sheet, thrown back to reveal the 'noble' profile, resembles a Roman toga.

It is remarkable that the busy surveyor-general found the time to nip into the morgue and sketch the deceased gangster, with no particular remit to be a police artist amongst his many other duties. It is not a hurried sketch, and the image was reworked and printed as a lithograph. Even Marat's name cut into the side of the wooden writing stand is as Mitchell has depicted 'Donohoe' in Roman lettering carved into the side of an imaginary marble catafalque. Was Mitchell aware of, and emulating, David's famous image? Romantically, he adds a couplet from Byron, which reveals a curious sympathy for the notorious young bushranger: 'No matter; I have bared my brow, Fair in Death's face – before – and now.'[116]

David's 1801 equine portrait of Napoleon returning across the Alps from a victorious campaign in Italy, emulating Hannibal, but on his horse, Marengo, instead of an elephant, sealed his position as the propagandist for the man who was soon to declare himself emperor. As true propaganda, it wasn't true, of course. Napoleon made the crossing of the St Bernard Pass on a donkey, not being a good enough rider to control a powerful horse.[117]

Members of the Bonaparte family had themselves sculpted by Canova, the leading sculptor of the day, whereby his work epitomises neoclassicism, with the women posing as Roman patricians lounging on couches, such as Napoleon's sister, Pauline (see Figure 62). One of the many portraits of himself that Napoleon commissioned from Canova is carved out of 3.5 metres of white Carrara marble. Following the tradition of Roman emperors having themselves portrayed as gods, he chose to be modelled, somewhat illogically and ironically, as *Mars, the Peacemaker* (see Figure 65). And following the Roman practice of having the body of a god, he is completely nude, apart from a small fig leaf.

In a strangely parallel symbolism, the ladies of a grateful nation commissioned a giant statue of his chief adversary, the Duke of Wellington, as a vigorously nude Achilles (see Figure 66),

116. Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*, 240.
117. Marengo, a suburb of the Victorian coastal resort of Apollo Bay, was so named by Baudin's republican successor in 1802, commemorating Napoleon's victory in northern Italy in 1800. The horse was so named as well.

placed just up the road from his house at Hyde Park Corner, to some consternation at the unveiling. With studied symbolism, it was cast in bronze from melted-down cannon captured at Wellington's victories at Salamanca, Vittoria, Toulouse, and Waterloo.[118] The sculptor, Richard Westmacott, RA, was self-evidently a disciple of Winckelmann.

Figure 65. Antonio Canova, *Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker*,1802–06, Carrara marble, Apsley House, London.

Figure 66. Richard Westmacott, *Achilles* (The Wellington Monument), 1822, bronze, Hyde Park Corner, London.

It is difficult to imagine Churchill or de Gaulle being honoured with similarly naked portraits on plinths in London and Paris respectively. There is a further comically symmetrical detail in the final destination of Napoleon's statue. At about the same time as the Wellington Monument was erected, Canova's nude portrait of Napoleon arrived in London. The government had bought the huge statue and given it to Wellington, who installed it in his home, Apsley House, just down the road on Hyde Park Corner. It is still there, at the foot of the stairs right opposite the front door of Number One, London**.** Winckelmann's influence had indeed reached the heart of Britain's geography and society.

The point is that at a time when people in Western societies never saw each other undressed, never exposed much of their bodies (whatever the climate), and never swam in public, if at all, were confronted by nude statuary in and on every public building. Everywhere they looked, the study and depiction of the male and female anatomy, apart from the previous examples, on the whole, anonymously, was considered a serious subject in art and a fundamental part of the academic canon. History was considered the most serious and

118. https://www.royalparks.org.uk/parks/hyde-park/things-to-see-and-do/memorials,-fountains-and-statues/statue-of-achilles

important branch of art, as religion had been in the Renaissance, thus classical histories and myth were constant themes in academic art. So it is intriguing to read that Mitchell attended anatomy classes at the Royal Academy and wonder what that actually meant and what he gained from them.

4.12 Looking for Models

The other anomaly was that the difficulty of finding models prepared to pose nude for neoclassical paintings meant that the artists usually had to resort to the limited stock of plaster casts of Roman or Greek statues. A 'classic' example is Johann Zoffany's painting, *The Death of Cook* (see Figure 67). Zoffany**,** a founding member of the Royal Academy, was set to sail with Banks on Cook's second voyage before his friend pulled out, and he went to India for a few successful years instead, but he was evidently invested in Cook's enterprise. He used the Roman sculpture, the *Dying Gaul*, as the model for Cook (see Figure 68) and the Greek *Discobolus* for his slayer (see Figure 69).

The added classicisation of the native Hawaiians was based on the theory that they must have been developing in a similar way to the Greeks because they wore something that resembled a Greek battle helmet, hence the classical headgear.[119] On inspection, Zoffany, having allegedly borrowed the Dying Gaul's pose, seems to have used some imagination with it, and the slayer could be the European-looking man bending over Cook without an obvious weapon. If the Discobolus man is the assassin, why is he dragging a heavy cloak and appearing to be unarmed? And given Zoffany's love of theatre, at least a blade catching the light in his left hand would provide a dramatic focal point.

119. Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1989), 119–20; Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific in the Wake of Cook's Voyages* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1992), 222.

Figure 67. Johann Zoffany, The Death of Captain James Cook, ca.1795, oil on canvas.[120]

Figure 68. The Dying Gaul, ca. 200 AD, marble.[121]

Figure 69. Discobolus of Myron, ca. 450 BC.[122]

If the composition appears like a staged operatic tableau in the grand manner, the main protagonists at the bottom of the canvas are as if at the edge of a stage, that is because Cook's death had been performed as a 'pantomime'. *Le Mort du Capitaine Cook*, was great success in Paris in 1788, and the following year it arrived in London as *The Death of Cook* at Covent Garden.[123] Furthermore, Zoffany was a stage designer himself and often worked with Garrick, the actor-producer.[124]

Apart from that ominous date for both the French aristocracy and the Australian Indigenous nobility (whose estates, as Michael Cathcart points out, 'were parks for the same purpose as any nobleman's in Merrie England'[125]), it should be noted that the first performance of a very British piece of history was a French production in Paris. It shows that the closeness of the two cultures, perpetually rivals all over the world, both fascinated and repelled by each other. In his journals, Stapylton rails against the French, putting French names on Australian maps, yet he peppers his language with French idioms.[126]

120. Courtesy of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, accessed September 9, 2020, https://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/11916.html?_ga=2.203838482.367065687.1599621324-68934675.1599621324
121. Courtesy of the Capitolini Museum, Rome, accessed September 9, 2020, http://www.museicapitolini.org/121
122. marble copy of bronze original. Courtesy of the National Roman Museum, accessed September 9, 2020, https://www.rome-museum.com/national-roman-museum.php.
123. B. Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 118.
124. Ibid.
125. Cathcart, *The Water Dreamers*, 78.
126. Eccleston, *Granville Staplyton*, 76. 'Another good hit at the Frenchmen who have been very active with their designations of Capes etc on the Southern Coast of our Territory.'

If Mitchell had come to grief on the Murray River at Mount Dispersion, given how seriously outnumbered his party was, would *The Death of Mitchell* have been the title of plays and paintings? Certainly his ghost would have expected it, but what is fairly certain is that he was aware of such portentous images, with Zoffany having been encouraged to tackle his subject from the great success of Benjamin West's *The Death of Wolfe* in 1771. West established a new format for displaying modern historical events by dressing figures in contemporary dress in a classical composition.[127] As has been demonstrated, several of Mitchell's illustrations tackle the subject tableaux in a grand manner, attempting to imbue events and encounters on his expeditions with an historical significance. In addition, and on the matter of 'life drawing', even the French, who were less prudish than the English about nudity, had a problem getting appropriate live models:

> The late eighteenth-century artist must have looked back even more nostalgically to the Greek *palestra*, for in his time nude models were rare and often most unsatisfactory.
>
> The model employed by the Academy in Paris had the rank of a minor civil servant, an apartment in the Louvre and a salary that passed to his widow at his death. Unfortunately there was no retiring age… he may have begun as a lithe young Mercury but, after more than forty years of yeoman service, he was good for nothing but Jupiter or Charon. …
>
> There were no female models in the academies…[128]

Mitchell had no such problems. In Australia Felix, his subjects wore no clothes. The Augustan members of the nascent colony were receptive to new ideas – in engineering, art and architecture – being clothed in a neoclassical style. Mitchell was well prepared to join their number and contribute to the culture.

127. Peter and Linda Murray, *Dictionary of Art and Artists*, 214.
128. Honour, *Neo-Classicism*, 116.

Chapter 5

Neoclassicism: Part 2 – Portraying Underdressed Faraway People

The anomaly of the fashion for the nude in art in the West, at a time when everyone was fully and formally dressed, is compared with what Mitchell found when he came to Australia and started exploring. On his expeditions he had ample opportunity to practice truly neoclassical portraiture.

5.1 The Dutch

Significantly, the first serious ethnographic, botanical and landscape studies of the New World were made in the early seventeenth century by Dutch artists when Governor Maurits van Nassau-Siegen took two artists to the short-lived colony that the Dutch had established in in the north-east corner of Brazil, between 1630 and 1654 Albert Eckhout (1610–1664) made finely observed drawings of the inhabitants of Pernambuco (Figure 70) and Frans Post (1612–1680) painted the landscape (Figure 71) in a precise illuminated style, strangely similar, in a stiff naïve manner, to von Guérard's interpretation of Australia Felix 200 years later. During the entire Spanish conquest and colonisation of South America, few, if any, such studies were made and no landscapes were painted of its astonishing scenery.

Figure 70. Albert Eckhout, *Tapuya Woman Seated*, ca. 1637–44, crayon.[1]

Figure 71. Frans Post, *Sao Franciscon River and Fort Maurits,* 1639, oil on canvas.[2]

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1. B. Smith, *Imagining the Pacific in the Wake of Cook's Voyages*, 19.
2. Ibid.

Thus the project remains as an anomaly in the European colonisation of the South American continent but proof of how advanced the Dutch were in their Golden Age, a symbol of which is the house Maurits built for himself in Hague.

The *Mauritshuis*, designed by Jacob van Campen and Pieter Post,[3] Frans's brother no less, is one of the first and best examples of a Dutch Palladian style that was soon copied in England and started a tradition that was to culminate in Georgian architecture (see Figure 72).[4] Four square, brick, pilastered, with a hipped roof, it directly influenced Sir Christopher Wren in his house designs.[5] Thus an argument could be made that the late-Georgian buildings Greenway created for Macquarie's neoclassical civic centre in Sydney date back stylistically to their origin in the Mauritshuis (see Figure 73). The building in The Hague also happens to be a treasure house of masterpieces from the Dutch Golden Age, the national hero of that period being Abel Tasman.

Figure 72. Mauritshuis, The Hague, Netherlands, 1641.

Figure 73. Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney, 1819.

5.2 James Cook and Joseph Banks

The next guidelines for studying and depicting the peoples of newly found lands by Western explorers were set by James Cook and Joseph Banks for Cook's three voyages to the Pacific, which were remarkable enterprises in scientific research rather than commercial plunder and imperial expansion. They are recounted by Bernard Smith in his magisterial work, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, which is considered to have greatly influenced the study of colonial exploration:

3. Frans and Pieter could be related as they are both from Haarlem.
4. Fletcher, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*, 833, 835.
5. Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture* (London: Penguin 1943; London: Thames and Hudson, revised edition, 2009), 169–170.

> It is still regarded as a major turning point in the study of colonial exploration in the Pacific, its seminal influence acknowledged by no less an authority than Edward Said, who can seem to have originated our current post-colonial perspectives.[6]

Smith cannot be ignored because his methodology is so wide ranging and imaginative that it presents a template for studying the ideals, attitudes and achievements of a man like Mitchell. The follow-up to *European Vision and the South Pacific*, which is *Imagining the Pacific in the Wake of Cook's Voyages,* opens with the following statement:

> In this book the imagination is understood as consisting of two primary components. First there is the imaging in which a person constructs an image in the presence of an object from which the image is fashioned; and then there is imagining, in which a person constructs an image while not in direct sensory contact with the object or objects from which the imagery of the imagining is constructed.[7]

He continues:

> If we are to understand the Pacific world, we must also accept the reality of the objects out of which the concept of the Pacific was constructed. Together with the reality both of the European minds that sought to understand it and of those Pacific minds that found themselves at once the objects and victims of that 'understanding'[8].

This gives a template for studying Mitchell's approach to the subject matter on his expeditions. Indeed, even on the way down the Atlantic, Banks put his artists, young Sydney Parkinson and Alexander Buchan, to work drawing coastal profiles, which was normally the job of the ship's officers because they were of military and naval use, and in Rio de Janeiro they were sketching the topography of the harbour.[9] This made the Portuguese viceroy suspicious despite Cook's protestations that his voyage was a purely scientific expedition. The viceroy was right to suspect because Buchan was not describing the astonishing setting of that city but drawing the harbour's fortifications and noting down its weaknesses, work which Mitchell would have enjoyed and understood.[10] Where these artists' work gets interesting is in Tierra del Fuego when the first encounter is made with non-European people, a tribe of the Ona Indians of Patagonia. Buchan, who was not trained to draw figures, depicted the event for Banks with a naïve truthfulness. B. Smith highlights the importance of this event:

6. Andrew Fuhmann, 'The Man Who Put Art on Australia's Map,' *Age (Melbourne)*, June 26, 2016, Spectrum sec.
7. B. Smith, *Imagining the Pacific, in the Wake of the Cook Voyages*, ix.
8. Ibid., ix.
9. Ibid., 54.
10. Ibid., 55, plate 46. Alexander Buchan, *Part of a Panoramic View of Rio de Janeiro*, 1768.

> It is interesting to reflect that it must be one of the first, if not *the* first, in which an on-the-spot visual record is was made by Europeans of their encounter with a non-European people at the moment of the encounter. It stands on the threshold of recording contact at the time of contact, by visual means – the ancestor of the photographic, film, and television documentary of contact between European and non-European.[11]

Not all Mitchell's drawings were of first-contact encounters of the Aborigines he met, but many were, such as in Figure 74 of the nervous mother carrying her infant son in a woven papoose.[12] The published lithograph does no justice to the on-the-spot drawing, which he describes hurriedly executing before she ran off.[13] Buchan's simple pencil drawings of two Tierra del Fuegans who came aboard the *Endeavour* are remarkably similar to Mitchell's(see Figure 75).

Figure 74. Mitchell, *Female and Child of Australia Felix,* 1836.[14]

Figure 75. Alexander Buchan, *Two Drawings of Tierra del Fuegans*, 1769, pencil.[15]

They give a sense of immediacy and place that an idle camera shot cannot capture. Figure 96 of *The First Meeting with the Chief of the Bogan Tribe*[16] depicts a first-contact situation for the chief, but it is a more complex composition of a formal event and one cannot be sure that

11. Ibid., 56–7.
12. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:212.
13. Ibid., 2:211–12.
14. Courtesy of the SLNSW, File No. DLPXX22f/9.
15. Alexander Buchan, 'Two Drawings of Tierra Del Fuegans,' 1769, in B. Smith, *Imagining the Pacific, in the Wake of Cook's Voyages* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1992), 59, plates 51a and b.
16. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:194.

the sketches were not made from memory a while later, not that that lessens the worth of the image.

What happens to the on-ground artist's image next is another story, which encompasses the whole gamut of philosophies, attitudes, preconceived ideas, artistic conventions, and reproduction techniques of whichever time an image is being published or exhibited. Buchan's stark watercolour of the Tierra del Fuegans in a shelter is a strong three-dimensional image, as if they are in a bell-like time capsule floating in space (see Figure 76).

Figure 76. Alexander Buchan, *Inhabitants of the Island of Terra del Feugo in Their Hut*, 1769, watercolour.[17]

Figure 77. Francesco Bartolozzi, *A View of the Indians of Terra del Fuego in Their Hut,* ca. 1772, engraving after a version by Giovanni B. Cipriani.[18]

Engraved by Francesco Bartolozzi from a version by Giovanni Cipriani, and published by Hawkesworth, it becomes a romantic scene of a nobly classical family picnicking in a rustic bower within a glade of ivy-clad oak trees (see Figure 77). A Claudeian tree and even Salvator Rosa's rocks and knotty branches have been added to the composition.[19] The Tierra del Fuegans have been classicised and Europeanised, their abode almost fit for Marie Antoinette to play in. John Hawkesworth, in his account of the voyage where both images appear, reproduces Cook's cogent opinion of the Aborigines of the east coast of Australia, which starts as follows:

> From what I have said of the natives of New-Holland they may appear to some to be the most wretched people on Earth, but in reality they are far more happier than we Europeans; being wholly unacquainted with not only the superfluous but the necessary Conveniences so much sought after in Europe, they they are happy in not knowing theuse of them. They live in a Tranquillity which is not disturb'd by the

17. Alexander Buchan, 'Inhabitants of the Island of Terra del Feugo in Their Hut,' in B. Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1992), 39, plate 30.
18. Francesco Bartolozzi, 'A View of the Indians of Tierra del Fuego in Their Hut,' in B. Smith, *Imagining the Pacific, in the Wake of Cook's Voyages* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1992), 60, plate 52.
19. B. Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 40.

> inequality of Condition. …etc … In short they seem'd to set no Value on anything we gave them…this in my opinion argues that they think themselves provided with all the neccessaries of Life and that they have no superfluities.[20]

Mitchell had no other draftsmen on his expeditions, so he was the sole artist. When his talent had been spotted by General Murray on arrival in Wellington's peninsular army, Mitchell had learnt to draw and paint landscape by example from his talented veteran superior officers, but it is difficult to establish how he trained at figure drawing. He did illustrate army drill manuals but naturally that was with rather wooden 'toy' soldiers. Therefore his depictions of the occupants of the lands he travelled through are especially interesting, and they are very prominent in his publications. The opening image in the first volume of *Three Expeditions* is of Cambo a 'Native of the Bogan' whose 'sitting' Mitchell describes with some amusement. He has attired him in a thin loincloth, presumably for decency, which denies Cambo his selfhood, but that is taking a twenty-first-century view, and Mitchell did not always comply with the mores of his time.

Kenneth Clark explains the philosophical seriousness of the Attic attitude to naturism as the origin of the classical nude, which evolved in the cult of athletic sports:

> The Greeks attached great importance to their nakedness. Thucydides in recording the stages by which they distinguished themselves from the Barbarians, gives prominence to the date at which it became the rule in the Olympic games… …psychologically, the Greek cult of absolute nakedness is of great importance. It implies the conquest of an inhibition, which oppresses all but the most backward people; it is like a denial of original sin.[21]

He continues by revealing the attitudes of their neighbours:

> This is not, as is sometimes supposed, simply a part of paganism: for the Romans were shocked by the nakedness of Greek athletes…the Spartans even scandalized the Athenians by allowing women, lightly clad, to compete in their games. …but in fact Greek confidence in the body can be understood only in relation to their philosophy. It expresses above all their sense of human wholeness. Nothing which related to the whole man could be isolated or evaded; and this serious awareness of how much was implied in physical beauty saved them from the two evils of sensuality and aestheticism.[22]

The corollary of Clark's statement must presumably be that neoclassical man, fully and formally clothed at all times in public, must be guilty of the twin evils. It was a strange period to have world leaders 'stripping off' for posterity in solid marble moulded by the successor in

20. B. Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 169. Reproduced from Cook's *Journals*, 399. Also Dixon, 12.
21. Kenneth Clark, *The Nude,* 23.
22. Ibid., 24.

sculpting genius to Michelangelo and Bernini. Mitchell, the aspiring artist, found in Australia Felix, and in the areas on his convoluted way there, ready-made models to whom nakedness was as natural as in the Garden of Eden, a metaphor Mitchell immodestly employs for himself as the only (clothed) Adam.[23]

5.3 The French Call in on Australia

It is interesting to look at studies made by French expeditions of the period. Jean Piron was an artist on Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's 1791–94 voyage seeking La Pérouse's ill-fated scientific expedition, which had disappeared after meeting the First Fleet at Botany Bay in 1788. Piron's engraving of Tasmanian inhabitants, *Natives of Cape Diemen fishing*, is a stylised and thoroughly neoclassical composition. In the guise of an anthropological study, he is able to present both sexes interacting together in 'the all-together', which would have been scandalous in a European classical scene at the time. The Tasmanian vegetation appears unobserved and gives little idea of what the landscape would have been like.

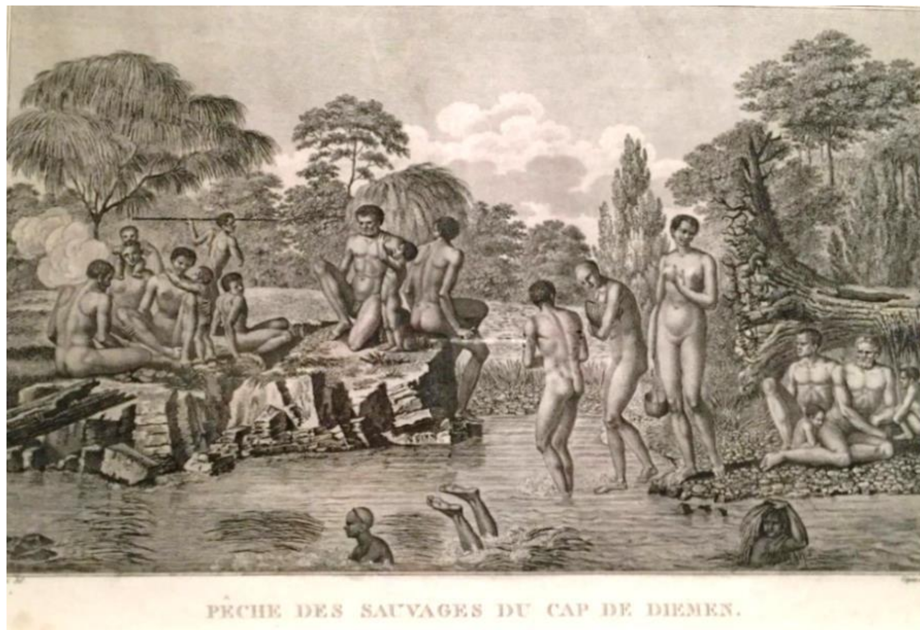

Figure 78. Jean Piron (draughtsman), *Natives of Cape Diemen Fishing*, 1817, Louis Copia (engraver).[24]

Nicholas Petit on Baudin's expedition, sent by Napoleon in 1800 to map Australia, made sensitive portraits of the inhabitants, such as the mother and child of New South Wales (see Figure 79). His finished portrait of the pair is well observed and a strong original

23. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:171.
24. Cathy Leahy and Judith Ryan, eds., *Colony: Australia 1770–1861* (Melbourne, Vic: National Gallery of Victoria, 2018), exhibition catalogue, photo EC.

composition, sculptural in its three dimensionality. The pose anticipates Mitchell's portrait of *Turandurey and Ballanandella* – and, in subject matter, his *Female and Child of Australia Felix* (see Figure 80 and Figure 81).

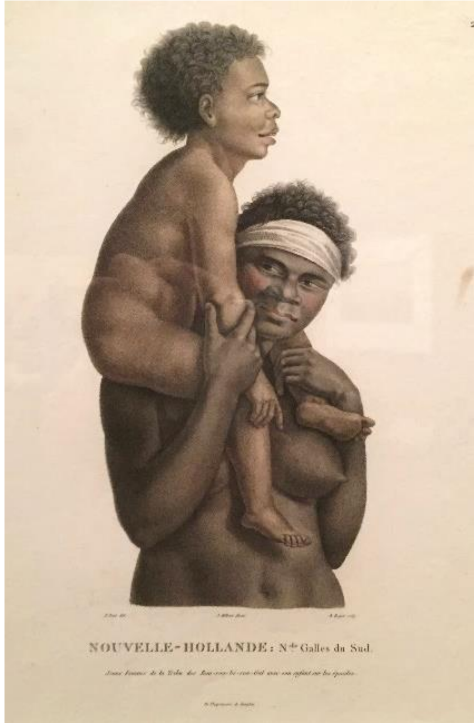

Figure 79. Nicholas Martin Petit, *Young Woman of the Buruberongal Tribe, with Her Child on Her Shoulders, NSW*, engraver, Barthélemy Roger, 1807-11

Figure 80. *Turandurey and Ballanandella*, detail (see Figure 28)

Figure 81. *Female and Child of Australia Felix*, 1836, detail (see Figure 28).

5.4 Cambo Classicised

Volume I of the two volumes of Mitchell's *Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia* opens the whole major publication with a full-length portrait as the frontispiece. Plate 1 of 51 plates and numerous drawings throughout the two 350-page volumes presents Cambo. The title simply states that. There is no categorising as 'native of the such and such tribe', which invests him with an individual dignity for the image. The List of Illustrations describes the plate as *Portrait of Cambo, an aboriginal native (Plate 1, see page 20.) Frontispiece* – the helpfully added direction also appears on the image itself. It is highly significant that Mitchell chose the image, of all the possible candidates, for his frontispiece (see Figure 82 and Figure 83).

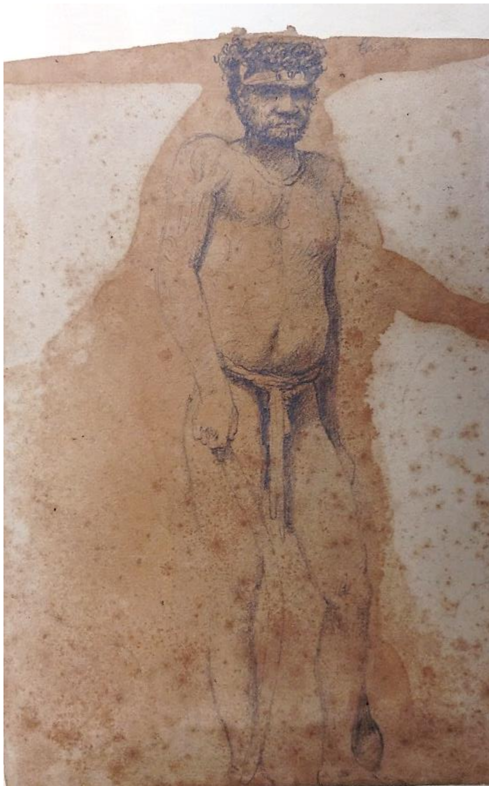

Figure 82. *Cambo*, 1831, detail, graphite and wash.[25]

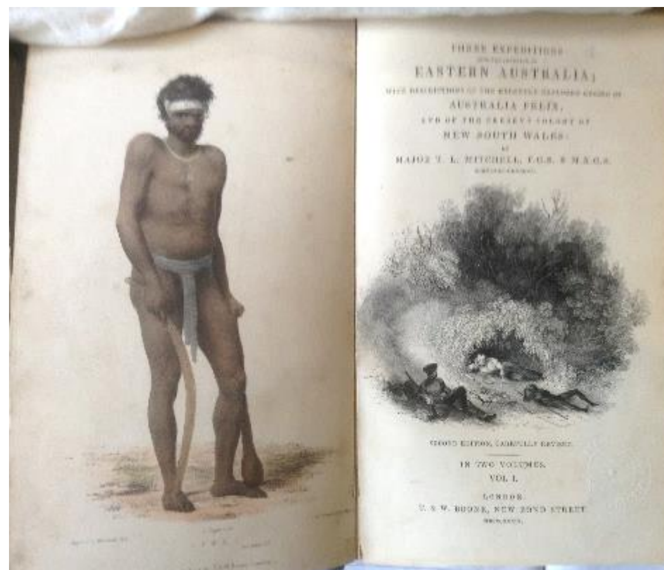

Figure 83. Frontispiece and title page, 1838.[26]

The image itself is strong because, apart from some suggested pinkish sandy ground to stand on, there is no background, so the sepia-toned figure stands out strongly and proudly. One of the reasons for the second edition of the *Three Expeditions* was supposedly to improve on the quality of the printing, but, in fact, a study comparing both editions held by the State Library

25. Courtesy of the SLNSW, File No. DLPXX 21f.
26. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, Frontispiece and title page.

of Victoria reveals little difference and a good-quality image of Cambo, unlike the very poor one in the facsimile edition.

The drawing is serious life drawing made wonderfully evocative with the stains and foxing of age – or is it a subtle wash laid over (see Figure 82)? Mitchell describes Cambo's 'sitting' in detail. It is worth repeating the whole passage as it reveals his attitudes, mindset and intentions:

> I was very anxious to obtain the assistance of an aboriginal guide, but the natives had almost all disappeared from the valley of the Hunter; and those who still linger near their ancient haunts, are sometimes met with, about such large establishments as Segenhoe, where, it may be presumed, they meet with kind treatment. Their reckless gaiety of manner; intelligence respecting the country, expressed in a laughable inversion of slang words; their dexterity, and skill in the use of their weapons; and above all, their few wants generally ensure them that look of welcome* without which these rovers of the wild will seldom visit a farm or cattle station. Among those, who have become sufficiently acquainted with us, to be sensible of that happy state of security, enjoyed by all men under protection of our laws, the conduct is strikingly different from that of the natives who remain in the savage state. The latter are named *myalls* by their half-civilised brethren – who, indeed, hold them in so much dread, that it is seldom possible to prevail on anyone to accompany a traveler far into the unexplored parts of the country.
> *They understand our looks better than our speech.[27]

This passage is a patronising, rosy-spectacled, simplistic view of settler-indigenous relations, especially in view of the current awareness of the massacres that had not been spoken about for some 200 years. Also his ambivalent opinions veer between using the word 'savage' as a pejorative noun or adjective in one instance and as a relatively neutral word for native in another:

> At Segenhoe, on a former occasion, I met with a native but recently arrived from the wilds. His terror and suspicion when required to stand steadily before me, while I drew his portrait, were such, that, notwithstanding the power of disguising fear, so remarkable in the savage race, the heart of Cambo was overcome, and beat visibly, when he at length suddenly darted forward from my presence; but speedily returned, bearing in one hand his club, and in the other his bommereng (sic) with which he seemed to acquire just fortitude enough, to be able to stand on his legs, until I had finished the sketch.[28]

The poor man was evidently not asked if he would like to pose for the surveyor-general; it was 'required' of him. There seemed to be no negotiation or payment. But Mitchell gives him a name, presumably, because he had heard it from the man himself (though this could be as

27. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:20. His own asterix and note.
28. Ibid.

weak as his presuming that Cambo's ilk are 'met with kind treatment'). Did Mitchell even hear his name correctly or was the subject answering what he thought was another question? Carter particularly riffs on the whole question of place names and how they could all be based on misunderstandings and variations of 'I don't know' or 'Go away', or, more probably, 'What do you mean?' and 'I don't understand.'[29] He counters the frequent criticism of Mitchell naming so many features in Australia Felix after colleagues and personalities rather than using Aboriginal names, which would have been meaningless anyway.[30]

And Mitchell does give Cambo great prominence opening the show, as it were, by objectifying him as the noble savage (to be fair, without making that allusion), almost as if the man might be an example of native fauna. There is apparently no other information about Cambo, and Mitchell does not explain the link between Cambo's fear of the myalls and his terror at being scrutinised by this bossy white man. Mitchell's attitude in the introductory section seems to be that the native populations who avoid the Europeans prefer to remain in the 'savage state' and menace their neighbours who do associate with the white intruders. Before castigating Mitchell for his patronising, ambivalent attitude towards the Indigenous population, one has to allow for the viewpoint of his time with respect to current attitudes that are slowly changing only now, over 180 years later, while those of others are not.

The drawing of Cambo is an elegantly simple portrait, as Mitchell describes, with his steadying club and hunting weapon (see Figure 84). It is neoclassical in that the pose or posture is in the format of classical Greek statuary of the Kouros. This was the tradition in Hellenic cultures of celebrating the ideal youth, called a *kouros,* an image of Apollo, in the form of a rather rigid standing statue, a format inherited from Egypt. The pose began to change over time with the left foot in front of the right but with the arms straight down from square shoulders. The right heel is raised as if the figure is walking forwards, but it appears very static.

The transformation starts about 480 BC in the *Kritios* figure, named after the sculptor, where the right knee is dropped, giving sense to the bending left leg.[31] In a matter of 30 years, Polykleitos produces *Doryphoros,* the spear carrier, where perfection was considered to have been achieved (see Figure 85). No original statues have survived from the Hellenic period.

29. Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, 327. Quoting Stokes, Chapter 11.
30. Ibid., Chapter 11.
31. Clark, *The Nude*, 23–4.

The best were cast in bronze and invariably melted down later, so art historians depend on Roman copies in marble to judge them, but they agree he perfected the form. This was achieved by the application of the *contrapposto*, or counterpoise pose, where the hips turn and the weight is taken off one foot giving a lifelike impression of relaxed movement.[32]

In *Doryphoros*, the left arm is lifted and the hand held as if explaining something in a speech or conversation. There is a pragmatic reason for this for, as his title suggests, he was originally holding a spear, which would have further informed the pose.

Figure 84. *Cambo*, 1838, lithograph.[33]

Figure 85. Polykleitos, *Doryphoros*, Roman copy.[34]

Figure 86. *Piper, the Conqueror of the Interior*, 1836, pencil drawing.[35]

In the same way Cambo's weapons affect his posture, which gives his portrait a latent energy. He is almost leaning on his club, allowing the left shoulder to drop and the left knee to fall forward as in *Doryphoros*, whereas the right knee is straighter in both figures. Mitchell has

32. Ibid.
33. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:20, plate 1.
34. Janson, *A History of Art*, 103, Fig, 154.
35. Courtesy of the SLNSW, File No. DLPXX 22f/3.

emphasised Cambo's right shoulder, while he holds his slender bow-like boomerang in a firm but relaxed grip.

Given the image's prominence in the publication, it is, presumably, intended to show an ideal of an Aboriginal hunter or warrior. The drawing makes no pretension to give Cambo a perfect physique, but it is beautiful in its delicacy and honesty and presents a genuine portrait of an individual. The original sketch (Fig.82), which is nicely textured with the stains of age, shows apparent changes to the position of the limbs as any carefully observed life drawing would have. It looks as if the left arm had been extended at one stage, as in the antique Greek, and the left leg had been adjusted. The head is wonderfully observed as the nervous subject concentrates on what is a perilous task to him. The lithograph by G. Foggo is carefully toned and strong but loses subtleties, particularly in the face, where the pupils are enlarged on heightened whites so as the eyes stare wildly out at the viewer. In Mitchell's drawing, they are shaded and impassive, giving Cambo a pensive expression. For all the chance for better printing quality in the second 1839 edition, there seems no difference from the first 1838 image. The modern facsimile edition loses finesse, with some images, particularly portraits, becoming crude and disfigured.[36]

5.5 Piper

There is no such reticence with Mitchell's portrait of Piper, his guide on the third expedition (see Figure 86). Aptly, for the man who aided his passage into Australia Felix, Piper stands proud, fit and handsome, with a mane of tousled hair. In Mitchell's drawing from the archive at the SLNSW, there is no pretension of a loincloth; the barrel of his shotgun is preserving his 'modesty' – or, rather, European sensibilities – but, again, a weapon appears as an important or symbolic prop, one that Piper was not hesitant to use against his fellow man.[37]

Mitchell titles his drawing *Piper, the Conqueror of the Interior*. Did he give him that appellation after having drawn his head as if that of a conquistador (see Figure 87)?[38] So, Piper steps into history in the pages of Mitchell's narrative, and later, as a Sydney celebrity, cleverly portrayed by William Fernyhough both in silhouette and in profile, dressed in his

36. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, facsimile ed.
37. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:143–4. 'Unfortunate result of Piper's interview with the natives of the lake.'
38. Mitchell's version is that Piper, in choosing a title for a medallion, did not want 'King' – there were too many already – and decided on Conqueror of the Interior – prompted by Mitchell? Had he drawn Piper there after the expedition?

frockcoat and cocked hat, and, again, on a sheet of paper being admired by Mitchell also in profile in a frockcoat.

Mitchell does not portray Piper in a strictly contrapposto pose, but the stance is no less neoclassical for that. It has the same relaxed self-confidence of the Greek when set beside *Doryphoros*. To modern eyes, the use of a gun as a fig leaf takes on prurient phallic connotations, which Mitchell, untroubled by Freudian psychology, would probably have been unaware of when the portrait was transferred to a lithograph for Plate 25, *Piper Watching the Carts at Benanee* (see Figure 88).

Figure 87. Detail of Figure 86, head of Piper (as a conquistador?)

5.6 Piper at Benanee

The pencil portrait of Piper is used in reverse in the curious tableau titled *Piper at Benanee* Plate 25, a first state result of lithographic process (see Figure 88). It is curious because, due to the complex composition, it is not clear what is exactly happening in the crowded and, at first glance, apparently peaceful scene. In the book, it is part of a menacing episode that leads to a major and tragic incident in the following days, an event which would have ongoing repercussions. The image needs to be understood, if possible, and the accompanying prose unravelled.

Importantly, this episode had all been influenced by a series of events that had happened the year before on the Darling River, which are recounted in Volume I of *Three Expeditions*. A precis of that is necessary because the narrative has arrived at the turning point of the whole

epic journey, and the next few days would determine the outcome: success, failure or annihilation for the expedition; harmony, conflict, or disaster for the protagonists.

Figure 88. *Piper Watching the Carts at Benanee*, 1836.[39]

Two days before this scene, Mitchell had set out with a party of 15 men, including Piper and his 'gin', from the temporary depôt camp that he had set up under the charge of Granville Stapylton.[40] The camp was conveniently situated beside a lake that Stapylton had found and so named after him.[41] The purpose of this excursion was to first reach the Murray River and then follow it to try to find its junction with the Darling River. This was in fact the main objective of the entire expedition, Mitchell having failed to complete the course of the Darling for the second time in two years. The party encountered the Murray sooner than expected and proceeded to follow it downstream. Given the river's interminable meanderings, this was not a straightforward task. After some detours around obstacles, they camped beside the 'magnificent stream.'[42] At '165 yards broad,'[43] it was over three times the width of the Murrumbidgee, 'and that seemed a fine river,' with a 'red bank … of 25 feet'[44] over twice the

39. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:92, plate 25, lithograph, Waldeck.
40. Ibid., 2:88.
41. Ibid., 2:86.
42. Ibid., 2:90.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.

height of the Murrumbidgee's. Mitchell was impressed, but characteristically starts the next day's entry with a dig at Sturt:

> May 24. – It was quite impossible to say on what part of the Murray, as laid down by Captain Sturt, we had arrived; we were therefore obliged to feel our way, just as cautiously, as if we had upon a river unexplored.[45]

He had other reasons to be cautious. The party set off encountering anabranches of the river, thickets of 'goborro' or dwarf box, and other impediments until Piper hurried ahead to some smoke he saw in the distance:

> To this smoke Piper had hastened, and when I reached a plain beyond the creek, I saw him carrying on a flying conversation with an old man and several gins, who were retiring in a north-west direction, to a wood a mile distant.[46]

At first, this would appear to be the subject of the image, but the words on page 91, although only a page before the plate, are misleading. Piper may be talking to a single old man but the gins in the picture are all sitting on the ground and are not retiring in any direction … or, indeed, to Western eyes, in their manner.

So the team followed and found the wood 'encircled a beautiful lake full sixteen miles in circumference, and swarming with natives both on the beach and in canoes.'[47] Evidently, Lake Benanee was a bountiful and popular gathering place that teemed with fish and game. Many followed and overtook them and guided the party to a dry crossing: 'Thither, therefore, we went, the natives accompanying us in considerable numbers, but each carrying a green bough.'[48] The bearing of a green bough was a sign of peace and, as Mitchell liked to point out, the ancient Greeks had the same custom, thus the Aboriginal nations were pleasingly following this classical precedent:

> Among (the crowd) were several old men, who took a most active part, and who were very remarkable from the bushy fulness (sic) and whiteness of their beards and hair; the latter growing thickly on the back and shoulders gave them a very singular appearance and accorded well with their patriarchal authority.[49]

45. Ibid., 2:91.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., 2:91–92.

The aged chiefs insistently beckoned them on. Then, as they followed cautiously, 'we discovered, almost as soon as we fell in with them, that they were actually our old enemies from the Darling!' [50]

This sets up the tension that is in both the text and the imagery. The prose is full of activity and noise and a confusing sequence of events. It is not mentioned when they make camp, or why they stay there, but in the picture, the bell tent erected behind the cartwheel suggests they are staying. It was an anxious time, but is Mitchell muddling the text to muddy the waters?

5.7 Repercussions

The Benanee image has three distinct parts, which are not wholly integrated. In the foreground stand two figures – Piper and an old man wrapped in a blanket – beside a wigwam and the rear wheel of a cart. Behind them a group of women is sitting on the ground in front of a forest crowded with people. Piper stands looking over his shoulder at the man wrapped in the blanket who has a white forked beard and darkened, downcast eyes. While Piper's stance is the same as in the drawing, his head has been turned to a profile and his hair trimmed. He is staring at either the man or the cart. It is not clear from the text which of several protagonists this man is, or what he is doing.

Lurking in the shade of the trees, beyond the figures and the women, Mitchell depicts an army of warriors. The bush is literally bristling with spears, cleverly silhouetted against a distant strip of light. He is sure that this is the same tribe with whom there had been a violent series of incidents during the previous year's expedition on the Darling River. There had probably been a rape Mitchell had not known about, a clubbing, shots fired, a mother with a baby killed, and a chieftain ('King Peter') shot dead with others who had been swimming away across the river.[51] The expedition was cut short, with the Darling's course still unknown; there were no official repercussions or inquiry, which meant that the issues remained unresolved.

Much later investigations on an expedition by Sturt and Eyre in 1844 unearthed the probable truth from Aboriginal witnesses, of which Mitchell, lied to by members of his convict team,

50. Ibid., 2:92.
51. Ibid., 1:269–275. The events of 9 July 1835.

had suspicions but was not fully aware.[52] They had concocted a story to cover up a rape, or an unpaid sexual encounter, infanticide and murder. In his journal Mitchell was forced to concoct an overwrought and confusing account for 9 to 11 July, 1835, much longer than the usual day's logs.[53]

Here, again, a year later, Mitchell's text is crowded and bewildering. He is normally careful to align his images to the text to make a combined narrative, but the illustration and the script do not match, and neither makes much sense. What is conveyed is a clamoring, restless crowd beckoning the explorers on – to what? A prime camping spot? To move them on? To have a corroboree? As Mitchell says, 'I little expected they were to be the first natives we would meet with on the Murray, at a distance of nearly two hundred miles from the scene of out former encounter.'[54]

There is an exaggerated humour in their welcome, which foretells a tense night of much activity:

> There is something so false in a forced loud laugh without any cause … I was at a loss to conceive what they meant by this uncommon civility.
>
> In the course of the afternoon, they assembled their women and children in groups before our camp, exactly as they had formerly done on the Darling.[55]

This suggests a certain ceremonial or formality to the gathering, which could have been interpreted as a welcoming gesture, but Mitchell presents an undercurrent of confrontation in both the prose and the image. Evidently, as Donald Baker suggests, some of the team from the previous year were worried that they would be recognised, particularly Joseph Jones, the probable rapist.[56] Mitchell even states that they had identified Charles King who did the shooting.[57]

The most remarkable part of the image is the group of Aboriginal women who have gathered – or been assembled by the elders. They are sitting in a tight cluster on the open ground behind Piper and the old man, and they are naturally unclothed. But by Clark's definition the way Mitchell presents them they are not naked but undeniably nude. They would appear to come from some neoclassical scene or 'odalisque' fantasy of the oriental harem by Ingres or

52. Baker, *The Civilised* Surveyor, 92–95. The Barkindji people.
53. Mitchell, Three *Expeditions*, 1:269–275. The events of 9 July 1835.
54. Ibid., Three *Expeditions*, 2:92.
55. Ibid.
56. Baker, *The Civilised Surveyor*, 120.
57. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:94.

Delacroix, a popular subject in contemporary art of the time. Mitchell seems to be indulging in a bit of orientalism.

Mitchell had made sketches for this vignette (see Figure 89), but they do not have the sensuality of the final image. Did he draw the women from life or, given the identical figure and hairstyle they all sport, is it the same model in different poses? In the tense atmosphere he describes for that evening, it would have been surprising if he could have sat and sketched.

On the same sheet, however, the hunched figure in the blanket titled *The Old Thief at Benanee* looks like a genuine sketch from life (see Figure 90) – in the same way as Mitchell's *Female and child of Australia Felix* (see Figure 74) and Buchan's drawing of the two *Tierra del Fuegans* (see Figure 75) have that honest, observed immediacy.

Figure 89. Detail of the Aboriginal women from *An Old Thief at Benanee*, sheet.[58]

Figure 90. *An Old Thief at Benanee*, 1836.[59]

Who is the old thief, then? In spite of all the drama, there is no mention of thieving here, but Mitchell seems to be referring back to the previous year's events on the Darling, where tense then violent interactions led ultimately to the disastrous climax on the Murray. These are but some of his comments at the time:

> July 9 (1835) … They were so covetous, that the progress of our carts was impeded for some time by the care necessary on the part of the drivers, to prevent these people from stealing.
>
> The afternoon was a most harassing time, from the repeated attempts to pilfer the carts and tents. The old man, whose cunning and dexterity in this way were wonderful, had nearly carried off the leathern socket for the tent poles; another extracted the iron bow of a bullock-yoke.[60]

58. Courtesy of the SLNSW, File No. DLPXX 22f/2.
59. Courtesy of the SLNSW, File No. DLPXX 22f/2.
60. Ibid., 1:265.

> The old man, however, managed to cut (with a knife he had received from us *as a present*) one of the tent ropes.[61]

He adds an appalling statement, evidently thought normal to print at the time, that reveals contemporary and much deeper prejudices and the 'othering' of different peoples if Said's 'orientalism' covers anti-Semitism:[62]

> This was a very remarkable personage, his features decidedly Jewish, having a thin aquiline nose, and a very piercing eye, as intent on mischief, as if it had belonged to Satan himself.'63

And so on, with even King Peter trying to pinch Mitchell's handkerchief out of his pocket, and yet Mitchell writes here at Benanee:

> I did not see the tall man, nor the mischievous old one of last year; but there were here many disposed to act like them. One miserable dirty old man was brought forward, and particularly pointed out to me by the tribe.[64]

Yet the man in the tableau is not apparently so; his forked white beard is quite neat and his beautifully decorated cloak looks wonderfully laundered, an object the explorers might covet. In the illustration, it seems that Piper is not in conversation with the man but is suspicious that the man is standing next to the cart, loaded with their equipment and food for one reason only. Mitchell accepts the introduction, but whether it was to the 'dirty old man' or the neater potential thief depicted is not clear:

> I accordingly shewed him the usual attention of sitting down, and smoothing the ground for him.*[65] but he soon requested me to strip, on which I arose mindful of a former vow, and perceiving the blacksmith washing himself, I called him up, and pointed out the muscles of his arm to the curious sage.[66]

What was his former vow? Was it to always keep his shirt on?[67] This is somewhat ironic given that the most interesting aspect of Piper at Benanee is Mitchell's artistic treatment of the group of women and what he writes next.

61. Ibid., 1:266.
62. Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye*, 136.
63. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:270.
64. *Three Expeditions* 2: 93.
65. Mitchell adds a footnote at this point, which evinces a shared understanding of ritual civilities:* 'Instead of handing a chair, the equivalent politeness with Australian natives is to smooth down or remove with the foot, any sharp spikes or rubbish on the ground, where you wish your friend to be seated before you.'
66. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:94.
67. It is interesting that the word 'strip' that sounds so modern is listed as Middle English in the Oxford Dictionary.

In the text comes the following curious passage. Pointed out to Mitchell are two daughters of the woman with the baby who was killed on the Darling the year before, and he writes that they reminded him of her. He is transfixed by the younger girl:

> The youngest was the handsomest female I had ever seen among the natives. She is so far from black, that the red colour was very apparent in her cheeks. She sat before me in a corner of the group, nearly in the attitude of Mr Baily's fine statue of Eve at the Fountain; and equally unconscious that she was naked… The chief who stood by … begged me to accept her in exchange for a tomahawk![68]

Is this why so much care has been paid to the depiction of this as a bevy of voluptuous young women? Presumably, she is the girl on the left in the illustration (see Figure 91).

Figure 91. Detail from Figure 88.

Edward Hodges Baily (1788–1867) was a prodigious sculptor and Royal Academician, who made portraits of such 'worthies' as Robert Peel, Lord Byron, Mitchell's friend Sir John Herschel, 'not' Mitchell's friend Governor Richard Bourke, and most prominently if difficult to see at close range, Horatio Nelson up on his column.[69] *Eve*, who Baily made more than one version of, is a demure marble nude, sitting on the ground, legs drawn up, leaning on her right arm, her left drawn across her chest, her eyes modestly downcast (see Figure 92). If she is the biblical Eve, it is before the fruit and the fall.

68. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:93.
69. 'Edward Hodges Baily RA (1788 – 1867),' Royal Academy of Arts, accessed March 2, 2020, https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/name/edward-hodges-baily-ra.

Figure 92. Edward H. Baily, *Eve at the Fountain*,1822, marble.[70]

Mitchell tries to show this girl in that manner but she is kneeling rather than sitting, and supporting herself on both arms beside her. Only her well-coiffured head is in the same shy attitude as Eve's. As he has put her in the classic pose of a 'bathing belle', Mitchell could not help but make her an object of desire for the male gaze,

Mitchell's group looks familiar, as if taken from a neoclassical painting of the period. The nearest in content is Ingres' *The Turkish Bath*, but it was painted in 1862 when the great French neoclassical painter, the heir to David, proudly added his age to his signature: 'Aetatis LXXXII, 'to show he still had it in him' (see Figure 93).[71] How and when did Mitchell execute his odalisque? Did another hand, say the engraver himself, redraft it from Mitchell's sketches with a more voluptuous touch? What is remarkable about the composition is that while 'odalisques' and harem paintings were common in the nineteenth century it is very rare for more than one or two figures to be depicted, which are more often draped than not, so Mitchell's image is almost as exceptional as Ingres fantasy.

70. Courtesy of the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, accessed September 12, 2020. http://museums.bristol.gov.uk/details.php?irn=117730.
71. Clark, *The Nude*, 159.

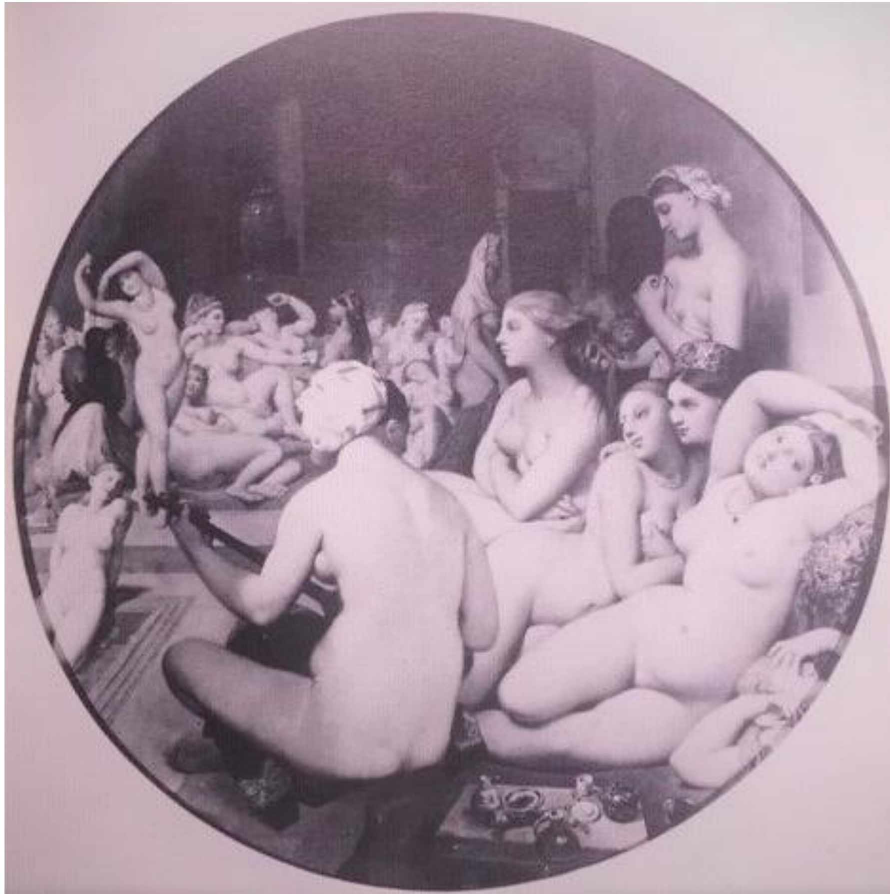

Figure 93. Jean A. D. Ingres, *The Turkish Bath*, 1862, oil on canvas.[72]

The symbolism of the juxtaposition of Piper gripping his gun in front of his masculinity beside this flock of nubile women needs no further comment.

Mitchell's anxious party survived a disturbed night during which Piper came to him, asking:

> with a thoughtful sense of responsibility, what the Governor had said to me about shooting blackfellows, (adding) These are only Myalls, (wild natives).
>
> I told him that the Governor had said positively, that I was not to shoot blackfellows, unless our own lives were in danger …. I sent up a rocket and the men gave three cheers, (and) all the blacks ran off.[73]

The next day they had no trouble, partly as a result of taking a route away from the river through deserted country.

On 26 July 1836, on the eve of the Dispersion, Mitchell even produces in the narrative a group of friendly Aborigines who approach their camp and warn them that 'the tribe at

72. Jean A. D. Ingres, *The Turkish Bath*, 1862, in Kenneth Clark, *The Romantic Rebellion*: *Romantic Versus Classic Art* (London; John Murray, 1973), 143, plate 102.
73. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:94.

Benanee did not belong in that part of the country and had come to fight us,'[74] and that somehow, 'they were the same tribe who had intended to kill another white man (Captain Sturt) in a canoe, at the junction of the rivers lower down.'[75] Even if the informants did appear like a Greek chorus, in such a theatrically timely manner in the drama, it is strange that the same Barkindji tribe, if it was they, should have travelled 200 miles south from their country to the mouth of the Darling River just as Sturt happened to be floating past on his expedition down the Murray River in 1830. That Mitchell wrote this down without question or irony adds to the difficulty of knowing what to believe of the next day's proceedings. Sturt did have a confrontation there but was it the same tribe? He used it to say he managed to explore the interior without shooting any Aborigines, when he had been perfectly prepared to do so, gun cocked and aimed, and was only stopped by calmer and wiser prevailing voices on more than one occasion.

So on 27 July 1836, on the Murray, the Mount Dispersion incident took place. The very word is euphemistic. As Mitchell introduces it: 'We proceeded on our journey as usual, but had not gone far, when we heard the voices of a vast body of blacks following our track, shouting prodigiously, and raising war cries.'[76] The event and Mitchell's illustration of it is described in Chapter 3.5 and 6, (Fig.32) but the book has been studied to this point because it is the fulcrum on which the whole Australia Felix narrative turns, and even elements of the imagery are neoclassical as has been demonstrated, and in the text.

Once free from the danger of a hostile population that greatly outnumbered a small and cumbersome expedition (albeit armed) in an unfamiliar and often desolate landscape, Mitchell is able to cross the symbolic river and enter biblical and classical allusions of the Promised Land, the Garden of the Hesperides, and an Eden of which he is 'the only Adam'. His party meets few but untroublesome people there in his Australia Felix. In the verdant lands to the south and the west, the clashes and dangers subside, the tension and noise abate – and for Mitchell there is both the picturesque and the sublime to enjoy.

5.8 A Presentation Ceremony

An earlier peaceful interaction that took place on Mitchell's first expedition embodied several of these neoclassical themes. Mitchell was trying to re-create a first contact he had

74. Ibid., 2:99.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., 2:101.

experienced as a formally composed tableau. He can be seen assembling the elements, the figures, the animals, and the bosky scenery at a moment in time to create a history painting in the tradition of European art of recording meetings, departures or gatherings that are not necessarily violent or religious. Barnard's lithograph appears badly reproduced in the common facsimile edition.

The illustration titled *First Meeting with the Chief of the Bogan* in Plate 12 of Volume I is set in a sylvan glade and demonstrates Mitchell's adeptness at drawing foliage and trees (see Figure 94).[77] A child adorned in foliage and wreaths is being presented to Mitchell and a wonderfully coiffured guide by two men. Seated to the side is a man who probably was not there given that Mitchell drew him a few days later, describing him with 'I never saw a worse countenance on any native'[78] – an opinion that is belied by a rather sympathetic portrait in Plate 13 (see Figure 95) – which also proves Mitchell was a master at describing intricately tousled hair.

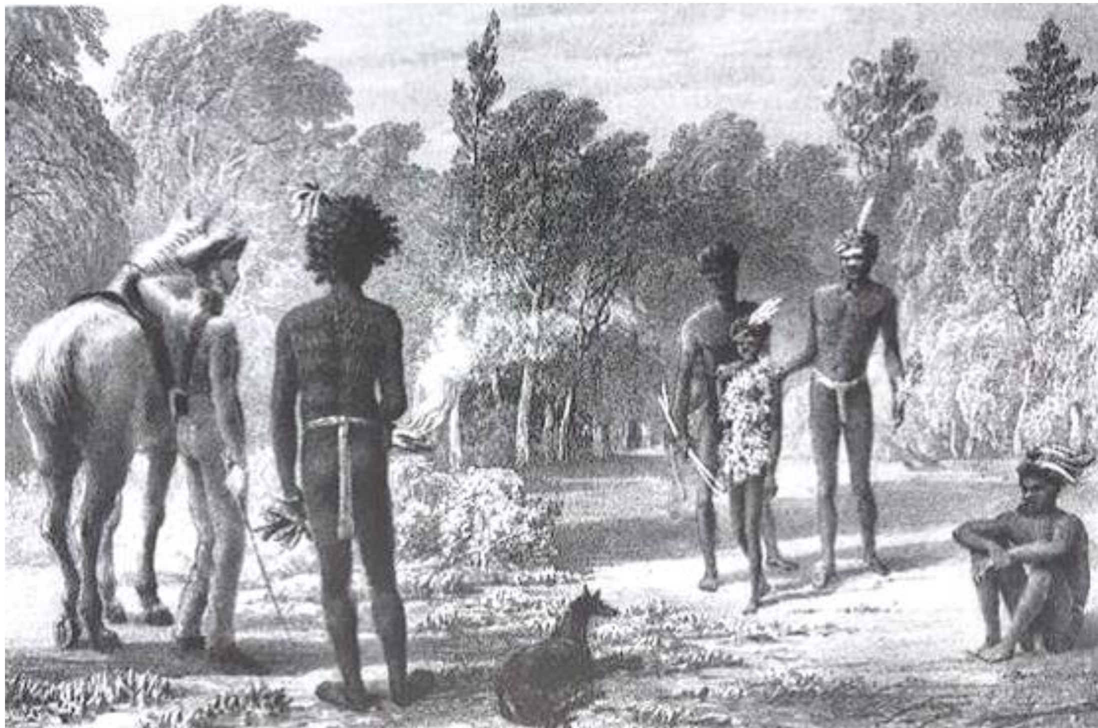

Figure 94. *The First Meeting with the Chief of the Bogan Tribe*.[79]

77. Ibid., 1:194.
78. Ibid., 1:204.
79. Ibid., 1:194, plate 12.

Figure 95. *Portrait of a Native of the Bogan*.[80]

It is easy to take the backgrounds for granted but most of his landscapes are generously planted with trees that have all been drawn in detail suitable to their location in the picture plane. He rarely takes short-cuts and, of course, all the while on his expeditions, he is gathering botanical information by sketching and taking notes.

In the Plate 12 illustration, he has captured the solemnity of the occasion and the nervousness of the bedecked slender child moving forward, gently pushed by his father or elder or chieftain, who hold a frond of foliage as a token of peace. There are several working drawings for this group and others for the audience – of presumably himself and a guide (see Figure 96).[81] In true neoclassical style, he seems to have evolved the poses in the nude before dressing them (the sketches are very faint), particularly of the horse handler who in the final version is evidently himself.

Simon Ryan argues that Mitchell has hellenised the event by relating the symbols to Greek precedents, particularly the carrying of green boughs and that, by extension through comparisons with classical culture, the Aborigines have been orientalised. He reiterates Said's dictum that 'orientalist studies are a self-contained system of generation of knowledge about the Orient, often proceeding without reference to the East's view of its own reality.'[82] Aside from the fact that the East has countless different realities (India, for instance, must have a

80. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:204, plate 13.
81. In SLNSW Mitchell archives.
82. Ibid.

thousand), it is not a single entity; how else is Mitchell to see another culture, without an interpreter, except through the lens of his own classical Judeo-Christian one? Ryan repeats Mitchell's footnote which states, 'the Grecians used to supplicate with green boughs in their hands, and crowns upon their heads, chiefly of olive or laurel.'[83] It is a formality Mitchell often describes sometimes, as at Benanee, with the branches being waved more in aggression than welcome.

In this case, Mitchell considers the boy in his costume appropriate 'and I received him as a personification of a green bough or emblem of peace.'[84] He has been kept waiting for an hour for the meeting with the chief and evidently deeply appreciates the trouble being taken with this ceremony. He is fairly sure it was the chief's first contact with white people.

Figure 96. Sketches for *The First Meeting with the Chief of the Bogan Tribe*.[85]

83. Ryan, 136, Ibid., Mitchell, 3E1, 194. In fact Ryan misquotes Mitchell as 'the Greeks used to supplicate …'
84. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:194.
85. Courtesy of the SLNSW, File No. DLPXX 21.

5.9 Talambé – A River God?

An older kin of the costumed Bogan boy is the subject of an image which Robert Dixon, calls ‘the representation of a river god presiding over a sylvan landscape.’[86]

Mitchell writes about meeting the affable Talambé,[87] a native of the Bogan; however, again as for previous illustrations, he does not describe drawing him, which is curious because it is an intimate study where great care has been taken with the subsequent lithograph (see Figure 97). Once more, Mitchell has rendered the ‘sylvan’ setting meticulously with a variety of trees subtly differentiated. It is worth comparing the two images in Plates 12 (*The First Meeting …*) and 19 for the value of the different background effect.

Figure 97. *Talambé – a Young Native of the Bogan Tribe* [88]

The pencil line portrait is very striking (see Figure 98). Talambé is adorned in a most elaborate floral headdress, which Mitchell has drawn with great care and botanical interest. At first glance, the portrait appears to be of a pretty garlanded girl, so the intense stare at the viewer is disarming and unexpected. Of course, it is unlikely that a female would be so forward. The youth is recumbent, wrapped loosely in a blanket and resting on his right arm.

86. McLean, *White Aborigines,* 37.
87. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:320.
88. Ibid., 1:318, plate 19.

Then one notices the ceremonial scarification marks on his chest and shoulder. He is an initiated young man of his tribe (see Figure 99).The hand and the foreshortening of the arm are well observed and drawn with a simple steady line. It is very much a 'life drawing' – that is, drawn from life on the spot and so has an immediacy and truthfulness because every line tells – and, unlike Cambo (see Figure 84) this subject is evidently enjoying the attention and the novelty.

Figure 98. *Talambé*, 1835, pencil sketch.[89]

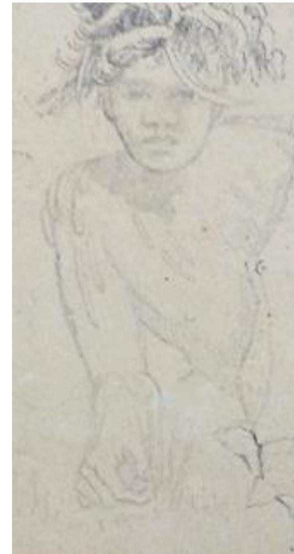

Figure 99. Detail of Figure 98.

It is also intrinsically a neoclassical drawing in the use of the simple pencil line, with very little shading or hatching. The neoclassical artists sought what Winckelmann directed: 'precision of Contour, that characteristic distinction of the ancients.'[90] Would Mitchell have known about the work of John Flaxman and Jean Ingres, both of whom studied in Rome, where the latter drew refined outline portraits of grand French tourists? Flaxman, who designed the uncluttered style of Wedgwood pottery, drew Homeric subjects with such a spare, unflinching minimalism that they set the standard for neoclassical draftsmanship.[91] Mitchell lost the chance of a truer, more neoclassical, life-drawing study here by throwing a blanket over Talambé, presumably for modesty.

The lithograph made for publication inevitably loses the subtleties in the face with the crudely treated eyes and mouth (where all likenesses are found) but gains with the depiction of the arcadian background. Great skill has been used to render the foliage to show the

89. Courtesy of the SLNSW, File No. DLPXX 21f./16.
90. Honour, *Neo-Classicism*, 62, 113.
91. Ibid., 62, 114.

variety of trees and shrubs across the valley of the dry Bogan River. A few days before drawing Talambé, Mitchell was delighted to find the same acacias, or wattles, that they had passed on the way down the Bogan River; however, he did have a purely aesthetic whinge about gum trees:

> *Aug*. 23._The weather again quite serene. We continued our march. The poverty of the foliage of the eucalyptus, the prevailing tree, affords little mass or shadow; and indeed seldom has that tree, either in the truck or branches, anything ornamental to landscape.[92]

In contrast, Mitchell enthuses in florid prose about re-discovering the *Acacia pendula* plants seen on the outward trip:

> The locality of the beautiful shrub is very peculiar being always near, but never within, the limits of inundations. Never far from hills but never upon them. These bushes, blended with a variety of other acacias, and crowned here and there with casuarinas, form very picturesque groups, especially when relieved with much open ground. Indeed, the beauty of the sylvan scenery on the lower Bogan may be cited as an exception to the general want of pictorial effect in the woods of New South Wales.[93]

Is this why he takes so much trouble with the image? The central tree indeed fits the description (and modern photographs of) the 'weeping myall', one of the names for *Acacia pendula*.[94] Is that what Talambé is wearing on his head – wattle blossom.? Has Mitchell, being so excited at finding the mimosa in bloom, played a part in the young man's adornment? Did Talambé become orientalised? There is no explanation in the text or account of the 'sitting' at all, compared with, say, the accompanying text for *Cambo,* or the *First Meeting with the Chief of the Bogan*. Touching on the theory of the explorer's gaze, this is the only figure drawing in the journals where the subject is staring intently at the viewer. Cambo's look, shaded by his brow, is equivocal; Talambé's gaze gives a disarming intimacy to his portrait drawing, lost in the crude rendering of his face in the lithograph. Mitchell had recognised Talambé:

> … at sunset … a young man came frankly up to our camp when we recognized Talambé, one of those who had accompanied the king of the Bogan. We were all very glad to meet with an old acquaintance, even of this kind and colour … and really the mild tone of his voice, and the very different manner of this native, and others of his tribe who came up in the morning made us feel comparatively at home.[95]

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92. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:318.
93. Ibid.
94. Myall being the name of Talambé's tribe. Did Mitchell influence this nomenclature?
95. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:320.

The very next sentence and journal entry is the start of the next day's progress:

> *Aug*. 28_ Several natives came up with Talambé in the morning and they accompanied us on our route. As we passed a burial ground, called by them 'Milmeridien,' I rode to examine it and on reaching the spot the natives became silent and held down their heads. Nor did their curiosity restrain them from passing on, although I unfolded my sketch book which they had not seen before, and remained there half an hour, for the purpose of which they could have had no idea.[96]

This is intriguing. First, Talambé, for one, *must* have seen his sketchbook; second, there is no description of the 'sitting', which must have happened that morning if he had arrived at sunset, nor any other interaction; and, third, the description of the acacias is five days ago and a couple of pages back (and Mitchell's pages are always dense with information). However, the acacias are not specifically signalled as being in this view, although Plate 19 is placed opposite that page,[97] so no connection is made in the brief description of the campsite: '*Aug*. 27 – We reached, in good time, a small open plain … and halted close by a pond in the bed of the Bogan.'[98]

There is no mention of the sylvan setting in the narrative, nor the blossom, nor the portraiture. However the List of Illustrations, describes Plate 19 as *Portrait of a young native ('Talambé')* (sic) *with the acacia pendula and scenery of the plains near the river Bogan,* which answers some of the questions, but not all.

The trees in Plate 19 are differentiated by skillful stippling, shading, scraping and aquatinting. The mystery is there is no engraver's name credited for it, when normally there is. So is it Mitchell's own work? He had learnt the techniques of etching and lithography. Mitchell has also not explained the elaborate crown of vegetation – or are there feathers in it as well? They are equally well detailed in the print, with a white frond or plume falling in front of Talambé's left eye. There are drooping, fruit-like forms making up the bulk of the headdress. Is that the unexplained connection? Is Talambé wearing the blossoms of *Acacia pendula*?

So, as Dixon establishes his persona:

> Talambé is depicted in the classical pose of a recumbent river god. Behind him is the 'sylvan' scenery of the river over which he presides, the source of his dignity and his virtue. Indeed, through the use of such antique concepts, Mitchell came remarkably

96. Ibid., 1:321.
97. Ibid., 1:318.
98. Ibid., 1:320.

> close to understanding what is today recognized as the moral and spiritual realstionship between an Aboriginal tribe and its territory.[99]

So the undelineated strip of white behind Talambé has become a pond in the otherwise the dry Bogan River, and he has become a classical deity presiding over a sylvan arcadia.

This all begins to demonstrate parts of McLean's theory about the meaning of the *Three Expeditions* trilogy: 'In his report the aesthetic conventions of the day (neoclassical, picturesque, sublime) combine as a scientific survey to produce a myth equal to the redemptive demands of colonisation.'[100]

However, suddenly without further elucidation, the narrative and the imagery abruptly plunges from neoclassicism to romanticism:

> The burying ground was fairy-like spot, in the midst of a scrub of drooping acacias. It was extensive, and laid out in walks, which were narrow and smooth, as if intended only for 'sprites', and they meandered in gracefully curved lines, among the heaps of reddish earth, which contrasted finely with the acacias and dark casuarinae around.[101]

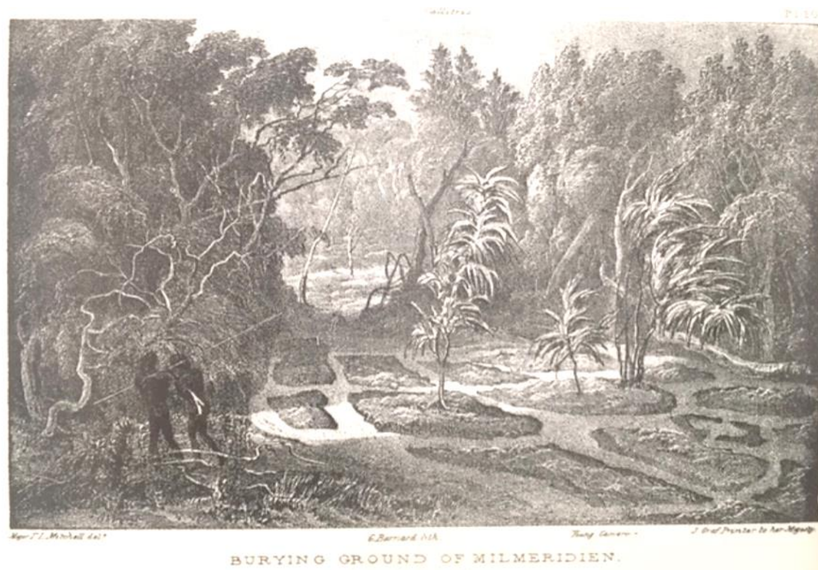

Figure 100. *Burying Ground of Milmeridien* (in an acacia scrub).[102]

This description is illustrated with a beautiful, softly rendered scene (lithographed by Barnard) of the mysterious, sacred glade (see Figure 100). It is an utterly romantic, subtly lit

99. Dixon, *The Course of Empire*, 114.
100. McLean, *White Aborigines,* 37.
101. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:321.
102. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*,1:321, plate 20.

image of great depth and complexity. Even the two shaded figures are reminiscent of those in mediaeval paintings of the expulsion from the Garden.

The cool rationality of neoclassicism and the enlightenment is swept away in a page: ‘With all our art we could do no more for the dead, than these poor savages had done.’[103]

5.10 Atlas Cover Plate

The design for the title plate of the Atlas makes a suitable endnote to this neoclassical chapter. It is Imperial Rome; the *Victor Ludorum*; the Olympic Games. The carefully studied laurel wreath, evidently drawn from life, frames a paste-up of the title, the whole converted into less subtle gold for the book cover (see Figure 101). Did Mitchell have to make the wreath himself, or were there skilled florists on hand to do that? It is exquisitely drawn.

Figure 101. Mitchell, *Design for the title plaque of the Atlas*.[104]

Presumably, Mitchell was thinking that the real receptor of the wreath should have been the Duke of Wellington given that his defeated adversary Napoleon was fond of donning one and having himself painted so at his coronation as emperor in 1804. Having summoned the Pope to Paris for the ceremony, which rather negated both the secular and the republican ideals of the revolution, Napoleon decided that the only person who could crown him was himself. The event in Notre Dame was, of course, recorded meticulously over acres of canvas by David,

103. Ibid.
104. *Wyld's Atlas*, Courtesy of the SLNSW.

and Napoleon enthroned, smothered in ermine, and looking somewhat constipated, was painted by Ingres (see Figure 104).

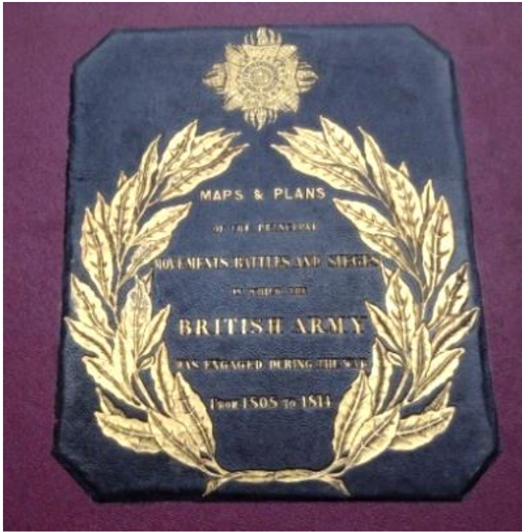

Figure 102. Title Plaque to Atlas Binder. SLNSW.

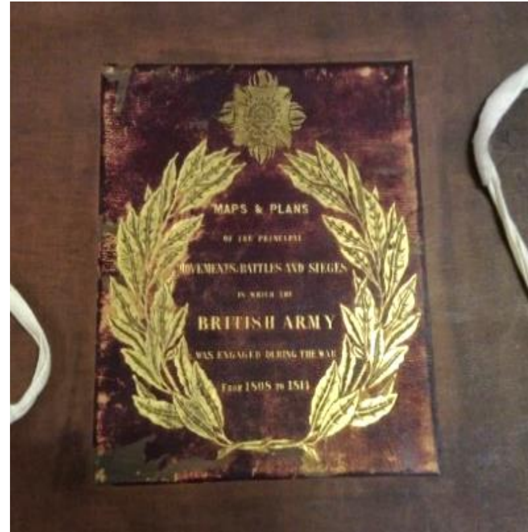

Figure 103. Title Plaque to Atlas Binder. British Library, London.

Figure 104. Jean A. D. Ingres, *Napoleon on His Imperial Throne*, 1806, oil on canvas, detail.[105]

All things neoclassical,
All temples great and small,
All things pure and rational,
The aesthetes made them all! [106]

105. Courtesy of the Musée de L'Armée, Paris, accessed September 12, 2020, https://basedescollections.musee-armee.fr/ark:/66008/4/v0001.simple.selectedTab=thumbnail.

106 Apologies to Mrs C.F.Alexander, 1848

Chapter 6

Picturesque Landscape

This chapter examines the contemporary philosophies and theories behind Mitchell's work and links them to his practice and his creation of a spatial history. The words 'picturesque', 'sublime' and 'beautiful', are familiar and part of our common language, but do we know what they mean? – or rather what they meant to Mitchell and his contemporaries? The terms were taken very seriously at the time and a publishing industry was kept going, arguing about them while the friendships of the proponents broke up.

Thus there might be more of Burke and Gilpin than Mitchell in places.

6.1 Aesthetics and the Picturesque

Mitchell's mapping of Australia Felix took various forms beyond simply surveying the traverse accurately. Having studied the visual and metaphysical evidence in his neoclassicism, and to understand the basis of Mitchell's landscapes, the theories and methodology he adopted for this imagery need examining. So it is time to seriously address the questions, which seemed so important at the time, about the vital concepts of beauty, the sublime and their odd, and somewhat confused offspring, the picturesque. They have been touched on before, and should perhaps be left in the seemingly pointless but passionate debates that were waged between gentlemen on their country estates in the England of the Georgian and Regency periods.

However, they sailed to Australia for Mitchell had learnt about the principles and brought them with him as did all his fellow explorers, artists, administrators and any settlers or visitors who considered themselves educated. Moreover, as any civil society has to have some set of standards about its surroundings, so the aesthetics of landscape and the environment are, in fact, given the scale of modern developments, more relevant than ever.

Many words were published at the time by certain aesthetic pundits and friendships were made and lost as they fell out. If it all seems arcane now, the debate coloured Mitchell's artwork – 'coloured' in an abstract sense in that, on the whole, his images were published in monochrome.

The picturesque is one aspect of romanticism that grew out of the revolutions in ideas in the eighteenth century as much as neoclassicism and was, and is, more pervasive. As a style, its most visible form was in architecture, with the Gothic revival setting the image of the Victorian age. Greenway's innovative classicism at St James' in Sydney was not to last, for ecclesiastical architecture and the cathedrals of the main denominations in Sydney and Melbourne were built in variations of gothic styles. Even Goold, the great art-collecting first Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne – the 'Baroque Bishop' – who was an ardent classicist and owned a complete set of Piranesi's prints of Rome, did not get his wishes for a neoclassical cathedral. His architect, William Wardell, was a pupil of Pugin, the leading Gothic revivalist of the age, and St Patrick's arose in a French gothic style.[1]

Mitchell's enthusiasm for Doric did not survive for his second house, *Carthona*, which was built on the waterfront in a quasi-medieval manor-house style, and his country house, *Parkhall*, in the southern highlands could perhaps be considered an example of early Scottish Baronial.

Mitchell had versed himself well in painting and drawing methods as well as printing techniques before he came to Australia. Moreover, he was well aware of the styles of the time. The word, as already mentioned, was 'picturesque', and behind that concept lay the opposing ideals of the beautiful and the sublime, and many words were printed explaining the differences. From a twenty-first-century viewpoint, it seems as absurd as the doctrinal debates in the early middle ages, but the values were of importance to the cognoscenti and artists at the time, and at least the feuds were not as deadly. Edmund Burke decreed the difference between the beautiful and the sublime: beautiful things, he said – especially scenery in landscapes and paintings of landscapes – were smooth and calm and gentle; however, the sublime implied, not as one might think now as being serene, grand and splendid, but in landscape as something vast that conveyed a sense of terror, of rocky cliffs and stormy skies.

So, what is beauty? one might think beauty is a 'known', or popularly 'in the eye of the beholder', but the definition pronounced by Burke was taken seriously by the connoisseurs at the time. It was the same with sublime. What can be studied is how the picturesque was

1. Shane Carmody, "The Baroque Bishop: Piranesi in the Collection of J. A. Goold," in *The Piranesi Effect*, eds. Kerrianne Stone and Gerard Vaughan (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2015), 226; Holden, *Piranesi's Grandest Tour,* 78–85.

defined by the Georgian aesthetes, who moulded the taste of the period, and what it meant to that Regency man of his times, Thomas Mitchell himself.

In order to try to make some order of the proponents and practitioners of these theories and styles, it might help to give a brief *dramatis personae* of some of the aesthetically inclined personalities involved.[2]

Aesthetic Players

Edmund Burke, *a philosopher and politician*

Uverdale Price, *a landowner, writer and keen gardener*

Richard Payne Knight, *his neighbour, writer, and castle builder*

Humphrey 'Milestone' Repton, *a professional landscape gardener*

William Gilpin, *a clergyman and guidebook writer*

Horace Walpole, *a rich dilettante and gothic enthusiast*

Thomas Gray, *a poor poet and sometime friend of Walpole*

Salvator Rosa, *a Neapolitan landscape painter*

Claude Lorraine, *a French landscape painter in Rome*

Alexander Cozens, *a radical artist and art teacher*

John Robert Cozens, *his son, also a radical artist*

Thomas Mitchell, *an explorer, cartographer and artist*

and

Tory, *a toy spaniel*

[2] The British Library has several collections of eighteenth century playbills from theatres in London and provincial cities.

The term 'picturesque' was suggested by Uvedale Price to indicate certain aesthetic qualities not comprised in the then fashionable aesthetic terms 'sublime' and 'beautiful',[3] explains Nikolaus Pevsner, who is an invaluable guide to the subject in his essays on the subject and the protagonists. 'Burke, in his *Inquiry into the Origin of our ideas on the Sublime and the Beautiful* in 1757, had been responsible for their definition and popularisation.'[4]

Burke described beauty as 'connected to smoothness, gentle curves, polish and delicacy,'[5] while the 'Sublime is caused by terrible objects, obscurity, solitude and vastness.'[6] Strange as they may seem to contemporary thought, Uvedale Price accepted these definitions but denied they were sufficient. 'There is visual delight neither caused by sombre grandeur nor by light elegance.'[7] He takes the example of a beautiful building in an advanced state of decay:

> Gradually, the embellishments that belong to architecture, the polish of its columns, the highly finished execution of its capitals and mouldings, its urns and statues, are changed for what may be called the embellishments of ruins, for encrustations and weather stains, and for the various plants that spring forth or climb over the walls…; and at length, perhaps all smoothness all symmetry, all trace of design are totally gone. But there may still remain an object which attracts notice. Has it then no character when that of beauty is departed? Is it ugly? Is it insipid? Is it merely curious?[8]

This sounds exactly as if Price is describing an etching by Piranesi, whose views of broken, weed-encrusted, half-buried Roman ruins were being bought by 'Grand' and, being affordable, not so grand 'Tourists', and carried back north to nurture the seeds of romanticism (typified by Figure 105).

Price continues:

> Ask the painter or the picturesque traveller, they never abandon a ruin to the mere antiquary, till none but the mere antiquary would observe it. Whatever then has strong attractions as a visible object, must have character; and that which has strong attractions for the painter, and yet is neither grand nor beautiful, is justly called picturesque.[9]

3. Nikolaus Pevsner, *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design: Volume One – from Mannerism to Romanticism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), 127. Essays on "The Origin of the Picturesque", "A Note on Sharawaggi", "Richard Payne Knight", "Uverdale Price" and "Humphrey Repton".
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.

Figure 105. Giovanni B. Piranesi, *The Arch of Titus*, ca. 1760, etching.[10]

Pevsner also makes a comment regarding the contrast between the antiquary and the picturesque traveller: 'It is today the contrast between the Office of Works attitude and the John Piper attitude.'[11] He was writing this article in London for *The Architectural Review* in 1944. The Office of Works had to decide which buildings that had been bombed in the Blitz could be propped up or had to be demolished. John Piper[12], an official war artist, was happily running around painting the ruins as picturesque subjects, and reinterpreting the genre. Pevsner makes another interesting observation: 'Of picturesque travellers there were more in Price's time than ours, when archaeology has robbed people of their visual innocence.'[13] He does not stop to expand on this – is 'visual innocence' just ignorance? – but, instead, moves straight into the next topic:

> The king of the picturesque travellers was of course William Gilpin. His eight books appeared from 1782 to 1809. Five of the eight were out before Price wrote his *Essay*. But to Gilpin picturesque meant simply what is 'agreeable in a picture'.[14]

10. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, accessed September 14, 2020, //www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/363083.
11. Ibid.
12. No relation to Mitchell's stalwart guide!
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.

Four words seems rather a drastic precis of the contents of eight, albeit slim, books. They are cleverly designed to slip into the pocket for both the picturesque traveller and the picturesque artist, and no doubt Mitchell carried one or more in his.

The leading protagonists and promoters of this movement, the picturesque, were four men: William Gilpin, Richard Payne Knight, Uverdale Price and Humphrey Repton. Knight and Price were landowners who lived in the west of England bordering Wales within 25 miles of each other. Both went on the Grand Tour to Italy and on return, with considerable independent means, could indulge their aesthetic ideas. Knight and Price put their landscape ideas into the grounds of their estates, constantly modifying plantings and vistas, with Knight's project including an entire new mediaeval castle. They belonged to an intellectual elite who discussed and wrote about their ideas. They conversed and argued with Repton, the leading landscape gardener of the day, and they fell out among themselves.

Utterly self-indulgent it may seem but they were to influence the tastes of the gentry and the appearance of the country, in a style that was at odds with the rigid symmetry and formalism of the *parterres* the French imposed on their gardens. And when the next generation or two came to Australia, they were able to say the landscape looked like a gentleman's park in England, unaware that it was, in a different way, also artificial. Mitchell was to realise it had been when, due to a ban on Aboriginal fire practices, he could no longer ride through what had been a treed but open landscape when he first arrived.[15]

Price went on the Grand Tour to France and Italy with Charles James Fox in 1767, they both having just left Eton, on a lavish 'gap year'. Fox, already a colourful character, was to become the leading radical Whig politician of the period. On return they visited Voltaire at Ferney on the Swiss–French border. Price spent most of his life improving his estate at Foxley in Herefordshire, the county where Alfred Watkins discovered ley lines.

Knight took three tours to Italy during his life, the first at age 17 when he stayed for several years. On the second trip, he went to Sicily with Charkes Gore and the German painter Phillip Hackaert, whose biography was written by Goethe. Gore later settled in Weimar with his daughters to be close to Goethe's circle. Somehow the only record of Knight's Sicilian diary is in a translation by Goethe, which Pevsner, being German, was in the linguistic position to rather unkindly dismiss as 'nothing in his descriptions having the observation and humanity

15. Gammage, *The Biggest Estate on Earth*, 316–7.

of every page of Goethe's *Travels in Italy*.'[16] Knight built Downton Castle for his home in Shropshire , which Pevsner claims was unique for the time in its asymmetry,[17] while inside the rooms were copies of grand Roman interiors with porphyry columns even imported from Italy.[18] Knight was asked to be on the selection committee to buy the Elgin Marbles and was, in fact, the only member to vote against the purchase.

These names are dropped to show that, while they might have been indulging themselves with their aesthetic interests, they were moving in the highest intellectual circles and consorting with some not insignificant figures in the world of letters and ideas.

Humphry 'Milestone' Repton was a successful landscape gardener and publisher of garden books, designing hundreds of gardens and busily altering Capability Brown's principle of removing the garden and carrying the park right up to the house. Brown had answered Burke's concept of beauty with gentle curves and smoothness, with serpentine lakes and open meadows, but to Repton and William Gilpin his aesthetic lacked the roughness and disturbances that were essential for a picturesque landscape. Repton's sales pitch was to present his clients with a 'Red Book' of his proposals, with 'before and after' flaps revealing the proposed new vistas. His nickname was for supposedly placing milestones on (very long) winding driveways at shorter intervals than reality to give visitors a false impression of the estate's magnitude.

Gilpin was a clergyman in Hampshire who found time to write several popular guides to the picturesque to which Mitchell subscribed. He was the most prolific and approachable, and, therefore, probably the most influential.

Extraordinarily all four men published in the same year, 1794:

Price – *Essay on the Picturesque*

Knight – *The Landscape*

Repton – *Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening*

16. Pevsner, *Studies in Art Architecture and Design*, 109. Pevsner's chronology is a bit confusing, making Knight either 17 or 27 for the Sicilian visit.
17. This is not quite true as in the same essay he tells that Horace Walpole had started his "Gothic plaything", Strawberry Hill, at Twickenham, in 1750, a house that was to give its name to a light domestic style of Gothic. Bannister Fletcher gives the gradual construction from 1747–1776 (p. 938), whereas Downton Castle was started in 1774 and completed in a rapid four years (p. 948).
18. Pevsner, *Studies in Art Architecture and Design*, 110.

Gilpin – *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape*.

Gilpin's *Three Essays*, as an example of his publications, is a comprehensive booklet, for it gives advice on what is 'picturesque beauty' followed by 'picturesque travel' and then on 'sketching landscape' to which is added a poem on Landscape Painting, second edition, by 'William Gilpin, Prebendary of Salisbury and Vicar of Boldre in the New Forest, near Lymington'.[19] Gilpin wrote for both the picturesque artist and the picturesque traveller and comments on Edmund Burke:

> Mr Burke, enumerating the properties of beauty, considers *smoothness* as one of the most essential.
>
> A very considerable part of the effect of beauty, says he, is owing to this quality: indeed the most considerable: for take any beautiful object and give it a broken and rugged surface and however well-formed it may be in other respects, it pleases no longer …
>
> How far Mr Burke may be right in making smoothness the *most considerable* source of beauty, I rather doubt. A considerable one it certainly is.[20]

He soon re-contradicts Burke with practical advice on drawing:

> In landscape universally the rougher objects are admired; which give the freest scope to execution. If the pencil be timid or hesitating little beauty results. The execution only is pleasing, when the hand firm, and yet decisive, freely touches the characteristic parts of each object.[21]

Gilpin illustrates the illogicality of Burke's dictum on smoothness with an untitled picture of three overlapping dark mounds as receding hills, the foremost black under a dark sky, which makes his point rather forcefully as it is, at first sight, an exceedingly grim and brooding image (see Figure 106). The 'rough' example on the reverse of the page is a picturesque scene that leads the eye past overlapping hillsides to a jagged distant mountain. The description is written here, aping the manner in which it was printed when the S had the form of an F-like letter except at the end of a word. Mitchell can be seen using it still in a letter to Murray in 1818 (See Figure 155).

> And in *landfcape-painting* fmooth objects would produce no compofition at all. In a mountain-fcene what compofition could arife from the corner of the fmooth knoll coming forward on one fide, interfected by a fmooth knoll on the other; with a fmooth

19. William A. M. Gilpin, *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape*, 2nd ed. (London: R Blamire, 1794; republished Farnborough, Hants: Gregg International Publishing, 1972).
20. Ibid., 5.
21. Ibid., 17–18.

> plain perhaps in the middle, and a fmooth mountain in the diftance? The very idea is difgufting.[22]

Figure 106. William Gilpin, ‘Smooth Rough’, untitled diagrams from *Three Essays*.[23]

Curiously of these two very dark examples, with no accreditation, or title, possibly by Gilpin’s own hand, the ‘smooth’ model resembles a real familiar landscape as much as the busier pleasant but unfamiliar ‘rough’ one, if not more so. If rough is meant to be picturesque, its dinginess does not help its aesthetic appeal.

However there is a charm about smooth as it is redolent of bare moody moorlands in Britain and similar uplands in Australia that are pleasant to walk on, which Mitchell often found on his return journey. Such landscapes are easier to make a picture of as contemporary taste favours simple forms and minimalism, and the sky can tell the story and inform the temper of the image. A picturesque image is in danger of being too complete and leaving nothing to the imagination, and thus dull to contemplate, especially if of nowhere in particular. So much nineteenth-century romantic literature is set on such a smooth landscape; *Wuthering Heights* on the Yorkshire Moors, *Lorna Doone* on Exmoor, Walter Scott’s novels on the Border Hills where he lived, and Thomas Hardy’s novels, played out among the steep rounded hills and deep combes that is the topography of Dorset. Tess of *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* is arrested for murder at Stonehenge, then an isolated mystery, on the open upland of Salisbury Plain.

Mitchell’s illustration of the Mammeloid Hills shows him intentionally drawing a Smooth landscape, and by skilful hatching, he makes it interesting and informative (see Figure 127). The illustration depicts the lie of the land as economically and as clearly as possible. Whether it is beautiful, sublime or picturesque is discussed later in chronological sequence. It also shows a landscape being neatly and boldly inserted into the text, no matter it is sideways on

22. Ibid., 19.
23. Gilpin, *Three Essays*, between pages 18 and 19.

the page. The feat was made by the new technique of wood-block printings, showing how closely Mitchell had been involved in the production process.[24]

And Gilpin provides useful advice for the traveller seeking the picturesque:

> Enough has been said to shew the difficulty of *assigning causes*: let us then take another course and amufe ourfelves with *searching after effects*. This is the general intention of picturesque travel. We mean not to bring it into competition with any of the more useful ends of travelling…. [25]

And,

> The *art of sketching* is to the picturesque traveller, what the art of writing is to the *scholar*. Each is equally necessary to fix and communicate its respective ideas.'(Italics in the original)[26]

It is notable, and perhaps an indication of the times, that Gilpin – an Anglican vicar and, as Prebendary of Salisbury Cathedral, holding high office in the Church of England – in his writing gives no reference to his occupation. Moreover, he never appears to allow a divine hand to play any part in creating the beauties of the landscape, this some 15 years before Charles Darwin was born.

Simon Ryan, in analysing the picturesque through Gilpin's exposition of the concept and Mitchell's handling of it, would have it that since such practitioners as Price and Knight were landowning gentry, the process is all about appropriation. Therefore, Mitchell, by finding a picturesque view and making an image of it, is appropriating the landscape. Ryan quotes Gilpin taking the analogy of the hunt, an activity as a country parson of the period he would, doubtless, have enjoyed as well:

> Just as an animal is hunted so is the picturesque scene. In *Three Essays* Gilpin constructs this analogy which draws upon the hunt, an occupation of the landed gentry, to describe another entertainment of the same class.[27]
>
> The pleasures of the chase are universal. A hare started before the dogs is enough to set the whole country in uproar … and shall we suppose a greater pleasure, to the sportsman to pursue a trivial animal, than it is to a man of taste to pursue the beauties of nature?[28]

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24. Heckenberg, 'Kerry Heckenberg, 'The Art and Science of Exploration: A Study of Genre, Vision and Visual Representation in Nineteenth-Century Journals and Reports of Australian Inland Exploration' (PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 2002), 73–4.
25. Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 41. Essay II on *Picturesque Travel*.
26. Ibid., 61. Essay III on *The Art of Sketching Landscape*
27. Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye*, 58.
28. Gilpin, *Three Essays*, 48.

Ryan takes this analogy further with the 'appropriation' of two of Mitchell's more striking images where he uses the phrase 'snatching from nature:'[29]

> The association of picturesque pleasure with the violent extraction of a scene from nature and with the taking of a picture, (quoting Mitchell), 'The eye of the eagle and the rich crest of the cockatoo of the desert could not be preserved in dead specimens and were too fine to be omitted among the sketches I endeavoured to snatch from nature'.[30]

It is not clear what either writer means by this, especially when before the camera the act of snatching from nature required much more effort. Did Mitchell draw them captured and then release them? Possibly with the eagle? To have 'captured' its haughty dignity and the brightness of its eye, he would need to have drawn it live. The cockatoo could have been shot, but it is perched in a very life-like manner, its crest erect, saluting, the equal of any study by Audubon or Lear.[31] It has a special resonance because it is the bird known as Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, and, from personal experience, the only thing he is remembered for –

> 'What is your PhD about?'
> A mumbled, '... Major Mitchell.'
> Then invariably from the questioner, 'Oh, the cockatoo!'

– and by deduction the only reason for the synonymous connection of the man and a bird few people have seen is perhaps that this very image is the only fully coloured illustration in the book. But that is supposition, and the irony is that in reading Gilpin's actual text, he writes:

> A hare started before the dogs is enough to set the whole country in uproar.
> The plough and the spade are deserted.
> Care is left behind; and every human frailty is dilated with joy. (my italics)
> – And shall we suppose a greater pleasure, to the sportsman to pursue a trivial animal, than it is to a man of taste to pursue the beauties of nature?[32]

Ryan has not just made a supposition but removed a section of the text contrary to his argument. Gentlemen do not handle ploughs and spades. Gilpin might have been a fox-hunting parson himself, but he is thinking about farmers and labourers – his parishioners. Simon Schama, in fact, writes separately about Gilpin as a historian of the New Forest,[33] which his parish was in, and how the occupants had a tradition of disdain for authority that

29. Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye*, 58.
30. Mitchell, Three Expeditions, 2:264, plate 36, "Portrait of an Eagle"; 2:47, plate 23, "Cockatoo of the Interior".
31. James Audubon, *Birds of America*, series, 1827–38; Edward Lear, *Edward Lear's Birds* (New Jersey: Wellfleet Press, 1980).
32. Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye*, 58.
33. One wonders when he had time to write his sermons, let alone attend his church to deliver them.

dated back to the Normans, which started when William II, 'Rufus', was mysteriously shot with an arrow while hunting. It somehow deflected off the trunk of an oak into the unpopular monarch. The Normans had appropriated the New Forest as a royal hunting preserve and others of the hated dynasty also died in the forest, 'cursed for their crimes against greenwood liberty.'[34] Spatial history played out by opposite ends of society and the New Forest remains intact to this day.

There is of course a parallel if the settlers in Australia Felix are considered as Norman invaders and the Aboriginal nations as Celts Anglo-Saxons and Danes, the population in Britain in 1066. It is a date the English have never forgotten for approaching one thousand years, the only one remembered.

6.2 Genesis of the Picturesque

Pevsner contends that the genesis of the picturesque lay in the English landscape gardens of the early eighteenth century and that they were philosophical and political gestures:

> The landscape garden was conceived in England between 1710 and 1730. It was conceived by philosophers, writers and virtuosi – not by architects and gardeners.
>
> It was conceived in England because it is the garden of English liberalism, and England just at that moment turned liberal, that is, Whig.[35]

Of course, this has to be taken with a few ladles of salt for these gardens had been created by a few very wealthy landowners, probably in government, indulging their ideas on estates from which the peasantry had been evicted.[36] It was an art form that had taken up a lot of space, but the handling of nature, trees, shrubs and greenswards appears to have been much more natural and free than the rigid lines of formal continental gardens, a style that had been led by the French, notably Le Nôtre's Baroque parterres at Versailles and Vaux-le-Vicomte:[37]

> Whiggism is the first source of the landscape garden, the philosophy of rationalism the second. Reason is the human power to keep in harmony with the eternal order of the Universe. It is a part of nature, not in opposition to nature. Only the latter day perversion of man has distorted the beauty and simplicity of this natural state into the artificial pomp of the Baroque and the flippancy of the Rococo.

34. Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 139–140.
35. Pevsner, *Studies in Art Architecture and Design*, 100.
36. Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*: *The English Rustic Tradition 1740–1860* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 63–73.
37. Pevsner, *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design*, 80–81.

> The remedy was Palladianism in architecture, a style as ordered as God's (and Newton's) universe and as simple as nature.[38]

This was the style Mitchell chose for his first house in Sydney, and how Macquarie with his architect Greenway, who had been trained by Nash,[39] tried to build a civilised and civilising civic centre there.

Pevsner credits Christopher Hussey with explaining that:

> After the Treaty of Utrecht in 1715,[40] the Grand Tour became *de rigueur* and the virtuoso discovered the Alps and the Italian scene and how he found them idealised and isolated in the art of Salvator Rosa, and of Poussin and Lorraine, how he brought home their paintings, or engravings after them, and encouraged the artists in England to see with the eyes of foreign landscape painters, and how in the end he tried to convert his grounds into a sequence of Rosa and Lorraine landscapes.[41]

Pevsner is an ideal guide for this subject because he was an historian of both art and architecture, and being a German emigré had been observing English culture from an outsider's vantage point. By his superhuman feat of singlehandedly recording the buildings of England, county by county, each chapel and cathedral, millhouse and mansion forge and factory in his *Buildings of England* series, he had shown the English their own architecture.[42] He also wrote the textbooks on the history of architecture and design. The paragraphs above are quoted because they sum up succinctly, with the relevant names, and the aesthetic issues of the eighteenth century.

6.3 Delightful Terror

Schama, as always, a fund of anecdotal detail that makes his telling of history an entertaining but densely informative narrative, gets right to the real origin of the sublime, to the first lived experience of it.[43] Hitherto overland travellers to Italy had to endure the unpleasant ordeal of crossing the Alps. Mountains were an ugly abomination to be avoided if possible, but if unavoidable, to be traversed with the blinds of the coach drawn. He tells of the young

38. Ibid., 100–101.
39. John Nash, the architect of the white-stuccoed developments of Regency London such as Regents Park.
40. Or several treaties which between 1713 and 1715 in the Dutch city made up the Peace of Utrecht, which ended the War of the Spanish Succession.
41. Pevsner, *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design*, 100–101. Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque*, 1927, reprinted 1944. It seems unavailable. It might answer one question. Having been told that Pope coined the word 'picturesque', Pevsner in his extensive essay entitled he The Genesis of the Picturesque with a detailed description of Pope designing his garden at Twickenham, appears to make no mention of Pope, or anyone else doing so.
42. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England* series, Penguin, 1940s – 70s, 46 volumes..
43. Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 447–462, Section 8.1, 'Delightful Horror'.

dilettante, Horace Walpole, on the Grand Tour crossing the Alps in 1739 with his friend, the poet Thomas Gray. To compound the horror of being among the mountains on the Mont Cenis Pass, he lost his pet dog.[44]

Tory, a toy spaniel, was waddling alongside the lumbering transport when a wolf appeared, seized the lapdog by the throat and carried it off to devour in the snow. Gray commented that 'perhaps Mont Cenis carries the permission mountains have of being frightful rather too far.'[45]

There is significance in the dog's name. Horace's father was the formidable Whig prime minister, the aforementioned Sir Robert Walpole, so the unfortunate dog was named in mockery of the opposition party.[46] A century later*, plus ça change*, it was the Whig prime minister, Melbourne, who lost power to Wellington's Tory government, which cruelled the chances of a treaty with the Aboriginal nations of Port Phillip,[47] but gave Mitchell, briefly, a direct line to the new colonial secretary, his old patron, Sir George Murray.

But, in fact, until the devouring of Tory, the young grand tourists were actually enjoying the horror of the mountains. Their leisurely progress to Italy had involved a detour to the isolated Grand Chartreuse Monastery of St Bruno on its mountain eyrie between Grenoble and Chambery. Instead of the religious experience of the pilgrimage, the pair revelled in the fear of falling: 'Their journey was designed to take them close to the edge, to toy with disaster.'[48] Gray wrote:

> I do not remember to have gone ten paces without an exclamation, that there is no restraining, There are certain scenes that would awe an atheist into belief, without the help of other argument.[49]

Walpole wrote to his friend West ecstatically:

> But the road, West, the road! Winding round a prodigious mountain …all shagged with hanging woods, obscured with pines or lost in clouds! Below a torrent breaking the rough cliffs, and tumbling through fragments of rocks!.... Sheets of cascades forcing their silver speed down channelled precipices, …this sounds too bombast and too romantic to one who has not seen it, too cold for one that has….two lovely

44. Ibid., 447.
45. Ibid., 448.
46. Ibid.
47. James Boyce, *1835*.
48. Schama, *Landscape and* Memory, 449.
48. Ibid., 450.
49. Ibid., 456.

> tempests that echoed each other's wrath… We staid there two hours, rode back through this charming picture, wished for a painter, wished to be poets![50]

Schama mentions that 20 years later, Gray, although not prolific, but considered the greatest poet of his age, wrote some of his best lines on the less rugged scenery of the English Lake District, but the point is that this was the first time anyone had been enjoying the sensations of being scared by the awesome heights and chasms of the Alps. Petrarch's ascent was brave for going against the norms of the Middle Ages, but Mont Ventoux is a smooth bare massif. Schama explains the enthusiasm of the young dilettanti generating a whole movement: 'Born of the oxymoron of agreeable horror, romanticism was nursed on calamity.'[51]

Horace had been conditioned for this state of mind because his father Sir Robert Walpole, the Prime Minister, had bought four of Rosa's paintings for his seat at Houghton, in Norfolk, the grandest of Palladian piles. As he exclaimed to West: 'Precipices, mountains, torrents, wolves, rumblings, Rosa.'[52] Kenneth Clark identifies this as 'one of the opening bars of the Romantic movement,' adding that 'although Rosa was the source of much picturesque nonsense, he was also the inspiration of genuine poetry.'[53]

6.4 The Cozens

The monastery was later painted by John Robert Cozens and the watercolour encapsulates the giddying vertiginous nature of the site (see Figure 107). Cozens and his father, Alexander, are central figures in this movement, if it can be called that, of pushing to the extreme ways of expressing landscape, particularly of the mountainous kind, that illustrate Burke's idea of the sublime.

50. Ibid., 457.
51. Ibid., 450. See Section 7.2 Climbers.
52. Ibid., 453.
53. Kenneth Clark, *Landscape into Art* (London: John Murray, 1949; 1976), 107.

Figure 107. John Robert Cozens, *Entrance to the Valley of the Grand Chartreuse in Dauphine*, 1783, watercolour.[54]

Alexander had the exotic start of his first 10 years growing up in the emerging St Petersburg, where his father was a shipwright to Peter the Great, and, as such, was much valued by the dynamic czar who spent much time with his European engineers and builders, and involved them with all the sumptuous displays of the court.[55] The relationship was such that it even led to unfounded rumours that Alexander was one of Peter's natural children. He was a drawing master to many – including the wealthy and eccentric dilettante, William Beckford, and the royal princes – and he taught at Christ's Hospital and Eton College.

Alexander Cozens' contribution to art history was his method of making imaginary landscapes from random blots of ink on paper (see Figure 108 and Figure 109), which he formed into rocky landscapes very similar to Rosa's paintings of wild mountain scenery. 'The visual expression of the sensationalism of the sublime'[56] was styled 'The New Method' and published in 1785 towards the end of his life.[57] The experiment, which he taught to his pupils, would appear to presage Abstract Expressionism by a century or two.

54. Courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, accessed September 15, 2020, https://collections.ashmolean.org/collection/search/per_page/25/offset/0/sort_by/relevance/object/135456
55. Kim Sloan, *Alexander and John Robert Cozens: The Poetry of Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 2.
56 Ibid.
57. Ibid

Figure 108. Alexander Cozens, *The New Method* Example A.[58]

Figure 109. Alexander Cozens, *The New Method*, Example B.[59]

John Robert Cozens first travelled to Italy with Richard Payne Knight and later with the entourage of his father's friend, William Beckford, as his private painter. Like his father's, his paintings are unusual and the subject veers from the conventional picturesque to extraordinary interpretations of the Alps. His later paintings in Italy when he had retreated from the sunlight deep into caves depict as little sense of balance as on the mountain precipices (see Figure 110) – 'as if sucked through some Virgilian vortex into the mouth of hell.'[60]

It is a nice link that Mitchell ends his *Three Expeditions* with a separate excursion into a cave to show the fossils and stalactitic formations below the Wellington Valley. The story of the unprinted spiritually profound first version, which happens to reside in the Art Gallery of Ballarat, has been told (see page 70). Mitchell died too young to retire and find his full potential as an artist, but poor Cozens went mad and died aged 46.

58. Alexander Cozens, "The New Method," in Andrew Wilton, *The Art of Alexander and John Robert Cozens*, (New Haven: Yale Centre for British Art, 1980), plate 18.
59. Ibid., plate 15.
60. Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 474.

Figure 110. John Robert Cozens, *A Cavern in the Campagna, Rome*, 1778, watercolour.[61]

6.5 The British Start Painting

It has to be remembered that until this time, compared to the European nations, the English had no great tradition of painting and sculpture. If there had been one, it was destroyed during the Reformation in the two violent iconoclasms. Any decorative art left in the churches after Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell's Dissolution of the Monasteries was scraped off the walls or pulled from niches and smashed during Oliver Cromwell's (remote relation) Puritan revolution a hundred years later. The monarchs had imported foreign artists to paint their portraits: Holbein, Van Dyck, Kneller and Lely, with Rubens to paint the ceilings.[62] Hogarth (1697–1764) was the first, and arguably the greatest, homegrown British artist and very much a brilliant urban social commentator, but he played no part in the landscape genre. The landscape artists who, starting with Paul Sandby, emerged in the eighteenth century could be said to constitute the first school of English artists. Even Thomas Gainsborough wanted to be known for his landscapes rather than his popular portraits in the style of Van Dyck.[63]

61. Courtesy of the V&A Museum, London, accessed September 15, 2020, https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O73615/a-cavern-in-the-campagna-watercolour-john-robert-cozens/
62. The ceiling of the Banqueting Hall, Whitehall, commissioned by Charles I, and the last art he would have seen before he stepped out onto the scaffold.
63. The Flemish Antony van Dyke was the court portrait painter to Charles I.

Thus British art was, if not in its infancy, still in its adolescence when Mitchell's career started, so he was effectively in the second wave, as it were, and before he left for Australia. He was learning from the example of a dynamic, experimenting, exploring, and exhibiting cohort of artists showing their work in London. The English, in particular, excelled in the highly portable medium of watercolour, thus suitable for painting landscape, as practised by Blake, Bonington, Constable, Cotman, Cox, Cozens, father and son, de Wint, Girtin and Palmer, to name but a few; and above all, there was the towering genius and industry of Turner, whose 'perfomances' on varnishing day at the Royal Academy were legendary. And the artists who influenced these artists, including Mitchell, more than any were Claude Lorraine and Salvator Rosa. These inspirational mentors would, through Mitchell, contribute to Australia's spatial history.

The, perhaps bold, question to be asked is: *Does Mitchell's work stand up to that of these artists? Can the images he produced – his illustrations of Australia Felix and those printed in* Wyld's Atlas – *be put into the same category?* Can Mitchell's name be added to that roll call? This chapter puts forward some submissions.

6.6 Mitchell's Picturesque – Sublime or Beautiful?

A fine example of Mitchell's work appears early in Volume 1 of the *Three Expeditions* in Plate 7, *A View of the Nundawar,* described in the List of Illustrations as *View of Nundawàr range, where the party could not cross it* (see Figure 111). He describes the attempt to find a route through a mountain range vividly, using the word 'picturesque' for the scenery. His rendition of the view would appear to be more than that.

6.6.1 At the Nundawar

The narrative tells of struggles to find a way though impenetrable jungle and unassailable cliffs, and Mitchell actually wrote:

> When the camp was fixed, I rode forward with Mr White and the native, and soon entered an extensive valley, beyond which, I could just perceive through the general smoke, majestic chain of mountains extending to the westward.
>
> I never felt less love for the picturesque than at that time, for grand as the outline was I could perceive no opening by which I could hope to cross it.[64]

64. Ibid., 1:46.

In fact, Mitchell has a slightly different description of the landscape he encounters and illustrates the following day, 19 December. When, after a six am start, they come to 'the stream of the valley,'[65] he leaves 'Mr White and the party to encamp, that the cattle might be watered and refreshed during the day'[66] and sets out 'with the native and two men to examine the mountains before us.'[67]

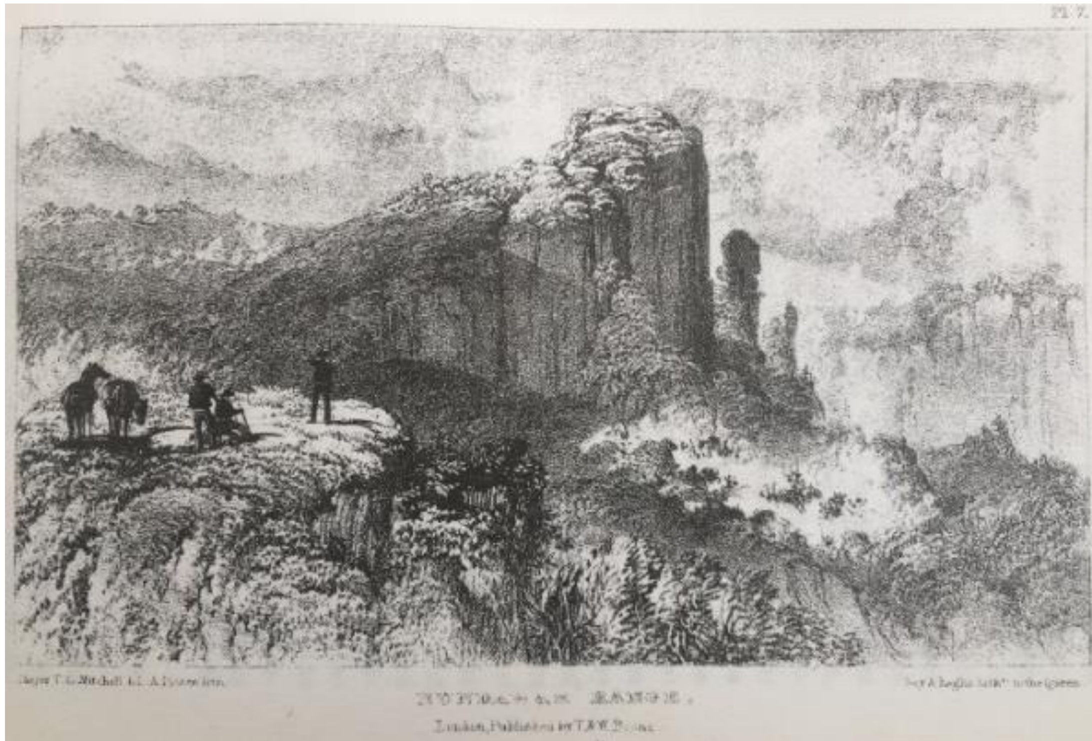

Figure 111. *View of Nundawàr Range, Where the Party Could Not Cross It*, lithograph.[68]

After a detailed descriptions of the geology and even of pebbles:

> In the little stream, were many pebbles of vesicular trap, probably amygdaloid with the kernels decomposed, but containing particles of olivine; also pebbles of a senetic compound, consisting of quartz, hornblende, and of compact feldspar, etc, etc…,[69]

declaring his lapidary knowledge, he turns to the landscape:

> After climbing about one mile and a half, we reached a lofty summit, where I hoped to obtain a view beyond the range, or at least discover where it might be crossed but I was disappointed. Distant summits, more lofty than and difficult of access, obstructed our view towards the east, north, and even west; while the only link connecting the hill we had gained with those still higher, was a very bold, naked rock, presenting a

65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
68. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:48. plate 7.
69. Ibid.

> perpendicular side, at least 200 feet in height. To proceed further in that direction, was therefore quite out of the question.[70]

However, ironically, given the previous remark, decrying the picturesque, the image Mitchell produced of the view, Plate 7 in the Journal, is a marvellous landscape, apparently a triumph of the style. In fact, it could be argued the image is not picturesque, as such. Instead of a gentle foreground to lead the eye in, there is a mossy ledge on the left where three figures look across to a sheer cliff with pinnacles receding behind it. There are two horses grazing beside them but the 'native', 'Mr Brown' does not get to share the awesome space, perhaps disqualified by Mitchell for disappearing the next day, nervous about the 'myalls' ahead.[71] Above and beyond floats a faint, misty and mysterious mountain range. It is not a landscape to wander through; it is to wonder at. It is sublime.

The sketch for this is an exquisite watercolour, which has a spontaneity that suggests it was painted on the spot (see Figure 112). It is a lyrical and exciting piece of topography that stands up to anything executed by contemporary artists.

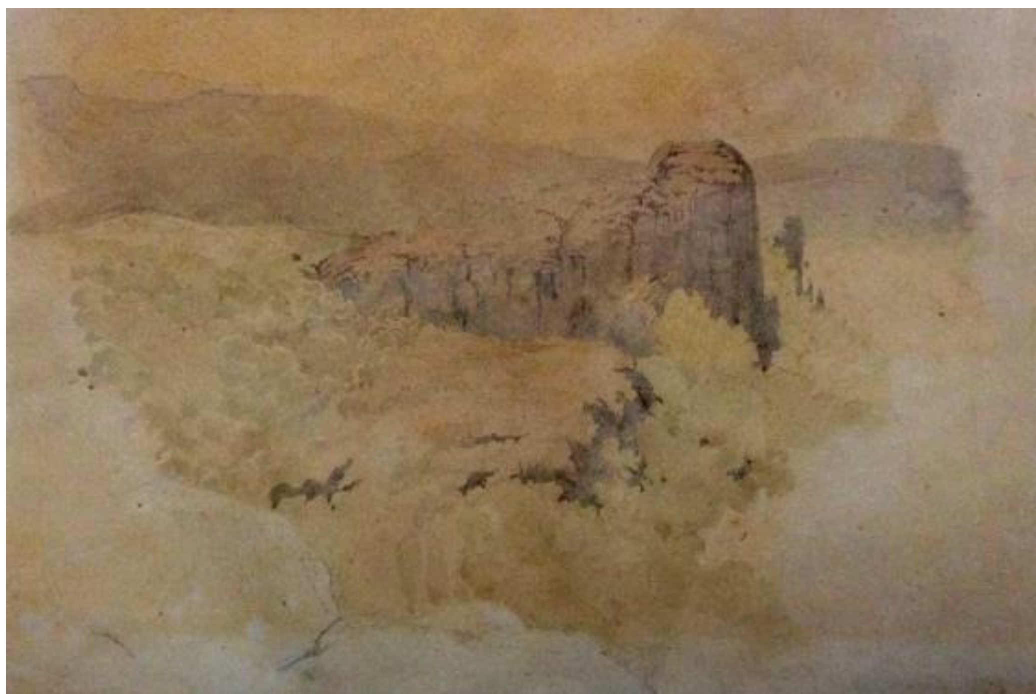

Figure 112. *Nundawar Range*, watercolour.[72]

In fact, there was probably no equal at the time in NSW – Conrad Martens not having arrived – and Glover in Tasmania had never worked with such lightness of touch. Could it thus be

70. Ibid., 1:46–47.
71. Ibid., 1:50.
72. Courtesy of the SLNSW, File No. DLPXX 21f /5.

called a spatial turn in landscape painting? On this showing it would appear that Mitchell could assuredly hang alongside either Cozens.

6.6.2 *Crater at Murroa – Rosa versus Claude*

The frontispiece of Volume II of the *Three Expeditions* (Plate 22) opens the whole *Australia Felix* chronicle with an arresting image from the return trip: *Crater of Murroa or Mount Napier* so Mitchell must have thought it special (see Figure 113).

It is a thoroughly romantic landscape of a volcanic crater on a high mountain. A gap in the craggy walls permits a view through to a misty plain and a distant horizon, which emphasises, or perhaps exaggerates, the mountain's height. The scene is populated with two woodsmen cutting down a tree accompanied by an Aboriginal hunter or guide elegantly posed on the volcano's rim. He is the centre of the composition and his gaze leads the viewer's eye out across to the promising and distant horizon. The tiny figures of four explorers high on the rim at the top of the composition are thus missed on first, or even the tenth, viewing.

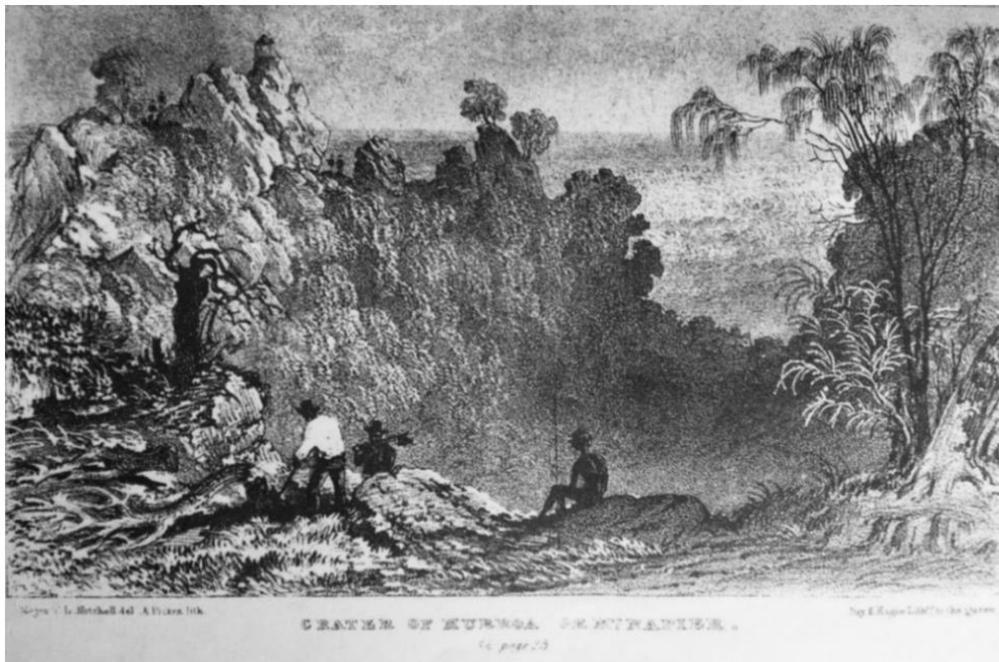

Figure 113. *Crater of Murroa or Mount Napier*.[73]

It is all highly fanciful; a classical idyll influenced by Claude Lorraine (1600–1682), whose serene golden landscapes of a classical past were being reinterpreted by J. M. W. Turner

73. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:frontispiece, plate 22.

(1775–1851) at the time, and to Salvator Rosa (1615–1673) whose wilder landscapes Mitchell much admired.[74] The distance in *Crater of Murroa* is very much in the Claude/Turner idiom, while the rocky crater in the foreground shows Rosa's influence.

Kenneth Clark describes Claude's influence on British art:

> Claude gave to English painting, a simpler scaffolding (than Poussin) on which the native school could build. There was something in Claude's gentle poetry, in his wistful glances at a vanished civilization, and in his feeling that all nature could be laid out for man's delight, like a gentleman's park, which appealed particularly to the English connoisseurs of the eighteenth century.[75]

Turner painted a series of classical scenes modelled closely on Claude's. When William Beckford, his patron at that stage, bought the pair of 'Altieri' Claudes, the most expensive art purchases of the time, Turner was able to study them closely.[76] The two paintings here of imaginary classical seaports bathed in a elegiac evening light (see Figure 114 and see Figure 115) show how closely the later artist captured the former's mood and expression while creating his own composition.

Figure 114. Claude Lorraine, *Seaport with the Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba*, 1648, oil on canvas.[77]

Figure 115. Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Dido building Carthage*, 1815, oil on canvas.[78]

In contrast, when Salvator Rosa tackles the same subject matter in Figure 116, the buildings are ruined, the ships capsized and, while the distant sky is serene, the shadows darken the forbidding foreground.

74. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 394.
75. Clark, *Landscape into Art*, 138–139.
76. James Hamilton, *Turner: A Life* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1997), 55–57.
77. Courtesy of the National Gallery, London, accessed December 8, 2020, https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/claude-seaport-with-the-embarkation-of-the-queen-of-sheba
78. Courtesy of the National Gallery, London, accessed December 8, 2020, https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/joseph-mallord-william-turner-dido-building-carthage

Figure 116. Salvator Rosa, *A Coastal Landscape with Shipwrecks and Ruins*, 1673, oil on canvas.[79]

Figure 117, a rocky river landscape with figures, is a typical Rosa that Mitchell could have had in mind when working on the crater of Murroa itself. It is worth illustrating here because it typifies the English aristocratic taste of the eighteenth century. The Wallace Collection in London consists of art and furniture bought by the Hertford family through five generations. They also acquired a Claude (see Figure 118) which, fascinatingly, is an almost identical composition, making the contrast in style, mood and tone between the two artists stand out clearly. It can be reasonably assumed the two were acquired for the same reason.

Figure 117. Salvator Rosa, *River Landscape with Apollo and the Cumaean Sibyl*, ca. 1657–58, oil on canvas.[80]

Figure 118. Claude Lorraine, *Landscape with Apollo and Mercury*, 1660, oil on canvas.[81]

From memory, the crater on Mount Napier is not as dramatic. The image is an advertising poster for Australia Felix and a travel brochure's enticement to come and explore. It also showcases the skills that Mitchell had learnt by courting professional artists as mentors and

79. Courtesy of a private collection. Dorotheum: Information icon.svg. Info about artwork.
80. Courtesy of the Wallace Collection, London, accessed September 15, 2020, https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/river-landscape-with-apollo-and-the-cumaean-sibyl-209107
81. Courtesy of the Wallace Collection, London, accessed August 15, 2020, https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/landscape-with-apollo-and-mercury-209105

friends, and the knowledge he had acquired of contemporary ideas in art. Mitchell was so enamoured of Salvator Rosa that he named, and illustrated, a river in Queensland, and other features, after the Italian artist.[82]

6.6.3 Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics – Burke and the Sublime and the Beautiful

In any discussion of the representation of landscape, the European tastes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries need to be understood. Dixon refers to Edmund Burke's importance in defining the emotions of taste in his book, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757 and 1759):

> It served as a basic handbook – even in the field – for all those who sought to understand and describe their emotional responses to landscape scenery. Its representation in early libraries of the colony, as at home, was well nigh universal.[83]

For understanding such sensibilities from a twenty-first century point of view, he adds:

> Burke outlined his complex subject with such an appearance of simplicity that his definitions could be grasped by even the least philosophical of readers:
>
> *The emotions of taste caused by the sublime in nature are astonishment, admiration and a thrilling sensation of terror; their physical causes include power, vastness of dimensions, and excess and suddenness in all sights and sounds. The emotions of taste caused by the beautiful in nature are gaiety, peacefulness and security; their physical causes include smoothness, gradual variation and delicacy. (Burke)*

Burke had a gift for selecting the most memorable examples from nature to illustrate his distinctions and they were recalled again and again by his successors:

> *Sublime objects include vast plains, extensive prospects of the ocean, dark woods, ancient trees, cataracts, and perpendicular cliffs of great height. Beautiful objects include sinuous lines of a stream and the smooth slopes of hill and dale. The sublime and the beautiful 'are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded upon pain, the other on pleasure.*' (Burke)[84]

'Sublime' is defined by the sixth edition of the Shorter Oxford Dictionary as: '5. Of nature, art, etc.: producing an overwhelming sense of awe, reverence, or high emotion, by reason of great beauty, vastness, or grandeur.' No mention of sensations of terror, or vertigo-inducing cliffs. It would seem the meaning has shifted from the dramatic sensationalist extremes of romanticism to a more serene quality.

82. Mitchell, *Journal of an Expedition into Tropical Australia,* plate 8, *The River Salvator*.
83. Dixon, *The Course of Empire*, 48.
84. Ibid., 49, Note 4: 2nd ed., London, 1759, 237–8. Presumably this is Burke, though no details are given while the previous Note 3: Edinburgh, 1790, 85–6. is obscure.

That said, Rosa's work seems less familiar now than Claude's. It is interesting that the catalogue of this university's library, which has a superb and, usefully for the research student, underappreciated collection of art books, lists only one item for either Rosa or Lorraine.

This is Jeff Woodger's 2006 PhD thesis, titled *An Inquiry into Suiboku and Kano School Influences on Rococo and Romantic Landscape Painting Through Claude Lorraine (1600-1682) and Salvator Rosa (1615–1673).* Woodger's argument is whether there could have been a Chinese and Japanese influence on European landscape painting in the seventeenth century.[85] The thesis is a work of art in itself.

The proposition may sound improbable but, as he explains, Jesuit missionaries brought Chinese and Japanese artefacts and artwork back to Europe in the late sixteenth century and the Pope owned the largest collection of Chinese and Japanese scroll paintings in Europe. Thus, ironically, the Vatican was the main centre for oriental studies in Europe at that time.[86] which considered whether there could have been a Chinese and Japanese influence on European landscape painting in the seventeenth century. Mitchell, when enraptured with certain landscapes, would name rivers and mountain ranges after both artists.[87]

That Mitchell could have been indirectly influenced by Chinese and Japanese art is obviously a ridiculous question – and he would have surely thought so. But is it completely? Those floating maps … that delicate monochrome shading … even the stylised rococo scroll-like campaign maps his superior officers made in the Peninsula.[88] Perhaps Woodger's idea is not so far fetched and Pevsner alludes to Chinese influence on seventeenth-century English garden design.[89]

This illustration expresses the ideals of landscape that were the standard of taste at the time – the sublime and the beautiful. It is difficult to disentangle the word meanings and how they might have changed, as well as it being interesting to work out why Rosa, so popular in the

85. Jeff R. Woodger, 'An Inquiry into Suiboku and Kano School Influences on Rococo and Romantic Landscape Painting Through Claude Lorraine and Salvator Rosa,' (PhD exegesis, University of Ballarat Arts Academy, 2006).
86. Ibid. There is even a theory that the great Tintoretto, who being Venetian would have easy access to ideas from the east, was so influenced. This might account for the astonishing perspectives in his giddying religious canvases of crucifixions and martyrdoms – but that is a dangerous diversion into a Venetian labyrinth.
87. Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, 237.
88. Survey sketch maps in TNA archives, Kew, London, which will be illustrated further as an influence on Mitchell.
89. Pevsner, *Studies in Art, Architecture, and Design*, 'A Note on Sharawaggi', 102-107.

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, is not as familiar a name today as Claude and Poussin. At that time, there was the battle between neoclassicism and romanticism, of which Mitchell expresses both styles, and that Rosa would appear to be a forerunner of the romantic artist. There is also the picturesque of which Mitchell was so aware that he even writes about it.[90] And where that fits between the sublime and the beautiful is debateable in spite of the rules written for it by the likes of Walpole, Gilpin, Knight and Price. It can be demonstrated that Mitchell was an exponent of all three styles.

For a start, applying Burke's rules for the sublime to Mitchell's *Crater of Murroa:*

Sublime objects that include a vast plain - ✓

Extensive prospects of the ocean – just beyond the horizon

Dark woods and ancient trees - ✓

Cataracts – well, a plunging chasm

Perpendicular cliffs of great height - ✓ ✓

It appears that Mitchell had read the handbook on the sublime. And the jagged cliffs would appear to be Salvator Rosa's. Burke's theories are explored in greater detail in Chapter 7.

6.6.4 On the Glenelg

Apart from the *Crater of Murroa/Mount Napier* the last major illustration Mitchell made of the Australia Felix expedition was of the Glenelg River (see Figure 119). It was dimly reproduced in the volume as Plate 35, but it is a masterfully romantic composition, which Mitchell matches with a fulsome description:

> Aug. 18. – At twelve o'clock, I embarked on the river with sixteen men, in two boats, leaving eight with Mr Stapylton in the depot … the scenery on the banks was pleasing and various: at some points picturesque limestone cliffs over hung the river, and cascades flowed out of caverns hung with stalactites: at others, the shores were festooned with green dripping shrubs and creepers, or terminated in a smooth grassy bank sloping to the water's edge.[91]

90. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1;48, plate 7. 6.6.1, The Nundawar Range.
91. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:221–22.

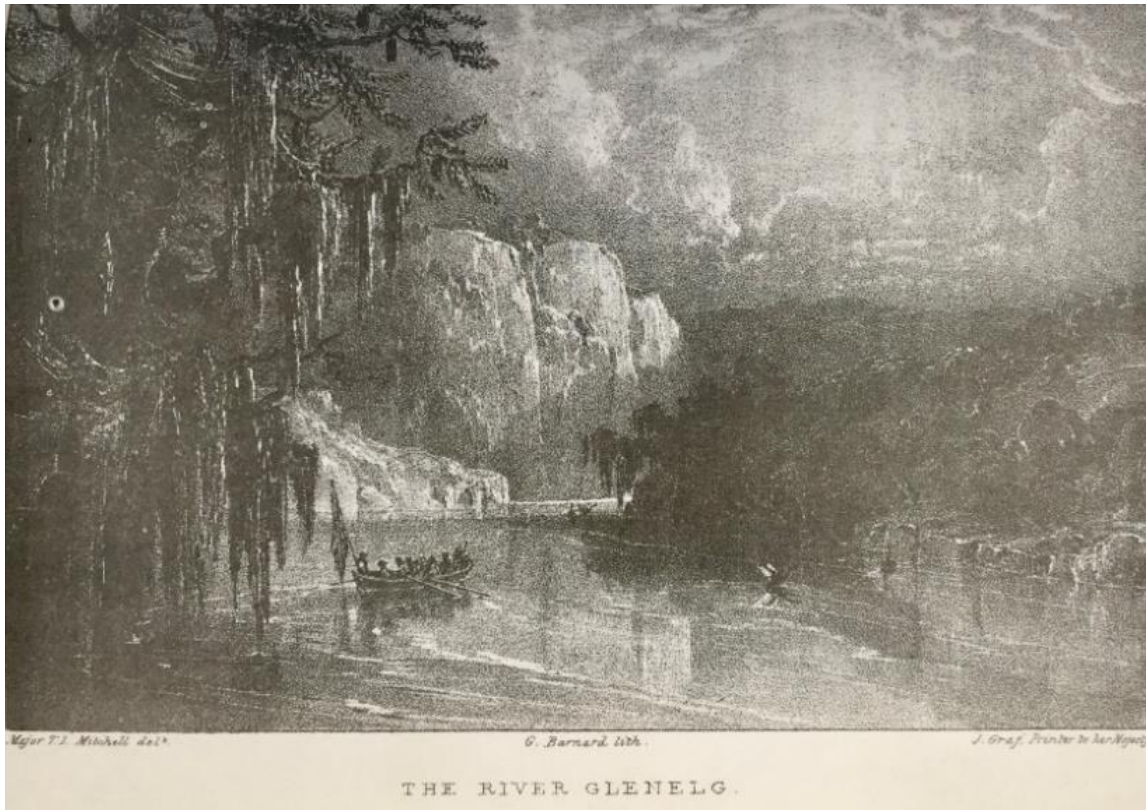

Figure 119. *The River Glenelg*.[92]

Again, painting a picture with words:

> The scenery on the long reaches was in many places very fine, from the picturesque character of the limestone-rock and the tints and outline of the trees, shrubs and creepers upon the banks. In some places stalactitic-grottoes, covered with red and yellow creepers, over hung or enclose cascades; at other points, '*casuarinae* and *banksia*' were festooned with creeping vines, whose hues of warm green or brown were relieved by the grey cliffs of more remote reaches, as they successively opened before us. [93]

He certainly waxes colourfully about the scene, expressing the excitement of finding a decent river to launch the whale boat that had been so laboriously brought all the way from Sydney. Above all, on a river of such breadth and depth was the expectation of finding a deep-water port at its mouth, the high cliffs tantalisingly concealing the prospect ahead; instead, the picturesque prose turns blunt as the idyllic scene is jolted by the sound of gunfire echoing along the cliffs: 'Black swans being numerous, we shot several; and found some eggs, which we thought a luxury, among the bulrushes at the water's edge.'[94]

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92. Ibid., 2:225, plate 35.
93. Ibid., 2:223.
94. Ibid. There is something about shooting swans that seems so... unnecessary. Are they not inedible

Mitchell and his crew continued on:

> The river had increased in width and depth; for here the measured breadth was 101 yards, and the mean depth five fathoms.
>
> It was, upon the whole, considering the permanent fullness of the stream, the character of its banks, and the uniformity of width and depth, the finest body of water I had seen in Australia; and our hopes were that day sanguine, that we should find an outlet to the sea of proportionate magnitude. [95]

But after all the build-up in anticipation, with further picturesque prose, the deep, wide river rounded a corner and just stopped at a broad beach: ‘and we saw the green rolling breakers of the sea.’ There was no reef beyond and what he considered was ‘but little tide on that coast,’ so although,

> the river was four fathoms deep, the water being fresh enough to use …,
> I nevertheless consider the mouth of this river quite unavailable as a harbour.’ [96]

It was a bigger disappointment for Mitchell than his tone suggests. Pointer refers to the contrast of Mitchell’s calm written report with Stapylton recording his fury at the disappointment on his return to the camp. [97]

Mitchell was hoping he would be the one to solve the general search for a harbour on the south coast, as a safe haven for emigrant ships, rather than the treacherous passage through Bass Strait. [98] This could have had implications for a particularly grand spatial history. Mitchell’s deep furrowed straight run home to Sydney, would have laid the tracks, as it were, for the highway between major two ports.

As it was the ‘Major’s Line’ did not become the backbone of the colony, and Pointer tells how Hepburn returning with cattle turned south off the route and settled at Smeaton ; and that ‘if Harrow’ (in that still remote area west of the Grampians that so delighted Mitchell), ‘is indeed the first inland town in the state, it can claim no prize for growth.’[99]

At least the river he named for the palindromic whig Colonial Secretary remains an unspoilt national park.[100]

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95. Ibid., 2:227.
96. Ibid.
97. Andrews,165
98. Pointer, Manning Clark et al, *The Chap Wurrung and Major Mitchell*, 80
99 Ibid.
100. The Lower Glenelg National Park. Charles Grant, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1835–39, was made Baron Glenelg in May 1835.

6.6.5 Towards Mount Abrupt (Wurgarri)

On 14 September 1836, Mitchell climbed the peak he called Mount Abrupt, the highest feature at the southern end of the Grampians. Three days before he wrote:

> *Sept*. 11.– … and we had at length reached the good country. The contrast between it and that from which we had emerged, was obvious to all; even to the natives, who for the first time, painted themselves in the evening, and danced a corrobory on the occasion.[101]

They were camped a mile south-west of present-day Hamilton, arguably the 'capital' of Australia Felix. The next day he wrote:

> *Sept*. 12._ A finer country could scarcely be imagined; enormous trees of mimosa or wattle, of which the bark is so valuable, grew almost everywhere…. The sublime peaks of the Grampians began to appear above the trees to the northward, and two lower hills of trap-rock arose, one to the south-west the other to the north-west I named Mount Bainbrigge and Mount Pierrepoint.[102]

Mitchell does not say why he used these names, but they are directly relevant to this thesis and it seems ungracious of him to give no reasons. These men were two of his senior officers in Quartermaster-General Murray's survey and intelligence department during the Peninsular War. Major Charles Pierrepoint was an artist of considerable ability and probably the first surveyor Mitchell was appointed to assist when he was taken on by Murray. So Mitchell would have been very fortunate to have Pierrepoint as his initial tutor in sketching the landscape. The number of his maps in the Atlas is only exceeded by Mitchell's contribution.

Pierrepoint was the Assistant Quartermaster-General when he was killed at the Siege of Burgos on 19 September 1812.[103] Major Philip Bainbrigge, who succeeded Pierrepoint in that role after Burgos, 'was one of the most experienced and talented of Wellington's surveyors,'[104] and from the spring of 1813 Mitchell was working directly under him.

The expedition continued towards the mountains:

> Sept.13.– … at a few miles beyond this lake, the cheering sight of an open country extending to the horizon first appeared through the trees; and we soon entered on these fine downs where the gently undulating surface was firm under our horses' feet, and thickly clothed with excellent grass. The cart-wheels trundled merrily along, so that the twelve miles were accomplished soon after midday, and we encamped near the extreme southern point of the Grampians, which I have named Mount Sturgeon.

101. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:256.
102. Ibid., 257.
103. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 21.
104. Ibid., 32–33.

> The weather was very wet, but this troubled us the less, as we had not known a day without rain for several months.[105]

The mood of the text is so cheerful that it is a surprise to discover that it was not a sunny day, nor, apparently, had there been one for months. Again, he names a mountain without explanation. This might partly explain the strength of the myth that the mountain is named after a fish, a species unknown in the British Isles, but famous for the glamour of its roe. Another local myth is that the mountains were named on the first maps the wrong way round, and that Abrupt looking more like a fish (if perhaps squinted at in the gloaming) was meant to be Sturgeon, and Mount Sturgeon being the bookend to the entire southern arm of the Grampians range should be Abrupt. In fact, Mitchell did originally name Mount Sturgeon Abrupt when viewed from Mount Napier.[106]

More importantly again, Mitchell fails to say that he had named the fine peak after a third senior colleague from the Peninsular War, Colonel Henry Sturgeon, who was a mentor and friend, as well as a brilliant surveyor-artist. Sturgeon had invited Mitchell to be his assistant after Cuidad Rodrigo when he was trying to decide whether to stay with his regiment or return to the survey department: 'I shall be glad to hear of your returning to us'.[107] Sturgeon was killed by a sniper's bullet when riding through a vineyard at Vic Bigorre in the French Pyrenees on 19 March 1814, a few days before the Battle of Toulouse ended the Napoleonic Wars. The Aboriginal name for the mountain is Murdadjood.

6.6.6 Mountain Games

Figure 120 shows the view Mitchell would have seen of the two mountains as he approached from the south west, and as anyone driving from Hamilton to Ararat or Melbourne would experience today.

The landscape plays a puzzling game here for in certain lights the mountains appear to transmogrify. One assumes the nearer Mount Sturgeon is on the left with Mount Abrupt, further away on the right. Somehow as Dunkeld is reached 'Mount Abrupt' becomes Mount Sturgeon towering above, and on turning into the town Mount Abrupt remerges on the other side. Perhaps Mitchell got confused by the same spatial trick.

105. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:257.
106. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:253.
107. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 24.

Figure 120. The road from Hamilton to Dunkeld. Mount Abrupt, on left, and Mount Sturgeon/Murdadjood.

On 14 September 1836, he ascended the higher peak he renamed Abrupt and 'beheld a truly sublime scene,' [108] of the entire range to Mount William (Duwil), which he sketched. It also inspired him to wax lyrical in his journal, and he drew Abrupt again from the south, an image he worked up in etching and aquatint (see Figure 124). The formation of the range to the north is truly spectacular here as if a set of gargantuan waves were petrified at the point of breaking onto the eastern plain. It is a landscape to inspire myth. Even the magnate's walled garden at the foot of Mount Sturgeon/Murdadjood evokes Kubla Khan's Xanadu.

6.6.7 An Australian Sturgeon

With all the talk of Sturgeon it is a good excuse to showcase Mitchell's ability at piscatorial art with his rendition of an Australian version of a sturgeon caught on the Peel on 14 December 1831 (see Figure 121). It appears in Volume 1, Plate 6, in a lithograph as Gristes Peelil (*or Cod Perch*). The original is a masterly watercolour study of a fish. The note under says from 'Gristes Peelii, Sir Thomas Mitchell's sketch book. Cod caught on the Peel at Wallamburn. It is the Murray Cod.

Figure 121. Australian 'Sturgeon' aka cod-perch, 1831, watercolour and pencil.[109]

108. Ibid., 2:258.
109. Courtesy of the SLNSW DLPXX 21f /2.

Next day, Mitchell is impatient to climb not Sturgeon but the higher Mount Abrupt, '… that I might close my survey of these mountains, and also reconnoitre the country before us.'[110]

He describes a deep stream near the base and the peculiar trees and shrubs, banksias and casuarinas, and xamthorhaeas and some geology but no account of the steep climb from the east side, unlike the perilous and gripping ascent of Mount William (on pages 174–6). Suddenly he is at the top:

> The weather turned out better than I had expected, and from the summit of Mount Abrupt I beheld a truly sublime scene; the whole of the mountains quite clear of the clouds, the grand outline of the more distant masses blended with the sky, and forming a blue and purple background for the numerous peaks of the range on which I stood, which consisted of sharp cones and perpendicular cliffs, foreshortened, so as to form one grand feature only of the extensive landscape, though composing a crescent nearly 30 miles in extent: this range being but a branch from the still more lofty masses of Mount William, which crowned the whole.[111]

This excerpt contains a non-Burkean, and understandable, meaning of 'sublime'. There is no thrill of terror or tantalising fear, although that could have been quite expected standing so close to the crest of the summit, which is mirrored by all the breaking wave forms of the peaks in front. Mitchell, however, is just enjoying the magnificent view and celebrating it in this technically expert topographical line drawing (see Figure 122).

He had found time to sketch the whole complex physiognomy of the range in a clear firm hand as advised by Reverend Gilpin[112] – but unusually for one who likes to report at length on botany and geology, he does not comment on the range's curious geological formation. His only reference to the rock is at the base when describing a surprisingly deep stream – 'so deep our horses could scarcely ford it without swimming'[113] – that appeared to flow towards the mountains:

> We soon came to a deep stream flowing not *from* but apparently *towards* the mountains. Reeds grew about, and the bottom was soft, although two kinds of rock appeared on its banks. On the right was trap, on the left the ferruginous sandstone of which all these mountains consist.[114]

'Ferruginous' means containing iron or of a rusty colour, but Mitchell does not speculate on the cause of the parallel fault lines and upthrusts. Sadly for this sort of climax to the

110. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:257.
111. Ibid., 2:258.
112. Gilpin, *Three Essays*.
113. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:258.
114. Ibid.

expedition, there is no commensurate image, a composed lithograph or a watercolour of the scene or, apart from a separate sketch of Mount Abrupt, of any other part of the extraordinary landscape. Mitchell was in a hurry to get home, and he needed to: the expedition was exhausted, supplies were running low, scurvy was hovering, and he had been ‘out of bounds’ since he had crossed the Murray River in June.

Figure 122. *The Grampians from the Summit of Mount Abrupt*.[115]

Even this fine drawing is squeezed in sideways beside the text as shown. In fact it shows Mitchell employing a technical advance. With the use of woodblock printing, images could be inserted into the text directly by the relevant passage.[116] He describes the view, emphasising his quandary of being torn between wanting to stay and explore, and having to get the expedition home, concluding:

> Several small and very picturesque lakes, then as smooth as mirrors, adorned the valley immediately to the westward of the hill, I was upon. They were fringed with luxuriant shrubs, so that *it was really painful for me to hurry, as I was then compelled to do, past spots like these, involving in their unexplored recesses so much of novelty amidst the most romantic scenery*. (my italics)[117]

He had time to jot down every detail of the view to fill the next pages, but that is all, with the exception of the little sketch of Mount Abrupt from below, *Mount Abrupt from the South*, which he worked up in etching and aquatint for publication (see Figure 123).

115. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:258.
116. Heckenberg, ‘The Art and Science of Exploration.’
117. Ibid., 2:259.

Figure 123. Drawing, etching and aquatint of Mount Abrupt.[118]

This group is a textbook example of transposing a sketch drawn on the spot. It appears to be taken from a high elevation near the summit, but there is no such position so he must have drawn from below, and it is a good strong image as it appears on page 261, made almost picturesque by being printed in the roundel format (see Figure 124)

Figure 124. *Mount Abrupt from the South.*[119]

So there is no view from the eastern side of the ranges, no rendering of the astonishing landform, which can be seen from the plain when approaching on the highway from the east.

It was up to others coming later to make that imagery for the painted identity of the place – Clark, von Guérard, Chevalier, Buvelot, Streeton, among others. Some fellow Scot would name the settlement that grew up at the foot of Mount Sturgeon with that name – after Dunkeld in Perthshire – a town but 30 miles from where Mitchell was born.

118. Courtesy of the SLNSW, File No. DLPXX 22f 11.
119. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:261.

6.7 Mitchell's Influence – and an Emblem

Von Guérard's painting, prosaically titled *View of the Grampians and Victoria Ranges from Mount Rouse*, is exactly what it says it is; but it is much more than that with its layers of significance. Von Guérard was particularly inspired by Mitchell's legacy and copied his drawings onto sheets of a type of paper used for tracing in ink (see Figure 125).[120] Ruth Pullin records 25 of them together with a significant note in von Guérard's hand, stating: '2 original drawings by Sir Thomas Mitchell,'[121] which indicates that he must have owned original work by Mitchell.

Figure 125. Eugène von Guérard, *Series of Landscape Drawings, copied from Mitchell*, ink on paper in Australian Reminiszezen.[122]

What were they of and how had he acquired them? There is apparently only one record of Mitchell exhibiting work and that is through a reference in Susanna de Vries-Evans study of Conrad Martens to a fire destroying much of his work.[123] This information is from an entry in the *Dictionary of Australian Artists*, which records an exhibition, curiously, not of landscapes but of portraits by Mitchell and his daughter, Blanche, which were lost in a fire.[124] Perhaps Mitchell sold or gave away drawings, or others did after his death.

The archive of Mitchell's work on paper is housed, like von Guérard's, in the Mitchell Library (no relation) of the State Library of New South Wales. It contains a collection of

120. Ruth Pullin, 'The Thistle and the Eucalypt: Eugène von Guérard and the Scots,' in Peter Freund, ed. *For Auld Lang Syne*, 161.
121. Ibid., 161.
122. Pullin, 'The Thistle and the Eucalypt: Eugène von Guérard and the Scots,' Eugène von Guérard, *Series of Landscape Drawings* in Peter Freund, *For Auld Lang Syne*,' 161.
123. De Vries-Evans, *Conrad Martens*, 133.
124. Kerr, Joan, ed. *Dictionary of Australian Artists.* Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992, 541, D. W. A. Baker.

loose drawings, watercolours and designs in different boxes of subjects in Australia, Spain and Portugal. Many are filed according to the expedition they were made on, or from Mitchell's time during and after the Peninsular War, and some due to Mitchell's use of Spanish names are attributed to the wrong continent. If many were lost in a fire, at least a reasonable trove survived.

So von Guérard saw Australia Felix 'through Scottish eyes, those of Major Thomas Mitchell'[125] which gave not only inspiration but 'provided the artist with an orientation to Western Victoria's significant landforms.'[126] They were provided as if in a Gilpin manual of the picturesque. Mount Rouse was not one of the eminences, as it stands 30 kilometres south of Mitchell's route past Mount Sturgeon. *View of the Grampians and Victoria Ranges from Mount Rouse* is not to be found in any books on von Guérard or Colonial Art before the catalogue of the 2011 exhibition, *Eugene von Guérard – Nature Revealed* at the National Gallery of Victoria (see Figure 126).[127] It was an unknown part of von Guérard's oeuvre throughout the twentieth century until, with his reputation revived, chiefly by the work of Ruth Pullin, it was found overseas and now hangs, not on public view, but aptly, within this same view.

It is a masterwork of this artist because it is a perfect marriage of his style to the content and design. His meticulousness with details and awkwardness with figures can sometimes jar, but here the figures of the dismounted rider greeting a couple of Kotor people in the shaded foreground fit in subtly, though probably fictionally by the 1850s.

Von Guérard shows them sheltering in the crater rim. It would have been easy for him to identify the hill as the cone of a volcano given that he was an expert in vulcanology. He had studied the volcanic landscape of the Eiffel region when a student at the Dusseldorf Art Academy and was inspired by Humbolt's ideal of integrating art and science in studying the natural world.[128] He was as good a geologist as Mitchell. The painting combines the warm serenity of a Claude Lorraine with the cool stillness of a Caspar David Friedrich, and manifests the tradition that Kenneth Clark, writing of earlier German renaissance artists Altdorfer and Elsheimer, calls 'a strangeness and intensity of light, an enamelled quality

125. Ibid.
126. Ibid.
127. Pullin, *Eugène von Guérard – Nature Revealed*,14–27.
128. Ibid., 14–15, Humbolt's Vision

which is entirely German.'[129] Mount Abrupt is right in the centre of the composition, Mount Sturgeon is the sharp peak just to its left and Mount William is in the distance on the far right.

Figure 126. Eugène von Guérard, *View of the Grampians and Victoria Ranges from Mount Rouse*, 1861, oil on canvas.[130]

It has rightly been called the definitive image of Mitchell's Australia Felix. As Pullin describes it:

> This composition, the expanse of fertile wooded plains framed by the undulating form of the crater ring in the foreground and the profile of the Gariwerd-Grampians on the horizon, is Mitchell's 'Australia Felix'.[131]

Romantically, the painting is housed in a gallery which stands in a beautiful walled garden, of not quite 'twice five miles of fertile ground with walls and towers girdled round', but substantial, and with a pleasure dome and rills. The foursquare sandstone wall is pierced at regular intervals by handsome bronze latticed gates of exquisite metalwork each telling a different story about the owner's family or the area. One is the Major Mitchell gate admitting, like all the others, a view – into a Xanadu right in the centre of Australia Felix.

129. Clark, *Landscape into Art*, 103.
130. Ibid., 133.
131. Pullin, 'The Thistle and the Eucalypt,' 162.

6.8 Mammeloid Hills

What Mitchell called the Mammeloid Hills, which he encountered as he was returning east across a green and enchanted land, he drew with the same facility as he 'captured' the view from Mount Abrupt (see

Again he is enraptured, first describing the geology and botany in detail:

> Sept.25.– We first crossed hills of the trapean conglomerate, on which grew iron-bark eucalypt, and box. The rock consisted of compact felspar, with embedded grains of quartz... there were also embedded crystals of common feldspar. By diverging a little to the right, we entered upon an open tract of the most favourable aspect, stretching away to the south west among similar hills, until they were lost in the extreme distance. The whole surface was as green as emerald, and on our right for some miles ran a fine rivulet between steep grassy banks … when we approached two lofty, smooth, round hills, green to their summits, the united streams flowed in an open dell, which our carts rolled through without meeting any impediment. [132]

This is after the constant bogging of the carts, and the cattle, in the waterlogged ground all across from the Grampians until a few days before. It is worth quoting Mitchell's text verbatim here – even necessary – because he is painting a word picture when he has no time to paint, and the enthusiastic prose needs to be given justice:

> I ascended the most western of these hills, as it was a point which I had observed from various distant stations, and I enjoyed such a charming view eastward of the summit, as can but seldom fall to the lot of the explorers of new countries. The surface presented the forms of pristine beauty, clothed in the hues of spring: and the shining verdure of these smooth symmetrical hills, was relieved by the darker hues of the wood with which they were interlaced; which exhibited every variety of tint, from a dark brown in the foreground, to a light blue in extreme distance.
>
> The hills consisted entirely of lava and I named them from their peculiar shape, the Mammeloid hills, and the station on which I stood Mount Greenock. In travelling through this Eden, no road was necessary, nor any ingenuity in conducting wheel-carriages, wherever we chose.[133]

It is as if he is making colour notes for a painting and probably that was his plan, if he had had the time. He did draw the hills finely as if to disprove Gilpin's theory, and it has the same resonance as his view of the Grampians from Mount Abrupt. Again, the image is squeezed vertically into the text as shown, the subject adapting well to the woodblock process.

132. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:275.
133. Ibid.

Is this, to put it crudely, a fairly obvious example of Simon Ryan's statement about Mitchell, as the masculine explorer, getting a 'reward' vision from the summit of a hill? 'What is being offered is a recumbent feminised landscape open to the penetrative gaze.'[134]

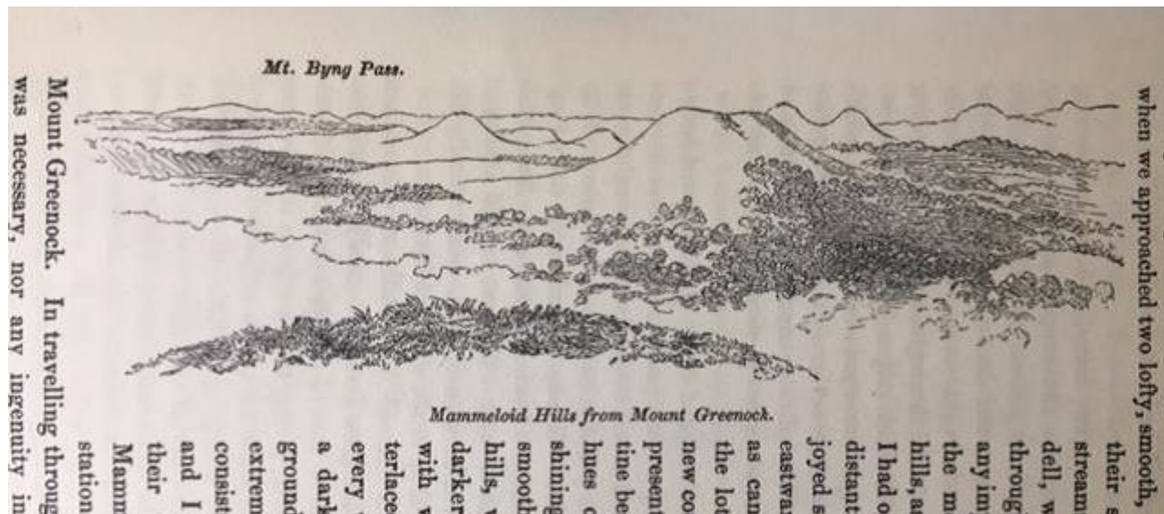

Figure 127. *The Mammeloid Hills from Mount Greenock*.[135]

Mitchell continues a detailed description of the flora:

> The beautiful little terrestrial orchidaceous plants, Caladenia dilatata and Diurus aurea were already in full bloom and we also found on the plains this day, a most curious little bush resembling a heath in foliage, but with solitary polypetalous flowers resembling those of Sollya.*[136]

He is slightly showing off here as in a footnote he tells us:

> *This has been identified as a new species of the genus Campylanthera of Hooker, or Pronaya of Baron Hugel, of which two species were found by the latter botanist and the late Mr Frazera at Swan River.[137]

He follows this with several lines of botanical Latin names, presumably identifying every component of each plant. Mitchell's diligence was singled out by Dr Ferdinand von Mueller:

> But only Sir Thomas Mitchell's expedition made us acquainted with plants of the country traversed; and not having among his followers a professional naturalist the leader himself' amidst the anxieties and responsibilities of such a geographic enterprise in those early days of our history, had to devote some time to gathering of botanic material which for the two volumes of his Expedition in brief notes was elaborated by the great Professor Lindley. Those are the earliest records of any inland-plants of Victoria, a considerable number of new species thus becoming

134. Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye,* 89.
135. Ibid., 2:276.
136. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:275.
137. Ibid.

> described from the Murray and Wimmera country, and particularly from the Grampians.[138]

Dr John Lindley, Professor of Botany at the University of London,[139] was the second expert, after the palaeontologist Richard Owen, who Mitchell went to see on arriving in England in 1837. Initially employed by Joseph Banks, it was he who instigated the setting up of Kew Gardens as an international centre of plant collections. This shows that, in his contacts and friendships, Mitchell, just as he was more of an artist than an explorer who sketched a bit, was more of botanist than a flower collecting tourist.

But what the drawing shows is a masterful economy of line and skilful hatching, which gives the clear perspective on the scene. It is a very modern, or at least timeless, drawing. Looking at it again, it seems even to have an affinity with Hokusai's landscapes of Japan, particularly his views of Mount Fuji, which strangely picks up on Woodger's theory of the influence of the oriental Suiboku and Kano schools on Western landscape painting, particularly that of Salvator Rosa.

6.9 Mount Macedon

Four days after drawing the Mammeloid Hills Mitchell left the party and made a detour south, spatially aware that he might get a view of the Port Phillip district from 'a lofty mountain mass'. An early reading of this formed the poignant image of Mitchell standing on the Mount Macedon, as he named it, and looking down at Port Phillip Bay in the evening light.[140] He could see something white but could not discern whether it was sails of ships in the bay or the tents of the new settlement of Melbourne, and he made a fine line drawing of the bay as far as the Heads. It seemed poignant because that was the closest he ever got to Melbourne. The moment epitomises the Sydney/Melbourne split, of two separate rival countries. It seems to define two spatial histories happening within sight but separated.

Mitchell pointedly stated how he had misnamed the mountain, let alone the misconnection of Arthur Phillip with Philip of Macedon: Geboor is the native name of this hill, as since

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138 Alexander Sutherland et.al., *Victoria and Its Metropolis, Past and Present* (Melbourne: McCarron, Bird & Co., 1888; Melbourne: McCarron, Bird, 1888). Quote from Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, 1825–1896, government botanist and director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens. http://id.loc.gov/authorities/names/no97001024, 750.

139. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 302

140. Blainey, *Our Side of the Country*, 18–19; Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 281–5.

ascertained by my friend Capt. King, and it is a much better one, having fewer letters and being aboriginal.[141]

6.10 Finally Fauna

Picking up on the anomaly of Mitchell's account of the eagle and Ryan's critical comment of appropriation, whatever happened, it might help to look at Mitchell's original drawing (see Figure 128). This is a straightforward line drawing, much faded, with no shading and minimal suggestion of the plumage. The head is shown in profile without any depth to it. In fact, it is so deteriorated that it is difficult to make out anything except the barest outlines, thus making the lithograph all the more a miracle (see Figure 129).

Figure 128. Sketch, head of an eagle.[142]

141. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 385.
142. Courtesy of the SLNSW, File No. DLPxx22f.

Figure 129. *Australian Eagle* (Aquilla fucosa).[143]

The lithograph presents a magnificently powerful head of the raptor, the sleek plumage beautifully rendered, the fiercesome beak, realistically three dimensional. It is very much alive, an effect achieved with the hard, white wedge in the stygian black of the eye's pupil. One can almost see one's reflection in it. There is no attempt at a background, no softening of the edges, which are razor sharp, as is the delineation of the beak, with its flesh-tearing hook. It simply fills the page. In a flash, it could turn and pluck your eye out!

The accreditation reads prominently, *From Nature & on Stone by Major T. L. Mitchell*, so no other lithographer was apparently involved. If so, it is a remarkably skilful piece of work in a very difficult medium to master. Mitchell was evidently proud of it for the credit line is often difficult to decipher on the plates.

By Burke's standard, it is a sublime object, beautiful but scary. Yes, Mitchell is saying, Australia Felix has birds of prey as awesome and lethal as any falcon of Arabia Felix.

On the other hand, it is for others to say if the image might be considered a portrait of a more benign but even more powerful entity – namely Bunjil, the great creator god of the nations of

143. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:264, plate 36.

Victoria. Mitchell could not have known that, nor that he is particularly associated with Gariwerd, the Grampians.

6.11 A shared sensibility

On 4 September, the day before Mitchell ascended Mount Napier, his choice for the frontispiece to the Australia Felix Volume (3) (Figure 133), he described a picturesque scene.

> Rich flats then extended before us and we arrived at an open grassy valley where a beautiful little stream, resembling a river in miniature, was flowing rapidly.[144]

Clark and Cahir pick up on this narrative suggesting his commonality of taste with the sensibility of the absent inhabitants, quoting his next sentence,

> Two very substantial huts showed us that even the natives had been attracted by the beauty of the spot…I wished to return if possible to spend a night there, for I began to learn that such huts with a good fire before them make very comfortable quarters in bad weather.[145]

In fact the Title page to Volume 1, (Fig.83) the opening the whole Three Expeditions enterprise, is an image of just such a dwelling with Mitchell himself reclining in the doorway in front of a fire, uninvited of course. This itself has a commonality with the Buchan images of Tierra del Fuegians at home (page 142) signifying perhaps a similar non-pejorative appreciation of simple comforts in tune with the proto-romantic thinking of the time.

6.11 Whigs, Wags and Wanderers

This chapter has examined the meanings of the aesthetic ideas of the eighteenth century in Britain and how they influenced Thomas Mitchell. It was a small world of aristocratic and gentlemen landowning intellectuals, garden designers, poets and artists. Those that could afford it took the Grand Tour to Italy, and particularly Rome, and while many young gentlemen went just for pleasure, a significant few took artists and architects with them, who brought back the ideals of neoclassicism and picturesque versions of it in Piranesi's *Views of Rome*, showing a city of overgrown half-buried classical ruins. Pevsner contends that the

[144] Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 247.

[145] Aboriginal Biocultural Knowledge in South-Eastern Australia : Perspectives of Early Colonists, Fred Cahir, Ian D. Clark, and P. A. Clarke, CSIRO Publishing, 2018, 168.

genesis of the picturesque lay in the naturalistic gardens that the enlightened Whig grandees established on their estates, and that it was both a reaction to the ornate symmetrical French style of gardening and a political statement about liberalism.

Horace Walpole and Thomas Gray, crossing the Alps were the first to thrill to the terror that the awesome grandeur of the mountains induced. Previously travellers found the experience to be endured rather than enjoyed. The most popular painter of wild mountain scenery was Salvator Rosa, Mitchell's favourite artist, while the contrasting serene canvases of a golden classical arcadia by Claude Lorraine were equally sought after by wealthy English collectors and were an inspiration for Turner. Mitchell employed motifs from both artists in his images.

In architecture Mitchell's first Sydney house, Craigend, was his somewhat pretentious attempt to recreate the Acropolis in Darlinghurst using the classical features of Doric columns and pediments, and the commonality of cultures to share an aesthetic appreciation of the picturesque is proposed by Mitchell.

The next chapter tries to understand Burke's theories of beauty and the sublime, that so underpin Mitchell's aesthetic. They might seem arcane and irrelevant to the life in the twenty-first century but they are anchored in events that concerned Burke in the eighteenth century and directly influenced the history of Mitchell's time.

Chapter 7
The Sublime 1 – Burke

This chapter examines the theories that held such sway over the culture of Mitchell's time. The concepts of the sublime and the beautiful were promulgated by the lawyer and politician Edmund Burke and much commented on by other writers on aesthetics such as Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price. They were introduced briefly in Chapter 3 in analysing the *Crater of Murroa* view, but his writings, and how they relate to history and his politics, need to be explored to illuminate Mitchell's thinking and aesthetic ideals. It also has to be remembered that Burke himself was not a self-indulged, landowning gentleman philosophising from his estate. He was a young law student in Dublin when he wrote his first theories on beauty and the sublime and became a leading orator in parliament, credited with being the first conservative in British politics. It is perhaps surprising how Burke emphasises terror as a component of the sublime and how the fear of great heights and the enjoyment of climbing mountains combine and become a recurring theme this study. Scaling virgin peaks could be considered an expression of the enlightenment.

7.1 Smoothness and Beauty

Edmund Burke describes beauty as 'connected to smoothness, gentle curves, polish and delicacy',[1] while the 'Sublime is caused by terrible objects, obscurity, solitude and vastness.'[2] These bald terms, isolated by Nikolaus Pevsner in his account of Uvedale Price's commentary on Burke's theories, need a little more explanation. It is best to read what Burke actually said since it is his thinking, and the interpretations of it by others, which influenced the aesthetic opinions and debates of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and shaped the aesthetic map that Mitchell, the aspiring artist, moved in.

Burke's thesis, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas on the Sublime and the Beautiful,* was published in 1757 and revised and reissued in 1759. Thereafter, it was republished every three years or so for the next three decades.[3] It was read on a popular level,

1. Pevsner, *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design*, 127.
2. Ibid.
3. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas on the Sublime and the Beautiful* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1757; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, rev. ed., 1958, rep. ed., 1967).

not just by the learned elite, and this applied to Australia as well. 'Its representation in the early libraries of the colony, as at home, was well-nigh universal.'[4]

It is set out in the format of a series of statements on the two main topics from different angles and attitudes. After an essay on taste, there are five parts, each consisting of several sections. The first two parts are mainly about different aspects of the sublime; Part III is 'On Beauty'; Part IV on 'The Efficient Cause of the Sublime and the Beautiful'; and Part V is 'Of Words'.

Part I begins with sections titled 'Novelty', 'Pain and Pleasure', 'The Difference between the Removal of Pain and Positive Pleasure', 'Of Delight and Pleasure, as Opposed to Each Other', 'Joy and Grief', 'Of the Passions Which Belong to Self-Preservation' and eventually Section VII – Of the Sublime opens with:

> Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime* ; that is it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.[5]

This is not the uplifting, life-enhancing experience one associates with the word.

He continues:

> I say the strongest emotion, because I am satisfied the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure. Without all doubt, the torments which we may be made to suffer are much greater in their effect on the body and mind, than any pleasures which the most learned voluptuary could suggest, or than the liveliest imagination, and the most sound and exquisitely sensible body could enjoy.[6]

Burke certainly does not want to let the reader think of the sublime as something pleasantly warm and fuzzy, especially as he next makes reference to the recent execution after 'barbarous tortures by *écartètelment*', a word perhaps best left untranslated, 'which justice inflicted in a few hours on the late unfortunate regicide in France.'[7] Burke is using an example of the most extreme form of pain imaginable from an event that had been much

4. Dixon, *The Course of Empire*, 48.
5. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 39.
6. Ibid.
7. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 39. Editor's footnote 11.

covered in English periodicals at the time.[8] He ends the short section (all the sections are short, mostly digestible segments, which cannot have hindered the book's popularity):

> When danger or pain stress too nearly they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; *but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we every day experience.* The cause of this I will endeavour to investigate hereafter. (Italics in original)[9]

Much seems to hinge on this passage. He has just mentioned the execution of the 'unfortunate regicide in France' who his readers would have known was Robert Damiens, an unsuccessful regicide, who wounded Louis XV with a penknife for which he was subjected to the most gruesome, drawn-out (literally) execution imaginable, the last such public execution in Paris. He jumps from this horrific event, from the 'simply terrible', to the assertion that danger or pain, at a distance and with 'modifications', '*may be, and they are delightful, as we every day experience*'. So not only from terrible pain to delight, with no intermediate stage, but also in one jump to frequently, in '*as we every day experience.*'[10]

Richard Payne Knight, Price's neighbour, was to trenchantly criticise this concept with his own line of reasoning:

> The word *sublime*, both according to its use and etymology, must signify *high* or *exalted*; and, if an individual chooses that, in his writings, it should signify *terrible*, he only involves his meaning in a confusion of terms which naturally leads to a confusion of ideas. (Italics in original)[11]

Boulton points out that 'for Knight, sublimity has its source in a great mental energy which excites a sympathetic energy in the mind of the reader or spectator'[12] and he brings Dugald Stewart 'into the fray',[13] who maintains that the original meaning of sublime was connected with height and claimed: 'The imagination is impressed by height because ascent is a principle contrary to the law of gravitation, and consequently involves an active exertion of the faculties.'[14]

Stewart emphasises the connection of the active powers with sublimity, in contrast to passive obedience to physical laws:

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8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., 40.
10. Ibid.
11. James T. Boulton 'Editor's Introduction,' in Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, lxxxix, footnote 40.
12. Ibid., lxxxix.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., lxxxix, footnote 42.

> Thus the sublime effect of impressive natural scenes is due partly to the suggestion of 'Creative Power' which is superior to physical laws.[15] Moreover, with physical height certain religious ideas have been associated, the objects of religious worship having always been considered as dwelling above.[16]

7.2 Climbers

This line of argument brings the Sienese poet, Petrarch, and his brother, back to mind; they who had the temerity to dare to ignore natural physical law and climb Mont Ventoux near Avignon in April 1336 which, as all great mountains, was the domain of God or gods. At the summit, having admired the view of the Alps, the Mediterranean and the Rhône below and, hoping he had seen as far as his native Italy, Petrarch opens his copy of St Augustine's *Confessions* at random. The book happens to fall open at the passage that reminds him he should consider his soul rather than the natural wonders of the world:

> And men go about to wonder at the heights of mountains and the mighty waves of the sea and the wide sweep of rivers and the circuit of the ocean and the revolution of the stars but they themselves they consider not....[17]
>
> ... I was abashed, Petrarch wrote, … I closed the book, angry at myself that I should still be admiring earthly things.[18]

It is extraordinary that the way in which those words are composed – designed to imply mankind should not wonder, and should not wander about – sounds seductively like a perfect expression of the sublime. Mitchell, standing and sketching on Mount Abrupt exactly 500 years later, could enjoy the scene and call it 'truly sublime'[19] without searching his soul. And, significantly, it was only late in Burke's lifetime that the Alps were symbolically conquered, as it were, when Mont Blanc was first officially ascended by the 'rational Genevan Christian', Horace Benedict de Saussure and his expedition in August 1787.[20] It had been 450 years since Petrarch's simpler but ground-breaking excursion up Mont Ventoux.

Petrarch, significantly, was a friend of the Sienese painter, Simone Martini, who illustrated for him, his copy of Virgil's rustic poems.[21] The sheep presented in Martini's title page references Mitchell's announcing Australia Felix as waiting for men to bring their sheep and

15. Ibid., lxxxix, footnote 43.
16. Ibid., lxxxix.
17. Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 421.
18. Clark, *Landscape into Art*, 10.
19. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:258.
20. Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 490–493.
21. Clark, *Landscape into Art*, 11, plate 7. Simone Martini Title page of a Virgil, belonging to Petrarch. Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan.

cattle,[22] as well as Mitchell's own attempts at running a farm. More directly Martini's depiction of a man tending vines is echoed by Mitchell's own 'Augustan' interest in viticulture, for on his last home leave, he returned to Spain and Portugal to study the industry and grew MacArthur's grapes himself.[23]

If it seems irrelevant to be harking back to Italy in the fourteenth century, not only is Mitchell a man of 'firsts', an innovator, but he fits the description of a 'renaissance man – a person of broad intellectual, artistic and scientific interests and abilities.

Martini's 'iconic', but now disputed, equestrian portrait of *Guido Riccio da Fogliano*, crossing a barren battlefield in Siena's Palazzo Publico, is painted on the other side of the wall that holds, in the Council Chamber, the first great secular landscape in European art. This is Ambrogio Lorrennzetti's *The City of Good Government*, where a peaceful productive countryside is depicted outside the walls of a well-run city.[24] This resonates with Macquarie's attempts to create a civilising city centre for Sydney.

Simon Schama finds the nice detail that staying in the same inn at Chamonix was a certain William Hodges, the landscape painter on Cook's *Endeavour* in the South Pacific, whose glorious paintings are so generously illustrated by Bernard Smith in his books – *European Vision and the South Pacific,* and *Imagining the Pacific in the Wake of Cook's Voyages* – on the exploration of the Pacific. His conversation inspired Saussure 'with the sense that he too was about to occupy, command, analyse, and describe one of the great vacant spaces on earth.'[25]

Climbing mountains and conquering superstition was an expression of the enlightenment. For Mitchell, it was essential for his systematic method of surveying. He had to be able to see from one high point to another to triangulate and measure the country. It is ironic that over another two centuries later, some Australian mountains are being closed to climbers, and not for reasons of safety.

22. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, Volume II.
23. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World,* 364.
24. Clark, *Landscape into Art,* Ambrogio Lorrennzetti, The City of Good Government, 1338.
25. Ibid., 492.

7.3 Terror

Returning to Richard Payne Knight, who wrote:

> Instead of considering, with Mr Burke, Terror as the ruling principle of the *religious sublime*, it would be nearer the truth to say, that the Terrible derives whatever character of Sublimity belongs to it from religious associations. (Italics in the original)[26]

'Terror' is indeed a problem word. It seems so extreme for the explication of a theory of aesthetics, which is not exactly a matter of life and death. Yet Burke has already invoked the horrific public capital punishment in Paris of the attempted regicide of Louis XV. A few sections later, he is considering sympathy for others in distress and even the converse: 'I am convinced we have a degree of delight, and that no small one, in the real misfortunes and pains of others.'[27] That sounds cynical but it also sounds as if it is the exact definition for our new word gleefully borrowed from the German *schadenfreude*. It begs the questions of how long the Germans have had it and why an English version did not evolve on its own.

This theme of sympathy or delight returns a few sections later in Sect XV – 'Of the effects of TRAGEDY' (in the theatre). In order to illustrate human reactions to real events and 'the comparative weakness of the imitative arts,'[28] Burke hints at another famous execution of the time; that of Lord Lovat in 1747 for treason – at the age of 80. The ruthless Highland chieftain had converted to Catholicism and supported the Stuart cause with his own army, for both the father, the old Pretender in 1715, and, 30 years later, the son, 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' in 1745, while at the same time feigning loyalty to the Hanoverian monarchy. After the crushing Jacobite defeat on Culloden moor, at which bloodbath he was not present, Lovat was captured and brought to London, tried, and condemned to be hung, drawn and quartered – a punishment kindly commuted to the axe. A subject of enormous curiosity, Hogarth memorably drew Lovat in prison, the popular print of the portrait revealing a robust unbowed giant of a man, his neck as thick as the trunk of an ancient oak.

So when Burke, to make the point, writes of assembling the ingredients for an imagined production of 'the most sublime and affecting tragedy',[29] with the best actors, scenery and music:

26. Boulton, 'Editor's Introduction,' xc, footnote 44.
27. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, Part XV.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.

> When you have collected your audience, just at the moment when their minds are erect with expectation, let it be reported that a state criminal of the high rank is on the point of being executed in the adjoining square; in a moment the emptiness of the theatre would demonstrate the comparative weakness of the imitative arts, and proclaim the triumph of real sympathy.[30] … and, surely, the public's ghoulishness.

When he writes this, his readers know exactly who, and what grisly scene, he is referring to. So he is using another extremely violent example to explain the intricacies of the sublime. And, of course, Burke's most quoted words concern beauty and come in his *Reflections* on the French Revolution, where he describes once seeing Marie Antoinette in the distance at Versailles and was enraptured:

> It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the Dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in – glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendour, and joy. Oh! What a revolution! and what a heart I must have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall …
>
> … little did I dream that I should see disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour, and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult.
>
> But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists and calculators has succeeded, and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever.[31]

Three years after he wrote these somewhat baroque words on 3 October 1793, with awful imagery and symbolism, the artist of the revolution Jacques-Louis David, a signatory even to her death warrant, coolly sketched her, seated rigidly upright her hands trussed behind her back, being transported to the Place de la Concorde for her public execution by the efficient 'humane' killing machine invented by Dr Guillotin. The Queen, Mme Capet, was the most prominent victim of 'The Reign of Terror', when the tumbrils rolled daily to the scaffold as the revolution consumed itself in a year of bloodshed until the revolutionary leaders started sending each other there as well.

Political expediency had overtaken harmless philosophising. Did Burke late in his life regret employing terror as an enjoyable component of the sublime when it had become a word synonymous with baskets of heads and the indelible image of the silhouette of an angled knife?

30. Ibid., 47.
31. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 1790, in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 111.

7.4 Beauty

What is generally agreed by his critics is that Burke's description of beauty, albeit not of a spatial value, was encapsulated, for all its hyperbole, in the Marie Antoinette passage.
In Part V of the *Enquiry* in Section V – 'Examples that Words may affect without raising images' – Burke quotes Homer's description of Helen of Troy's beauty as related by King Priam:

> They cry'd, no wonder such celestial charms
> For nine long years have set the world in arms;
> What winning graces! What majestic mien!
> She moves a goddess, and she looks a queen. POPE, *Illiad*, III, 156-8

And he comments:

> Here is not one word said of the particulars of her beauty; no thing which can in the least help us to any precise idea of her person; but yet we are much more touched by this manner of mentioning her than by these long and laboured descriptions of Helen, whether handed down by tradition, or formed by fancy, which are met with by some authors.[32]

As Boulton writes of this: 'It is not surprising then that the demand he makes on poetry should fairly take one of his own celebrated prose passages; the apostrophe to the Queen in *Reflections.*[33] While it might be argued unkindly that some of his remarks on bombast in the *Enquiry* should be applied to parts of the apostrophe, it remains true that his comments on Homer's description of Helen are applicable (with a change of name only) to his own evocation of Marie Antoinette.'[34]

When Burke comes to analyse beauty in Part III, much of his exposition is about human, and particularly female, beauty defined by qualities of Smoothness, Smallness, Delicacy, and Gradual Variation. Gilpin, as previously mentioned, found smoothness without roughness made for very dull scenery, as Repton attacked Brown's smooth unbroken curves in his landscaping. Boulton argues that Burke's 'chief weakness'[35] in his 'sensationist theory'[36] lies in 'the sharp distinction he draws between the sublime and the beautiful:'[37]

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32. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 171–172.
33. The use of the apostrophe in this case is in its meaning as an address to an absent person. It could be argued it is not.
34. Boulton, 'Editor's Introduction,' lxxxi. Of course given that, as the daughter of the Austrian emperor, she was a Hapsburg, a family notorious for inbreeding (which was one of the causes of the War of the Spanish Succession at the start of the century) it was remarkable she had all her features in the right place.
35 Boulton, 'Editor's Introduction,' lxxv.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.

> By reserving to sublimity all that is impressive and awe-inspiring, he robs beauty of any power to be intensely moving, and leaves it a weak and sentimentalized conception. Beauty becomes, in fact, mere prettiness.[38]

The supposition is that Burke was writing about the qualities he saw in one Jane Nugent who was to become his wife. He was in love. He was also in his teens and early 20s when writing the first draft of the *Enquiry*, so it was precocious of him to tell the world about his ideas on aesthetics with a relatively limited life experience. And, unlike the spoilt brats Messrs Walpole, Knight and Price, he had not had the advantage of going on the Grand Tour to Italy.

7.5 Advice

In his conclusion to Part I, Burke does, however, make some profound remarks about what artists do:

> Poets, and orators and painters, and those who cultivate other branches of the liberal arts, have without this critical knowledge succeeded well in their several provinces, and will succeed ; as among artificers there are many machines made and even invented without any exact knowledge of the principles they are governed by. It is, I own, not uncommon to be wrong in theory and right in practice; and we are happy it is so.
>
> We might expect that the artists themselves would have been our surest guides; but the artists themselves have been too much occupied in the practice.[39]

Burke was a great supporter of the arts and of individual artists, such as his Irish fellow countrymen James Barry and George Barret:[40]

> But art can never give the rules that make an art … they have been imitators of one another rather than of nature; and this with so faithful a uniformity, and to so remote an antiquity, that it is hard to say who gave the first model.[41]

This surely is a criticism of neoclassicism. The ambitious and vain Barry painted crowded allegorical scenes on enormous canvases, eliciting the comment that he 'seldom painted any small pictures, for he seemed to entertain the idea that no work of art could be in a great style, unless it were of great dimensions.'[42] As Burke decreed one of the essences of beauty was 'smallness', Barry's acres of paint disqualified his work from being 'beautiful', but he took Burke's word that magnitude was an essence of the sublime that he was striving for. Burke came to regret this part of his formula for the sublime, and even wrote, anonymously, against

38. Ibid.
39. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 53.
40. Boulton, 'Editor's Introduction,' cix.
41. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 53.
42. Boulton, Editor's Introduction,' cxii.

the ‘erroneous principle’[43] of ‘confounding greatness of size with greatness of manner, and imagining that extent of canvas or weight of marble can contribute towards making a picture or a statue sublime.’[44]

Mitchell was guilty of towering personal ambition so working on the enormous canvas of the landmass of south eastern Australia, by surveying, he was able to tie its dimensions and features down to a map. Meanwhile his hand was capable of eliciting the sensation of vast landscapes in the confines of a lithograph reproduced on the small page of a book, all a paradigm of spatial control.

And he was able to breathe a sense of the landscape into the maps he made of the Spanish and Portuguese battlefields. One of the artists he would have learnt these skills from was John Martin.

Boulton inevitably credits Mitchell’s tutor with taking the use of vastness into the nineteenth century in order to create sublimity in art, with his *Belshazzars’s Feast* (1821). The *Edinburgh Review’s* article employed Burke’s terminology:

> The ruling sentiment of the present subject is a sublime and supernatural awe … Vastness and strength powerfully excite a sense of awe and grandeur … and Mr Martin has accordingly presented us with a hall of dimensions and gorgeous strength unparalleled.[45]

The same language can be used to describe Mitchell’s *Valley of the Grose* (see Figure 141).

Though the printed image in the book is, perforce, small, it conveys a vast space, even if it is within the confines of a gorge, when compared with, say, *Tombs of a Tribe* (see Figure 1) with its infinite horizon. The untamed forces of nature and aeons of time and weather are evinced, with the life force embodied in the eagle readying its wings to soar into the space.

Where Mitchell was caught out was in imagining bits of landscape that were not there. He was so convinced there was a great river or series of lakes and waterways in the north of the continent flowing west to provide, not only fertile land, but a trade route to India, that he was ready to falsify maps and ‘muddy the waters’ of the narrative of his fourth expedition. But, happily, that is not part of Australia Felix.

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43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., footnote 143.
45. Ibid., cxiii.

Robert Dixon highlights how the earlier artists had been struck by the sublime landscapes Australia had to offer but lacked the skills to express and interpret the full grandeur once the hinterland of Port Jackson had become accessible. It took Conrad Martens, following Mitchell's directions, to find the sublime subjects to study for a 'school' of Australian landscape painting to make a start.

7.6 Astonishment

There is another gentler facet of the sublime that does not necessarily engender fear. It is curious (if not astonishing) that Burke does not pick it out for special attention. Out of the 100 sections of the *Enquiry*, not one is given to astonishment, whereas he does write in a section titled 'Exercise necessary for the finer Organs', positing that a certain state of mind of is:

> … a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquillity tinged with terror; which as it belongs to self-preservation is one of the strongest of all passions. Its object is the sublime.([46]) Its highest degree I call *astonishment* ; the subordinate degrees are awe, reverence and respect...(Italics in original)[47]

And then in a passage where he considers similar words being shared by different languages he writes:

> The Romans used the verb 'stupeo', a term which strongly marks the state of the astonished mind, to express the effect either of simple fear or of astonishment; the word *attonitus* (thunderstruck) is equally expressive and does not the French *etonnement*, and the English astonishment, the kindred emotions which attend fear and wonder? (Italics in original)[48]

That is it: *thunderstruck* – a sudden bolt of lightning and the explosion. The surprise and shock and whatever follows but not a long, lingering dread. A flash of revelation and inspiration followed by the reverberations, the sinking in of wonder and enjoyment, and the memory lasting for a day or a lifetime.

7.7 A German Excursion

A sublime discussion of the period: in the early May of 1799 after the hardest winter of the century, Samuel Taylor Coleridge studying at Gottingen University in central Germany gathered a group of fellow students for a walking tour of the Harz Mountains. One of the

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46. Did Gilbert pinch these words to give Mikado as he sought to make the punishment fit the crime?
47. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 136.
48. Ibid., 58.

number, Clement Carlyon, wrote of the trip and their climb up the Brocken, the mountain rich in German folklore, the haunt of the Brocken spectre and witches Sabbaths:

> Coleridge drove them on relentlessly (in spite of swollen feet and stubbed toes) and never stopped talking.
>
> When we were ascending the Brocken, and ever and anon stopping to take breath as well as survey the magnificent scene, a long discussion took place on the Sublime and the Beautiful. We had much of Burke but more of Coleridge …
>
> Many were the fruitless attempts to define sublimity satisfactorily, when Coleridge, at length pronounced it to consist of a suspension of the powers of comparison.[49]

Richard Holmes records that the idea first struck STC when staying at Ratzeburg on the Baltic, and hearing at night 'the thunders and howling of the breaking ice'[50] and which effect he had already imagined in *The Ancient Mariner*:

> There are sounds more sublime than any *sight* can be, more absolutely suspending the power of comparison, and more utterly absorbing of the mind's self-consciousness, in its total attention to the object working on it. (Italics in original)[51]

Beethoven was to capture sublimity with the opening of his fifth symphony, followed in the next by the thunderstorm itself in his sixth, the Pastoral. Both works were first performed at a chaotic under-rehearsed concert just before Christmas 1808. After countless well-rehearsed performances since, they still have the power to astonish. By coincidence, or a mysterious confluence of intellectual ideas, STC's reflections on sublime sounds, whenever he set them down, were published the following year.

This chapter has not had much on sound but has considered the extent of Mitchell's understanding of the sublime. In fact, it could be said that the two most remarkable sublime constants about Australia are the stars and the birds and that Mitchell had played a hand in expressing the wonders of both.[52] The stars are as majestically silent as the birds are not. While being of an infinite variety of size, shape, hue, plumage and habit, the birds provide a continuous symphony at once mellifluous, raucous, bell-like, frantic, melodious, booming, chattering – an infinite variety of sound.

49. Richard Holmes, *Coleridge Early Visions* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989), 230.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., 230, footnote 74, *Friend*, Dec.1809.
52. The Chart of the Zodiac; Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:47, plate 23 – Cockatoo of the interior; 2:264, plate 36 – Portrait of an eagle that has been winged.

Mitchell created two memorable images of birds but he also made a particular and moving reference to bird sound, which Michael Cathcart chooses as an epigram to introduce *The Water Dreamers*:

> Late in the night, as we lay burning with thirst and dreaming of water, a species of duck flew over our heads, which from its peculiar note, I knew I had previously heard on the Darling. It was flying towards the south west.[53]

It is subtle, but nevertheless could be considered as sublime, if perhaps not up to STC's standard. A skein of ducks flying high overhead at dusk does make a haunting elegiac sound, of great import if announcing water is somewhere on ahead. On Burke's rules for the sublime, if the 'terrible object' is thirst, and not knowing where he is going to find water for his men and the beasts, the 'obscurity, solitude and vastness' are manifest.

53. Mitchell *Three Expeditions*, 2:51, Cathcart.

Chapter 8

The Sublime 2 – Jellore

Whether we can interpret Mitchell's work in Burkean and Gilpinesque terms to any value depends on his narrative, both written and drawn. To modern eyes, the picturesque and the sublime have different meanings. The picturesque is quaint, out of date, sentimental and to use another useful German word, 'kitsch'. So with certain contemporary artists it is used knowingly and ironically, such as for David Hockney, and in Australia, by Stephen Bush.[1]

Sublime is a frequent figure of speech but it does not contain that element of terror which Burke conceived. Sunsets, holidays, chocolate, ice-cream, and wines are sublime. In fact it seems to be used for things we imbibe and consume, so, ironically, it almost exclusively applies to the unrefined meaning of that eighteenth-century word 'Taste'. The fearful head of the eagle, filling the page in Chapter 6 (see Figure 129) is sublime.

Mitchell in his journal, is now back in familiar territory and reminiscing of former exploits there. Here he had been surveying, and setting up the road infrastructure for transport south of Sydney. He was much challenged but excited by the inhospitable and dramatic landscape and now records his clearing of the summit of Mount Jellore so to complete the survey of the region, a task his predecessors had found impossible. With the death of Oxley Jellore was where, unaware, he had become the Surveyor General. He fondly remembers the Nattai inhabitants, and shows his portrait of the chieftain, his friend Moyengully. The extraordinary detailing of his hair leads to a rumination on Mitchell's apparent fascination with hair and other quirks in his character.

At the end of the chapter Robert Dixon's theory of the close artistic association between Mitchell and Martens will be tested. As he states:

> During 1836, while Mitchell was on his expedition to Australia Felix, Martens too, travelled 'South to the Wollondilly and Cockbundoon'. The result was a series of romantic studies of river scenery that are almost indistinguishable from Mitchell's except for Martens' slightly finer sense of harmony and mood.[2]

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1. Simon Maidment and Li Bowen, *David Hockney: Current* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2017), exhibition catalogue; Stephen Bush, *Steenhuffel* (Melbourne: Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, 2014), exhibition catalogue.
2. Dixon, *The Course of Empire*, 106–107.

This claim would put Mitchell's name and art on a par with the leading mid-nineteenth century landscape artist in NSW.

8.1 Approaching Jellore – Antres Vast

One of the final plates, number 38, of Mitchell's main narrative is a long fold-out lithograph of the panorama from the summit of Mount Jellore (see Figure 130). Volume II ends with a separate account of his previous rich paleontological findings, richly illustrated, in the Wellington Caves, near Bathurst. While of enormous interest and value for palaeontology, they are not part of the Australia Felix narrative, and in practice they are rather cumbersome; Plate 38 unfolds simply and stylishly.

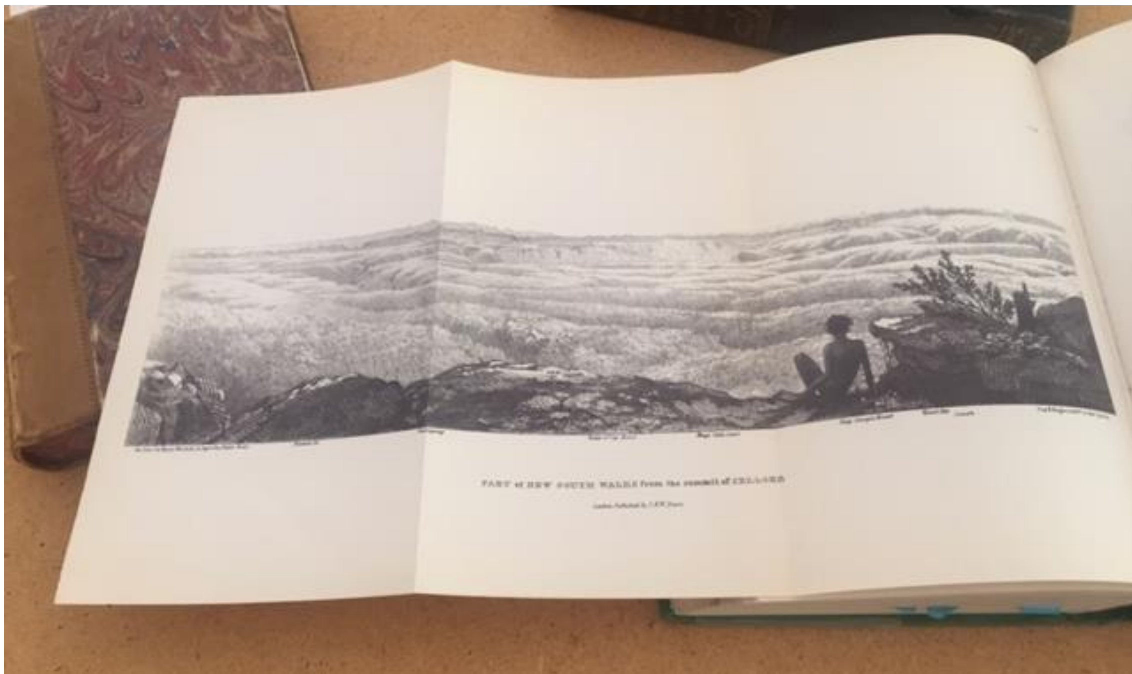

Figure 130. Foldout of Jellore panorama.[3]

At this stage of *Three Expeditions*, Mitchell is describing his journey home as he enters the settled area and can sleep under roofs and receive the hospitality of pioneer settlers. He becomes familiar with it as he reaches the roads he has been responsible for installing, and he is proud to see the bridges he had commissioned completed. The whole publication, particularly the second volume is aimed at a British and international audience to attract migrants, and he is extolling not only the opportunities and the infrastructure being installed but also the more spectacular bits of scenery and geology for sightseers.

3. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:323, plate 38.

He writes, rather fancifully:

> on the range separating the country at the head of the Shoalhaven river from the ravines on the coast I was shown an 'antre vast,' which, for aught I know, may involve in its recesses, more of the wild and wonderful, than any of the 'deserts idle' which I have since explored.[4]

For all the dense geological and botanical details he often expounds upon, here he is betraying a genuine enthusiasm for the country and appears to be spruiking adventure tourism. And the term. 'antre vast', what does that mean? Is it a Burkean expression for a sub-section of the sublime? That does not seem to be the case, though it is on theme, for according to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, vast means 'vast' and antre is a cavern – and together the expression refers to a fad for stories of exciting adventures set within a vast secret cave full of monsters and hidden treasure.

He is in fact unwittingly predicting a real theme in exploration literature that Cathcart explores in *The Water Dreamers* in a chapter on fantastical adventure stories set in Australia in the style of Rider Haggard novels.

These emerged at the end of the nineteenth century in Australia and are known as 'Lemurian novels'.[5] They share a basic storyline of a legendary lost civilisation that preceded Aboriginal occupation. The heroes, white British-Australians with names like John Holdfast and Dick Hardwicke, battle evil Aboriginal witchdoctors and savage cannibal tribes to rescue beautiful white damsels in distress. They were based on a theory of an Atlantis type of land, called Lemuria, buried or lost beneath the sea, put about by the Theosophical Society in London in the 1880s with the writings of the charismatic spiritualist, Madame Blavatsky.

Not only was the movement trumpeting the Empire it was also deeply white supremacist in character, and Cathcart quotes quite unprintable attitudes about Aborigines, and how to treat them, tainting the 'ripping yarns'. Mitchell, in writing his own adventure stories, is consciously addressing an imperial audience but is also, as mentioned, decidedly ambivalent in his attitudes and use of the word 'savage'. He frequently speaks of Aboriginal groups or individuals as being hostile, untrustworthy, evil savages, and barbarians, and then on the next page indicates his concern for their wellbeing and praises their skills and humanity.

4. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 321.
5. Cathcart, *The Water Dreamers*, 179.

But further search reveals 'the deserts idle' is not Mitchell quoting himself, which is quite plausible, but is from Shakespeare's Othello: 'And portance in my travel's history; Wherein of antres vast and desarts idle.'

Consequently, it maybe worth quoting more of Othello's speech, where he tells his life story at the beginning of the play, to see if it is so innocently placed.

> Her father lov'd me; oft invited me;
> Still question'd me the story of my life …
> Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances …
> Of being taken by the insolent foe,
> and sold to slavery, of my redemption thence
> And portance in my travel's history;
> Wherein of antres vast and desarts idle,
> Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch heaven,
> It was my hint to speak, such was the process;

(The Bard seems to be channelling the unborn Salvator Rosa for a moment.)[6] And then a jolt:

> And of the Cannibals that each other eat,
> The Anthropophagai, and men whose heads
> Do grow beneath their shoulders. This to hear
> Would Desdemona seriously incline.[7]

Suddenly his 'deserts idle', which one would assume refers to the desolate country around Mitchell's 'dreary banks of the Darling,' takes on a whole new meaning. Why did he use the idle deserts phrase if not to draw a literate audience's attention to the Shakespearian allusion? It is the language of Shakespeare's time when the myths of the Antipodes, circumnavigated but unexplored, lingered on – of the one-legged naked skiapods holding their huge single feet up as shades from the boiling sun, and other strange creatures and cannibals undoubtedly. It is a strange hidden trace, but he, unfortunately, did seem to be foretelling the crass Lemurian literature.

---

6. Shakespeare (1564–1616), Rosa (1615–73)
7. *Othello*, 1.ii.

8.2 Surveying at Mount Jellore

And so Mitchell's narrative comes to Mount Jellore, and there is the other side of his attitude when he uses the word 'savage' without animus and in a non-pejorative sense to mean indigene. Admittedly, it is not always clear as he slips from one meaning to the other but, given the rapid change in attitudes in this century, one cannot be smugly censorious. In fact, he only uses the word once in passing in these pages and his actions in his artwork speak louder than words in Plate 38 (see Figure 131) and Plate 39 (see Figure 134).

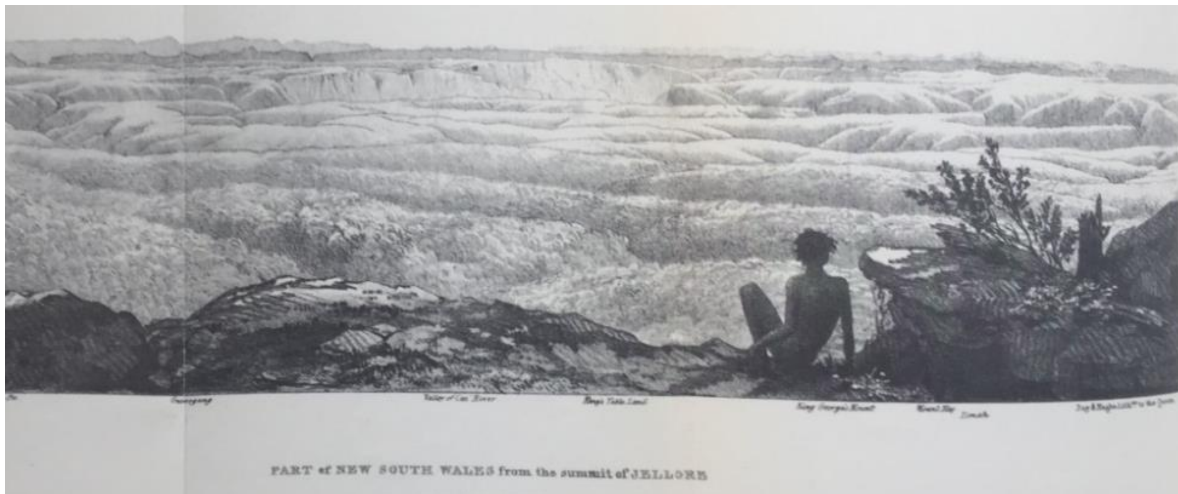

Figure 131. (Detail) *Part of New South Wales from the Summit of Jellore*.[8]

The print is inscribed on the left side, *On Zinc, by Major Mitchell, (a page of his Field Book)*, which implies that he alone was the lithographer, although the opposite corner has a credit to 'Day and Haghe Lith^rs to the Queen'. Features in the landscape are helpfully identified along the same border. The image is unique in the volumes for being a long fold-out panorama, so it is evidently special to Mitchell and he particularly comments upon its creation. We share the view with a lithe tousle-haired Aboriginal youth who sits on a rock in silhouette contemplating a vast furrowed landscape of rounded ridges, rendered as if wooded, and mostly parallel to the picture plane, heaving like a turbulent sea. He just belongs there without need of explanation, and Mitchell gives none, the lord of all he surveys. The figure's position and pose is similar to that of the hunter on the rim of the crater of Mount Napier in the frontispiece to the Volume but here he looks like a genuine portrait drawn from life, as it were, inviting the reader to share the view over his shoulder. And what a view – all the way

8. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:323, plate 38, detail.

to the Blue Mountains, and off frame Mitchell could see the walls of the new gaol being built in Sydney, some 70 miles to the north.

The panorama is topographical in that, seemingly like other topographical drawings such as his Peninsular War landscapes, the sky is shown completely blank, with no suggestion of cloud or atmosphere. It seems to be a convention. There is a mystery about the making of Plate 38, which is explored in this thesis because it connects to other narratives.

This peak had a special meaning for Mitchell because it was central to his survey of the region in 1828. In a way it represented his conquest, not so much of the eminence but more of the landscape below, and, as much as Mount William, it could, professionally, be considered his Mont BlancBy getting a gang of convicts to clear the densely forested summit, he was able to start the process of the triangulation of the region and connect with all the similarly cleared peaks. The terrain had been a major obstacle to mapping: 'The scene it presented, when I stood upon the pic of Jellore in 1828, and commenced my general survey of the colony, was of a most discouraging description.*'[9].

It was the summit of his first major spatial project, thus literally making Spatial History.

With an asterisk he adds a lengthy footnote at this point, which, as well as puffing his own achievement against the odds, compares himself to his colleagues: '*My predecessor in office had declared the operation to be impracticable in such country – but to this general survey I was pledged, on accepting my appointment in London.'[10] In fact one of his first duties on this first expedition was to visit his then superior, the ailing surveyor-general, John Oxley, at his country property near Camden. He was greeted by Mrs Oxley, already in dressed in black, who took Mitchell in to her dying husband's bedside. He was in great pain and Mitchell was sure he would never see him again.[11] He goes on to detail that 'two other commissioners for the division were receiving a guinea a day but yet could do nothing, until this survey was accomplished.'[12]

But he does describe clearly his motive and his methodology:

> And I therefore set about the work with the resolution necessary for the performance of what was deemed impossible. Universal wood - impassable ravines - a total absence of artificial objects, and the consequent necessity for clearing summits as

9. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:322.
10. Ibid., 2:323, footnote.
11. Baker, *The Civilised Surveyor*, 28.
12. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:323, footnote.

> stations for the theodolite, were great impediments; but I made the most of each station when it had once been cleared by taking an exact panoramic view with the theodolite, of the nameless features it commanded.[13]

What 'an exact panoramic view with the theodolite' actually means is the contentious point, for a theodolite is not a camera, nor can it project an image. He continues in the main text:

> A flat horizon to a surface cracked and hollowed out into the wildest ravines, deep and inaccessible; their sides consisting of perpendicular rocky cliffs, afforded but little reason to suppose, that it could be surveyed and divided, as proposed into counties, hundreds, and parishes; and still less was it likely ever to be inhabited, even if such a work could be accomplished.[14]

Australia to the newly arrived, and Mitchell is describing his early days, is an upside-down world where the swans are black, the trees shed their bark rather than their leaves, and outside Sydney the landscape is inverted. Visitors, instead of gazing up at mountain peaks find themselves looking down to where the wilderness lies below in deep chasms.

Mitchell recounts with heroic nonchalance:

> Nevertheless, it was necessary in the performance of my duties, that these rivers should be traced, and where the surveyor pronounced them inaccessible to the chain, I clambered over rocks and measured from cliff to cliff with the pocket sextant.
>
> Thus had I wandered on foot by the murmuring Wollondilly, sometimes passing the night in its deep dark bed with no other companions than a robber and a savage.[15]

The irony of that statement is that he is referring to a night when his convict servant, Bates, (surely the origin of a clichéd name for every manservant and officer's batman) had lit a good fire and gathered logs to make him a comfortable bed base, while his native guide 'Billy of Kerraway' had led him to a magical ravine that bore 'a closer resemblance to a Salvator Rosa landscape than any he had seen in nature.'[16] This is the landscape of the rivers Wollondilly, Cockbundoon and the Grose that Dixon is referring to, hidden in the folds below and beyond Mount Jellore, the gorges and ravines and waterfalls that so inspired both Mitchell and Martens and many other artists. Mitchell describes at length the travails of the first explorers trying to survey the area, including himself, crawling on hands and knees over boulder-strewn terrain.

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13. Ibid., 2:322.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Baker, *The Civilised Surveyor*, 34.

‘When it had once been cleared’[17] would have been no small task for his convict labour force before the advent of the chainsaw, not to mention moving across the ravines from one ridge to another. He continues with the line, which is both helpful and puzzling:

> The accompanying fac-simile of a page of my field book, includes the view between north and north-west, taken for the above purpose, from the summit of Jellore, and extends over the ravines of the Nattai, to the crest of the Blue Mountains.(Pl. 38)[18]

He added, ‘but I made the most of each station when it had been cleared by taking an exact panoramic view with the theodolite of the nameless features it commanded.’[19] What did he mean by that? A theodolite is a measuring instrument. Surely it cannot be used to record the view like a camera.

The field book or relevant page for that period does not seem available to solve how the transposition was made. Figure 132 is a good example of a page, and apt as it was made as he was nearing Mount Arapiles. It shows his working methods, from lively but thorough sketching to measurements and calculations all on the same sheet. Mount Zero is the eminence on the left.

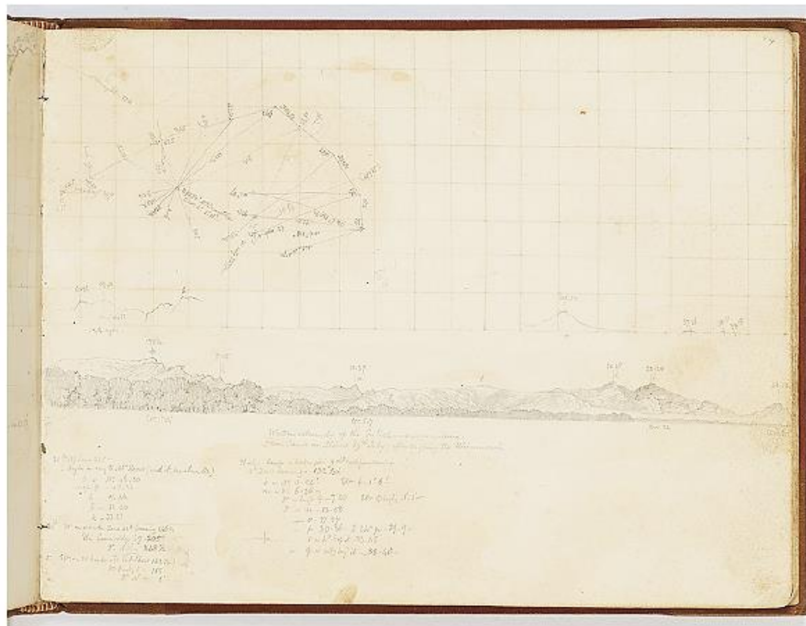

Figure 132. Mitchell’s field book, 15 July 1836, Western Extremity of the Grampians.[20]

17. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:323, footnote.
18. Ibid.
19. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:323.
20. Courtesy of the SLNSW, 1836, C56.

He titles this panorama *Western Extremity of the Gulielmian Mountains from camp on Plains 19 July 9(after crossing the Wimmera)*. The Jellore panorama is topographical in that, seemingly like other topographical drawings such as his Peninsular War landscapes, the sky is shown completely blank, with no suggestion of cloud or atmosphere.

Interestingly, if it is a true topographical image, it could have been made with a camera obscura, a device that records an image in a lightbox. Quite how it could be lugged up to the top of a mountain and used in the blinding contrast of the Australian light is as much a question as why, with his skills, he would need to 'cheat' as it were.

The evidence of the connection of topographical work with the proto-photographic device was given by Sir Joshua Reynolds in his *Discourses on Art* at the Royal Academy in the eighteenth century, where he dismissed topographical painting as 'an inferior branch of the art requiring little more thought than the use of a *camera obscura*.'[21]

The Camera Obscura was an arrangement of mirrors and lenses in a darkened box or tent that would project a precise image of the landscape onto a sheet of paper on which the artist could accurately trace the outline of the features. Mitchell records that once the mountain top was cleared, he returned three days running to make the 40-degree climb to work on the drawing in his field book, which suggests it was not much of an aid if it took him so long. It also shows his dogged determination and high standards. However, it was important to be accurate because he was establishing the trigonometrical survey of the colony from this point. Could he have used such a cumbersome device, as the *Dictionary of Australian Artists* claims?

> His major journeys of exploration were recorded in his *Three Expeditions*.., and *Journal of an Expedition into Tropical Australia* …, both copiously illustrated after drawings he had made of landscapes, flora, fauna, etc. All are technical expositions, yet many of his landscapes, such as his view from the summit of Mount Jellore, done with the aid of a camera obscura, are tinged with a somewhat melancholy romanticism.[22]

Of all his artwork in the published journals, this entry singles out this one image.[23] There is a clue to this in another reference, which may have used the same source, but at the time of writing the mystery remains unsolved.

21. Dixon, *The Course of Empire*, 48, footnote 1.
22. Kerr, *Dictionary of Australian Artists*, 541.Quote from D. W. A. Baker.
23. Ibid.

A more likely instrument could be the Camera Lucida, which had been designed for outdoor work and was easily portable. In fact, it had been invented by John Varley, a prolific water colourist and printmaker, one of the English landscape artists that Mitchell had studied. It was a simpler device than the Camera Obscura in that the artist used a prism to trace the outline of features.[24] However, Mitchell particularly records that on the third morning, up at five, and having sent the main party back to Mittagong, he, again, climbed the hill 'with Dixon and two men to carry the theodolite and its stand,' [25] reaching the top before sunrise. It evidently was not an instrument to tuck under the arm.

It is interesting to contrast this method with that in the letter Mitchell wrote to Murray from Salamanca in December 1815, recounting appalling weather hindering his work:

> The winter set in early and unfavourably for it almost continually rained … then fogs, frosts, and storms, succeeded in rapid succession, notwithstanding all which however I managed to fall but two weeks behind the time...
>
> This is owing to the facility with which I now sketch from long practice, by which I have also with ease laid down the most minute features without which a sketch of this kind would show nothing.[26]

He left seven trees standing, one in another version, to give a marker object to be seen from other mountaintop viewpoints, and after this endeavour, he travelled south to Lake George where he established a baseline for the whole trigonometrical survey. And the following year he travelled to Mount Warrawolong, to the north of Sydney almost level with Newcastle, which he had somehow seen from Jellore, 200 kilometres away. Here he established the northern station for completing the accurate survey of the whole settled area round Sydney.[27] The imperial control and order could then be set out accurately in his *Map of the Nineteen Counties*, a copy of which he gave to Martens' former colleague, Captain Fitzroy, before he sailed the *Beagle* out of Sydney.[28]

8.3 Portuguese Topography

The Lines, from the Western Extremity of Monte Junto image from the Wyld Atlas shows Mitchell's rendering of the topography of the landscape north of Lisbon where the Lines of Torres Vedras were installed by Wellington for the defence of the Portuguese capital (see

24. Murray, *Dictionary of Art and Artists*.
25. Baker, *The Civilised Surveyor*, 29.
26. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 55–56.
27. Baker, *The Civilised Surveyor*, 198, endnote. Much of this information is from three letters he wrote in early 1828 – two to Murray and one to Hay.
28. Receiving the response reproduced in the Prelude, p…

Figure 133). The young Mitchell found the terrain as pitted and convoluted as this in NSW had confounded his predecessors. It was described by Oman as ‘a ganglion of mountains rather than a well-marked chain’[29], an apt term to define the country around Jellore. It was typical of Mitchell that, although Murray had only asked for a general outline of the main features for him to develop back in England from the engineers’ construction plans, he was determined that it would be all his own work.[30] So, aside from the laborious surveying and drawing up of the plans, he took as much trouble over presenting the landscape, and this view is one of many, all beautifully drawn and ‘explorable’. It is taken well beyond the diagrammatic, again having the appearance of the ocean, in fact of the storm-tossed Atlantic off the adjacent Portuguese coast. Thus the empty sky seems all the stranger. Presumably this is the convention for typography for there is no lack of shading and ‘atmosphere’ in the detailing of the ground, conversely making the ‘atmosphere’ rather eerie. Apart from the winding line of trees down in the valley, it could, in fact, be a landscape on Mars.

Figure 133. *The Lines, from the Western Extremity of Monte Junto.Wyld’s Atlas*.

The Portuguese landscape belongs here to make up for the lack of images and maps of the 1836 expedition, as mentioned before. This is the sort of work, as his field notebooks show, that Mitchell could have produced if he had had the luxury of time, so it can adequately stand in as symbolic material for constructing the ‘mapping’ of Australia Felix.

Jellore is symbolic because it is the last landscape image of the Australia Felix expedition, and, in a way, the first. What is significant for history and for Mitchell is that while he was surveying at Jellore, Oxley died and, in spite of his genuine fears that Governor Darling, who

29. Robertson, *An Atlas of the Peninsular War*, 52.
30. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 77.

had a reputation for nepotism, might appoint a Dumaresq relative, he became the surveyor-general of New South Wales.[31]

If Burke's rules are applied, the Jellore image is sublime in that it conveys vastness and a sense of danger given by the boy sitting atop a presumed precipice but with every fold below and distant range clearly delineated, the only obscurity would have been the remoteness, which would not have been an issue for the figure in the picture. It was, rather, a temporary sanctuary for his people.

If it had been intended as a scientific diagram, presumably, it should not have had a human figure in the theatrically shaded foreground beholding the panorama and, as it were, inviting the reader to share the enjoyment of the view. It would not have introduced the suggestion of pathos for the fate of the young lord, at present, of all that he surveys, which the *Dictionary of Australian Artists* contributor picked up on. (note 83 above) It is at least now the Nattai National Park.

A jagged stump is shown remaining in a cleft in the rock on the right. By removing trees from several hilltops, Mitchell was able, by triangulating all the high points, to map the most impenetrable landscape of deep valleys and chasms. There is an affinity with the next plate on the very next page, a unique juxtaposition in the volumes, which is a portrait.

8.4 Moyengully, the King of the Nattai

The assumption would be that the youth is imagined, just a generic figure, but then overleaf Mitchell introduces, in Plate 39, an old friend (see Figure 134). In fact, it is the only occasion in both volumes (apart from the Caves and Fossil appendix) where two plates are concurrent. Mitchell writes: 'This wild region is the haunt and secure retreat of the Nattai tribe, whose chief, Moyengully, was one of my earliest aboriginal friends.'[32]

31. Cumpston, *Thomas Mitchell*, 56.
32. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:323.

Figure 134. *Moyengully, King of Nattai*.[33]

Figure 135. Detail of Figure 134.

The image of Moyengully is remarkable, apart from being a sensitive portrait of a thoughtful man, with no mention of the word 'savage' in the narrative. After dinner on the evening the survey at Mount Jellore was completed, Mitchell was told that the King of the Nattai was camped nearby, so he then proceeded to spend a very pleasant evening with him and his extended family sitting by different fires. Young men were lying about singing, and 'now and then the old King would add his deep bass to the strain.'[34]

In the morning, Moyengully visited the surveyor's camp and Mitchell decided to draw his extraordinary helmet of plaited hair (see Figure 135). Surprisingly, he sat with such impatience that Mitchell promised him a pair of trousers. But the chief drove a hard bargain. He did not want a pair of blue Parramatta cloth, 'quite unfit for a gentleman',[35] or new grey ones, he was only content with a pair of lightweight ones like Mitchell's. Presumably he earned them, for the resulting drawing must have taken hours to complete, and Mitchell appears to have flattered him because he looks to be a youngish man in his prime.

33. Mitchell, Three Expeditions, 2:323, plate 39.
34. Baker, *The Civilised Surveyor*, 30.
35. Ibid., 31.

8.5 Hair

A rather crude overlay of brown or sepia ink for the head, which does not quite register, does not manage to obliterate Mitchell's treatment of the sitter's hair, which is platted and coiled into the most elaborate coif. It is so meticulously drawn, with every curl and plait and ringlet microscopically observed, that it begs a question.

There is something rather odd in taking quite so much time and trouble over a hair-do. This is not to suggest a hair fetish, whatever that may entail, but it does lead one to reflect other odd things about Mitchell's character: this obsession with detail beyond perhaps what was required – for instance, all the botanical and geological information, when the day-to-day accurate surveying procedures would have occupied most of the time. There are plant and foliage drawings in the SLNSW of the most fastidious complexity and exactitude. Was Mitchell, perhaps, in some ways, to use a contemporary phrase, 'on the spectrum'?

It would need psychiatric knowledge far beyond the scope of this research, but it might explain such behaviours as his need to fight every governor; his jealousy and suspicion of Sturt, his ungracious treatment of Perry, his permanently put-upon, and never appreciated deputy; and, most personally, his apparent careless indifference, if not cruelty, to his wife, Mary, who bore him 12 children; and who he never took on holiday, or to the theatre with him in London, or on a trip anywhere (except to Sydney); and never gave her credit for anything, until he could talk about her as 'Lady Mitchell' to others. After that, given his prodigious workload and the number of societies and committees of which he was a member, Mitchell would have rarely have spent an evening in, and Mary, looking after a constantly increasing family, would have never gone out. She was rarely seen in Sydney society. This is how he describes his arrival home after over seven months away:

> At length I arrived at Sydney, and had all the happiness, on terminating this long journey, to find that all the members of my family were well, although they had been much alarmed by reports of my death, and the destruction of my party, by the savage natives of the interior.[36]

And that is it. A three-line break before he goes straight into a long summary of what he had found of the country. The poor woman had only held the fort for most of the year with half the dozen children she had gave birth to. Even if reports of a massacre were quashed when

36. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:328.

news came by sea from Portland Bay that he was alive, did not mean further misadventure was avoidable.

There are other examples of this interest in hair: for instance, Piper's portrait (see Figure 136) with his magnificent mane of hair and his conquistador's beard all the more imposing as otherwise he has not a stitch, or other ornament, on apart from an artfully placed gun barrel (see Figure 86). The reproduction of the pose that Mitchell presents to the public in the *Piper at Benanee* lithograph (see Figure 88) has his beard trimmed and hair close cropped.

The *Native of the Bogan* encountered on the previous expedition to the Darling River is another example of a portrait of a fine head, where the main interest is obviously in his magnificent 'hair-do' (see Figure 137). Jokes about 'having a bad-hair day' are probably out of date now, and hairstylists perhaps make a living from creating such a display, but Mitchell was clearly fascinated. He has lovingly drawn every strand teased out to its fullest extent, every wavy wisp and curl held in place by the bandana, and given the same attention to the platted beard. He appears to have inserted this solemn, dignified man into Plate 12, the tableau of *The First Meeting with the King of the Bogans*, as a man seated staring at the ground, with his wild hair having become a feathered headdress.

Figure 136. Piper, detail from Figure 87.

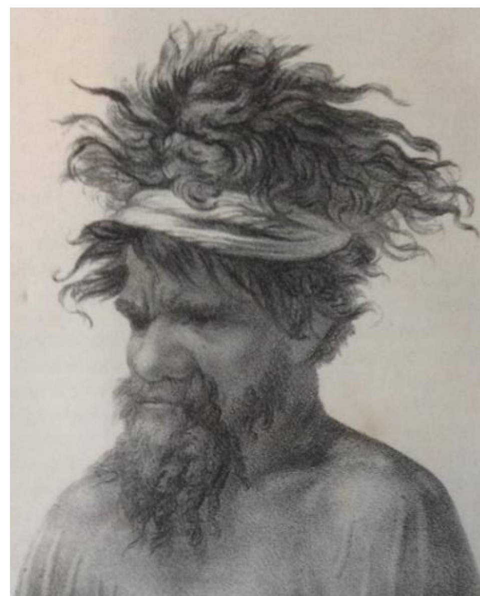

Figure 137. *Portrait of a Native of the Bogan*.[37]

So it is very curious to read Mitchell's less than flattering description of the man himself. He repeats that he is the most ill-countenanced man he had ever seen, while the men in the group

37. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:204.

being led by their 'king' are particularly friendly and helpful guides: 'We had overtaken a strong man with a bad countenance, prowling along through the bush; and being, as it appeared, a friend of the king's he continued with us.'[38]

And next day:

> the blacks sat down at a fire nearer to us than usual, and the strong man of bad countenance, particularly attracted my attention. I prevailed on him to sit until I sketched his face; for which piece of civility I gave him a tomahawk.
>
> Late at night he came up to my tent and demanded something in a whisper. I shewed him my rifle and gave the man on watch to look sharp. This savage was twice afterwards caught about the carts during the night, and in the morning, he was seen pointing out to the other natives the cart on which the flour was placed.
>
> I never saw a worse countenance on any native; …[39]

end of story, but then an aside: 'I was even deprived of the slight comfort of doubt as to poor Cunningham's fate, on looking at it.'[40]

Cunningham, the expedition botanist, was lost, and by this time they were sure he had met with foul play, so Mitchell is pinning his suspicions on this man. It is remarkable that while verbally pouring venom on him, visually, Mitchell presents a strong, dignified portrait with a frown of concentration that any sitter would evince.

8.6 Henry Fuseli

A point to observe, perhaps more coincident than causative, is that when Mitchell was in London in the early 1820s, it is fairly certain that he attended classes or lectures at the Royal Academy. Given the assurance with which Mitchell could handle the human figure (for example, the nudes in *Piper at Benanee* and the portraits of Turandurey and the blanketed Talambé), a supposition could be advanced that he attended life classes there. Henry Fuseli had been appointed professor of painting at the Academy by the president, Joshua Reynolds, in 1799 and held the post until his death in 1825. He had also been made keeper and was an enthusiastic and inspiring lecturer. Compared with his contemporaries, Fuseli was a fairly extraordinary choice for a role that he held for so long given that he was a highly eccentric, extreme romantic whose work was dark, stylised, and erotic in contrast to Reynold's classicism and Gainsborough's charm.[41] All his drawings and paintings concern the human

38. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:202.
39. Ibid., 1:202–04.
40. Ibid., 1:204.
41. Murray, *Dictionary of Art and Artists*, 79.

form in dramatic action and are neoclassical in their themes and nudity, and romantic in their narratives, dark tones and swirling intensity – and he had a thing about hair.

Since the inception of psychoanalysis, it has been noted that Fuseli was infatuated with hair, particularly on women. His young wife, who he married at 50, shared his obsession and would have her hair elaborately styled every day so that he was able to indulge in countless studies of her coiffures and 'to use her as inspiration for a wide variety of female types.'[42] She modelled for him as figures from myth and history, characters from Shakespeare and courtesans.

This is not the place for a study of post-Freudian theories on fetishism, but Gert Schiff was one of the first to link the phenomena of hair fetishism to Fuseli's images.

> Hair in its psycho-sexual significance is a fetish and fetishism is based on the illusion that all life-giving, life-preserving energy derives from the mother whom the male child imagines as endowed with a phallus. The fetish is an attempt to deny the woman's lack of a penis and the resulting male castration anxiety.[43]

Magdalena was the unrequited love of Fuseli's life, while a wife being portrayed as the Medusa does purvey a strange sort of message, even if it was only a private work (see Figure 138 and Figure 139).

In fact, for all his obsession with female hair, one of the most reproduced Fuseli's images is that of Achilles, in a symbolic act of self-mutilation, cutting his own hair to throw on the funeral pyre of Patroclus (see Figure 140), though Schiff, who considers it one of Fuseli's greatest drawings, interprets it 'in psychological terms as the sacrifice of primitive inclinations to the higher aims of civilisation.'[44] Fuseli died while Mitchell was still in England, but even if their paths never crossed, Mitchell would surely have been aware of Fuseli's influence and prolific output when attending the Royal Academy.

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42. Gert Schiff, *Henry Fuseli, 1741–1825: Essay, Catalogue Entries and Biographical Outline* (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1975), 15.
43. Schiff, *Henry Fuseli*, 17.
44. Ibid., 20, footnote 14. See K. A. Menninger, 'Study of Self-Mutilation,' in *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, IV, 1935, 462. This writer had written 'self-mutilation' before reading this footnote in the essay.

Figure 138. Henry Fuseli, *Magdalena Schweizer-Hess Seen in Profile from the Right*, 1779, pencil.[45]

Figure 139. Henry Fuseli, *Mrs Fuseli, seated in Front of a Fire, behind Her a Relief Medallion with Her Portrait as the Medusa*, 1799, detail.[46]

Figure 140. Henry Fuseli, *Achilles Sacrifices his Hair on the Funeral Pyre of Patroclus*, 1800–05, ink and watercolour.[47]

Deborah Klein, an established Australian feminist artist from Ballarat in Victoria, has as one of her themes the interpretation of carefully coiffed or plaited hair seen from behind. They are strange and arresting images, partly because the women are comletely anonymous and the viewer is forced to study the immaculate hairstyle, sometimes decorated with bows or butterflies, but with not a hair out of place. Unlike Fuseli's extravagances, they are relatively normal, full lavish heads of hair but not eccentric; neverthless, they are very still images, which is somehow unsettling, the antithesis of the frenetic movement conjured by Fuseli, an artist she admires, particulary because of his inflence on Blake. Sasha Grishin, writing from a male perspective explains:

> It is an enclosed, sheltered and I am inclined to say feminine space, known but fully unknowable,personal and intimate, but at the same time objectified and already presenting itself as a candidate for the Freudian uncanny.[48]

One could say Mitchell's is a very masculine space, but he does apply the same intense focus to depicting birds, fish, vegetation and fossils – and, of course, topography and maps.

45. Henry Fuseli, *Magdalena Schweizer-Hess Seen in Profile from the Right*, in Gert Schiff, *Henry Fuseli, 1741–1825: Essay, Catalogue Entries and Biographical Outline* (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1975), exhibition catalogue.
46. Henry Fuseli, *Mrs Fuseli, seated in Front of a Fire, behind Her a Relief Medallion with Her Portrait as the Medusa*, in Gert Schiff, *Henry Fuseli, 1741–1825*.
47. Henry Fuseli, *Achilles Sacrifices his Hair on the Funeral Pyre of Patroclus*, in Gert Schiff, *Henry Fuseli, 1741–1825*.
48. Sasha Grishin, 'Painting a Nation,' *Craft Arts International* 90 (2014): 108–109.

8.7 Duel

One more aspect of Mitchell's 'oddness' to be remembered, which relates to the violence implied in these theories, is an act which could have been his last. On 22 September 1851, he was the last man, of two, to fight a duel in Australia.[49]

They both missed by an inch on the third shots, and their seconds hustled them away. He had felt slighted by an allegation of mismanagement of his department by a fellow member of the Australian Club called Donaldson, who refused to change the wording of a newspaper article. Neither side would budge nor find an alternative and they repaired to a secluded park with their seconds. Extraordinarily, Donaldson was the founder of the club and was to become the premier of New South Wales. It was all very 'gentlemanly' and 'in club', the seconds and convenor were all members. It mirrored an earlier duel between two members of the Melbourne Club, one Snodgrass and 'Fiery' Ryrie, with the same result. [50]

A reason for the intemperance that led to such a drastic, and potentially fatal, act was the recent death of Mitchell's favourite son, Roderick, who became a JP aged 28. A surveyor with the potential, it was hoped, to be the surveyor-general of a sister colony, he fell overboard in a storm on passage from Moreton Bay to Sydney.[51] The tragedy would have affected his father's reasoning. It is all too Greek.

8.8 Scenic Geology

To return, finally, to Dixon's theory of the indistinguishable images Mitchell and Martens produced in the landscape below Jellore. They are not, in fact, easy to find, so examples are apparently limited. The *Valley of the Grose* was an inspiring subject for both artists, and many others. Mitchell was fascinated by the web of sandstone gorges in the Blue Mountains, being particularly intrigued by their depth and inaccessibility. He was trying to work out the best route to get a western highway over the mountains: 'Mr Dixon [presumably the theodolite carrier up Mount Jellore], in an unsuccessful attempt, penetrated to the valley of the Grose, until then unvisited by any Europeans.'[52]

---

49. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 443.
50. I am grateful to a member of the Australian Club for these details. Snodgrass also challenged one Redmond Barry, fortunately with no harm done, or the history of Melbourne and of the college that evolved into this university would have been poorer.
51. Ibid., 442.
52. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:154.

This is just 100 kilometres from Sydney, some 40 years after first settlement:

> And when he at length emerged from ravines, in which he had been bewildered four days without reaching Mount Hay, he thanked God (to use his own words in an official letter), that he had found his way out of them.[53]

In 1827, Mitchell, guided by Govett, ascended Mount Hay and was able to place his theodolite on the summit. He had arrived from England at the end of September that year:

> I found the scenery immediately around it very wild, consisting of stupendous perpendicular cliffs, 3000 feet deep, at the feet of which, the silvery line of the Grose, meanders through a green valley, into which, neither the colonists nor their cattle had penetrated.[54]

'Having looked into this valley from the summit of Mount Tomah also in 1827,'[55] Mitchell tried to enter it by ascending the river from its junction with the Hawkesbury near Richmond:

> but I had not proceeded far in this attempt, accompanied by Major Lockyer and Mr Dixon, when we were compelled to leave our horses, and, soon after, to scramble on our hands and feet until, at length, even our quadrumanous progress was arrested in the bed of the river, by round boulders which were as large as houses, and over and between which we found it impossible to proceed.[56]

So, presumably, Plate 10 is Mitchell's view of the valley of the Grose River from Mount Tomah, and he certainly makes the most of the forbidding grandeur of the scene (see Figure 141). It is literally forbidding access to all – except eagles. Plate 10 is titled in the List of Illustrations as *The inaccessible valley of the river Grose*.

53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.

Figure 141. *Valley of the Grose*.[57]

Here Mitchell shows the valley of the Grose in a wonderfully sublime image. This is sublime Gothic, or 'Gothick', a brilliantly orchestrated piece of theatre, the stage lighting of the sun's rays throwing a far headland into relief and giving a hint of promise in the sunlit valley beyond the forbidding cliffs where the silver thread of the Grose can be seen wending its way. This is the home – the eyrie – of Mitchell's eagle, surely such a setting worthy of Bunjil himself. If the sublime 'is caused by terrible objects, obscurity, solitude and vastness,' this image ticks all the boxes. If this is Bunjil's country, he is not to be disturbed. The projecting rock is cleverly positioned at the bottom of the frame so that it is not noticed first, but when it is, no clue is provided regarding the depth of the drop below. Only an eagle would be unconcerned. And on reading the script, it is evident that there is no gentle slope hidden below the rim. It really is a frightening landscape. The influence of John Martin, Mitchell's sometime tutor in London, is clear, and behind him Signor Rosa.

57. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:154, plate 10.

Mitchell's image is no copy of a Martin but the painter and engraver of vast apocalyptic biblical scenes would have been pleased with Mitchell's ability to handle the scale and the lighting to maximum effect. Of course, credit must also go to the lithographer G. Barnard, but with Mitchell's abilities and interest in the process, it is difficult to know how collaborative the production would have been.

Lastly, surely Mitchell's background must play a part. The restless weather depicted of squalls and showers and sunlight scudding across the glen, throwing the grandeur into sharp relief, is thoroughly Scottish, with even the trousered 'wedgie' standing in for a golden eagle.

Martens was a master at atmospheric conditions and in that he was a disciple of Turner, but as Robert Hughes points out, 'with his habit of observation went his insistence on an abstract basis of design.'[58] Continuing, Hughes says:

> By massing lights and darks, the picture could gain a breadth and general form independent of what it depicted. Martens's romantic leanings were rooted firmly in a knowledge of pictorial structure, a combination missing from most colonial art.[59]

Martens' view of the same subject is quite different and, typical of his work, shows more of an interest in atmosphere, and in the reproduction it is difficult to tell what is happening (see Figure 142). Mist seems to be riding up the valley into a deep cleft or basin, for a bird of prey is soaring below and beyond in indeterminate space. The dead tree is indistinguishable from the wisps of cloud, so appearing to resemble a white dragon. Martens would have been there with Mitchell's directions, or led by the engraving itself, for the *Three Expeditions* was in its second edition by 1839 and should have reached the colony. Of course, it is an oil painting and Martens was a good colourist, but it is useful to have a black, very black, and white reproduction to compare with Mitchell's.

It must have been an earlier view of the Grose that Darwin saw in Martens' studio that encouraged him to go exploring in the Blue Mountains where he admired Mitchell's road building schemes.[60]

58. Hughes, *The Art of Australia*, 44.
59. Ibid.
60. De Vries-Evans, *Conrad Martens*.

Figure 142. Conrad Martens, *Valley of the Grose*, ca. 1839, oil on canvas.[61]

Conrad's much later work, *One of the Falls of Apsley, NSW*, is shown as the subject, while called a waterfall, it is more impressive at presenting the gorge landscape of the region (see Figure 143). Although painted in 1873 for the NGV, it is based on a sketch made in 1852, so Mitchell may have known of it. That said, the scale is somewhat diminished by the intrepid explorer in his pristine white shorts peering round the cliff in the middle distance. He would have been better placed as a repoussoir figure in the foreground like the Nattai youth at Jellore.

Figure 143. Conrad Martens, *One of the Falls on the Apsley*, 1873, watercolour.[62]

61. Conrad Martens, *Valley of the Grose*, 1839, in Tim Bonyhady, *Images in Opposition*, 72.
62. Conrad Martens, *One of the Falls on the Apsley*, 1873, in Tim Bonyhady, *Images in Opposition*, 75.

However, Martens was probably being honest for he enjoyed a long friendship with the Reverend W. B. Clarke, who was the leading geological authority in NSW in the mid-nineteenth century, and he made several drawings for Clarke, who also encouraged Martens' interest in astronomy.[63] So, he was just as much a scientist as Mitchell.

The painting was a commission from the NGV, therefore it was probably modelled on a drawing completed during Martens' early explorations. Mitchell, of course, shared these interests, and as a fellow trustee of the Australian Museum, would have known and conversed with Clarke.[64]

8.9 Guarda

The vignette from the page of the *Position at Guarda* in the Wyld Atlas shows an affinity with the Jellore panorama: the silhouetted, seated semi-recumbent figure sharing one's view across a vast landscape (see Figure 144). In contrast to Jellore, the sky is alive with weather casting light and shade across the rugged mountainous terrain of northern Portugal. The central figure is rather awkwardly drawn but is acting well as a repoussoir, like the Nattai youth at Jellore, directing the eye into the scene. Presumably, he is meant to be an intelligence officer scouting the terrain, the plume of his hat or helmet being blown in the gale. Also, the strange, gnome-like goatherd must have been taken from life for the goats are clearly drawn on the site.

Figure 144. *Position at Guarda,* detail. *Wyld Atlas*.

63. Bonyhady, *Images in Opposition*, 88.
64. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 471.

Guarda lies at 3400 feet high up on the Serra da Estrela, the highest town in Portugal and for centuries had been a key frontier post. While not the scene of a pitched battle, Murray wanted the area detailed given that it lay in the path of Massena's retreat from Portugal in early 1811, where his army had been stalled from taking the capital by Wellington's double barricade of defences, the Lines of Torres Vedras. There were so many skirmishes and movements in the area as the allies pursued the French back across this mountainous country that Murray's instructions to Mitchell were extensive. He concluded the first part: 'The above explanation will be sufficient, I hope, to let you understand what part of the sketch should be fully detailed.'[65]

But he goes on to further instructions:

> The remaining part of the sketch is meant to show merely the direction in which the troops approached who were to be employed in the attack; and for the purpose of doing that it will be sufficient that the roads and villages should be marked and the general outline of the country slightly traced.
>
> The places to be shown in the outer extremity of the Sketch will be the following; the village of Linares, with the road which crosses from it into the Val de Mondego, the towns of Celorico, Alverca, and Freixedas – a short distance of the road beyond Ripola, Arrifana and Joao Bragal, - and part of the Sabugal road about half way to Adao. [66]

It was a vast area to single handedly survey, and he had to get back to Lisbon to have somewhere to keep the sketches clean and dry, 'for at Guarda I lodged under a charcoal magazine, and my quarters at Sabugal had neither door nor windows.'[67] Murray also required a plan of the 'combat' at Sabugal to the south-east of Guarda, where on 3 April 1811, a French battalion gave way to infantry assaults, but the cavalry failed to follow up.[68]

Whatever the military value of the finished work, *Position at Guarda* is a wonderfully abstract design showing the rugged terrain, as if three dimensional, floating across the vast double pages of the Atlas (see Figure 145). The respective units of the opposing forces – French in blue, allies in red – are lost at this scale in the valleys. Guarda usefully draws the narrative back to the Iberian Peninsular

65. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 66.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid., 67.
68. Robertson, *An Atlas of the Peninsular War*, 54.

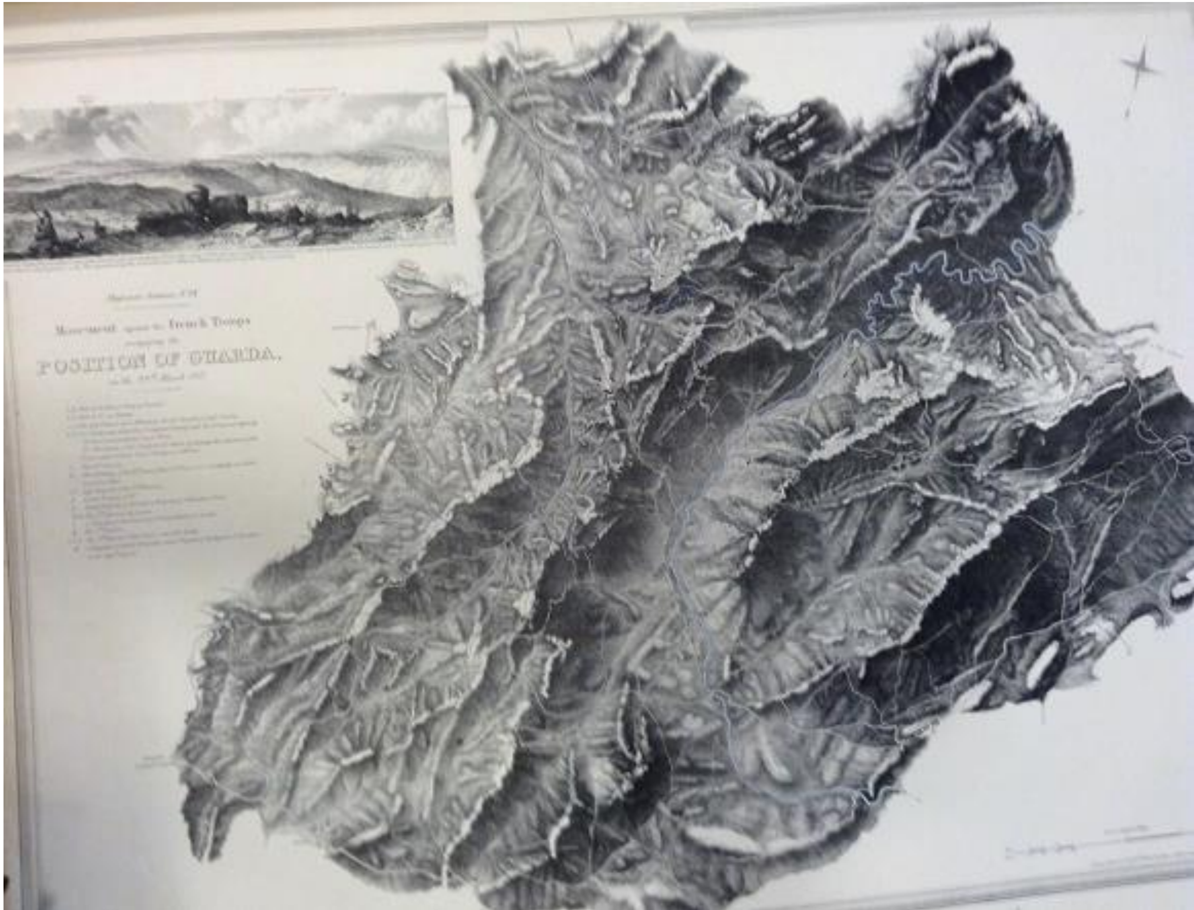


Figure 145. *Position at Guarda.Wyld Atlas*

Armed with a primary introduction to Burke's sublime, Mitchell's progress has been followed in terms of the aesthetic theories and technical developments he used to describe his Australia Felix. His obsessive detailing of hair and vegetation in his drawings of people and landscape point to strange aspects of his character that could have led to his determination to fight a duel over a trivial matter, both participants narrowly missing a sublime in Burke's.

Chapter 9
Sublime Mapping

Part I – Mapping in Iberia

This chapter makes a final summation of the forces in the landscape that Mitchell responded to practically, scientifically, imaginatively and aesthetically. It correspondingly reveals the abilities that Mitchell used and harnessed, to express the splendour of Australia Felix and make his own spatial history. It explores the influences on Mitchell, particularly those he absorbed from the campaign maps made by his senior officer surveyors during the Peninsular War, men who would have guided and encouraged him. The scene moves from Salamanca in western Spain, and the two original Arapiles hills outside the city, to the feature Mitchell named Mount Arapiles in western Victoria.

Importantly, and on the matter of art genres, before finishing, the tragedy of what happened to the traditional inhabitants of Australia Felix will need in some way to be addressed. It seems that is now, in part, being answered through art. That is the vigorous work of current Aboriginal artists and concerned Australian art makers.

9.1 Peninsular War Mapping

The revelation of the folders of work made by the British military surveyors during the Peninsular War could be dismissed as an excuse to showcase some fine unfamiliar artwork, but it seems there developed a separate genre, in a way, a style of executing these wartime campaign maps and diagrams that may have only pertained to the Peninsular War, itself a uniquely self-contained event, but is distinctively artistic, abstracted, imaginative, and sometimes bafflingly eccentric. For Britain, the war itself was unique, being autonomous in time and place without any major political, social or moral repercussions. When Wellington's army entered south-western France, the troops were in fact welcomed by the local population, and won the unnecessary final battle at Toulouse, for Napoleon had already abdicated.[1] The British only returned to Spain in large numbers in the late twentieth century to invade its beaches.

1. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*.

The impression emerges, when unearthing files of original sketches – 'finished' route maps, plans of fortifications, and the like – in the archives that there was a group of talented soldier-surveyor-artists who were both bouncing aesthetic ideas around and competing to be original. Arguably, they produced a unique genre of art that would be a separate subject for research. They were not war artists in the twentieth-century Australian and British sense, but, rather, innovative artists of a branch of radical aesthetic cartography. As the coordinator, editor, and main contributor of material to the Atlas, Mitchell could be considered as the authorial publicist for the movement, the Atlas as its forgotten sacred codex.

Mitchell, who turned just 19 after he had arrived in Portugal, was immediately spotted for his potential by Quartermaster-General Sir George Murray and speedily gazetted as 2nd Lieutenant into the 95th Regiment of Rifles, the Green Jackets, on 24 July 1811 so that he could be employed and drawn into this group.[2]

9.2 Maps in the National Archives and the National Library of Scotland

The National Archives in London has a collection of campaign maps made during the Peninsular War, which are remarkable for their variety, artistry and strangeness. Many are anonymously produced; others are clearly identifiable, and signed, by colleagues of Mitchell and himself.

Richard Smith describes the methodology of mapping during the war, particularly in the Quartermaster-General's (QMG's) department under Murray.[3] Surveyors had to work fast and convey the essential information of a piece of country – for example, the roads and routes through, the crossings, bridges, shelter or billets available, and food supplies – to Murray as economically as possible.

When the war began in 1808, there were no proper comprehensive maps of the Iberian Peninsula. All sides had only the provincial maps produced by Thomàs López and the Vicente Tofiño chart**.** A combination of the two surveys was published in London by John Stockdale in 1812 but would probably have been a case of too little and too late for the

2. Ibid., 13.
3. Richard H. P. Smith, 'Peninsular War Cartography: A New Look at the Military Mapping of General Sir George Murray and the Quartermaster General's Department.' Imago Mundi: The International Journal for the History of Cartography 65, no. 2 (2013): 234–252.

QMG's department.[4] The tracking down of this map, misleadingly described as an Ordnance Survey, at Liverpool University was described in an earlier chapter.

In terms of training, the surveying instructions given to staff officers at the Royal Military College founded in 1801 at Sandhurst, where Mitchell was stationed when he returned to England in 1819, consisted of the following:

> Simple surveying, sketch mapping from observation, measurement of distance by time travelled, and the use of a small hand compass. No instruction was given in triangulation or even surveying by traverse, since these techniques were considered too slow for and army's campaign needs. The classes were imparted by a series of eight lectures (in French!) by Colonel François Jarry, a French officer previously on the staff of the Prussian monarch, Frederick the Great.[5]

According to Smith, Colonel Henry Sturgeon, who invited Mitchell to return to the QMG's department after the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo,[6] was one of only two officers who received training at the Royal Engineers College at Woolwich Military Academy.[7] As this was the school for artillery and ordnance personnel, it is surprising this was so. The engineers were taught advanced mathematics, design of fortifications and siege preparations, as well as cartography. Importantly, they had extensive mapping experience, as well as their own drawing office in the Tower of London.[8] This was, of course, where the Ordnance Survey of Scotland began to be drawn up under the aegis of the royal duke, 'Butcher' Cumberland, after the final defeat of the Jacobite rebellions at Culloden in 1745. That map room could be considered the hatchery of a new spatial history, for in effect the Ordnance Survey of the whole British Isles proceeded from there.

However, the engineers' diligent methods were not suited to the fast-moving needs of an army on campaign, specifically for those of George Murray, and Henry Sturgeon was one who evidently transcended both disciplines. He is recorded as building a vitally important bridge on campaign.

Smith points out the contrast with the training of the opposition. Not only had France become the leading cartographic nation in the eighteenth century, but 'Napoleon made it even more

4. John Stockdale, *A New Military Map of Spain & Portugal, Compiled from the Nautical Surveys of Don Vincent Tofiño, the New Provincial Maps of Don Thomas Lopez, the Large Map of the Pyrenees by Roussell, and various original documents* (London: John Stockdale, 1812).
5. R. Smith, 'Peninsular War Cartography,' 237.
6. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 24.
7. R. Smith, 'Peninsular War Cartography,' 250, footnote 20.
8. Ibid., 236.

so.'[9] French officers who attended the École Militaire, where they learnt to make maps from field sketches, also received training in advanced mathematics at the elite École Polytechnique, which enabled them to carry out scientific mapping. They had access to the seven volumes of the *Mémorial Topographique*, 'which effectively defined a methodology for military survey and draughtsmanship.'[10] This cultural difference – with the English having a less rigorous, dare one say *laissez faire*, approach to mapping – is perhaps illustrated by the aforementioned French philosophical interest in spatial history shown by Foucault and, before him, the Annales school of history. The French military engineers, the Corps des Ingénieurs-Géographes, sent over 600 maps to Paris.[11]

The reason for going into this detail about the methodologies of surveying and mapping during this war is that it provides a clue to Mitchell's working methods and the skills that he was able to employ on his expeditions. He could capture the topography and, for visual effect the atmospheric conditions, as well as have time to methodically note the details of the geology, botany, fauna, weather, and, of course, his geographical position, in his field note books, sketch books and journals. So an immense amount of information was all taken accurately on the run – as if he was on campaign back in Spain.

It would be fascinating to explore the trove of sketches Murray amassed with his 'squirrel instinct', which repose in the National Library of Scotland, but they are not currently digitised. A letter from the Curator of Archives and Manuscript Collections at the library advises:

> There are sketch maps from George Murray's time in the Peninsular War at shelfmarks Adv.MSS.46.1.22-46.3.5. This section of Murray's papers comprises 30 volumes where sketch maps are incorporated into his correspondence.
>
> A further section of maps is contained in two volumes at the end of the collection, Adv.MS.46.10.1-2, which also contain some maps from the Peninsular War, although these are more formal. These two volumes are kept in the Map Library.[12]

Smith gives a simpler numerical idea of the scale of just this wartime portion of the Murray papers bequeathed to the National Library of Scotland: 'Those relating to the Peninsular War

9. Ibid., 248.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 248.
12. Dr Ulrike Hogg, Curator Archives & Manuscript Collections, National Library of Scotland, email message to author, July 16, 2020.

period exceed 10,000 folios including many small-size sketch maps held in the Manuscripts Department and 76 large-size cartographic documents in the Map Department.'[13]

Paradoxically, Smith claims that for all the map production for his department, the quartermaster-general had no training or much idea about maps and had little idea how to read them. There is no evidence Murray ever surveyed or drew a map, and Smith quotes one of his officers saying that Murray 'was most completely ignorant of what a military plan should be and in fact was unacquainted with the nature of military drawing.' [14]

Foster suggests that Murray might have felt an affinity with Mitchell when he arrived on the Iberian Peninsula as he, too, had been educated at Edinburgh University, hence the young subaltern's fortunate recognition by the most important officer next to the commander-in-chief. He was essentially Wellington's right-hand man, running the management, movement, housing, and feeding of the Allied army. Mitchell became irked by the long wait to receive promotion in rank, but he was well blessed to have such an influential, patient and faithful patron throughout his life.

Back on the Iberian front, the essential information required on campaign was for the planning of itineraries for the daily 'Order of March'. This consisted of 'reconnaissance surveys, to calculate distances, identify roads suitable for artillery and baggage transport, feasible river crossings (bridges, fords, ferries), victualling capacity for men and animals plus billeting or bivouacking possibilities.'[15]

Apart from the constant movement and mapping element of planning, Murray's responsibilities included:

> Coordinating the Royal Staff Corps engineering tasks, organising the arrival and return of troops in the main ports, working with the allied Portuguese and Spanish armies, and liaising with the Commissariat responsible for buying supplies, stores and transport. [16]

Smith illustrates a detail of an untitled map of the western end of the Pyrenees by a Lieutenant John Griffiths of the 94th Regiment, when Wellington was pushing the French back home after the battles of Vitoria and Pamplona (see Figure 146).

13. R. Smith, 'Peninsular War Cartography,' 240.
14. Ibid., 237.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.

Figure 146. John Griffiths, Untitled map of the Western Pyrenees.[17]

The style shows routes through mountain ranges, their dark shading emphasised by the crests and peaks left starkly white. This was not meant to represent snow, as one might think, for a mountainous terrain such as the high Pyrenees, but as Mitchell's maps show, it was a technique for describing high points and ridges at any level. The resulting chiaroscuro effect is prominent in his maps of both the battles of Vitoria and Pamplona in the Atlas, and given the huge scale of the large fold-out plans, they are very powerful images.

9.3 Busaço

The same symbolism is used to strange effect by several artists describing the high ridge of the Serra do Busaço near Coimbra in Portugal, in contrast to the prosaic workmanlike pencil map Smith depicts, signed by one 'Pathieros' (see Figure 147).

Figure 147. Pathieros, *The Ridge of Busaço*.[18]

17. John Griffiths, *Untitled Map of the Western Pyrenees*, in R. Smith, *Peninsular War Cartography*, 240.
18. Pathieros, *The Ridge of Busaço*, in R. Smith, *Peninsular War Cartography*, 240.

This diagram clearly and usefully shows the positions of the 54 British and Portuguese regiments prior to the Battle of Busaço on 27 September 1810, which were not random, but assigned by Wellington according to the army's regulations and long military tradition.[19] The engagement, where the Allies were hidden behind granite outcrops on the crest of the escarpment, surprised Marshal Masséna's forces as they struggled up the steep incline. The Allies inflicted heavy casualties on the French, and they were able to return to Lisbon and the safety of the Lines of Torres Vedras, untroubled by the army of occupation. Esdaile records the engagement was politically shrouded in controversy, but it was thought Wellington wanted to 'blood' the Portuguese army, calm the citizens of Lisbon, and quell criticism of his leadership at home.[20]

What is interesting for this thesis is how Murray's mapmakers seem to have been almost obsessed with Busaço, judging by the remarkable number of versions of this landscape that were produced. The National Archives in London holds many folders of Peninsular War maps and among them are several of Busaço. Mitchell's version in the Atlas is darkly dramatic and brooding, though this might have been a decision out of his hands as he had to return to Australia before the Atlas went to print. However, he must have been inspired by the sketches and, it is fair to call them, paintings, by his colleagues. For they are works of art. It is almost as if they were inspired by the intensity of the action as much as by the vertiginous landscape, if not a measure of delight at decisive result. It would seem to have been an easy victory entirely due to Masséna's recklessness.

Foster, in describing Mitchell's surveying of the site, summons up the romance of the landscape with the adjacent monastery of the bare-footed Carmelites and its treasured arboretum, the Matteo de Busaço, of trees grown from seedlings brought from worldwide Portuguese possessions, which the Pope in 1643 gave the added protection of a Papal Bull.[21] He quotes Sir Charles Oman, the great historian of the Peninsular War:

> With the possible exception of the Pyrenean fighting-grounds, Busaço gives the most beautiful landscape of any of the British battlefields of the Peninsula … The loftiness, the open breezy air, the far-reaching view over plain, wood, mountain and distant sea, from the summit of the Busaço Serra is unique in its beauty.[22]

19. R. Smith, 'Peninsular War Cartography,' 245–6.
20. Esdaile, *The Peninsular War*, 324.
21. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 62.
22. Ibid., footnote 68. Quoting Oman, *History of the Peninsular War*, Vol. 3, 404.

Given that Oman's *History of the Peninsular War* stretches to seven volumes, his superlatives do perhaps explain one reason why Mitchell and his colleagues took such an interest in the place.

The following pages show versions of the maps of the Battle of Busaço. The first two (see Figure 148 and Figure 149) are proofs of lithographs that Mitchell worked up for the Atlas.

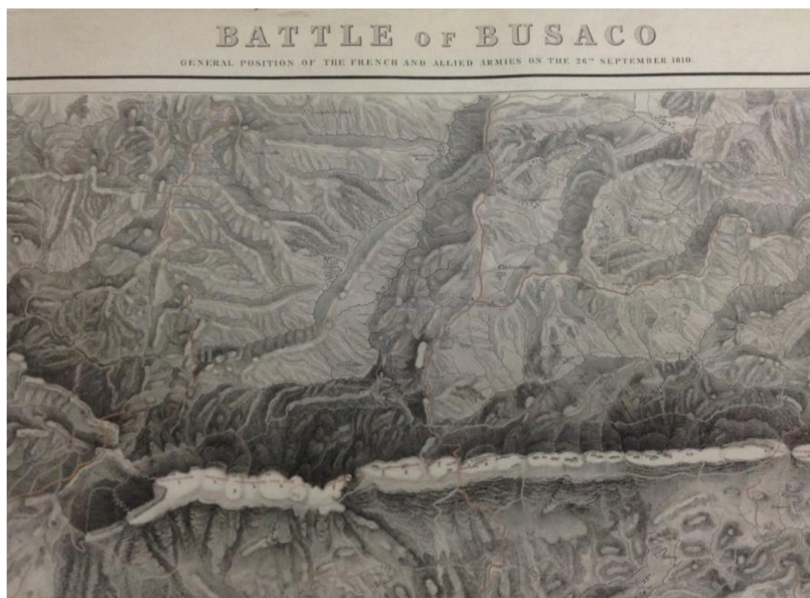


Figure 148. Mitchell, *Battle of Busaço – General Position of French and Allied Armies, 26 September 1810*, proof, detail.[23]

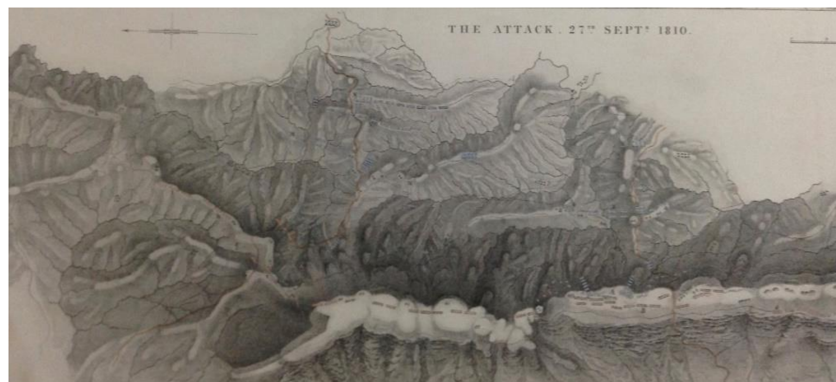


Figure 149. Mitchell, *Battle of Busaço – The Attack, 27 Sept 1810*, proof, detail.[24]

Figure 150 is a sketch by Colonel Henry Sturgeon, Mitchell's mentor, who had asked him to come and work with him after Badajoz, showing that Mitchell, though he surveyed the site himself after the war, was probably working from this sheet.

23. Courtesy of the National Archives, London, File No. 78.5624 (EC Img No. 2925)
24. Courtesy of the National Archives, London, File No. 78.5624 (EC Img No. 2925).

Figure 150. Henry Sturgeon, *Busaço* sketch.[25]

Sturgeon made an elaborate reworking of the whole ridge. Figure 151 is a detail showing the French battalions in blue and the Allies along the ridge. The heart-shaped enclosure at the bottom is the Carmelite monastery in its walled arboretum. Sturgeon seems to have chosen a shrunken crusted effect like the hide of a rhinoceros and enjoyed using intricate detail.

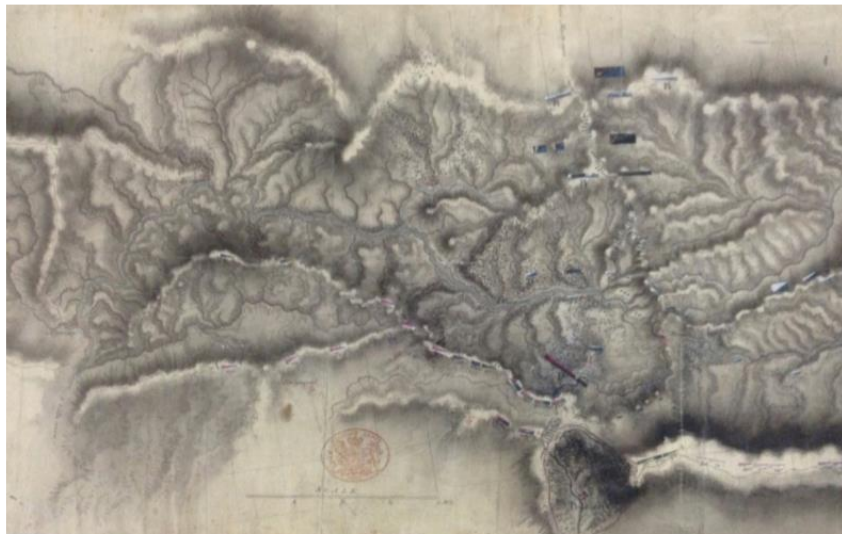


Figure 151. Henry Sturgeon, detail from a very long *Busaço* sketch (see Figure 152) .[26]

What is astonishing is the length (literally) that Sturgeon went to in order to depict the scene. The work (see Figure 152) is a narrow 'carpet runner' of a map that runs north from the Rio Mondego to Busaço and beyond. It is several metres long and has qualities of a Chinese scroll in its tonal values and decorative appeal.

25. Courtesy of the National Archives, London, File No. WD78/5970.
26. Courtesy of the National Archives, London, File No. WD78/5970.

Figure 152. Henry Sturgeon, Very long *Busaço* sketch.[27]

The versions, as they appear in the Atlas, have the British regiments in red strung along the teeth-like crests, the French in ranks of blue above on the page, though in reality they were below the crest (see Figure 153). The tone has been darkened from the proof and much black ink has been expended, throwing the crests into a sharp white contrast and the result loses much of the subtleties of the sketches.

27. Courtesy of the National Archives, London, WO78/5970.

Figure 153. Mitchell, *Battle of Busaço – General Position of French and Allied Armies, 26 September 1810, detail. Wyld's Atlas.*

In *The Attack* (Figure 154), the effect is even darker and more dramatic and the cut-out format gives the impression the French troops are arrayed up a Matterhorn-like mountain. Mitchell had to return to Australia before the printing, so this effect may not have been his choice.

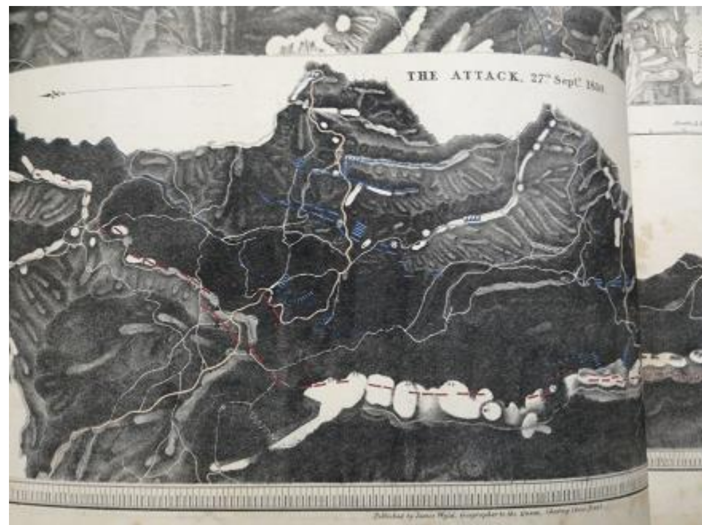
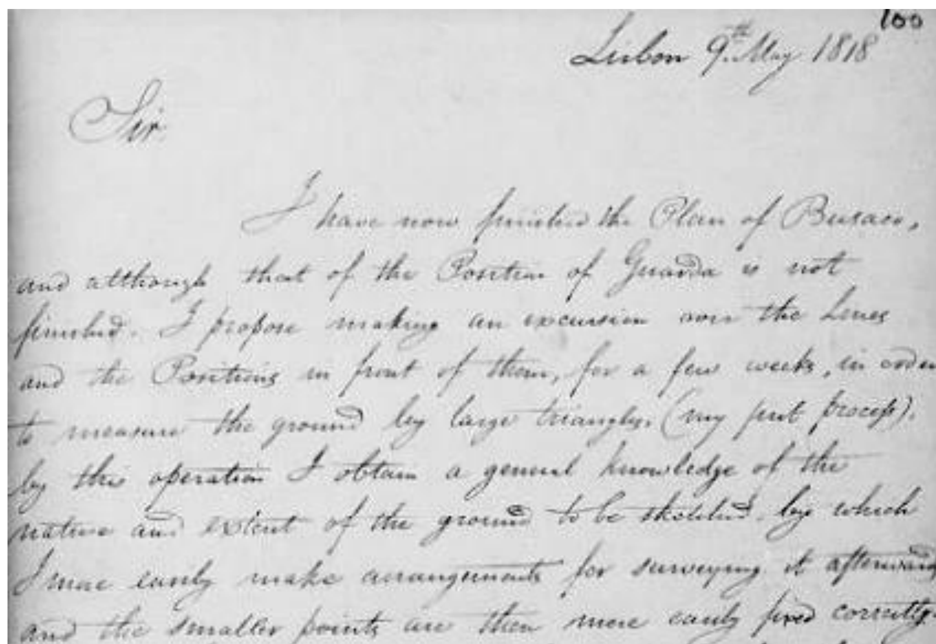


Figure 154. Mitchell, *Battle of Busaço – The Attack, 27 Sept 1810*, detail.*Wyld's Atlas*.

Mitchell's design for the full map of the combat at Busaço, inspired by the scale Sturgeon was working on, folds out to the size of a small tennis court (see Figure 155). It has the appearance of an attempt to make spatial history. The Mondego river runs down the right side and the Busaco escarpment across the middle, unfortunately right on the crease.

Figure 155. Atlas open at the Busaco map.[28]

On 9 May 1818 Mitchell wrote to Murray that he had completed the plan of Busaco and that, although the Position at Guarda was not finished, he proposed to start surveying the Lines of Torres Vedras. He gives an insight into his methods (see Figure 156).



100

Lisbon 9th May 1818

Sir

I have now finished the Plan of Busaco, and although that of the Position of Guarda is not finished. I propose making an excursion over the Lines and the Positions in front of them, for a few weeks, in order to measure the ground by large triangles, (my first process). by this operation I obtain a general knowledge of the nature and extent of the ground to be sketched, by which I more easily make arrangements for surveying it afterwards. and the smaller points are then more easily fixed correctly.

Figure 156. Mitchell’s letter to Murray, 9 May 1818, detail.[29]

28. Courtesy of the Mitchell Library, SLNSW.
29. Courtesy of SLV, microfilm of Murray records.

> I propose making an excursion over the Lines and the Positions in front of them, for a few weeks, in order to measure the ground by large triangles (my first process) by this operation I obtain a general knowledge of the nature and extent of the ground to be sketched…

It has already been noted how difficult the terrain of the Lines would be to survey, Oman's 'ganglion of mountains' (Section 8.5 – Portuguese Topography) but Mitchell seemed undeterred. He also had other things on his mind at the time for a month later on 10 June 1818, in the English Church in Lisbon, Lieutenant Mitchell married Mary Blunt, the 17-year-old daughter of Major General Blunt.[30]

9.4 Sturgeon's Style

Mitchell would not only have used the work of these experienced military surveyors for compiling the Atlas, but he would have been influenced by the style in which they worked, and, the speed at which he was able to sketch and spatially control unfamiliar country.

Another example of Sturgeon's art is a sheet titled *Affair with the Rear Guard of Marshal Soult's Army at Salamonde, on the 16th of May 1809* (Figure 157). It is difficult to guess what military and cartographic purposes it served, but it is undoubtedly a thing of beauty. With its swirling spray-like forms, the style verges on Rococo. It is exquisitely decorative. Surely, Sturgeon was aware he was doing more than presenting a military map.

Figure 157. Henry Sturgeon, *Affair with the Rear Guard of Marshal Soult's Army at Salamonde, on the 16th of May 1809*, ink and wash.[31]

30. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 75.
31. Courtesy of the National Archives, London, WO 78/5967.

The origin of the word Rococo is French, *rocaille*, meaning 'rock-work'. As a style, it evolved in France in the 1730s as a reaction against the pompous Baroque of Louis XIV's Versailles, and is principally a style of interior decoration characterised by C scrolls and counter curves in asymmetrical arrangements.[32]

It seems extraordinary to use such decorative artistry in a map, let alone one detailing a wartime engagement or, as quaintly described, an 'affair' (see Figure 158). Presumably, there is a narrative running, spiralling, through the design, and in style and format, and topographically it foretells Sturgeon's later elongated Busaço map.

Figure 158. Detail of Figure 157.

Did this design, or others like it, have an influence on Mitchell? The opening of the Atlas suggests it did, for the first pages reveal the use of landscape as a decorative framing device.

Figure 159 shows deeply fretted landforms elegantly curving across the page to frame the title, the landscape turned into a decorative, design. The scale is difficult to ascertain. Is it a chain of mountains, hills, or sand dunes? The caption printed here is the title of the page as it appears, the first item, on the list of contents. There are no page numbers. Is it the work of Pierrepoint, or is he, in this case, just responsible for the small map on the side? Or is it Mitchell channelling either Sturgeon's or Pierrepoint's style? Whoever it is, they seem to

32. Murray, *Dictionary of Art and Artists*, 174.

have sublimated the geology into an almost witty, Rococo topography, resembling ornate Bavarian plasterwork.[33]

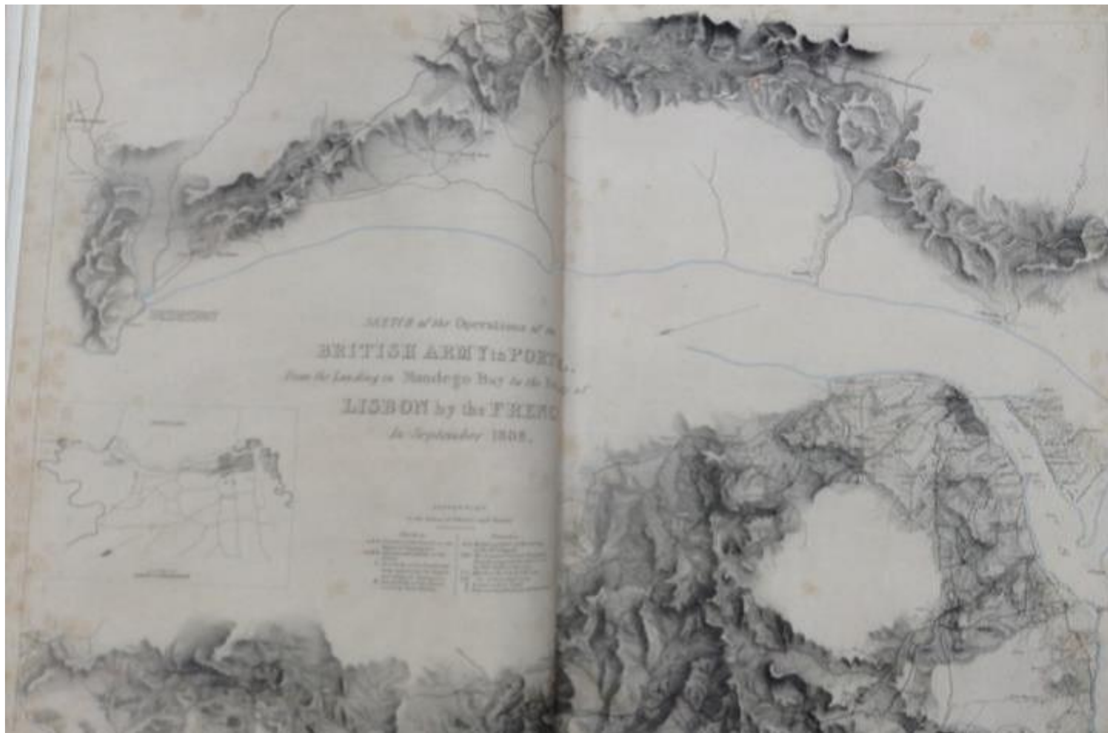


Figure 159. Mitchell, *Sketch of the Operations of the British Army in Portugal from the Landing in Mondego Bay to the Evacuation of Lisbon by the French in September 1808. With a plan of Peniche. Surveyed by Major Pierrepoint DAQMG. Wyld's Atlas*. [34]

Figure 160. Henry Sturgeon, *Terrain Rendering*, detail.[35]

The sheet (Figure 160), also signed by Sturgeon, shows an intense study of 'rough undulating ground'. Deft short strokes of a pen or pencil are used to describe rising ground. To modern

33. At the time of writing a Pevsner essay, read long ago, showing just such linear swirling patterns, remains elusive.
34. First item on the Atlas's List of Contents, but pages are not numbered.
35. Courtesy of the National Archives, London, WO 78/5967.

eyes the effect is pleasing, an abstract image, the intensive but lively patterning resembling the penmanship of van Gogh.

A further example of Sturgeon's variety of style is his somewhat eccentric design of the *Heights of Grijo*, that he titled, spaced thus,

> *Advance of the Right Column of the British Army*
> *under the Command of Lieut Gen Sir Arthur Wellesley K.B*
> *towards Oporto on the 11th of May, 1809, and Affair with the*
> *Enemy upon the Heights of Grijo* (see B)

Figure 161. Henry Sturgeon, *Affair with the Enemy upon the Heights of Grijo*, 1809.

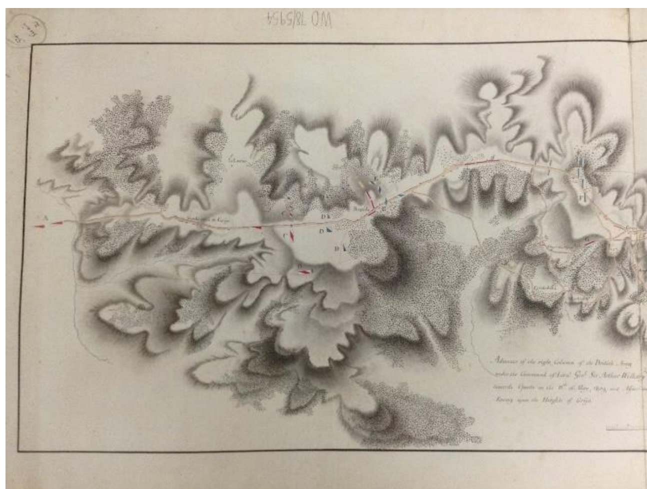


Figure 162. Detail of left half of Figure 161.

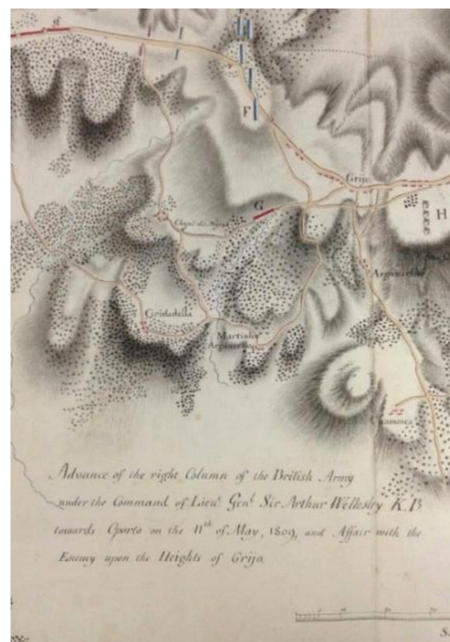


Figure 163. Detail of Figure 162, showing the title.

The dynamic design, held together by a sinuous line with an organic patterning of an oak leaf form and a vigorous stippling effect, transcends the requirements of providing geographical

and tactical information. This is the work of an imaginative professional artist. Looked at impassively, it is impossible to date within a century or two.

In looking for any obvious influence on Mitchell, it can be arguably found in, say, his map of Guarda, which has layers of detail in each valley depicted with a similar style of stippling and flecking that gives great depth to the rendition (see Figure 164, Figure 165 and Figure 166).

Figure 164. *Position at Guarda. Wyld's Atlas*

Figure 165. Detail of Figure 164, top right area.

Figure 166. *Position at Guarda*, detail of Figure 164, lower mid area.

The exposure of these works on paper is important as it provides a clue to Mitchell's artistic development. He would have learnt much from being with, and being taught by men, who could produce work like this. It could have been what inspired him to further his artistic education in England before coming to Australia. Furthermore, as described previously, he would have learnt how to provide clear and persuasive information at speed to the QMG's

department. It was thus he could absorb and record all the voluminous daily information on his expeditions often in less than ideal circumstances.

In fact, for the last year of the campaign, Mitchell was almost continually surveying for Murray's department, as the French were gradually pushed north past Vittoria and Pamplona and into the Pyrenees. He never fought with his regiment again, thus missing out both on the chance of gaining rank by being present at battles and, significantly for his character, the camaraderie of regimental life. Of course, it has to be noted that missing battles probably raised his life expectation, and he survived the war without a scratch.

While at the same time, surveying was not necessarily any safer for colleagues and friends, and Henry Sturgeon was shot while riding through a vineyard at Vic-en-Bigorre in southern France a few days before the end of the war. Strangely, and for a mapmaker, spatially, his death was right beside the Greenwich Meridian.[36] Mitchell gave him the grandest of all memorials, naming the craggy mountain after him that is the southern sentinel of the Grampians at Dunkeld (see Figure 167).

Figure 167. Mount Sturgeon.[37]

36. 43.23N, 0.04E.
37. Courtesy of Trailhiking Australia.

9.5 General Mitchell – from Los Arapiles to Mount Arapiles

In Australia Felix, and the regions of the previous expeditions, Mitchell was an artistic general on campaign, himself playing the tripartite role of a surveyor for the QMG's department, the Quartermaster-General himself and, proudly, the Surveyor-General of New South Wales. With his little army of uniformed and armed convicts, he re-enacted the war he missed much of, and perhaps he saw himself as Wellington. This concept of the Australia Felix expedition being a military campaign, a re-run of his Peninsular War, was predicted when he wrote home to his mother in Scotland in March 1815 on the eve of travelling to Madrid to obtain royal permission for the surveys in Spain:

> I am not very sorry to learn that Napoleon has landed in France and is likely to kindle the War once more in France. It is only during war that I am happy. This may seem to you a terrible disposition; but it is really at present mine, and the few days of happiness which my life has afforded me were all in the 'tented field'.[38]

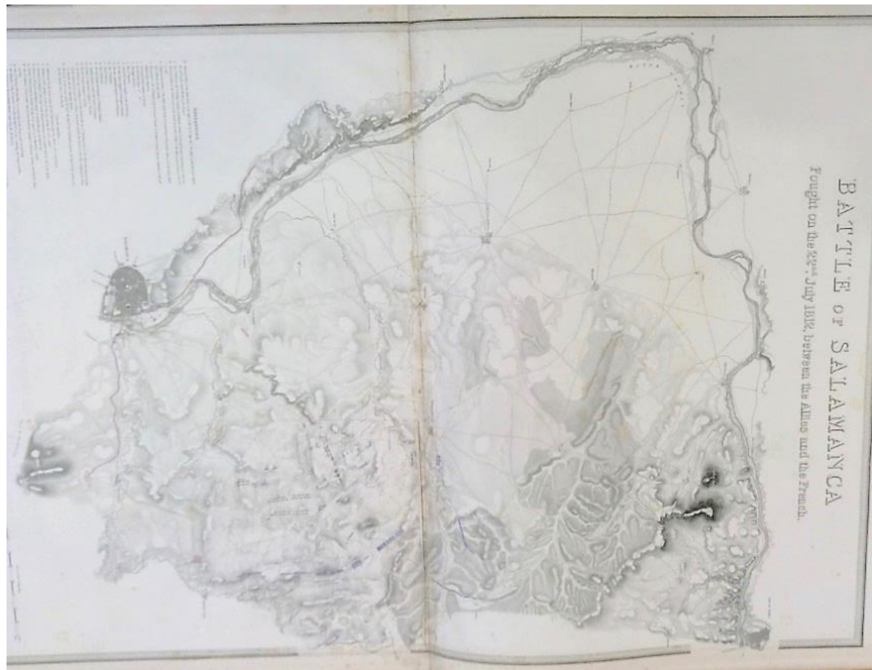
The interest in the name of the remote mountain beyond the Grampians started this quest and inspired this thesis, and the origin of the naming of Mount Arapiles starts at Salamanca. Why did Mitchell call the rocky, ramparted massif that, having baldly stated without any further explanation in his journal entry for 23 July 1836, 'I ascended this hill on the anniversary of the battle of Salamanca, and hence the name?'[39]

9.6 The Battle of Salamanca

The plan of the Battle of Salamanca (see Figure 168), as it appears in the Atlas, has been reorientated in this section to fit the page and the compass. The city is the neat, round shape on the left. The Tomes River runs up along the east side, taking a sharp turn to run down past the city. The map has varied detail and is difficult to follow, even on a large scale. The Arapil Hills are on the lower right of the left page.

38. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 50.
39. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:190.

North



South

Figure 168. Mitchell, main map of the *Battle of Salamanca.Wyld's Atlas*.

The battle proper started when Wellington ordered a general attack at the civilised hour of 2.45 pm.[40] One is tempted to say after lunch.[41] And at times these battles do sound like football matches, and there were rules of war; in theory, the killing was reserved for the battles. At the end of each engagement the score was carefully counted; the numbers of the dead, the wounded, and the prisoners taken. It was the guerrillas who ignored the rules. Whether he had eaten or not, Marmont was hit in the arm by shrapnel in the first salvo in the afternoon and badly wounded, which put him at a disadvantage and the French briefly without a commander.

Figure 169 is a small detail of an original plan of the Battle of Salamanca. It shows a British battery on Arapil Chico, the small flat-topped mound in the centre left, with Arapil Grande above where the French commander, Marshal Marmont, had a higher vantage point. The village of Los Arapiles lies between the two long ranks of combatants to the south. It would appear the British field guns were firing over an Allied company, shown in the red block A, lined up between the two craggy hills.

40. Robertson, *An Atlas of the Peninsular War*, 78.
41. In fact a point of history is that lunch was not a feature of the day then. Mitchell records his plan for the working day in England in 1820 as 'Rise At 6, 9-10 Breakfast, 10 go to Sir George's, Work till 3, Dinner at 4.30, Read till 7, Walk till 9, Read poetry till 10.'

Figure 169. Charles Pierrepoint, *Battle of Salamanca*, draft plan, detail of Los Arapiles.[42]

Whether it cost him the battle is hard to say due to the complex manoeuvrings of the opposing forces over the wide plain around and beyond the hills, and every account is different. One casual early reading had a large French contingent chasing an Allied supply train mistaken for a British regiment retreating but this is not mentioned in other descriptions. Ian Robertson uses six maps compared to one for each day of the two Fuentes de Oñoro battles. By evening the French general, Foy, was unable to withstand a renewed allied attack and ‘as darkness fell the French retreat developed into a stampede as they fled south east through the woods, despite the fact that the Allies were by then too exhausted to pursue vigorously.’[43]

Mitchell’s 95th Green Jackets were held in reserve to the west behind Arapil Chico and never engaged, but in this case he could say he was present at not just a battle, but, arguably, Wellington’s most decisive victory against Napoleon’s forces: ‘Without doubt – as Foy candidly admitted – it had been Wellington’s most brilliant offensive battle to date. It greatly enhanced his reputation and encouraged the Spaniards to maintain their resistance.’[44]

Foster writes that it was ‘considered by some to be Wellington’s most brilliant action. The beating of 40,000 men in 40 minutes, with French casualties totalling between 14,000 and 15,000 compared with Allied casualties of about 5,000.’[45]

42. Courtesy of the National Archives, London.
43. Robertson, *An Atlas of the Peninsular War*, 81.
44. Ibid.
45. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 27.

He does not give a reference for the neat figures, but 40 minutes suggests the battle should have finished by 3.30 pm. Nevertheless, though the war dragged on for another couple of years, giving plenty of battle sites for Mitchell to survey, the victory determined the French never regained full control of Spain. And, of course, 24 years later on the 22 July 1836, Mitchell climbed a rocky massif in the west of Australia Felix and later called it Mount Arapiles.

The larger scale of this part of the map of the Salamanca battlefield (see Figure 170) shows a beautifully rendered landscape, very subtly washed and shaded, so it looks like a nineteenth-century version of a Google Earth map, with positions and diagrammatic movements clearly shown within a controlled and attractive aesthetic, which Mitchell would have had at hand to use in the plan for the Atlas.

Figure 170. Detail of Figure 169.[46]

Figure 171 is a version of the working proof that plainly shows a cut-out placed over the Arapil part of the map, presumably from a print of the map in Figure 170.

46. Courtesy of the National Archives, London.

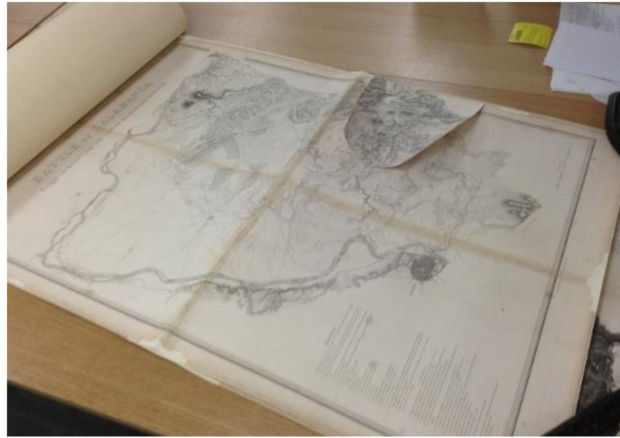


Figure 171. *Battle of Salamanca*, working proof.[47]

According to the separate photograph of the fine copperplate signature, which almost certainly belongs to the same sheet, it was created by Major Charles Pierrepoint, Assistant Quartermaster-General, and Captain Colleton of the Royal Staffordshire Regiment (see Figure 172). Pierrepoint would have been a brilliant mentor to Mitchell and was second only to him in the number of plans illustrated in the Atlas.[48] Foster describes him when appointed captain in the 20th Foot (Lancashire Fusiliers) in September 1806 as even then being considered an artist of considerable ability. He was promoted to Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General in April 1811, and made Major Assistant Quartermaster-General three months later.

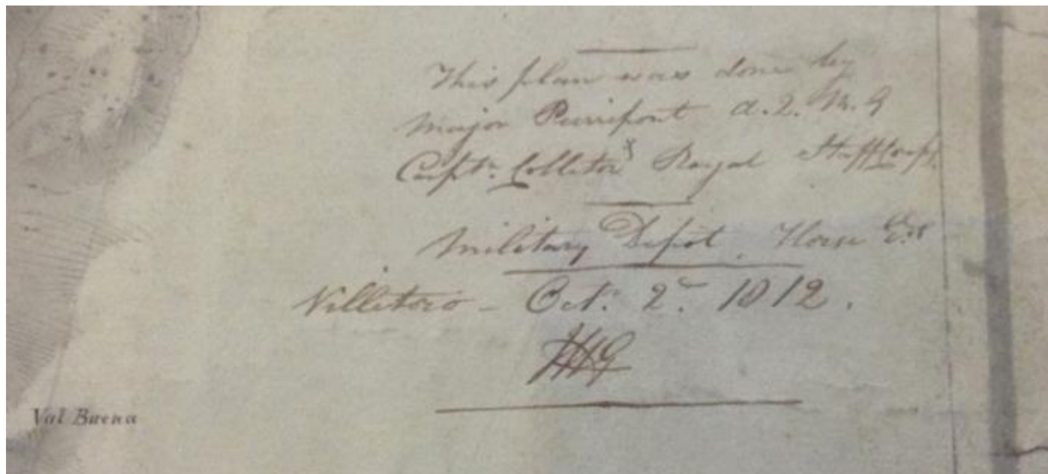


Figure 172. Charles Pierrepoint, signatures on working drawing for plan of Battle of Salamanca, detail.[49]

47. Courtesy of the National Archives, London
48. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 21.
49. Courtesy of the National Archives, London.

It reads, 'This plan was drawn by Major Pierrepoint a 2.QMG, CaptColleton, Royal Staff Corps, Military Depot, Horse Gds(?), Villetoro, Oct.2nd, 1812, QMG (?).' What is so odd and tragic is the date given. Pierrepoint was killed at the Siege of Burgos on 19th September 1812.

9.7 Art as Reportage

Aside from the great map in the Atlas, what was Mitchell's pictorial version of events on the 22 July 1812? As mentioned, his regiment was kept in reserve and he probably did not witness any action. However, he did produce a masterful print of the city of Salamanca, which has been much reproduced in the Peninsular War literature and illustrated by both Foster and John Cumpston. It is a view across the Tomes River, with its multi-arched viaduct of a Roman bridge to the university city, dominated by its great cathedral (see Figure 173).

Figure 173. Mitchell, *Salamanca, Capture of the Forts, 27th June 1812*, lithograph.*Wyld's Atlas*.

It takes a while to notice that the beautifully rendered clouds are, in fact, huge columns of smoke rising from the buildings in the distance. They are the French forts on fire from the British bombardment.

The unfinished pencil and watercolour sketch in the SLNSW collection is evidently the model for the lithograph (see Figure 174). Was this what Mitchell witnessed well over three weeks before the battle? Did he sketch the billowing smoke at the time, and was he able to

paint the watercolour of the burning city then? The damaged condition of the paper, which gives it a certain charm as a relic, suggests that the image was made on the spot, and so did go on campaign with Mitchell; however, the handling of the clouds of smoke is extraordinarily proficient for one so young.

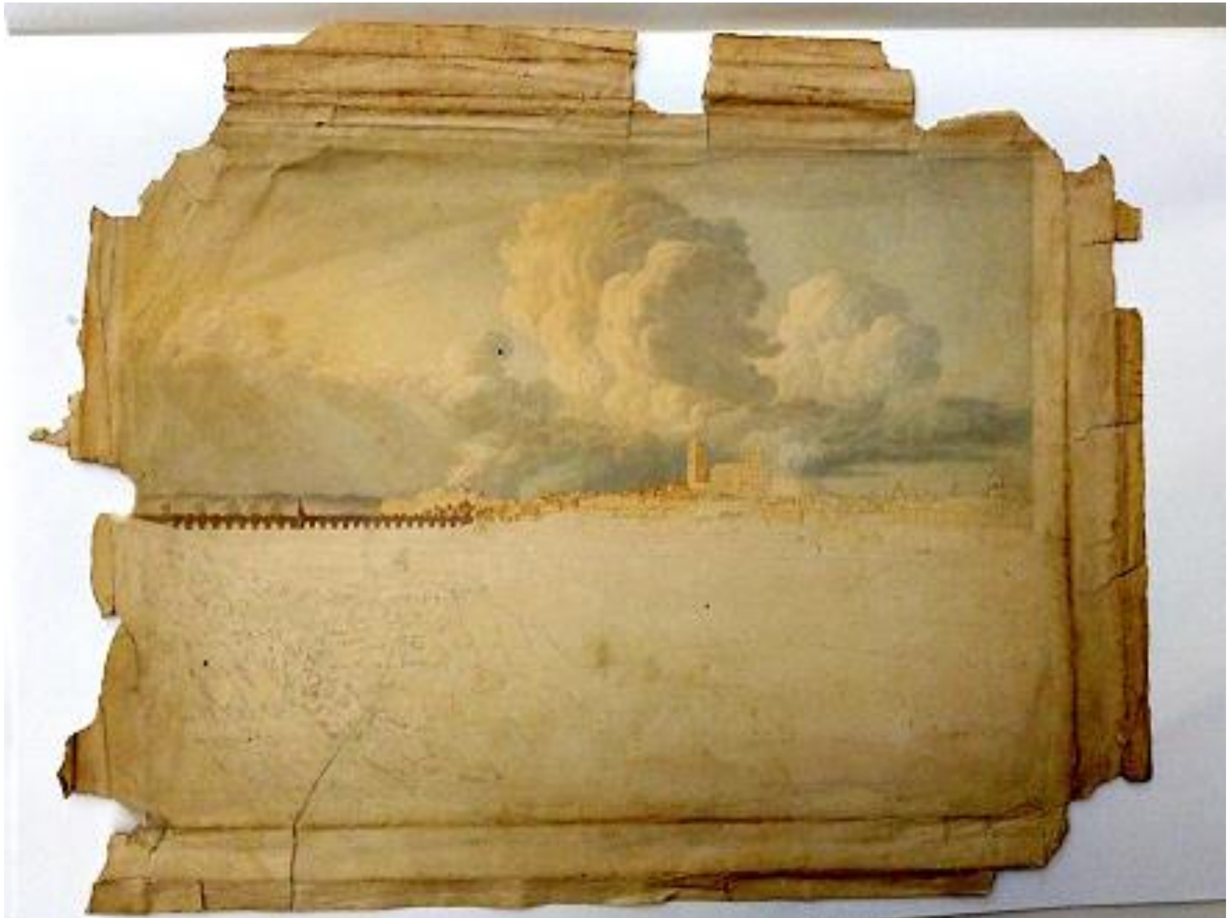


Figure 174. Mitchell, untitled view of Salamanca, pencil and watercolour.[50]

In Figure 175, the detail of the painting reveals Mitchell's skilful treatment of the smoke. Salamanca Cathedral appears to be on fire, though that impression is corrected in the print. The lithograph in the Atlas taken from this image clearly shows the cathedral apparently unharmed and the date clearly fixed in the title as 27th June 1812, so Mitchell must have made the image about then.

At the time, the period of the Reform Bills being fought over, they could be considered subversive images for they symbolised the destruction of a corrupt and unpopular institution.

50. Courtesy of the SLNSW.

Wellington, as leader of the anti-reform Tory party, was to have one of his tenures as prime minister later that year.

Figure 175. Detail of Figure 173.

One can only guess that he sketched and washed the delicate billowing forms on the spot, pencilled in the essentials and had to leave the rest unfinished. It is a miracle that it has survived at all. It is both art and war reportage given that Mitchell became a war artist at the age of 20.

The most famous contemporary studies of buildings on fire are J. M. W. Turner's of the burning of the Houses of Parliament on the night of 16 October 1834. Turner, living nearby, was on the spot and sketched the cataclysm, and the watching crowds, in watercolour all night. It was both art and reportage.[51] This resulted in two of Turner's greatest oil paintings, views of the inferno reflected in the Thames (see Figure 176 and Figure 177). The pair reside in two American provincial galleries, to the chagrin of Kenneth Clark, the art historian and wartime director of the National Gallery, who wrote: 'Both versions of this historic event are in American museums and are among the very few works of art I would have felt justified in forcibly retaining in England.'[52]

51. Evelyn Joll, 'The Burning of the Houses of Parliament,' in *Turner*, ed., Michael Lloyd (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 1996), 87–99.
52. Kenneth Clark, *The Romantic Rebellion* (London: John Murray, 1973), 257.

Figure 176. Joseph M. W. Turner, *The Burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons, 16th October, 1834*, 1835, oil on canvas.[53]

Figure 177. Joseph M. W. Turner, *The Burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons, 16th October, 1834*, 1835, oil on canvas.[54]

53. Courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, accessed September 21, 2020, https://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/103831.html?mulR=2144034067|7.
54. Courtesy of the Cleveland Museum of Art, accessed September 21, 2020, https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1942.647.

At the time, the period of the Reform Bills being fought over, they could be considered subversive images for they symbolised the destruction of a corrupt and unpopular institution. Wellington, as leader of the anti-reform Tory party, was to have one of his tenures as prime minister later that year. Would Mitchell have been aware of the paintings? He would have missed their showing in London in 1835, but by then his friendship with Conrad Martens, who admired Turner above all contemporary artists, would have ignited interest in him. In fact, Martens never returned to England, so never got to see Turner's later works, whereas Mitchell would have had some opportunity on his return visits. In Australia, Turner's work could only be seen in Tasmania when the Bishop of Tasmania, Francis Nixon, exhibited oils and watercolours by him, which he owned in 1845.[55] When preparing the Salamanca images for publication in London in 1839–40, would Mitchell have sought out Turner's work and studied it then?

It is perhaps unfair, and impudent, to compare Mitchell's work to Turner's, and one should use something similar made by Turner when he was 20 in 1795, or, at least, in the same year as Salamanca. In fact, in 1812 Turner was commenting obliquely on contemporary events when he was exhibiting his monumental *Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps* (see Figure 178), where the Carthaginian general on his elephant is a minuscule distant dab of paint about to be swallowed up in the vortex of a black and white tempest.

Figure 178. Joseph M. W. Turner, *Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps*,1812, oil on canvas.[56]

55. Andrew Sayers, 'Turner and the Origins of Landscape Painting in Australia,' in *Turner*, ed., Michael Lloyd (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 1996), 202–213.
56. Courtesy of the Tate Gallery, London, accessed September 21, 2020, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-snow-storm-hannibal-and-his-army-crossing-the-alps-n00490

Simon Schama alludes to the canvas being, for Turner, a demonstration of hubris, based on his (speculated) reaction to David's propaganda painting of a triumphant Napoleon crossing the Alps on the horse Marengo.[57] The winter of 1812 was to see the disastrous Russian campaign and retreat from Moscow, when Napoleon lost 400,000 men from his Grand Armée, and authority to rule Europe, let alone any credibility that he cared for his troops.[58]

In this way, Mitchell's image of the baroque clouds of smoke over Salamanca could be seen as a symbol of the turning of the tide of French control of Spain and therefore a visual portent of the eventual defeat of Bonaparte's empire. It goes without saying that Mitchell's drawing ability gives a wholly convincing depiction of space. It conveys a spatial history as it was happening. The torn sheet is itself a fragment of history. In 1996 these three key works by Turner where exhibited in Australia at the NGA and the NGV as part of exhibition of his paintings called simply 'Turner'.

9.8 Cuidad Salamanca

Why did Mitchell take such care in drawing up the plan of the walled city of Salamanca (see Figure 179) when the battle had been fought over the plains well to the south of the city?

Figure 179. Mitchell, *Salamanca with the French Forts with the Batteries and Trenches erected before them in June 1812*, from plans in the Ordnance Office. *Wyld's Atlas*.

57. Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 462.
58. 'Napeoleon Retreats from Moscow,' History.com, last modified October 16, 2020, accessed February 13, 2021, https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/napoleon-retreats-from-moscow, 13.2.21.

Was it to show the large construction in the lower-left corner, the fortification the French had built using material from the demolition of the three convents (see Figure 180)? He has clearly named the 'Ruins' and even detailed the rubble.

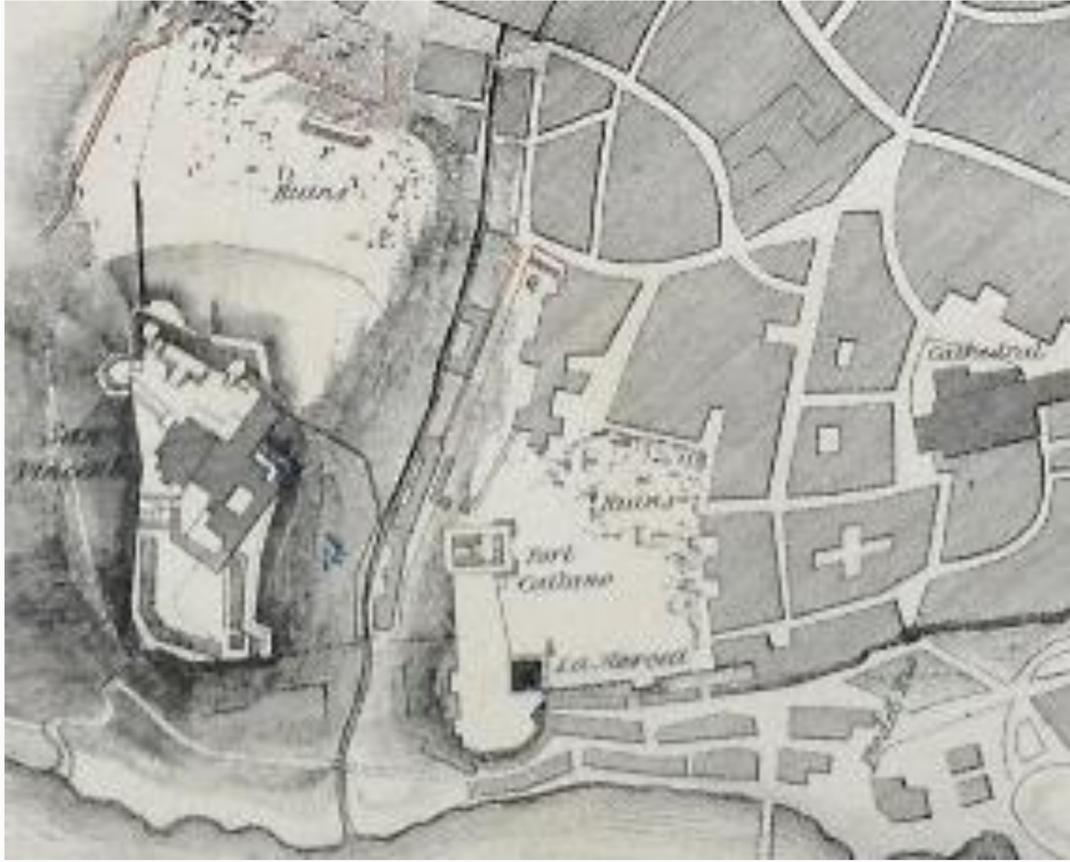


Figure 180. Detail of Figure 179.

Interestingly, Mitchell delineates but does not name the jewel at the centre of Salamanca, the Plaza Mayor, carved out of the mediaeval town by Alberto de Churriguera and his nephew, Manuel de Churriguera, in the eighteenth century. 'Churrigueresque' is the name given to the architectural style of elaborately sculpted facades and church interiors, which generations of the family produced, and characterises an extreme and very Spanish version of baroque.[59] However, the more restrained decoration of Salamanca's square suggests the emergence of a Spanish neoclassical style. It was in this splendid setting that Wellington was welcomed by the citizenry when he entered the city on 17 June 1812.

While Mitchell was working in Salamanca, Gioacchino Rossini was composing his most popular opera *The Barber of Seville*, the prequel in storyline to Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, itself an interpretation of Beaumarchais' trilogy of plays. The comedies were at first

59. Fletcher, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method* 845–6.

banned in France by the king for the plot showed the servants running rings round their aristocratic masters. Their popularity could have been an influence on the French Revolution. There followed a fashion for operas with a Spanish theme that ran through the nineteenth century from Beethoven's *Fidelio* to the most performed of all, Bizet's *Carmen*. Verdi set four of his operas in Spain and even the heroine of his *La Traviata* has a Spanish band at her parties in Paris. [60]

Spain, which had been the richest most powerful European nation in the sixteenth century, had descended into poverty and irrelevance, as Mitchell was experiencing. It was an exotic stage for playing out violent passions. It had become 'the other'.

There is something operatic about much of Mitchell's exploits in Australia. As Carter points out:

> If the narratives of Sturt and Eyre have the melodramatic appeal of serialised stories, then the journals of Mitchell suggest operatic pageants, where scene after scene of exotic incident has the paradoxical has the effect of making the reader forget exactly where he is.[61]

The narrative of the expedition sings out to be converted into a grand tragi-comic opera. The ingredients are all there: a male chorus of convicts, a genuine multicultural cast, dramas, dangers, and dancing – and the flawed hero in a silly hat looking like a squashed pumpkin.

Mitchell spent from late September to just before Christmas 1815 in Salamanca surveying and trying to draw up the plans, during which time the weather was mostly appalling. His diary entries include 'continual rain from 23 to 31 October, making sketching very difficult.'[62] The rain in Spain …

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[60] http://www.operapulse.com/opera-library/2012/12/23/the-rain-in-spain-verdis-spanish-operas/
[61] Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, 108-9.
62. Foster, *Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World*, 55.

Figure 181 shows the view across part of the battlefield of Salamanca from the French Command position on Arapil Grande towards Arapil Chico, which is where the British salvo was launched that took Marshall Marmont’s arm. The city of Salamanca lies beyond.

Figure 181. Edward Coleridge, *The Origin of Mount Arapiles*, oil on panel, with applied frieze of French and British cavalry, infantry and artillery of the period.

The sketching of this view was cut short by drops from the lowering clouds. It proceeded to rain continuously for three days on a drive from there through an unseen Spanish landscape, north east through Burgos and Bilbao, and on to Vitoria and Pamplona, all awash.

The rain in Spain …

Part II – Mapping in Australia Felix

Twenty-four years after the events at Salamanca, Mitchell and his party arrived at the strange monadnock that rises from the flat plain west of the Grampians. He was enthralled and, as mentioned, was busy and productive during his short two-day visit during which he made three conceptually different and influential images.

9.9 Landscape with Figures

The *Mitre Rock and Lake from Mount Arapiles* image is Mitchell's 'iconic' view from the mountain that overlooks the flat plains of the Wimmera that stretch unruffled to the north (see Figure 182). This figure is a photograph of a slightly foxed plate in a nicely aged copy of the 1837 first edition of the *Three Expeditions* is of a much better quality than the facsimile reproduction of the second edition**.**

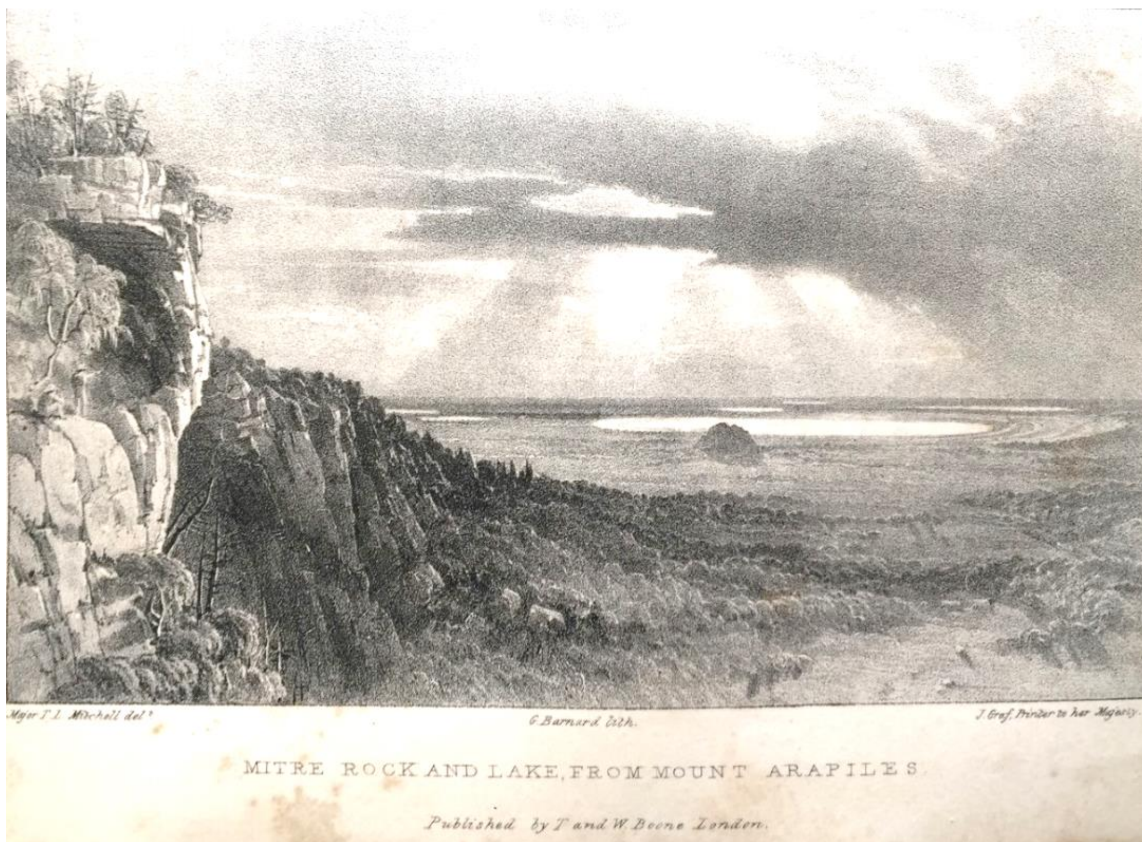

Figure 182. *Mitre Rock and Lake, from Mount Arapiles*, lithograph.[63]

There is nothing naïve about Mitchell's composition. The cloud is masterfully wrought so that it counterbalances the overhanging vegetation on the cliff, and the arch it describes

63. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:189, plate 31. G Barnard, lithographer, First Edition .

mirrors the curve of the darkly forested spur of the hill, both framing the distant lake. Meanwhile the outcrop Mitchell aptly named, given that it resembles a bishop's mitre, acts as an ideal focal point in the middle distance.

Not noticeable at first are two men perched precariously on the cliff face almost as *repoussoir* figures pointing at the magnificent view north across a lake-strewn plain (see Figure 183), though their gesture is somewhat false because Mitchell had already ascertained that the cluster of lakes held no promise. The lack of camp fires in that direction also suggested to him they were salty.

Figure 183. Detail of Figure 182, showing the figures on the cliff face.

Mitchell made a watercolour version of the view, where he forms foreground rocks as if they are the remains of some ancient fortress, a common theme at the time of explorers and travellers wanting to find such romantic elements of the European picturesque in the Australian landscape.[64]

64. Dixon, *The Course of Empire*, 118, plate 29: Thomas Mitchell, *The Mitre Rock and Lake, From Mount Arapiles.*

9.10 Landforms and Technology – The Anaglyptograph

On his second day at Mount Arapiles, Mitchell, determined to examine the lakes to the north of which he had counted 27 from the highest summit, went to explore them. He found a remarkable series of puzzling land forms, a consistency of shallow round lakes or lake beds with smooth curving mounds on the eastern sides. He surveyed the largest with a substantial green hill and found,

> There was a remarkable analogy in the form of and position of all these hills; the form being usually that of a curve, concentric with the lake, and the position invariably on the eastern or north-eastern shores, a peculiarity I had previously observed not only in the lakes near the banks of the Murray, but also in others on the Murrumbidgee and the Lachlan where the ridge consisted of red sand.[65]

Mitchell proudly presents his survey of Greenhill Lake, having modelled it and applied the new invention of the anaglyptograph to it. This was typical of Mitchell in that he would try out the latest technology to illustrate his discoveries.

Eccleston emphasises the importance to mapmaking of Mitchell's adaption of the medal-engraving machine invented by John Bates. He was the first person to do this and the first European to take an interest in these geographical features, now known as *lunettes*, which are common in the southern parts of Australia. It was only in the 1980s that an explanation for their creation was made by geologist Jim Bowler as a wind-formed process in the cold dry Pleistocene age over 15,000 years ago.[66]

Mitchell made a clay model of the landform from his survey, and the line engraver, using Bate's machine, was able to produce a contoured three-dimensional effect of Greenhill Lake (see Figure 184 and Figure 185).

65. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:190.
66. Eccleston, *Major Mitchell's 1836 Australia Felix Expedition*, 107–119.

Figure 184. *Plan of Hills beside Greenhill Lake*.[67]

Figure 185. Detail of Figure 184

The success of the Greenhill Lake print led Mitchell to experiment with the same process for the Atlas. This resulted in his hugely ambitious production of a relief map of the Pyrenees, which involved making a model in plaster of Paris of the whole mountain range. This map appears in the Atlas as per Figure 186. Figure 187 is a close-up, indicating the detail of the map. It is 'the most extensive survey in the massive volume.'[68]

Figure 186. *Two pages of the MAP of a Portion of the Pyrenees, in Four Plates, surveyed by Major Sir T L Mitchell.Wyld's Atlas*.

67. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:190, plate 32.
68 Foster, 36.

Figure 187. Detail of Figure 186

9.11 Geology – Rendering Rocks

The composition of Plate 33 of the *Three Expeditions* journal is taken from the masterful geological–topographical drawing preserved in the SLNSW archives onto which he has written colour notes (see Figure 188). This study of the rock formation on the western side of Mount Arapiles, which Mitchell drew on 24 July 1836, was mistakenly, but understandably, filed with Spanish drawings.

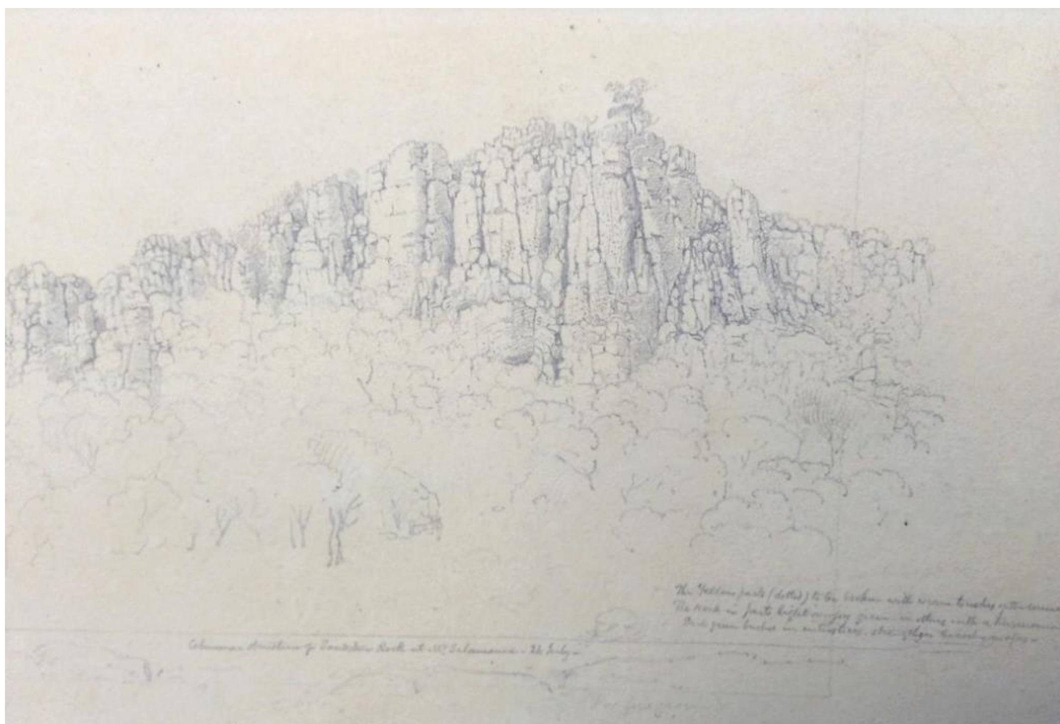

Figure 188. *Columnar Structure of Sandstone Rock at Mt Salamanca, 24 July 1836.*[69]

69. Courtesy of the SLNSW, File No. DG*D21 13.

Here was the imagined great mountain in Spain, the eminence that overlooks the battlefield of Salamanca according to writers and historians who have not had the chance to go there. Both Arapil Chico and Arapil Grande are good viewpoints, but they were more part of the field of battle than the remote backdrop.

As can be seen on the drawing, Mitchell has written colour notes for use later as he had no time to put a wash on if he had any watercolours with him:

> The yellow parts (dotted)to be broken (?) with warm touches of the same.
> The rock in parts light … green l … in others with a h…
> Dark green branches in interstices (?) strengthen the rocky …

There was no apparent use of them during the expedition; however, they would have assisted his reworking of the image for the masterful lithograph (Plate 33) engraved by Barnard, which suggests Mitchell must have made extensive notes of the flora and fauna at the site (see Figure 189). The treescape, as it might be called, at the foot of the cliff is immensely detailed and variegated, and there is the classical repoussoir tree on the left, with a corresponding lower shrub in blossom on the right. Kangaroos and wallabies make ideal local staffage.

Figure 189. *Western Extremity of Mount Arapiles*.[70]

70. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:192, plate 33.

As with Plate 41, he has used a squall trailing a shower as an expressive gesture leaping from behind the cliff face.

Other artists were inspired by Mitchell's views to go there. Nicolas Chevalier who travelled with Georg Neumayer's scientific expedition in 1862, part of a magnetic survey of the colony, was commissioned to paint Mount Arapiles by Alexander Wilson, or his brother Charles, the owner of the station that then included the monolith (see Figure 190).[71]

Christine Dixon points out in the NGA catalogue that such collaborations of artists and scientists were common at the time: 'When art was frequently seen to be a handmaiden of science, rather than its opposite.'[72] Mitchell could be said to manifest a duality of both science and art in his own methods, interests and output; at this stage it can now be argued with few if any equals.

Figure 190. Nicolas Chevalier, *Mount Arapiles and the Mitre Rock*, 1863, oil on canvas.[73]

Dixon emphasises the themes of the sublime studied in this thesis and brings Turner into her analysis as well, noting the scale of the composition dominating the tiny cattle:

71. Christine Dixon, "Nicolas Chevalier, Mount Arapiles and the Mitre Rock, 1863," National Gallery of Australia, last modified 2010, accessed September 28, 2020, https://cs.nga.gov.au/detail.cfm?irn=62487.
72. Ibid.
73. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, accessed September 28, 2020, https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/detail.cfm?irn=62487

> In *Mount Arapiles and the Mitre Rock*, Chevalier portrayed the might of nature compared with the efforts of humans. This was an important theme of the Sublime, the aesthetic doctrine concerned with the awe-inspiring, indifferent and immeasurable vastness of creation, made manifest in the paintings of J. M. W. Turner.[74]

It would seem Chevalier has used a certain amount of 'artistic licence' to achieve his effects. Not only has he shifted the Mitre Lake a mile or so south to conveniently reflect Mitre Rock, which he has also shrunk and shunted towards the cliffs, but he has evidently taken Mitchell's drawing of the cliffs of the western extremity and turned it around. The profile is almost the same in reverse. The Wilsons commissioned the painting, which was exhibited in Melbourne in 1864 to high praise.

The NGV has a view Chevalier also painted from the eastern rim of Mount Arapiles looking towards the Grampians.[75] As a composition, it would make an ideal pair with Eugene von Guérard's painting *View of the Grampians and Victoria Ranges from Mount Rouse* (see Figure 126). Von Guérard – who also went on an important expedition with his friend and fellow countryman, Georg von Neumayer, for the magnetic survey of Mount Kosciusko in 1862 – visited the area in 1868. He stayed for a week near Mount Arapiles on the Wilsons' station and did numerous drawings of the rock formations. He had traced both of Mitchell's views of Mount Arapiles, as he did with other Mitchell landscapes, into the folio he called his *Australien Reminiszenzen.* Ruth Pullin records his diary entry at the time:

> Wednesday 14 Oct, dreadful wind overnight … rain began … arrived at the foot of the rock after 2 hours on foot. Tried unsuccessfully to find Chevalier's standpoint. Climbed up the broken and fissured rocks sketched …[76]

It is not surprising that von Guérard could not find Chevalier's standpoint if it was an invention! He found and drew Mitchell's view two days later and much later painted it, for a commission, as *The Mitre Rock and Lake from Mount Arapiles*, which, it seems, was unavailable for the great retrospective on von Guérard in 2011 (see Figure 191). That exhibition restored the German artist's reputation from a century of oblivion due to the research of the curator, Dr Ruth Pullin.[77]

74. Ibid.
75. Nicholas Chevalier, Mount Arapiles, on canvas on composition board, 1863, NGV.
76. Ruth Pullin, *The Artist as Traveller: The Sketchbooks of Eugene von Guérard* (Ballarat, Vic: Art Gallery of Ballarat in association with the State Library of Victoria, 2018), 254.
77. Ruth Pullin, co-curator Michael Varcoe-Cocks, *Eugène von Guérard: Nature Revealed* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2011), retrospective exhibition catalogue.

Figure 191. Eugene von Guérard*, The Mitre Rock and Lake from Mount Arapiles*, 1874, oil on canvas.[78]

Figure 192 is the scene from the present-day viewing platform, which shows the accuracy of topography, geology, and light that von Guérard, inspired by Mitchell, was able to achieve from his hard-won sketches.

Figure 192. Mitre Rock and Lake today.

It may seem odd to finish this thesis with another artist, but von Guérard's legacy was to give the landscape of western Victoria, Mitchell's Australia Felix, a painted identity,[79] achieved by often faithfully working from his copies of Mitchell's illustrations. As Pullin declares, it is

78. Eugene von Guérard*, The Mitre Rock and Lake from Mount Arapile*,1874, in Candice Bruce, *Eugene von Guérard* (Sydney: Australian Gallery Directors Council in conjunction with the Australian National Gallery, 1980).
79. Coleridge, 'Tilting at Windmills'.

von Guerard's painting of the view from Mount Rouse (Figure 126) that is the definitive image of Australia Felix. (p 210)

Finally, Mitchell leaves no explanation of why, and when, after drawing his study of the western cliffs and titling it *Mount Salamanca*, he changed the name to *Mount Arapiles*. Or, with his precision of exposition of every scientific and geographical detail, why he left the bewildering statement, except to a Salamancan, about his choice of nomenclature,

'I ascended this hill on the anniversary of the battle of Salamanca, and hence the name.'[80] At least it makes the mountain memorable for what in essence was Mitchell's gateway to Australia Felix.

One mystery remains …Look back at Figure 189, the *Western Extremity of Mount Arapiles*. That cloud leaping out over the mountain – is that not the inchoate form of … a giant eagle?

Figure 193. Detail of Figure 189.

Has Mitchell unwittingly depicted the great Bungil guarding his eyrie? A mountain whose real name is not Arapiles but to the traditional Wotjobaluk owners is known as Dyurrite.[81]

80. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:190.
81. 'Mount Arapiles – Tooan State Park,' Parks Victoria, accessed September 8, 2020, https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/places-to-see/parks/mount-arapiles-tooan-state-park.

Conclusion

Poets intend to give pleasure or instruction
Or to combine the pleasing and instructive in one poem

Horace, 'Ars Poetica' (c 20/c10 BC)[1]

This thesis has covered a large amount of ground geographically, of necessity due to the many and varied peregrinations of its protagonist; in practice due to the relationships between maps and surveying, and between cartography and exploration; and culturally due to the wide-ranging aesthetic influences. Curiosity, navigation and trade spawned a cartographic publishing industry which flourished in Flanders and Holland, when the Dutch became masters of the seas. Varied political dynamics fuelled the development of accurate surveying and mapmaking in France and Britain that essentially was concerned with defence and control of territory. The French Revolution led to the Napoleonic wars, and the British involvement on the Iberian Peninsula, where young Lieutenant Thomas Mitchell started his military career and developed into Mitchell, the professional surveyor, cartographer, artist, illustrator, writer, poet, soldier, administrator, astronomer and antagonist, who fathered a dozen children with his rarely acknowledged wife.

The approach of the thesis could be accused of being somewhat Eurocentric. This is unavoidable because the philosophies of neo-classicism and romanticism, and the concepts of the sublime and the picturesque, all of which Mitchell faithfully, subscribed to, emanated from the European cultures of Italy, France, Germany, the Low Countries, and Britain, and originally from classical world of Rome and Greece. What Mitchell did was to contribute to the development of many of these ideas in the culture and concrete reality of the new Australia and use them to interpret the lands he explored and the people he encountered.

Mitchell's nationality and education in Scotland identifies him as a beneficiary of the Scottish enlightenment. The intellectual and architectural phenomenon Dixon proposed had a distinct influence on the cultural development of the colony of NSW. Rather than the bland reiteration of the words themselves, the origins and meanings of the eighteenth century aesthetic terms Mitchell was familiar with, such as Burke's 'sublime' and Gilpin's

1. Kerry Heckenberg, 'The Art and Science of Exploration: A Study of Genre, Vision and Visual Representation in Nineteenth-Century Journals and Reports of Australian Inland Exploration (PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 2002), 49.

'picturesque', were explored and, Mitchell's interpretation of them analysed and illustrated. Mitchell was seen to take every opportunity to train himself as a topographical and landscape artist, and as Surveyor General of NSW he also had a considerable influence on the built environment, commissioning important roads and significant bridges.

The objective of this thesis has been to expose the Mitchell's rare masterwork, the *Atlas* of battlefields of the Peninsular War, by the approach of using its remarkable contents to 'map' his most famous exploit, the expedition which discovered the land he called 'Australia Felix' in 1836, his account of which he successfully wrote up and published in 1838. This framework gave the opportunity to show and compare Mitchell's scenes of events in Iberia and Australia as well as the topography and scenery he recorded of both lands, not only as printed, but in his unpublished sketches and artwork,

To assess Mitchell's achievement in terms of this thesis the questions posed earlier can be answered:

1. How good an artist was he?
2. Was his illustrative work just a set of competent explorer's sketches to enhance his published journals, or does it express his ideals and put him on a par with contemporary professional artists?
3. In order to have greater authority, does his work express the art movements and philosophies of his time? Does his work embody an expression of, and latent understanding of, spatial theory.
4. Could his illustrations be considered a fundamental part of the mapping of Australia Felix?
5. Did his work contribute to the cultural and aesthetic enhancement of the colony?

1. How good an artist was he?

Perhaps the first question should be answered last, but the sheer volume and variety of work seen so far suggests he was a versatile and enquiring artist, studying the work of significant contemporary artists, taking lessons from reputable teachers, always experimenting with new techniques and subjects, and able to make interesting and informative images.

2. Was his illustrative work just a set of competent explorer's sketches to enhance his published journals, or does it express his ideals and put him on a par with contemporary professional artists?

Kerry Heckenberg has methodically counted all of Mitchell's published expeditionary images, together with of all the nineteenth-century Australian explorers, and set up bar charts for different categories of subject matter. For quantity, Mitchell wins easily on most of her diagrams. In Fig. 1.1 of 14 explorers' journals from Oxley in 1820 to Giles in 1889, she records 90 'pictures' for the 1838 *Three Expeditions*, the next being Grey in 1841 and Giles with 45 each, many of the latter presumably being photographs. For quality she states:

> As the chart 1.1 makes clear, Mitchell's Three Expeditions, stands out for its reliance on different sorts of visual images…. Mitchell's achievement and its significance are central topics of my discussion … My argument is that Mitchell's copiously illustrated 1838 journal with its tightly integrated combination of text and image (facilitated by the development of lithography and wood engraving) created a model that was such a critical success that it was emulated by his followers over the next decade in varying degrees.2

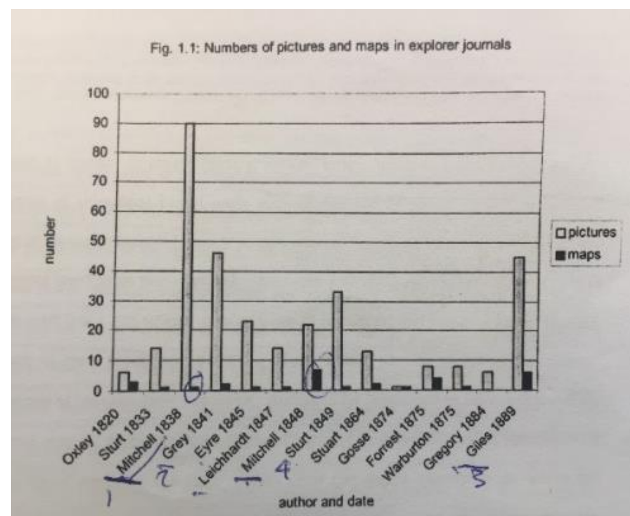

Figure 194. Heckenberg's bar chart of illustrations in explorers' journals: *Numbers of pictures and maps in explorer journals*

Bernard Smith is considered the pre-eminent Australian art historian and critic and he discusses Mitchell generously in his evaluation with Sturt:

> It would be a great mistake, however, to rule out the aesthetic factor as irrelevant when considering the work of such men as Sturt and Mitchell. During the period in which they worked it was possible for an artist who had been called upon to satisfy the illustrative requirements of science and exploration to transfer his attention to the service of taste, without involving any radical alteration either of his style or his interests. Similarly explorers were not uncommonly men of taste and wide cultural interests who were interested in the nature of their own aesthetic reactions to new scenes. This is true of both Sturt and Mitchell. [3]

2. Heckenberg, 'The Art and Science of Exploration,' 62.
3. B. Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 280.

He illustrates an example of Sturt's work, a watercolour of *Depot Glen*, his refuge from the harsh conditions on his last expedition which was first noticed in Michael Cathcart's *The Water Dreamers* where it is 'hung' with Mitchell's rather cartoon-like sepia landscape of the Salvator River.[4] He named the river and the rather odd row of eroded rocky peaks beyond after his favourite artist, the Neapolitan painter of craggy mountains, Salvator Rosa. Sturt's depiction of a craggy, Rosa-like cliff is in the same style as Mitchell's but much livelier, with a figure shooting at a bird escaping over the ridge, giving movement to the scene. So on that first conscious viewing of a work by Mitchell, ironically Cathcart's choice gave the impression of Sturt as being the better artist. In fact to be fair to Sturt, as Smith tells of Mitchell, 'His journeys took him, for the most part, over much better country than Sturt's…'[5]

Smith also considers:

> Mitchell's own example did much to promote an interest in landscape-painting among surveyors.
>
> This was due in part to his 1827 practical text book on surveying *Outlines of a System of Surveying, for Geographical and Military* purposes of, 'based on sixteen years experience, and originated among the mountains of Spain and Portugal during the war.[6]

He recounts Mitchell's device of constructing field sketches from a survey and illustrates the example he designed in plate 180.[7] He describes Mitchell using this to deal with the difficult terrain near Mount Jellore and quotes his comments at the end of the Australia Felix expedition about his solving the problems that had defeated others.[8]

3. *In order to have greater authority, does his work express the art movements and philosophies of his time?*

He was certainly a prodigious artist, considering he was also running a survey department and organising the road and bridge building for the infrastructure of NSW and sitting on several committees. The Map of the Nineteen Counties, which has not been part of this thesis, was a major achievement for the cadastral mapping of the colony, which was in a chaotic state when he arrived, with settlement spreading rapidly beyond the measured landscape.

4. Cathcart, *The Water Dreamers*, plates 4 and 5.
5. B. Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 280.
6. Ibid., 281
7. Ibid., 292, plate 180 – Landscape Sketching by Survey.
8. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:323, footnote. See in Chapter 8.

The published plates and smaller illustrations and woodcuts embedded in the text perform the function of giving pleasure, an Horatian ideal, as Heckenberg and Aitken point out, thereby giving Mitchell neoclassical kudos, something his 'Augustan' readers would have appreciated.[9]

Heckenberg also notes, in recounting his lessons with a Mr Cooper in watercolour technique in 1824, that Cooper judged Turner to be 'by far the best artist we have in landscape.' This reinforces why Turner hovers behind this thesis, as Wellington haunts it politically.

And then a remarkable statement: '*Mitchell mentions going to see Turner in late 1825* (emphasis added) as well as viewing Martin's famous painting of the *Deluge*, but does not offer further comment on these experiences.'[10] So Mitchell knew or met Turner? This gives strength to the conjectured connection with Turner and his art in the previous chapter. A whole play could be written about the meeting.

Heckenberg continues in the next sentence, 'In 1828 Mitchell also attended a 'Mr Green's first Anatomical lecture at the Royal Academy.'[11] This importantly hints at his ability to draw the undressed figures he met in the Australian bush. Was it a 'life' class? Did he attend others? It also brings him to the institution where Henry Fuseli was teaching painting - and drawing his wife's elaborately arranged hair at home. However if the date is correct Mitchell was already in Australia.

4. *Could his illustrations be considered a fundamental part of the mapping of Australia Felix?*

On this question, the plates of lithographs and engravings in *Three Expeditions* undeniably gave the reader on the other side of the world a rich and informative experience of this territory he called Australia Felix. The success of the journal going into a second print in 1839, in which the irritatingly tearable map remained from in the first volume, is proof of that. The map is too small a scale for following the day to day route and inconvenient to pack away.[12]

9. Aitken, *The Garden of Ideas*, 35; Heckenberg, 'The Art and Science of Exploration,' v.
10 Ibid., 447, 'n.27. Mitchell, Diary 1825, entry for 31 December 1825 (Turner)'.
11. Ibid.
12. IEven in a kindly lent original 1838 edition, in good condition for its age, a crude mimeographed basic route map has replaced the long gone original.

In a way the rich collection of lithographs, engravings, drawings, woodcuts, enthusiastic vivid prose, and even dense accounts of geology and botany for readers of those interests, make the map unnecessary. Greg Eccleston's work on the 150th anniversary guide book *The Major Mitchell Trail* with day by day route maps is the ideal companion if a copy can be found.[13] The few Iberian maps shown give an idea of what might have been made but they point to something more profound, which will be explained next.

5. Did his work contribute to the cultural and aesthetic enhancement of the colony?

Finally, Christine Wright's account of the history and effect Peninsular War veterans in Australia is revelatory for it brings to the fore the extent of their influence and contribution to the nascent colony. Mitchell features frequently in her Wellington's Men in Australia especially in the chapter on surveyors.[14]

In a chapter on the veterans who contributed to culture in the colony she features Mitchell in a list of 16 artists including George Barney, his successor; Henry Dumaresq, with whom Darling wanted to replace Mitchell; Robert Hoddle, who laid out Melbourne; William Light, who laid out Adelaide; Samuel Perry, Mitchell's abused assistant; and Charles Sturt, his rival explorer. Light, who had worked with Mitchell on the Peninsular, had a considerable artistic reputation, publishing books of his paintings in England.

These veterans represent a unique turn in history, and Mitchell's army experiences typified theirs. At that time promotion was only available through connections and paying substantial sums for a commission. When the army needed large numbers of recruits to fight in the Napoleonic Wars educated men of limited means like Mitchell were encouraged to join up and given a commission. Hence Mitchell's sudden arrival on the Peninsular, his working for Murray assuming it would get him promotion, and his subsequent frustrations at being bypassed for a captaincy. After the war, with officers on half pay, there was little future for these men in a reduced peacetime military. The army encouraged emigration to Australia with the promise of a large land grants. So veterans could become landowners, a status unavailable to them in Britain. Wright confirms the research findings:

> That the majority of British army commissions during the Peninsular War were obtained without purchase, and it was precisely this class of middling

13. *The Major Mitchell Trail – exploring Australia Felix*, Dept of Conservation and the Environment, State of Victoria, 1990.
14. Wright, *Wellington's Men in Australia.* Chapter 5, 'An art which owes its perfection to War': Skills of the Veterans.

> gentry officer who sought to secure the future for his family in the Australian colonies.[15]

This was Mitchell's story repeated over and over, by men well trained by the war to handle the challenges of a climate and terrain more similar to Spain than England, with the resourcefulness to efficiently manage whatever enterprise or employment they found. Thus the Peninsular War and the settlement of Australia, and on the individual scale, Mitchell's war and his Australian career, are not two disconnected events that just happened on opposite sides of the world.[16] They are bound in a sort of symbiosis.

Thus from Wright's analysis it can inferred the war made these men and, in turn, they made Australia.[17] So the Atlas could be considered a symbol of that process, and it does not have to prove itself further. It is symbolically, and symbiotically, the Atlas for Australia Felix. Its rarity provides an added mystique.

An Art Statement

It has to be said that it is through art that the strongest representation of the Indigenous voice and story is being heard and disseminated. Contemporary Aboriginal artists are producing the most original, ambitious, and inspiring work in Australia. A sample of this as was in evidence at the *Frontier Wars* section of the *Colony* exhibition at the NGV in 2018. The exhibits shown were challenging, colourful, quirky, amusing, skilful, thought provoking, moving and powerfully original. As Robert Nelson said of Christian Thompson's *Othering the Explorer, James Cook*, 'when we look into the explorer's eyes we see the gaze of the explored: the colonised takes over the sight and command of the colonist.'[18]

Figure 195. Christian Thompson, *Othering the Explorer, James Cook*, 2015, detail.

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15. Wright, *Wellington's Men in Australia,* 178.
16. The Antipodes, remember them? This narrative has travelled a bit since the one-legged Skiapods shading themselves in the torrid climes.
17. Wright, *Wellington's Men in Australia*, 175–78.
18. Robert Nelson, 'Colony: A Celebration of the Indigenous Voice,' *The Age*, May 15, 2018.

It is a visual metaphor, the game being that Thompson's work always involves images of himself dressed up in different personas, which is inevitably a somewhat egocentric method, but here he is invisible and only his eyes can be seen looking through the cut-out eyes of a reproduction of Cook's portrait (see Figure 195), whose stare in Nathaniel Dance's painting is in fact aslant of the viewer.[19]

Steaphan Paton played on the representation of the warrior but dressed in contemporary battle fatigues in a film loop shooting arrows over a pile of traditional decorated shields and weapons (see Figure 196). Ian McLean, otherwise criticising the general hang of the show, rather than the contributors, described its power as:

> in a dark room … a serpent reared and hissed. This was Paton's searing *Cloaked combat*. Paired with piles of shields and other cultural objects strewn on the floor like bodies slain in battle, their ghostly spirits rising in the large flanking portraits by Leah King-Smith and Brook Andrews, it was inspired curating.[20]

Figure 196. Steaphan Paton, *Cloaked combat*. Colony/Frontier Wars, NGV, 2018.

Megan Evans, the widow of a stolen generation man and the descendant of a squattocratic family, is an artist who works in many media but noticeably fine needlework and beading (see Figure 197).

19. Nathaniel Dance, *Captain James Cook 1728–79*, 1776, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, UK.
20. Ian McLean, 'Colony,'*Artline*, April 13, 2018.

Figure 197. Megan Evans, *Squatters and Savages* installation.[21]

She collaborates with Peter Waples Crowe, a Ngarigo artist, in a recurring theme titled 'Squatters and Savages'. In the latest iteration at the Art Gallery of Ballarat, he uses Western classical depictions of Aboriginal violence within the word itself (see Figure 198).

Figure 198. Peter Waples Crowe, *Squatters and Savages* installation.[22]

Evans references Mitchell in the intricately stitched letters. Her *Backwater of the Murray* is clearly visible behind the lacework (see Figure 199).

Figure 199. Megan Evans, *Squatters and Savages* installation, detail.[23]

Figure 200. *Back Water of the Murray*, 1836.[24]

An earlier work by Evans, *Proof* , 2017, when first viewed appears to be an antique *chaise longue* luxuriously upholstered in white fur. But why is it at eye level and impossible to recline on (a la Pauline Bonaparte-Borgese)?

21. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ballarat, 2021.
22. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ballarat.
23. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ballarat.
24. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:133, plate 28.

Figure 201. Megan Evans, *Proof*, 2017.[25]

It is a shock to realise the legs are rifles. On the back she has attached strings of tiny beads to a map of Victoria, each bead representing a death falling from a massacre site. It is an unforgettable metaphor of luxury floating on bloodshed and dispossession (see Figure 201).

To return to the question asked about Mitchell:

Did his work contribute to the cultural and aesthetic enhancement of the colony?

This is answered succinctly by Wright:

> Peninsular War veterans also made a significant contribution to the scientific and cultural life of the Australian colonies, although the leader in this field was surely Sir Thomas Mitchell. He was a surveyor and mapmaker, inventor, author of military textbooks and texts on winegrowing, translator and an artist and writer of ability. Mitchell's skills as a surveyor and mapmaker are discussed elsewhere. As far as his writing skills are concerned, the Oxford Companion to Australian Literature has called him the best literary stylist of the Australian explorers.[26]

As Henry Lennox was not a war veteran, she does not mention the concrete evidence of aesthetic enhancement in the magnificent bridges Mitchell commissioned from the Scottish engineer.

25. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ballarat.
26. Wright, *Wellington's Men in Australia*, 145.

Wright details the many institutions and libraries Mitchell was involved with as a founder or committee member. Of particular interest is the Australian Subscription Library of which his namesake Dr James Mitchell, another Peninsular veteran was also on the committee. Dr Mitchell had a distinguished career in the army medical corps on the Iberian Peninsula, and in America, and operated in the military hospital at Waterloo. He was president of the Medical Board of NSW for many years, but his earlier years in Sydney were dogged by his being stood down from the Colonial Medical Department for refusing to attend a flogging. He sat on many boards, including the State Legislature, and owned land, mines and many successful business ventures.[27] He left his fortune to his only son, the eccentric, reclusive, book collector, David Scott Mitchell.

It has been a matter of awkwardness throughout this research that the main archive of Thomas Mitchell's papers and artwork, in Australia, is all held in the Mitchell Library in the State Library of New South Wales, which any reader would assume is named after Thomas.

The Library [SLNSW] is also the repository of one of only two known copies of the tome, known as Wyld's Atlas, in a public institution in Australia. The other is in the NLA. The discovery that the Mitchell Library was set up from the enormous endowment of David Scott Mitchell, the son of Thomas' colleague, and friend, James Mitchell, while still misleading, nicely connects Thomas to that great institution.[28]

The most important questions were asked in Chapter 6.

> *Does Mitchell's work stand up to the artistic canon? Is it on a par with that of the leading artists of his time?*

This thesis has presumptuously presented images by Mitchell alongside the work of individuals in the pantheon of artists. The effect, it would seem, does not jar. For example:

- The dead bushranger, Donohoe, 'lying (as if) in state' beside David's masterpiece of secular hagiography, his friend Marat murdered in his bath (see Figure 63 and Figure 64) has the same neoclassical dignity given to both unscrupulous men.

27. Ibid., 109.
28. Ibid.

- The Nundarwar –'I never felt less love for the picturesque'– Range [29], Plate 7 (see Figure 111), is a brilliant evocation of space and narrative and adventure. Mr Picken, is credited as the lithographer, through Mitchell as a practised printmaker would have been involved as shown by the faithful interpretation of the original watercolour of the view (see Figure 112). This painting compares well beside any mountainous landscape by such watercolourists as Varley or de Wint, even Cotman in its geometry, and Turner in its sweep and mystery. In fact coming within a page or two in this text of Alexander Cozens' abstracted, blotted method of rocky mountainscapes (see Figure 108) it suggests Mitchell knew of them, too, as a structure for the image.
- The unarguable inspiration Mitchell gave to the early renderers of the landscape of Australia Felix, is proven by the work of Chevalier and von Guerard, the former surely tracing and reversing Mitchell's Western Extremity of Mount Arapiles, in his Mount Arapiles and the Mitre Rock, as well as moving other bits of scenery about, and the latter capturing both Mitchell's symbolism and the unchanged view today in The Mitre Rock and Lake from Mount Arapiles, an unexhibited work only known from one reproduction.
- Mitchell's sketch of the burning forts at Salamanca is discussed with Turner's paintings of the burning of the Houses of Parliament, while the portent of hubris for overweening military leaders is implied by Turner's Snowstorm, Hannibal and his army crossing the Alps painted the same year as Mitchell's sketch in 1812 – a date which Tchaikovsky ensured would be remembered for the same reason. It also has to be remembered that when Turner was the same age as Mitchell was at Salamanca, he was drawing equally precisely, particularly of architectural subjects.

Can the images Mitchell produced – his illustrations of Australia Felix and the little exposed sketches for these, and those printed in *Wyld's Atlas* – together with the maps in the Atlas be put into the same category as the work of the illuminati previously mentioned? Can Mitchell's name be added to that roll call? The visually rich expedition of this thesis, along with the multifarious ideas, quoted prose and poetry, events, scientific information, history,

29. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 1:46.

tragedy and command of spatial experience, would seem to answer that question in a resounding affirmative.

Whatever else might be said about Thomas Mitchell, his art and his enthusiasm for that land he crossed in the spring of 1836 should not be forgotten. It remains for his Atlas to be brought out of the archives and celebrated.

Whatever else might be said about Australia Felix, it will always hover in a mythical space coming in and out of focus. It always existed to the advantage of a few and the terrible disadvantage of its original owners. It cannot return until all parties can live in harmony and equal opportunity.

One path to a solution might be found in a conversation Mitchell was having with Piper after the expedition. Mitchell asked Piper what title he should have on his customary brass plate before he returned to his people. He did not want 'King' for there were 'too many kings already', he pointed out, and chose 'Conqueror of the Interior'.[30] This suggests that Mitchell's drawing of him (see Figure 86) with just such a title was executed then with the mane and beard modelled on that of a Spanish conquistador.

More profoundly it hatches an idea that if Australia were to have, not a king or queen, per se, but an Indigenous Head of State it might settle a lot of conceptual and identity problems. The title, whatever word that might be, and the role could revolve regularly through different groups and regions, but would put the traditional owners of the land at the centre of the constitution and add a mystique and dignity and uniqueness to the body politic that the nation sorely needs.

30. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:339.

An Endnote

A final image and a question:

Whose hand drew this landscape?

Figure 202. *Untitled sketch*, detail.

Richard Aitken writes of this drawing, evidently of vegetation in a gorge like landscape, that 'it evocatively demonstrates the manner in which those engaged with exploring and recording the Australian landscape combined detached observation with a more lyrical aesthetic appreciation.'[31]

This extraordinary modern sketch – bold, free flowing, obtaining the essentials of the landscape, the view itself a cut-off with little convention of a horizon or a particular focal point – could be a late drawing by Lloyd Rees, or by the contemporary interpreter of Australian geology and natural history, John Wolseley.

31. Richard Aitken, *The Garden of Ideas*, 45.

It was drawn in 1828 by Thomas Mitchell.

Figure 203. Mitchell, *Untitled sketch*, 1829.[32]

It economically describes a spatial complexity and transcends time. Essentially it simply celebrates being in the landscape, Mitchell being in the landscape.

32. Courtesy of the SLNSW, Mitchell's field, note and sketchbook 1828–30, C42.

Postscript

Arapiles/Dyurrite Today

The thesis research got underway, and I went to Melbourne, Sydney, London, Liverpool, and I still had not been to Mount Arapiles. I even spoke in a seminar at the Menzies Centre at Kings College London, where a resident professor (of philosophy) told me that in the room above us, the Council Chamber, hung a portrait of the Duke of Wellington. Mitchell's Commander-in-Chief had founded the university in 1829, the mere third in England, compared to Scotland's long established five. Eventually an expedition was organised and, from staying in Hamilton, we drove north though that rich country Mitchell had eulogised when travelling south from Mount Salamanca, as he first called it:

> An open grassy county, extending as far as the eye could see – hills round and smooth as a carpet – meadows broad, either green as an emerald, or of a rich golden colour from the abundance of a little ranunculus-like flower.[1]

This was where he encountered and drew the mother and child with the finely woven basket and circular mat (see Figure 28):[2]

> The only visible inhabitant of this splendid valley, resembling a nobleman's park on a gigantic scale. She stated that the main river was called 'Temiángandgeen,' a name unfortunately too long to be introduced into maps.[3]

The landscape was as Mitchell described it, rolling, green, now between big stands of gums, rich paddocks of sheep, but strangely empty, few farm gates, no one about, great distances between the small towns with English names. This was Mitchell's Australia Felix.

We picnicked at Mitre Rock and clambered up looking over at Mount Arapiles at last. Later at the Mount we walked the up past the peaceful campsite and below the sandstone 'Organ Pipes'. Voices could be heard coming from the cliffs and we realised there were the tiny figures of climbers high above us, snatches of gentle conversation wafted down in the afternoon sun. It is not a hurried sport. There was a wonderfully calm atmosphere in that canyon. To my astonishment Susan, so moved by the cleanliness and civility of the camping ground suggested we come and stay there, not an activity we normally do. I scrambled up as

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1. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:211.
2. Opposite page 212, Female and Child of Australia Felix. The lithograph particularly details the weave of the mat and basket.
3. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:212. He named the river after the Colonial Secretary, Lord Glenelg.

high as I could until stopped by overhangs and thought of Mitchell stomping about on the same rocks.

However there are now issues about Aboriginal sites being damaged by rock climbers and certain areas being banned to climbers. It is a sad irony that this quiet, unobtrusive, most ecologically aware sporting activity (at this level) should become a pariah.

On the way down I picked up a small red-ochre coloured rock just lying on the path and brought it home. It is like a small plinth and on its face is embedded a tooth-like piece of quartz, just as Mitchell described:

> Mount Arapiles consists of sandstone, the whole apparently an altered sandstone, the the structure being in one part almost destroyed; in others perfectly distinct, and containing pebbles of quartz.[4]

Figure 204. Sandstone rock from Mount Arapiles, with model fusiliers of the Light Brigade, the 95th regiment, wearing the Green Jackets uniform, that Mitchell would have worn.[5]

4. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, 2:189.
5. Italeri, Bologna, model kit, 95th rgt. 'Green Jackets', Napoleonic Wars No. 6083, 1:72 scale.

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THE ATLAS

British Library, St Pancras, London
1 and 2 October 2015

Maps & plans showing the principal moments, battles & sieges in which the British Army was engaged during the war from 1808 to 1814 in the Spanish Peninsula and the south of France.

James Wyld, London 1840, known as 'Wyld's Atlas for want of any authorship or credit given by James Wyld the publisher.

A separate companion *Memoir* of the war by General Sir George Murray, signed by him though not listed as such nor credited with any other author. The slim volume written as an introduction to the Atlas was the first produced from the catalogue. It disappointingly contained no maps or graphic material. The following day on 1 October 2015 the Atlas was found and wheeled out in its battered binding.

Discovered, studied and photographed British Library, St Pancras, London, 1 and 2 October 2015.

State Library of New South Wales
8 July 2016

Maps and plans showing the principal moments, battles and sieges in which the British Army was engaged during the war from 1808 to 1814 in the Spanish Peninsula and the south of France.

James Wyld, London 1840, known as *Wyld's Atlas*. It is in very good condition having been restored and rebound. Studied July 2016.

There is no record of Murray's *Memoir*.

It would appear to be the only copy in a public Australian institution.

FILES and FOLDERS

National Archives, Kew, London

File No: 78.5624: Thomas L. Mitchell, Battle of Busaço – General Position of French and Allied Armies, 26 September 1810, proof, detail.

WO 78/5800: *Maps and Plans,* etc,. Roll of proofs mounted on heavy paper (ref WD 2656), including: Battle of Salamanca, working proof.

WO 78/5805: Cuidad Rodrigo.

WO 78/5896: Sketch of part of Fuentes.

WO 78/5903: Original plan of Cuidad Rodrigo.

WO 78/5908: Figure Badajoz.

WO 78/5906: Positions in front of Burgos.

WO 78/5908: Badajoz.

WO 78/5909: Charles Pierrepoint, The Battle of Salamanca, draft, detail of Los Arapiles.

WO 78/5954: Henry Sturgeon, Affair with the Enemy upon the Heights of Grijo,1809. S

WO 78/5957: Henry Sturgeon, Affair with the Rear Guard of Marshal. Soult's Army at Salamonde, on the 16th of May 1809, ink and wash.

WO 78/5965: Henry Sturgeon, 'very long' Ridge of Busaço plan.

WO 78/5967: Henry Sturgeon Captain, Terrain Rendering.

WO 78/5970: Henry Sturgeon, Busaço sketch, 'best plan'.

State Library of New South Wales

8 July 2016

File No. DLPxx 20, 21, 22: Files holding loose drawings, sketches, watercolours and prints all by Mitchell.

File No. DLPxx20: (Victoria Pass to Cambo).

4. *Pass of Victoria*: Figure 57. Thomas Mitchell, Victoria Pass, watercolour, ca. 1830.

18. *Cambo*: Figure 83, Cambo, (at Segenhoe) undated, graphite and wash.

File No. DLPxx21f

5. *Nundawar*, watercolour study: Figure 113 – for Plate 7, Figure 114.

14. *Portrait of a Native of the Bogan*, Vol 1:204, plate 13: Figure 96.

15. Dead acacia tree, pencil and ink in Figures 1 and 2, *Tombs of a Tribe*.

16. *Talambé*, pencil: Figure 99. Talambé, pencil sketch, 1835, for Vol 1, Plate.19.

File No. DLPxx22f

1. *Turandurey and Ballandella*, pencil drawing: Figure 29, Plate 24.

2. *An old thief at Benanee Lake*: Figure 89, Plate 25, and Figures 90 and 91.

3. John Piper, alias Jimmy, 'Conqueror of the Interior', pencil, 15 Dec 1836: Fig 87 and 88.

9. 'Barrawy', pencil, mother carrying boy in woven mat: Figure 29, *Female and Child of* Australia *Felix,* Plate 34.

11. Mount Abrupt from South, pencil: Figure 125.

12. Mount Abrupt from South, etching: Figure 125.

13. Mount Abrupt from South, aquatint: Figure 125 woodblock print, *Three Expeditions*, 2:261.

14. Eagle head, very faint drawing on thin yellowed paper: Figure 129 for Figure 130 Australian Eagle (*Aquilla fucosa*), powerful lithograph.

File No. DGD 21 Sketches, watercolours of Spain and Portugal

11. Salamanca, view the burning forts, unfinished watercolour, torn: Figure 175 and 176 (EC, 2516).

13. Mount Salamanca, 24 July (columnar structure of sandstone rock). In fact a drawing of Mount Arapiles, understandably mistakenly attributed to the wrong hemisphere.

16. Cannon sketch, File No. DG*21: Figure 39.

17. Design for front plate of Atlas binding: Figure 104 (EC, 2539).

19. Gun emplacement, pencil ink and wash, and notes: Figures 38, 39 (EC, 2528).

22. Sketch of distressed figures watching an embattled city: Figure 41.

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Salamanca, Spain, and Los Arapiles.

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