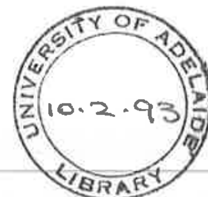

CIVILIZATION IN THE WILDERNESS: THE HOMESTEAD IN THE AUSTRALIAN COLONIAL NOVEL 1830-1860

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

To European eyes the homestead was a symbol of a settled civilized society in the Australian hinterland in the earlier nineteenth century. It was powerful enough to catch the imagination of creative writers when they selected settings in the Antipodes and chose to identify with a population isolated both from the urban centres of the Australian littoral and from Europe itself. This thesis considers the influences which helped shape these narratives. It examines, above all, how the image of the European dwelling emerges as central to such texts. Although these pastoral romances must be considered minor Victorian fiction, they may be termed the earlier colonial novels in the context of Australian literature. Three decades permit over fifty of them to be studied. Paintings from the period and other contemporary works, fiction and non-fiction, help throw light on my findings.

Novelists concerned themselves with the attempt to convert what was perceived to be a wilderness into a pastoral landscape. Projected here is an interest in a society undergoing transition. In this colonial life, the private and personal tend to be suppressed in the face of social and communal preoccupations, and problems of personal identity are subordinated to those relating to an evolving society; further, such an emphasis is mirrored in the focus on the homestead's spatial areas. Certain manifestations of contemporary reality in and around these fictional locations are set aside in place of an idealized and romanticized presentation of colonial society: one where the ethos of middle-class family life in the

homeland of early Victorian times prevails. A conservative impulse and a simple moral vision permeate these narratives. However, while patriotism and nostalgia for the mother culture are apparent, one detects an early expression of Australian nationalism and the emergence of a spirit which is distinctly Australian. Importantly, these texts give insight into the way in which certain elements of colonial experience are beginning to assume mythic status.

The aim of my study is to demonstrate the way in which genre, narrative structure, settings and themes have been employed to emphasize particular - and often favoured - aspects of colonial settlement. My thesis acknowledges the contribution made by these nineteenth century novelists to Australian literature and because their works are little known it is my hope that this study will go some way in redressing the situation.

STATEMENT

I hereby affirm that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for an award of any other degree or diploma in any other university; nor, to the best of my knowledge and belief, does it contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text or notes.

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I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

SIGNED: DATE: 3rd February 1993

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Special thanks must go to librarians around Australia. I would like to mention those at the Barr Smith Library at the University of Adelaide, State Library of South Australia, Queensland University, University of New England, National Library, Mitchell Library, State Library of Victoria, and University of Tasmania: their prompt assistance over several years has made my task easier.

Grateful thanks are also due to Mrs. Anne Beugelaar and Mrs. Margaret MacDonald for their typing expertise.

Note: Literature as historical evidence of a period.

At a time when Australians are looking to their cultural origins with renewed interest it is tempting to see these nineteenth century works as providing evidence of historical and sociological processes. The hazards of using literature for such purposes is much debated, and it is the subject of some well-judged comment by Peter Laslett.[1] This historian observes that both artist and audience will be exercising their imaginations, that they 'will exaggerate, colour up and tone down for aesthetic effect, for subjective, psychological reasons, and must end by suppressing some things and inventing others'. Of necessity, authors are selective. The creative writer, then, offers 'reflections to be shared by his readers rather than mirror-like reflectiveness of the society which they shared together'. Laslett goes on to state: 'The subject matter of imaginative literature shows forth above all what engaged the minds of the generation of the author'. Another historian, Richard White, affirms similarly that 'there have been countless attempts to get Australia down on paper and to catch its essence'; any such attempt, even so, 'is more likely to reflect the hopes, fears or needs of its inventor'.[2]

I turn now to George Watson who asserts that the novel was 'the dominant literary form of the Victorians' - a factor which is widely held to be valid.[3] 'Nobody', Watson believes, 'would now attempt an account of Victorian civilization without considering it'. And he adds that the 'usual Victorian view was not much different ...'. Watson's The English Ideology is an examination of the culture of Victorian times

1 Peter Laslett, 'The Wrong Way Through the Telescope: A Note on Literary Evidence in Sociology and in Historical Sociology', British Journal of Sociology, 27.3(1976):324,328.

2 Richard White, Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980 (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1981)viii.

3 George Watson, The English Ideology (London: Lane, 1973) 256. Cf.Louis Cazamian, The Social Novel in England 1830-1850, trans. Martin Fido (1903; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973) 5-7. Theological works were, however, more numerous. See Cazamian 307.

(a period into which the majority of these narratives fall) and he argues incisively for the value of the contemporary novel as a record of social history. In this regard he writes: 'The difference between "fact" and "fiction" is not the same as that between truth and falsehood'. There is a further important element. 'The Victorians did not merely expect novels to be accurate: they demanded that they should be so'. Victorian novels 'were seen, by their earliest readers, as direct sources of social knowledge'. Watson considers that the social fiction of the nineteenth century 'achieves high contemporaneity by the 1850s and 1860s'.[4] Laslett, likewise, offers the revealing comment that the novelist wishing to succeed in the Victorian era had to be well aware of the temper of the times.[5]

Even although one discerns a reliance on highly-coloured events and, in addition, a reluctance to set down the less desirable facets of colonial existence, there is a strong sense that the texts studied here are greatly revealing of colonial culture. Accordingly, I am in agreement with Hergenhan when he states: 'Through imaginative recreation, fiction can offer this kind of living picture to complement the studies of historians which necessarily have different aims'.[6]

Here it is worthwhile turning to the thoughts expressed by the authors themselves. In gravely-worded Preface or Foreword writers pledged the truth of their fictions; promised narratives which educated while they entertained. Even allowing for the topicality of this literary ploy it can be said that such a stance is fundamental to these

4 Watson 4-5.

5 Laslett 334.

6 Laurie Hergenhan, Unnatural Lives. Studies in Australian Fiction about the Convicts, from James Tucker to Patrick White (St. Lucia: U of Queensland P,1983)5.

texts. Two interwoven lines of development are therefore in evidence, the one educative and turning on historical, political and social realities; the other entertaining and more obviously shaped to artistic purpose. Elements of the romance proliferate, but with an underpinning of careful documentation. In the most competent works, of course, these factors will coalesce. My contention is that although the evidence is selective, it is possible to say that the body of prose fiction studied here affords an invaluable insight into many aspects of colonial culture, into the spirit of the times, and into attitudes and values of the period.

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CH. I

CIVILIZATION IN THE WILDERNESS

> All was still; the stars were bright in the heavens, and I could distinguish the faint outlines of the distant hills. It was long before I could compose myself to sleep. I was full of thought and anxiety. I had everything to do: mine was really a beginning. The soil around me had not been disturbed by civilized man since its creation. The vast wilderness seemed to have received us into its ample bosom, and to have closed around us, shutting us out from all communication with humanity.
>
> Tales of the Colonies[1] (p.67)

Encapsulated in the lines chosen as the epigraph to this chapter are the outlook and some of the emotions possible in an emigrant who has settled in Australia in the earlier nineteenth century. Such thoughts preoccupy Rowcroft's protagonist William Thornley, and Tales of the Colonies of 1843 purports to be the latter's journal. Like many of the novels to follow, Tales of the Colonies is structured around the compositional device of emigration to an Australian colony followed by a further journey to land in the interior. The journey's end, therefore, is also a beginning and Rowcroft has thought to give voice to the mixed emotions connected with such an enterprise. To be discerned in the passage above is the major theme of the earlier colonial novel. It is that of civilization in the wilderness.

The anxiety apparent here is to underscore the colonial narrative for many decades. Thornley expresses his thoughts thus:

> It seems to me, that, voluntarily to remove to a new colony is like putting yourself back in the age of the world for some hundreds of years, by relinquishing the point of civilisation and progress reached by the old country. (p.503)

And yet optimism is the prevailing characteristic of this body of work because,

1. Charles Rowcroft, Tales of the Colonies, Or The Adventures of an Emigrant (London, 1847).

Note: Even when inconsistent the original spelling and punctuation will be retained in all quotations from primary sources.

as is claimed in Rowcroft's Introduction, in this 'new world' a 'new life' is possible. Here the settler may pursue a pastoral existence and, moreover, 'in resuming the occupations of the patriarchs of old, he may be said to recover the natural dignity of man' (p.xii). In these words one becomes aware of a nostalgic reference to a previous era. It is a reference which provides insight into a belief in a bygone pastoral age, and is a point which will be taken up subsequently. However, certain conventions were beginning to accrue in the colonial novel and, accordingly, William Thornley and his family establish themselves in the bush and make it their home.

'A NEW heaven and a new earth!' With these words, as the author has told us, 'we have done with the Old world for many a year' (p.134). In such a manner the nineteenth century reader was introduced both to the Antipodes and to Ch.XVIII of The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn,[2] a romance by Henry Kingsley which was published in London in 1859. This work is to form another major text in my study of Australian prose fiction in the years between 1830-1860. In a work which is the best known of the earlier colonial narratives — and sometimes the only one that is known by otherwise well-read Australians — the opening of Ch.XVIII places the scene, creates a powerful image, and leads into the longer and Australian segment of Geoffry Hamlyn. Initially set in England, the plot follows the fortunes of those who variously journey to Australia, and returns the chief of them to England many years later. The novel's Australian setting is seen to be remote, so much so that one of the newcomers can refer to it as a 'lonely wilderness'. The region was generally considered to be a particular area in the south-east of the continent; more recently Robert Dixon has revealed how the author created a representative and idealized imaginary landscape for the symbolic possibil-

2. Henry Kingsley, The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn in Henry Kingsley, Portable Australian Authors, ed. with an introduction by J.S.D. Mellick (St. Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1982). In line with common practice the work will be referred to throughout as Geoffry Hamlyn.

ities it could sustain.[3]

Many literary critics have alluded to the opening passage of Ch.XVIII and some have quoted it in full.[4] With its opposed images of the old and the new, of civilization and wilderness, and of sociability and remoteness, this chapter sets up tensions which are seen to be similar to those expressed by Rowcroft, and common at the time. Such tensions are suggestive of an ambivalence towards the country and settlement there. In directing attention to this initial Australian setting in Geoffry Hamlyn, critics have marked the heightened prose which is employed to describe the physical features and natural beauty of the region that forms the backdrop to the long romance. 'All creation is new and strange': with these words Kingsley is simply following a host of authors who, over three decades, have likewise drawn the reader's attention to the advent of the European into the Australian hinterland, and to the awesome nature of the environment in the southern continent.

Kingsley's descriptive passage of the area which is to be the chief location, one 'beyond the bounds of all settlement' (p.136), is a poetic attempt to evoke the splendour of the scene. More importantly, it is the means chosen to illustrate how the continent itself, or at least one favoured aspect of it, would appear to those viewing it for the first time. In his Introduction Mellick observes that Kingsley stresses the 'newness' of Australia and 'exalts it in almost biblical language'. It may not be generally known that the introductory phrase employed by Kingsley does indeed come from the Bible: 'And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away...' (The Revelation, 21:1). The visionary and the hortative, an aspect of the later Book of Revelations,

3. Robert Dixon, The Course of the Empire : Neo-Classical Culture in New South Wales 1788-1860 (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1986) 184-92.

4. See E. Morris Miller, Australian Literature From Its Beginnings to 1935: A Descriptive and Bibliographical Survey, 2 vols. (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1940), Barry Argyle, An Introduction to the Australian Novel, 1830-1930 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1972) and Adrian Mitchell in The Oxford History of Australian Literature, ed. Leonie Kramer (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1981).

serves well here; it heralds the arrival of British settlers in a new colony.[5] The rich connotations of the biblical allusion would not have gone unnoticed by contemporary readers. Speaking of the latter, Altick has commented that 'on all levels of society ... the Victorians were accustomed to Biblical language and story to an extent almost inconceivable today'.[6] If, as the historian has argued in this respect, Victorian writers were able to communicate 'in readily understandable and persuasive terms', then readers would have been aware of the lofty sentiments and spirit of aspiration conveyed by Kingsley here and elsewhere. Despite anxiety, figured forth is confidence in the colonization of a far-distant land. One observes that a celebratory impulse is commonly associated with this enterprise and accordingly with the prose fiction connected with it. Such confidence informs and permeates all the works under discussion, but especially is this so once the country had moved beyond its initial stage as a British penal settlement.

There were individuals, however, who had confidence in the land from the beginning and these swelled in the early decades of the nineteenth century when the way became open for free settlers to emigrate. So that Kingsley was not the first to employ this particular biblical allusion or the thoughts underlying it. He may well have been influenced by a much earlier novel: one which has as a setting, as early as 1801, the continent of Australia. The book I am referring to is Huber's <u>Adventures on a Journey to New Holland</u>,[7] a German work which takes for a theme the settlement of Australia as a convict colony and the progress practicable there given the

5. Similar imagery is to be located in Isiah (65:17). See Adrian Mitchell, 'No New Thing: The Concept of Novelty and Early Australian Writing' in P.R. Eaden and F.H. Mares, eds., <u>Mapped But Not Known: The Landscape of the Imagination</u> (Adelaide: Wakefield, 1986).

6. Richard D. Altick, <u>Victorian People and Ideas</u> (London: Dent, 1974) 192.

7. Therese Huber, <u>Adventures on a Journey to New Holland</u> and <u>The Lonely Deathbed</u>, ed. L. Bodi, trans. R. Livingstone (Melbourne: Lansdowne, 1966).

redeeming power of Nature and the eventual possibility of freedom. The chance of a better life outside Europe is stressed, as is the hope for unrestrained human achievement in such regions. For Huber, as for Kingsley, the world is rediscovered in the Antipodes. 'The new Heavens and the new Earth are here before my very eyes...' proclaims one of the main characters (p.47). Huber's book has been judged by Bodi to be 'probably the first novel in world literature that has the Australian penal settlement as its background' (p.7). Although historically interesting, especially as it may have influenced Kingsley, this novel can play no part in my study which relates to works written in English. Even so, passing reference will be made to several European works which are relevant to my concerns and which demonstrate a common application of similar themes.

Huber's tale has as background the early convict era; those by Rowcroft and Kingsley fix on free settlers who emigrate to Australia. But a firm belief in the human progress possible in the new land is conveyed in all and is indicative of the spirit of the times. That expression of confidence almost universally marks the colonial novel in the decades 1830-1860.

From the vantage point of today it becomes clear that the whole concept of civilization in the wilderness provided a cogent, substantial and uplifting theme for those writing against a background of colonial expansion in the nineteenth century. I come next, therefore, to the major influences on the body of prose fiction which took as its chief subject the colonization of Australia, and which are conveniently termed colonial novels. Given the circumstances — Australia's isolation and its initial settlement as a convict colony, and for other reasons shortly explained — the genre most appropriate was that of the romance. And because the antipodean hinterland offered the most favourable setting, the pastoral mode was manifestly apt. It was advantageous, and invaluable to these writers, that both pastoral and

romance were allied to a rich story-telling tradition.

Further shaping influences derive from the period: the transitional years which saw the Georgian epoch evolve into the Victorian age. Victoria ascended the throne in 1837 and therefore the earlier decades of her reign concern us. It should be said that the notion of Victorianism is simply a national expression of what was a general reorientation of thought in the nineteenth century. We are focussing upon a period in British history when the great value placed upon reason, restraint, balance, order and stability, qualities which have traditionally been associated with the eighteenth century, the Age of Reason, was on the wane. Turning to the nineteenth century, factors such as Great Britain's rise to imperial and economic power and the positive outlook caused by colonial expansion, and hence the patriotic fervour that all this aroused, must be considered in connection with the colonial novel. What must also be taken into account is the pressing need for emigration due to the disruptive social and economic pressures connected with the Industrial Revolution. One senses here the considerable encouragement that these books could give to such a movement and in considering the remarks which preface them one begins to appreciate the social awareness which characterizes the earlier colonial narrative.

For while biblical and classical allusions are present there is a further aspect of these nineteenth century works which should be considered. Concerning this social awareness Altick has explained how, in the first half of the century, there developed an outlook which was 'increasingly contemporary in its orientation'.[8] Prose writers relied wholeheartedly on their readers' 'sense of the present'. Thus learned references came to be eclipsed by other matter and as Altick states: 'In short, the advent of a mass reading

8. Richard D. Altick, 'Victorian Readers and the Sense of the Present', Midway 10.4 (1970): 97.

audience necessarily shifted the weight of the terms of discourse from polite letters to the subject of the day'. Although admitting the loss of certain nuances and details this writer has drawn attention to the range of resonances which today's readers should take into account. These include literary, topical, and stock allusions, the use of double-titles, contemporary references and jokes, the avoidance of — or the brief reference to — certain material, the spectrum of significances and associations in idiom, catchwords and ironies, the wide deployment of current events and the reliance on existent knowledge. Ongoing study provides ample evidence of such matters in English literature of the nineteenth century; in comparison, little has been done in this regard in terms of the Australian component of that body of work.

With regard to genre, the novel became the popular literary form. Social historians have generally observed that it was the middle-classes who comprised the bulk of the reading public; whose 'interests and tastes' determined the 'tone and content' of prose fiction.[9] Cazamian, paraphrasing Edward Bulwer, an influential figure of the Victorian period, writes that 'the novel is fashionable, and has the longest hold on public attention'; and further, that 'literature must be adapted to the decided tastes of the middle-classes...'.[10] Strongly propagandist, and directed at this social group, the body of fiction under consideration here is therefore constantly revealing of a particular aspect of nineteenth century thought. It exemplifies the notion that the term 'Victorian' 'tends to summon up a middle-class image...'.[11]

It is scarcely necessary to say that those characteristics mentioned

9. Altick, Victorian People 59ff.

10. Cazamian 44.

11. Janet Phillips and Peter Phillips, Victorians at Home and Away (London: Croom Helm, 1978) 11.

above and which are normally assigned to the Georgian age, and those usually connected with the Victorian, such as seriousness and moral rectitude, optimism and a belief in social meliorism, merge and blend. History is a continuum of which only occasionally can social movements be positively linked to reigns and dates. Acting as a further stimulus and having affinities with the historical processes just mentioned is the movement known as the Romantic movement and which spans the two centuries. It is Romanticism to which I now turn. My remarks will be brief since the subject is highly complex and might propose in itself a worthwhile line of study to those interested in the colonial novel.[12]

The Romantic movement offered additional impetus to the creative energy brought to bear on the subject of Australian settlement in prose fiction. As I say that, I am setting aside for the moment Dixon's authoritative study of the spirit of the previous age — called Georgian, neo-classical, or in terms of literature, the Augustan age. Dixon argues that this spirit helped shape the early colonial period in Australia. It influenced, no doubt, the earliest prose fiction although, as will be demonstrated in the course of my study, there were other co-existent and perhaps more influential forces at work when such novels began to proliferate around the 1830s. In fact, in David Denholm's opinion, Romanticism was introduced into the bush in the decade of the 1830s.[13] His findings are social and historical, but interestingly the date coincides with the appearance of these works.

Rickword, in his examination of the social background of the age, has drawn attention to the 'air of expectancy, of revival' in the last decades of the eighteenth century and those which were to follow.[14] As part of that

12. Argyle follows this line of enquiry in <u>An Introduction to the Australian Novel</u> and here outlines Sir Walter Scott's influence on some early Australian works.

13. David Denholm, <u>The Colonial Australians</u> (Ringwood: Penguin, 1979) 21.

14. Edgell Rickword, 'The Social Setting (1780-1830)', <u>From Blake to Byron</u>, vol.V of <u>The Pelican Guide to English Literature</u>, rev.ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975) 12.

process, one must regard the Romantic movement as the imaginative and creative response to rapidly changing times. Rickword, surveying the movement, notes how rare it is for 'the perceptible limits of a literary "period" [to] coincide so closely with crucial political events...'.[15] 'Romanticism', for Denholm, was 'a doctrine of rejection' of the great economic upheaval called the Industrial Revolution.[16] When writers turned from the more complex and unwholesome life of a rapidly developing urban civilization and focussed on the felicity of a rural existence and its inherent link with the natural world such a stance had contemporary appeal. It was to the Romantic sensibility of the reading public. 'Emotion and sentiment', Bernard Smith has observed, soon gathered around the idea of nature.[17]

While it took some time for Romantic precepts to become incorporated into colonial fiction it was, as Denholm has argued, 'a doctrine made for colonial life...'.[18] As he explains, however, and as Dixon's The Course of the Empire confirms, there was much inherently Georgian in early colonial culture. To take an example: the regularity of the straight line was only one aspect of that 'mental baggage' of early colonial society, although an important one, as this historian has revealed.[19] 'It was a vision that banished the untidy, the irregular from civilization'.[20] Such a concept is embodied in Alfred Dudley,[21] published in 1830, and attributed to Sarah Porter.[22] Illustrated here is the dwelling built by new settlers in Australia; it is said to replicate exactly the formal lines of their Georgian residence in the

15. Rickwood 11.
16. Denholm 20.
17. Bernard Smith, European Vision and the South Pacific, 1768-1850 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960) 59.
18. Denholm 20.
19. Denholm Ch.4.
20. Denholm 49.
21. [Sarah Porter], Alfred Dudley; Or, The Australian Settlers (London, [1842]).
22. Marcie Muir, A Bibliography of Australian Children's Books, 2 vols.I (London: Deutsch, 1970); II (Sydney: Hutchinson, 1976). I:37-8.

motherland. Louisa Meredith's Notes and Sketches of 1844, a useful ancillary work for my study, provides another example. Meredith deplores the wholesale removal of native vegetation around country homesteads. But she notes that if such measures are not taken, owners regard their dwellings as 'wild and uncivilized'.[23] In the homeland at this time, Denholm reminds us: 'The Romantics had already begun to rebel against Georgian form and begun to see merit in unspoiled nature'.[24] Yet in the alien environment of the southern hemisphere Romantic concepts could only slowly permeate the bush. After initial settlement, 'human progress was symbolized by the imposition of law and order upon the untamed wilderness...'. However, as Smith continues, some decades later in a change marked by Romantic sensibility, 'an increasing number of settlers began to derive considerable aesthetic satisfaction from their surroundings'.[25] One can chart the unsteady progress of such ideas in the colonial novels; for it was against this complex intellectual background in the homeland that colonial prose fiction first appeared.

Spurred on by the dehumanizing processes and influences of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain the creative writer looked to the natural environment and the life-enhancing qualities that an existence close to nature could propose. Influenced in addition by events overseas, and the keen interest of a growing reading public, writers also cast around for material beyond that at hand in Europe. Thus Romantic interest centred on the picturesque and exotic landscapes and people that new lands could provide. Australia was one of those lands. As Bernard Smith has so ably demonstrated, painters, like writers, derived an immense stimulus from the contrast of the civilized an the uncultivated, the juxtaposition of Culture and Nature, which character-

23. [Louisa Anne] Meredith, Notes and Sketches of New South Wales ...by Mrs. Charles Meredith (London, 1844; Sydney: Ure Smith in assoc. with the National Trust of Australia, N.S.W., 1973) 56. See also 129.

24. Denholm 49.

25. Smith, European Vision 224.

ized and defined European settlement in Australia. Still, just as the creative writer looked beyond the burgeoning towns of the Industrial Revolution, so too they turned to settings in the hinterland when they chose an Australian setting. It appealed to the susceptibilities of the age. And so did the plot concerning emigrants who made their way to the hinterland — and their home there.

Certainly, a promise of freedom and a belief in the dignity of the individual was sustained in the business of the taking up of land in the bush. There was an expectation here of the continuation of a rural life known of old. One can only agree with historian Richard White who sees these 'romantic visions' as an 'imaginative response to industrialisation in England'. For behind those qualities which appealed to the newcomers White sees lurking 'an unstated comparison with a cold, crowded, polluted, industrialised and socially-divided England'. And he adds: 'The visions of rural innocence in Australia appealed to a deep-seated emotional resentment against industrialisation'.[26] Lansbury is another who has recorded the contemporary nostalgia for a rural past and the belief in a previous rural golden age in Britain.[27]

In the expansive climate of the wider historical period under discussion at this moment a journey became a popular metaphor appropriate to the age. Romantic individualism is epitomized by such a means. For the novelist the journey could transform subject matter into material with Romantic connotations. For authors utilizing Australia as a setting the theme imposed form. A voyage to colonial Australia and, once there, an imagined trek inland, provided the linear structure of a number of narratives. Paradoxically,

26. White 34.

27. Coral Lansbury, Arcady in Australia: The Evocation of Australia in Nineteenth Century English Literature (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1970) Ch.3 and passim.

an expansive spatial dimension is also proposed here since a journey to a new world evokes metaphysical concerns — those involving both writer and reader. Within these texts therefore arise tensions of a kind which, I would contend, go unnoticed by the reader today.

The character of the settler is a Romantic figure here. As commonly remarked, other characters of importance are the convict, the shepherd, the bushranger and the Aboriginal. The seeker of gold makes his appearance in the novels of the 1850s. All evoke Romantic colouring; however, it is the settler who becomes the 'noble frontiersman', a popular contemporary character 'around whom there clings an aura of high romance...'.[28] It does seem likely, in Russel Ward's opinion, that the heroes of James Fenimore Cooper's American stories of frontier life offered the 'noble and heroic archetype for the innumerable noble frontiersmen who were to crowd the pages of subsequent nineteenth-century popular novels'.[29] In Australian fiction a figure like this on the borders of civilization took the place of the original inhabitant of the land: the 'noble savage', who had initially appealed to Romantic taste. And the Australian Aboriginal became merely a peripheral character.

In such a climate of opinion writers captured the drama of pioneering life or rather, those aspects of pioneering which could appropriately be utilized in the genre of romance. In fact, Gillian Beer has seen the Romantic movement as according 'new significances' to the form of romance.[30] A 'romantic image of an ideal rural society' is what White has seen as emerging at this time.[31] Whether chronicling colonial life or inventing it these authors, like those later in the century, did not need, in Denholm's

28. Russel Ward, The Australian Legend, new illus.ed. (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1978) 303.

29. Ward 298.

30. Gillian Beer, The Romance, Critical Idiom Series 10 (London: Methuen, 1970) 6.

31. White 34.

words, 'to write sound history'. What he has seen as the 'pastoral romantic need' was rather to 'create a history to give life a poetic nobility in a hostile land'.[32] It was this Romantic vision which set in train the pastoral myth integral to these early Australian novels. Thus, against a background of antipodean exoticism intrepid settlers demonstrate their essential nobility and, even more importantly, evince Anglo-Saxon perseverance as they establish a domestic and cultural milieu which almost exactly parallels its metropolitan counterpart.

It would seem that one aspect of this milieu was the ideal popularly gathering round the country-house in the mother culture. Such an ideal incorporated practical, moral and spiritual attributes of a strongly positive nature and presented 'a powerful conservative symbol': the words are those of Kenny in her study of the subject.[33] The concept of the country-house and the ethos it sustained provided a trope that could be appropriated with ease by the colonial writer and was, one could argue, by the most sophisticated. Dixon posits its significance in the emerging Australian literary tradition. He writes:

> If any one symbol may be said to have expressed the novelists' interpretation of this quintessential frontier situation, it was the country-house landscape and its relation to the wilderness. With its splendid mansion wedded to the surrounding woodlands by a series of intermediate designs, the country estate in eighteenth century English literature was the manifest image of a society based upon natural virtue.[34]

Most writers evoked a modest recreation of the colonial dwelling; yet as 'an image of solidity in an uncertain age'[35] in former times such a picture conformed well to a colonial setting. In bringing the matter forward at this

32. Denholm 158-9.
33. Virginia C. Kenny, The Country-House Ethos in English Literature, 1688-1750 (Brighton: Harvester, 1984) x.
34. Dixon 155.
35. Kenny 19.

juncture I am proposing that an element of romance is inherent in this idealized image; at least as it may have appeared to readers whose background was middle-class. It was one way in which nobility could be conferred on colonial domestic circumstances.

The insistent themes and the assured perspective of the romance offer the creative writer strong formulas on which to build. There is no clear-cut differentiating line between the romance and the novel, the latter, of course, being the generic term conventionally employed, and used here, for prose fiction. Having said this, it is worth turning to Beer's The Romance and considering her statement that: 'The novel is more preoccupied with representing and interpreting a known world, the romance with making apparent the hidden dreams of that world' (p.12). This neat summary encapsulates two possible modes of coming to terms with available material, and while it is true that the expressed intention of the writers under discussion here was to address aspects of contemporary reality, yet their narratives were habitually couched in terms of romance. Just why that was so and how well prose fiction with an Australian setting was suited to the genre and, further, how Australian subject matter came to be tailored to the matrix of romance, are matters dealt with presently; and in the chapters to come. It is appropriat to record at this point, however, that the form's many possible variants best suited it to contemporary circumstances. Furthermore, it is Beer's contention that during the Romantic period there came a recognition that 'the romance expressed a world permanently within all men: the world of the imagination and of dream' (p.7).

Above all, the romance is a serious treatment of love and adventure. Its structure gives rise to the happy ending. Beer has drawn attention to the 'cluster of properties' characterizing the romance (p.10). Stock themes and images abound, and as Northrop Frye has observed, there is a stron

connection between the romance and the folktale because, more fundamentally, each has the capacity to incorporate the elements of myth. Both romance and folktale form part of that body of literature which meet 'the imaginative needs of the community'.[36] In addition to its Romantic connotations, a journey or a quest is a significant convention of romance and as well as serving as a structural device, such movement exists furthermore on a metaphoric or mythic level. Such travels may involve exploits in a distant land. A rural setting is often proposed and pastoral and Arcadian imagery is a popular commonplace, as are scenes of rural hospitality, felicity and goodwill. The realistic and the fanciful exist side by side, while the colourful and exaggerated are major elements. There is a reliance too on chance or coincidence or unexpected events. Heroes and heroines are idealized; even so, exploits and adventures ensue before they can be united. Almost invariably the romance culminates in marriage and domesticity, these forming elements of paramount significance in the genre. To sum up: tribulation gives way to good fortune; there is triumph over evil; virtue and courage are rewarded. Some of these ideas point to a further structural element: the deferral of the romance's happy conclusion. When the plot is not strongly unified, the narrative becomes in effect a series of adventures, sometimes picaresque in nature, and with room for diversity and digression.

While the romance might point a moral it is axiomatic that it is entertaining. Nostalgia regarding the past is one aspect of these narratives but to this, as Northrop Frye has argued, is linked that which is 'potential or possible'.[37] He continues: 'This recreation of the possible or future or ideal constitutes the wish-fulfillment element in romance...'. Accordingly, 'the recreation of romance brings us into a present when past and future are

36. Northrop Frye, _The Secular Scripture_ (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1976) 6-8.

37. Frye, _The Secular Scripture_ 178-9.

gathered...'. Herein lies a richness and a power to gratify contemporary aspirations. The 'image of the ideal', it has been said, 'is central to romance'.[38] Above all, such tales are essentially pleasing; they document success. When we consider all these factors it becomes plain that in structure and in tone the genre provides a singularly appropriate formula in which to chronicle the settlement of Australia.

I have said that exploit and adventure are fundamental to romance and that a journey or quest helped structure such fictions. Frye points out that such elements give literary form to the genre.[39] This proposes a modality which would serve those inclined to illustrate colonization in imaginative prose. Thus a journey to a land so far removed from metropolitan England that it was antipodean is a formulaic technique structuring the books to which I first drew attention: Huber's Adventures on a Journey to New Holland, Rowcroft's Tales of the Colonies, and Kingsley's Geoffry Hamlyn. The theme gave rise to a host of works to follow. Their destination reached, characters in the colonial novel may be obliged to make a further journey, one which will test their endurance and take them to the object of their endeavours — land in the new colony and a home. Thus Rowcroft's characters in the Tales make for the Tasmanian hinterland; those in Geoffry Hamlyn the rich pastoral country of south-eastern Australia.

The location to which writers directed their attention was the European dwelling in the Australian bushland. The construction of the family home forms a key theme in Alfred Dudley, one of the earliest works with an Australian setting. Although a minor work, its themes were to foreshadow those of scores of others. The building of a house was the chief character-

38. E.T. Lincoln, in her introduction to Pastoral and Romance. Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. E.T. Lincoln (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969) 4.

39. Northrop Frye, 'The Mythos of Summer: Romance', in Lincoln 208-24.

istic of the newcomers; such technology differentiated them from the indigenes. And just as castle or cottage formed the major locales in the traditional European romance, so the bush homestead was the antipodean equivalent. It was a stable centre. Comfortable lodgings were envisaged, at least for the foremost characters; although sometimes the reader enters less salubrious accommodation, as in the anonymous Frank Kennedy, the Australian Settler[40] of 1847. More than one dwelling might figure in the colonial narrative: employed for contrast and comparison. And drawing on the tendency of romance to blend the ideal with sharply drawn details of contemporary reality, novelists pictured domestic contentment within firmly realized settings. Ignored were the less pleasing aspects of these rural locales and supplied instead were details likely to whet the reader's interest. The architectural feature is a commonplace in romance, and of topical interest in the texts I am studying are references to the verandah, writers learning to employ the area as the background for domestic occasions. Perhaps Christie in A Love Story[41] of 1841 was the first to allude to a verandah in Australian prose fiction and as time passed the locale began to take on metaphorical significance. Common to the genre also is the feast or celebration; a set-piece of that kind now took on new attributes. For example, Mary Theresa Vidal imagines a party celebrating the final clearance of land for agriculture in Bengala,[42] a large-scale work. All this would suggest that conventions peculiar to the Australian romance were evolving.

Employing another stock image, the locus amoenus, writers added a garden to the chosen location and filled it, as in Atkinson's Cowanda,[43] with Euro-

40. Frank Kennedy, the Australian Settler, ed. 'Yarra-Guinea' (Sydney, 1847).
41. [W.H. Christie], A Love Story by 'A Bushman', 2 vols. (Sydney, 1841).
42. Mrs. [Mary Theresa] Vidal, Bengala: Or, Some Time Ago (London, 1860).
43. [Louisa Atkinson], Cowanda; The Veteran's Grant, by the authoress of 'Gertrude', etc., etc. (Sydney, 1859).

pean blooms. Far from inventing this pleasing spectacle, they were in fact drawing on that aspect of contemporary reality which so attracted travellers in colonial Australia. Moreover, they created appealing pastoral imagery thereby. Adopting yet another romance element writers tended to name these fictional locales. The Aboriginal name 'Lan-lan-borin' thus provides local colour, foreign exoticism and musicality to the text of Haydon's The Australian Emigrant.[44] In this novel 'Lan-lan-borin' is envisaged 'emerging from the surrounding wilderness' (p.189) and one further aspect of romance is in evidence here. That peaceful pastoral setting, in these novels the symbol of European civilization, provides a forceful contrast to the little-known and often harsh country beyond. Sometimes, recalling their European heritage and the long history of romance, novelists called the latter a forest but, almost without exception, it was termed a wilderness. The question these authors addressed was how to reconcile the concept of wilderness with notions of pastoral. As for the wondrous, which many have seen as a necessary attribute of the romance, what has generally been described as 'antipodean inversion' or a 'reversal of nature' was a topic which it pleased the creative writer to observe. Australia, a present day writer has declared, was 'a land of strange contradictions and eccentricities'.[45] 'This concept of the "reversal of nature" was a commonplace of late eighteenth century thinking about antipodean countries', writes Brian Elliott in this regard.[46] However, many decades later the authors of the colonial romance were still turning to such material in order to focus upon the phenomenal or the odd.

Movement, as part of the exploits and adventures which structured the earlier colonial novel, was in general towards the locale of the bush home-

44. G.H. Haydon, The Australian Emigrant; A Rambling Story Containing as Much Fact as Fiction (London, 1854).
45. F.G. Clarke, Land of Contrarieties (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1977) 154 and passim.
46. Brian Elliott, The Landscape of Australian Poetry (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1967) 14.

stead. All manner of sites may be perceived in this literary landscape, as is exemplified, say, in Atkinson's Gertrude,[47] and now a writer with a thorough grasp of conditions points up the diversity of colonial life through contrasts and parallelisms. A similarly loosely constructed narrative is Howitt's Tallangetta.[48] Romances of this kind permit the incorporation of much extraneous subject matter and may be episodic in nature. Of special interest here is the delineation of the relationship between the colonists and their new homeland. However, the declaration of such affinities is generally left to the story's conclusion, where the greater movement which structures these narratives is most in evidence. Here one formula may return the principal characters to the motherland. To take an example: Francis Newton, of the anonymous Rebel Convicts,[49] 'having no tie to bind him to the country' leaves Australia for his native land. This was to become a popular convention, those returning having achieved success in the Antipodes; or, as in the spirit of romance, having unexpectedly inherited a fortune. Even so, the great majority of the novels concern emigration and those voyaging to Australia journey inland and settle there, Australia becoming their home.

The romance, then, offered a literary model and one that was, generally speaking, reliant upon stock conventions and plots. There is little room for questioning or for overturning that which is familiar, accepted or known. 'The conventions of prose romance show little change over the course of centuries, and conservatism of this kind is the mark of a stable genre': the words are those of Northrop Frye.[50] Not surprisingly, the romance insists upon traditional moral values; upon social norms. And of the latter court-

47. [Louisa Atkinson], Gertrude, the Emigrant; A Tale of Colonial Life by an Australian lady (Sydney, 1857).
48. William Howitt, Tallangetta, the Squatter's Home (London, 1857).
49. Rebel Convicts: An Australian Novel (Melbourne, 1858).
50. Frye, The Secular Scripture 4.

ship and marriage are amongst the principal. The selection of a domestic locale as a narrative's spiritual core is part of the formal strategy of romance. It is symbolic of fundamental beliefs and ideals. The romance places emphasis on courage and virtue: the worthy receive their just rewards and the wicked their dues. And how fitting are such concepts in picturing settlements far from the parent culture and where the population was variously composed of transported felons and emancipists, the military and the marines, free colonists and indigenous tribespeople. Thus the romance's happy ending is singularly appropriate; it eases the heightened emotions and dramatic tension engendered by such a situation, one made more complex by climatic and environmental conditions. Frye is a critic who has thought to take into account the intense desire 'of most readers of romances for the happy ending'.[51] Surely the latter derives from the wishfulfilment element underlying the romance. The happy ending offers a solution which is credible and pleasing in artistic terms — and in terms of contemporary reality.

I have argued that such formulas were those which shaped the earliest prose fiction with an Australian setting. Yet in view of the circumstances surrounding the initial settlement of a penal colony it is only to be expected that this body of work, while retaining the romance ethos, admitted elements antithetical to the genre. In drawing particular attention to the works below it is to be remarked that the subject of crime and punishment, to a greater or lesser degree, obtrudes almost without exception into narratives which have south-eastern Australia as their setting. Amongst the works of prose relating to Australia in the early nineteenth century were a handful of narratives which purported to be the reminiscences of transported felons. Of these The Memoirs of James Hardy Vaux[52] of 1819 and Savery's

51. Frye, The Secular Scripture 136.

52. James Hardy Vaux, The Memoirs of James Hardy Vaux, Including His Vocabulary of the Flash Language, ed. N. McLachlan (London: Heineman, 1964).

Quintus Servinton[53] of 1830 are usually considered to be the first termed prose fiction. The latter is the first full length novel published in Australia. It is worthwhile stating now that these will scarcely figure in my study since the Australian settings are brief and predominantly urban.

However, in Howison's little-known novella One False Step (1830)[54] and in Tucker's Ralph Rashleigh[55] the transported protagonists are sent into the hinterland of New South Wales, where the adventures which ensue against well-realized rural backgrounds are amongst those elements placing the works in the romance genre. That could be said of Adventures of a Guardsman (1848)[56] although the book by Cozens could more correctly be termed descriptive prose with some fictional representation.

Two later works, Lang's The Forger's Wife (1855)[57] and Botany Bay (1859),[58] have as setting New South Wales during the convict era, and though the concept of crime and punishment is fundamental the themes and motifs of romance predominate. Transportation to the eastern states ceased just after the mid-century; Lang's works are thus set in the recent past. Brian Elliott is only one of a number who have remarked upon the particular interest of the nineteenth century in crime and punishment.[59] In an Introduction to a later convict novel, O'Reilly's Moondyne of 1879, Elliott rightly points out that a

53. [Henry Savery], Quintus Servinton: A Tale Founded upon Incidents of Real Occurrence, ed. C. Hadgraft (Brisbane: Jacaranda, 1962).

54. John Howison, One False Step in his Tales of the Colonies, 2 vols. (London, 1830).

55. [James Tucker], Ralph Rashleigh, ed. C. Roderick (Brisbane: Jacaranda, 1962). The date of composition is generally agreed to be 1844-5, but H.J. Boehm proposes a later date, roughly 1850. Australian Literary Studies 6.4 (1974): 428-30.
Note: The abbreviated form ALS will be cited in all subsequent references to this journal.

56. Charles Cozens, Adventures of a Guardsman (London, 1848).

57. John Lang and 'The Forger's Wife', ed. N. Keesing (Sydney: Ferguson, 1979

58. John Lang, Botany Bay Or True Tales of Early Australia (Hobart, 1859).

59. Brian Elliott in his introduction to J.B. O'Reilly, Moondyne (Adelaide: Rigby, 1975) x. See also Richard D. Altick, Victorian Studies in Scarlet (London: Dent, 1972) passim.

number of the earlier Australian novels dealt variously with the subject, Lang's works, for example, introducing 'critical opinions which point to something beyond entertainment'. In the context of Australian colonization this was bound to be so, and one of the most powerful works relating to the system of transportation is Leakey's The Broad Arrow.[60] Here the conventions of romance, moreover, some aspects of Gothic romance, are central to the work. Coming right at the end of the period I am studying is the anonymous Wolfingham[61] of 1860. Recalled for its insistent religiosity, its ideal of love is set against themes of crime, punishment, bushranging and remorse.

Emigration to Australia, due to political, economic and social circumstances in Britain, greatly increased in the decades leading up to the mid-century, one writer seeing this phenomenon as 'a social safety valve'.[62] Settlers from the mother country pressed forward into the hinterland of the huge continent with varying degrees of success and, not surprisingly, that more agreeable subject matter caught the attention of creative writers. The whole concept of a voyage to a distant land — one already celebrated for its unique characteristics — and events surrounding settlement there, quite naturally proposed the genre of romance. Even so, writers who chose a mode which could be both factual and fanciful were free to diverge from the playfulness of romance, to apprise their predominantly middle-class reading public of the facts concerning emigration and settlement. The need for such factual matters gave rise to a spate of publications in the early nineteenth century; prose fiction relating to Australia (although not the Swan River Settlement) began to proliferate after the 1830s.

An ancient convention of the genre was that although the story was not always plausible it purported to tell of events that had indeed taken place.

60. [Caroline Leakey], The Broad Arrow: Being Passages from the History of Maida Gwynnham, a Lifer by Oliné Keese, 2 vols. (London, 1859).
61. Wolfingham; Or, The Convict-Settler of Jervis Bay (London, [1860]).
62. Clarke 164.

Authors of the earlier colonial narrative seized upon this aspect of romance; in particular, it became the subject of statement in introductions and forewords and prefaces without which, it would seem, the colonial novel was incomplete. Writing for an eager and ever-expanding audience and drawing from first-hand experience or other sources, these novelists incorporated a substantial amount of factual matter into their narratives. Reflecting upon these works and the creative writers' professed intention to enlighten their readers, one becomes aware that with this urgent and personal tone the genre of romance is taking on a new guise even as it retains one of its inherent attributes.

It is noticeable that some of the earliest authors chose to write in autobiographical mode, that seeming to lend weight and credibility to the tales they told. Mitchell has outlined the change from the factual memoirs of early commentators on Australia — Watkin Tench, perhaps, is the best known — to the appearance of prose fiction with an Australian setting. Mitchell sees the early convict narratives in autobiographical mode as a transitional phase and observes too that the 'formal model of the memoir' is later to be found in Tales of the Colonies.[63] Interestingly Rowcroft, employing both Prefaces and an Introduction and acting as 'Editor' to the numerous editions of his work, gives indications of his wish to blend truth with fiction. With recourse to similar tactics, creative writers were to follow in his train. Accordingly, in these romances fiction and fact were to compete: in terms of composition colonialism was to modify form.

To instruct and to entertain: that became the contemporary catch-cry. The ideal was important, say, in a book for children and is embodied in A Mother's Offering to Her Children, published in 1841 and described in the

63. The Oxford History of Australian Literature 34.

Preface as 'the first work written in the Colony expressly for children'.[64] The Preface of the sweeping romance The Emigrant Family (1849)[65] provides a good illustration of the convention and one notes that Harris, even as he reveals that certain elements have been introduced to this antipodean narrative 'to furnish the tale with sufficient of plot to interest the lovers of romance', is nevertheless able to assert that 'everything exhibited is a simple copy from actual daily life'. Haydon refers to the text of The Australian Emigrant as 'a rambling story, containing as much fact as fiction' and declares in the Preface that his intention is both to 'amuse and instruct'. In the same year, 1854, but with greater finesse, Catherine Helen Spence explains that Clara Morison is both a 'transcript' and a tale.[66] If intentions were divided, then such writers seemed to have no mental reservations that this literary ideal was appropriate to the times.

Perhaps readers came to expect such assertions. Given the optimism surrounding colonization and the keen interest in the endeavour, that does seem possible. As to the creative writer, in presenting an exciting narrative and in pledging the truth of the particulars, each was attempting to fuse colonial realities with the prerequisites of romance. All this is revealing of the gravity and earnestness which marks these novels, and given the spirit of the age the mood was apt. It embraced a further advantage: that such reasoning lent contemporaneity to the strengths of an ancient literary form.

I have implied that the form of romance is protean and it has become clear already that age-old conventions permit the incorporation of a profusion

64. [Charlotte Barton], A Mother's Offering to Her Children by a lady long resident in New South Wales, introduction R. Wighton, facs. ed. (Milton, Qu.: Jacaranda, 1979).

65. [Alexander Harris], The Emigrant Family: Or, the Story of an Australian Settler, ed. W.S. Ramson (Canberra: Australian National UP, 1967).

66. See Susan Eade in her introduction to Catherine Helen Spence, Clara Morison (Adelaide: Rigby, 1971).

of material. The ideal and the actual are encompassed within the structure of romance; so that along with the extravagant and highly-coloured, the inclusion of more mundane detail is characteristic. How well this suited the colonial novelist is irrefutable. Sometimes in their eagerness writers made use of practical and statistical information relating to emigration or settlement. Rowcroft, to take one example, more than once describes the construction of a dwelling for the interested reader or the elucidation of the would-be colonist. With a nod in that direction the more sophisticated Spence unexpectedly includes the method of pizé construction right at the end of Clara Morison (p.422). One finds oneself agreeing with Umberto Eco that to suspend the action thus is a charming aspect of the nineteenth century novel; yet in terms of literary craft 'it should not be done'.[67] However, while the most obvious intrusions may go against the grain of romance it might be said of the writers of romance, as one observer has done, that:

> In form and spirit, as well as in content, the romance proved peculiarly adaptable to the needs of these authors. The absence of classical precepts governing its structure offered freedom to the writer who would develop his forms empirically from his materials.[68]

Useful as this informative mode might be, for the discerning reader a weakness is embodied here. With such points in mind, Frederick Sinnett was the earliest to offer a critical analysis of Australian prose fiction of his times.

The Fiction Fields of Australia,[69] published in 1856, is the 'first critical essay to deal solely with Australian literature...'.[70] It is of

67. Umberto Eco, 'Reflections on The Name of the Rose', Encounter LXIV.4 (1985): 12.
68. D.G. Hoffman, 'Fable as Reality' in Lincoln 278-9.
69. F. Sinnett, 'The Fiction Fields of Australia' in John Barnes, ed., The Writer in Australia: A Collection of Literary Documents 1856-1964 (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1969) 8-32.
70. The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature, ed. W.H. Wilde, J. Hooton, B. Andrews (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1985) 257.

seminal importance. Criticising the practices of contemporary novelists and employing the metaphor of a fictional field, Sinnett refers to the difficulties of 'breaking up fresh ground' in creative writing. He observes the 'fiction fields' of Australia to be slow in their yield and he reasons that both the immaturity of colonial culture and, more seriously, lack of talent, are the contributing factors. Initially Sinnett directs attention to such defects and he writes of the need for the externals of these narratives to be 'truthful and complete but', he insists, 'subordinated to the larger purposes of fiction'. Stressing the obligation to make imaginative use of the Australian material available this critic identifies some of the major defects. The novels are 'too apt to be books of travel in disguise'. He outlines another failing: most narratives are '<u>too</u> Australian', authors falling back on that informative mode to which I referred above. Too seriously Australian yet avoiding 'human life' — with these observations Sinnett complains that novels concentrate on localized 'manners and customs'. Sinnett's deliberations carry weight and it is worthwhile comparing his remarks with those of the present day critic, Leonie Kramer:

> Early attempts to document the life of the new colony resulted in some curious amalgams of fact and fiction, of informative detail and melodramatic romance, and awkward combinations of poetic diction and local colour.[71]

This is fair comment, typical of the statements made concerning the earlier colonial novels and their authors and largely validates the earlier critic's judgement. Sinnett was a perceptive writer and in subsequent chapters I will be returning to his essay.

I turn now to an additional element which likewise seems to run counter to those qualities common to romance. Sinnett could not have complained of a lack of steadfast purpose in the works he was considering. It could be

71. Kramer, in her introduction to <u>The Oxford History of Australian Literature</u> 15.

argued that the light-heartedness one normally associates with the romance is mostly missing here. My contention is that the spirit of the times and moreover, the whole concept of attempting to represent this pioneering impulse, would seem to preclude any such levity. Similarly, in our own era, anything other than gravity would seem inappropriate in contemplating the exploration of outer space. The two ventures, though separated by a technological gulf, are not dissimilar. Cynicism may occasionally colour the reporting of exploratory endeavour today; in these novels the quality is almost totally absent. On the other hand, with some exceptions, notably in works by Rowcroft, Harris, Tucker, and Kingsley, humour seems to be lacking. However humour, in the context of another age, is not always easy to appreciate or define. What is embraced here is a positivistic stand. It is one of the chief attractions of the earlier colonial narrative.

Even if they did not make use of practical or statistical information one is nonetheless struck by the colonial novelist's stance. The expressed desire was to do justice to the material available and to incorporate a range of antipodean perspectives for their readers. They succeeded variously, both in artistic terms and in terms of a reporting of contemporary reality. Not all were able to fulfil adequately the task of recording colonial settlement in the form of prose narrative, however, and perhaps the most successful recreation of life in the interior of New South Wales before the half-century was a fictionalized autobiography by Harris known as Settlers and Convicts (1847).[72] The book has always been well-received: we learn of this from Sinnett and through critical opinion today.[73] Comparing Harris's book with Tales of the Colonies, John Barnes regards both as

72. [Alexander Harris], Settlers and Convicts, Or Recollections of Sixteen Years' Labour in the Australian Backwoods by 'An Emigrant Mechanic', foreword C.M.H. Clark (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1953).

73. See, for example, H.M. Green, A History of Australian Literature, rev.ed. 2 vols. (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1974) 30-3. Dixon draws attention to the complexity of this work in The Course of the Empire 172-84.

'colonial reminiscences', but sees Settlers and Convicts as the superior work because the author 'ignored the convention of romance which Rowcroft fell back on'.[74]

Seriousness of purpose could be entertained even if one's knowledge of Australia was not derived from first-hand experience. Hall's Floss[75] of 1852 is a conspicuous example. Published in London and marked by unbelievable dialogue, attempts at grim humour, and details of a sadistic and sensational kind, Hall's narrative lurches to its conclusion by means of events both coincidental and incredible. However, a lack of such experience did not preclude an imaginative recreation of colonial circumstances and in Sidney's Gallops and Gossips in the Bush of Australia (1854)[76] we come across pleasing imagery of colonial domestic life: that which bears all the hallmarks of the observed event.

The same cannot be said of Lee's Adventures in Australia (1851)[77] and The Kangaroo Hunters (1858)[78] by Bowman. Of these two authors it has been maintained: 'Mrs. Lee and Mrs. Bowman were inaccurate but industrious compilers of information', the two books being of the type written for young people which incorporated 'differing mixtures of fact and fancy, of the possible and impossible...'.[79] Several books for children are included in my study, and with good reason. Given the social context one would surmise that readership was not necessarily restricted to the young. Moreover, I

74. John Barnes, 'Australian Fiction to 1920' in The Literature of Australia, ed. Geoffrey Dutton, rev.ed. (Ringwood: Penguin, 1976) 152.

75. Thomas Hall, Floss; Or, The Progress of an Adventurer in the Regions of Australia (London, 1852).

76. Samuel Sidney, Gallops and Gossips in the Bush of Australia: Or, Passages in the Life of Alfred Barnard (London, 1854).

77. Sarah Lee, Adventures in Australia; Or, The Wanderings of Captain Spencer in the Bush and the Wilds (London, 1869).

78. Anne Bowman, The Kangaroo Hunters; Or Adventures in the Bush (London, 186

79. Brenda Niall, Australia Through the Looking-Glass: Children's Fiction 1830-1980 (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1984) 36,28.

agree with Brenda Niall's assertion that 'because of the vigilance with which children's books are monitored, they may reflect their society's values with special clarity'.[80]

A sober approach underlines two works which fall just within the bounds of romance; in these ethical concerns could be said to outweigh artistic purposes. Vidal's Tales for the Bush[81] of 1845 are told against an Australian background and attracted H.M. Green who, recognizing the author's intentions as religious and moral, praised the book within its limited context.[82] In similar mood is Marian[83] of 1859. The author Franc is not without craft in her recreation of bush life and her vision is informed by a good knowledge of contemporary circumstances; yet for all this Franc's religiosity and cramped moralizing seems to run counter to the breadth of vision possible in a new land. Simplicity and warmth are, however, undeniably present in these two works and, further, use has been made of themes and motifs typical of the colonial romance.

Pastoral is an ancient literary theme, often linked with the romance. Traditionally it dealt with a nostalgic rendering of peaceful prospects, simple ways, country ritual and scenes of rural life. Settings are idealized, as in romance, and concern was often with the minutiae of life. It has been said of the pastoral genre:

> What does appear to be a constant element in the pastoral as known to literature is the recognition of a contrast, implicit or expressed, between pastoral life and some more complex type of civilization.[84]

80. Niall 5.
81. Mrs. Francis Vidal, [Mary Theresa], Tales for the Bush (London, 1876).
82. Green 84-5, 90-1.
83. Maud Jean Franc, Marian; Or The Light of Someone's Home. A Tale of Australian Bush Life (Mt. Barker, S.Aust., 1859). Note: To the best of my knowledge this edition has not previously been recorded.
84. W.W. Greg, 'Pastoral: A Literary Inquiry' in Lincoln 9-10.

The writer continues: 'As the result of this contrast there arises an idea which comes perhaps as near being universal in pastoral as any — the idea, namely, of the "golden age"'. If pastoral life in literature were conveniently associated with a golden age, it became in addition incorporated into Christian teaching; accordingly that idealized concept came to be linked with the notion of the Garden of Eden. Within this schema a much earlier epoch was being drawn upon since in classical literature the notion of pastoral contained allusions to Arcadia, an ideal region of rural felicity. There, too, Elysium was the name given an imagined place of perfect happiness. Such settings had become part of the stock imagery of European literature and iconography and therefore formed one aspect of the cultural heritage of writers who looked to Australia for inspiration as the nineteenth century progressed.

If all this seems far removed from the concept of pioneering in a land itself remote, in physical and metaphysical terms, from the European homeland and its traditions, then there was one sense in which pastoral imagery was logically connected with the southern continent and, above all, with its hinterland. Thus, on his arrival Rowcroft's protagonist is struck by the 'arcadian scenery of the new continent' (p.21). Having built his 'tidy homestead' Thornley is eventually in a position to survey his property with satisfaction. 'We turned our little flock into the meadow, where we could see for a mile before us, with only trees enough to make the place look pleasing, like a gentleman's park in England' (p.77). Later, the settler takes stock of his situation and is grateful: 'I cast my eyes on the plain before me, and saw my flock of sheep studding the plain, with my working bullocks at a little distance' (p.90). Pastoral well-being, stability and independence have been achieved by this pioneering family. Thus the hopes and dreams which are spelt out in the Introduction to Tales of the Colonies and are illuminated in the text, point to that belief in social meliorism which has pastoral connotations and posits a golden age. Here

withdrawal to a closer relationship with natural and elemental rhythms has resulted in physical and mental well-being and material prosperity. Here pastoral gains antipodean colouring. Adopting this positive approach a host of writers were to fix upon the pastoral aspect of Australia and the pleasing tableau it presented. In literary terms a sense of continuity with European heritage was thereby contrived. Given the context, the scene must have evoked a powerful response.

Such confidence gave rise to a wealth of pastoral associations and therefore a range of narratives could be quoted here. I turn to Tallangetta where the chief setting is the eponymous homestead. The author was surely harking back to a golden age when he pictures the charm of the dwelling set in a 'golden wilderness' (Vol.I,Ch.I). Another such locale is 'Lahni Mill' (Vol.I,Ch.VIII). Vineyards and gardens likewise surround this dwelling and delight is expressed at the location's 'Elysian beauty'. Howitt styles it an 'Eden of the wilderness'.

But it is Kingsley who, in Geoffry Hamlyn, evokes a pastoral world in fine style and who draws upon biblical notions of pastoral with greatest success. Following those descriptive passages referred to above, Kingsley envisages the first meeting of some of the characters in a region where they have decided to settle. Hamlyn, recording events, explains how he saw a scene

> so venerable and ancient, so seldom seen in the Old World — the patriarchs moving into the desert with all their wealth, to find a new pasture-ground. A simple primitive action, the first and simplest act of colonization, yet producing such great results on the history of the world, as did the parting of Lot and Abraham in times gone by. (p.137)

Likened to a happening in the Old Testament, the passage takes on an elevated tone, and in employing the trope of settlers as patriarchs, as Rowcroft had done in his Introduction to the Tales, the author can propose the establish-

ment of a line of colonists. Here are a chosen people and a promised land, and the biblical allusion takes on contemporaneity and a patriotic colouring bound to please the British reader. With Kingsley's scene in mind Dixon has observed: 'Divine approbation of British colonization, a favourite theme of the explorers, is suggested by the receptivity of the new country and its immediate suitability to pastoralism'.[85] Pastoralism, as depicted here and in numerous other works, evokes that agreeable vision of well-being and continuity of culture.

Drawing on the richness of the pastoral tradition writers could embellish their texts, obtain a sense of heightened realism, or utilize the novel aspect of pastoralism in bush surrounds. And yet it was not essential for creative writers to rely upon classical or standardized notions of pastoral imagery. It was only necessary to employ simple descriptive passages to convey this aspect of colonial life. More serious ideas inherent in the notion of pastoral — those which might enquire into the complex relationship between the newcomers and the land and its original inhabitants or, again, explore the feelings of settlers towards the past or identify their dreams for the future — are cursorily examined in these narratives. They are unsophisticated works in the main. However, in simpler terms, the creative writer could compete with the factual account, a matter of some relevance in an age keen to acquire information about Australia. The little-known land had become an area for speculation; it began to assume a pleasing aspect as time elapsed since, with industry and endeavour, it would seem, all could gainfully indulge in pastoral pursuits.

A Voice from the Crowd[86] was published in Adelaide in 1859 and contains moral treatises, sketches and verse. The author, Cayley, does not feel the need to utilize the conventional subjects accruing in the Australian pastoral

85. Dixon 185.

86. James A. Cayley, A Voice from the Crowd (Adelaide, [1859]).

romance — Aborigines, bushrangers and bushfires — to help readers envisage the colonial scene. In 'South Australian Scenery', then, one notes his acceptance of a countryside characterized by 'peaceful repose' (p.55), one where 'rich cornfields and comfortable homesteads' have come to symbolize the European presence there (p.57). When George Mayford, the hero of Rowcroft's An Emigrant in Search of a Colony (1851),[87] arrives in New South Wales after seemingly unending peregrinations, he discovers the truth of the assertion that Australia is a land of 'rich pastures and unbounded plains' (p.397). In effect, this recognition of pastoral harmony helped emigrants to become reconciled to their strange surrounds. I refer both to imaginary characters, and to those who created them. There is comfort in the pastoral mode, as there is in the romance.

A traditional element in pastoral literature is the stock comparison of country and town and it is given new currency when set against a background that is novel. Pastoral elements helped shape the reader's knowledge of the Australian hinterland; information regarding the burgeoning towns was less easily obtained, and for reasons I will shortly propose. Mention has already been made of the system of transportation which continued until around the mid-century in the east of the continent. This factor must be taken into account when considering the earlier colonial novel, and anxieties connected with these circumstances are noticeably absent from the novels located in South Australia. In the 1850s Adelaide is the well-realized setting of Clara Morison and Tender and True[88] by Spence and it also forms part of the backdrop to Colonial Pen-Scratchings[89] by 'Little Jacob'. Innumerable credible settings are depicted and the works convey a wealth of information regarding those segments of urban life

87. Charles Rowcroft, An Emigrant in Search of a Colony (London, 1851).
88. Catherine Helen Spence, Tender and True: A Colonial Tale (London, 1856).
89. 'Little Jacob', Colonial Pen-Scratchings; Or Sketches of South Australian Life (Mt. Barker, S.Aust., 1860). This volume cited in all subsequent references.

which authors chose to portray. A writer of greater intellectual depth, Spence does not so obviously employ the mandatory antithesis of town and country, but the disparity between the two is made much of by 'Little Jacob' who structures a number of the tales around such distinctions. This anonymous writer expresses a firm preference for the simplicity of rural life; in consequence, the bush homestead often becomes, as it does in this fiction as a whole, the narrative's moral centre. In contrast are the hypocrisy and materialism of Adelaide, 'a mean, petty, shabby place' (p.103).

Sketches of town and country life which have been seen to offer 'a valuable picture of colonial Tasmania'[90] comprise the book entitled The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land (1829-30)[91] and generally ascribed to Savery. However, the work does not fall into the category of a fictional narrative and will be peripheral to my study. Mixed feelings towards Hobart Town and its population are in evidence in Tales of the Colonies. 'Altogether, I did not like the look of matters; but I was assured that the interior of the country was more inviting' writes Rowcroft's chief character (p.12). And a later visit to the town, and a public execution there, confirms the view that despite its dangers, rural domesticity is much to be preferred. In The Broad Arrow of 1859 Leakey surveys the heterogeneous population of free colonists, convicts and emancipists (or convicts who have served their time) in Hobart Town and is concerned with the considerable tensions arising from the situation, especially as it relates to middle-class urban life in a remote colony.

If the unknown author of the uncompleted The Emigrant's Daughter[92] of 1856 had planned rural episodes we cannot be sure since eight chapters only

90. The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature 609.
91. [H. Savery], The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land, ed. C. Hadgraft (St. Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1964).
92. The Emigrant's Daughter, A Tale That Is Told (Hobart, 1856).

are extant. A good knowledge of Melbourne in the 1850s seems evident in Chs.V-VIII. The town here is characterized by social evils: 'All that was thought of appeared mammon — the senses were entirely re-modeled and selfishness only prevailed' (p.18). Great wealth exists alongside poverty and degradation, and these chapters recount the plight of those who comprise part of the mass migration which followed gold discoveries at the mid-century in Victoria. Another who envisaged opulence and poverty side by side was the French writer Chabrillan in Les Voleurs d'Or.[93] Pictured are the incongruous nature of Sydney society, this being attributed to the town's origins as a convict settlement (Ch.6), and a variety of conditions in Melbourne. Here a public execution (Ch.14) is only one of the dramatic events of a highly-coloured novel published in Paris in 1857.

Sydney is the town featured in a number of the earliest novels and what emerges in this literary context is the particular attention drawn to the divided population there. It is one composed of free citizens and felons. Even so, it suits Rowcroft to mention mid-century sophistication and in An Emigrant in Search of a Colony he has his protagonist judge Sydney to be 'a splendid town, with handsome houses, and brilliant equipages' (p.413). Again, Sydney is seen through the heroine's eyes in Cowanda. In a little-known passage in Ch.XVII Atkinson's most competent descriptive passages bring the city streets and their cultural milieu vividly to mind.

More often, however, and as with Melbourne and Hobart Town, and occasionally Adelaide, the least appealing side of urban life is envisaged. Sydney, rapidly expanding by both natural means and emigration, seems not to have differed greatly from its British counterparts, and writers were soon referring to its iniquities. As early as 1819 Vaux can speak of 'a life of innocence and peaceful retirement' at a place called 'The Green Hills'

93. Madame Céleste de Chabrillan, The Gold Robbers, trans. Lucy and Caroline Moorehead (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1970).

which he then compares with Sydney — 'a vortex of dissipation, folly and wickedness' (The Memoirs, p.101). Clearly, Vaux is drawing on literary tradition here. The sentimental recollection of pastoral retirement and reference to his own state of mind and to the location's pleasing name make for pastoral imagery of the conventional kind. For all this, it would seem that literary idiom nicely mirrored the conditions. Later in the century, opposition between Sydney and the bush was to become a much debated topic.

Of other writers, Harris in his Settlers and Convicts makes use of some sharply-observed scenes of lawlessness and squalour in the area known as 'the Rocks'.[94] As Dixon reminds us, the protagonist here renounces the public houses of 'the Rocks' 'for the "more orderly and rational society" of the agricultural regions'.[95] The infamous nature of Sydney seems to have prompted the comment in Clacy's 'Mikka', that 'the dissipation of Sydney' is 'worse than London' (Vol.II,p.51). And a decade earlier in The Emigrant Family there is a telling reference to the town in a remark concerning the 'more hospitable habits of the interior' (p.34). Easy-going hospitality and generosity of spirit are seen in this body of fiction to be characteristic of the bush.

I have taken care to establish how colonial towns were viewed and have demonstrated that, overwhelmingly, urban existence was envisaged pejoratively. Perhaps this was apt in terms of contemporary reality; moreover, it was well suited to the polarities of the pastoral romance. I have mentioned the pointed reference to the social evils of Sydney, Melbourne, and

94. For similar observations on Sydney, see [Samuel Sidney], A Voice from the Far Interior of Australia by 'a Bushman' (London, 1847) 56 and E. F. T. Fowler, Southern Lights and Shadows : Being Brief Notes of Three Years' Experience of Social, Literary and Political Life in Australia, 2nd ed. (London, 1859) 43. For information on Australian urban life see Michael Cannon, Australia in the Victorian Age, 3 vols. (Melbourne: Nelson, 1971-5) vol.III, Life in the Cities.

95. Dixon 173.

Hobart Town; in addition, novelists ascribed undesirable qualities to urban locales. As to physical conditions, these were fancied as uncomfortable, a number of writers stressing the heat and dust of the mainland towns.[96] Oddly enough, heat and dust are remarkably absent from rural settings, so we may assume it was the peculiarity of such conditions which not unnaturally struck newcomers from northern climes. And as I have said, it is a pronounced feature of this body of fiction that rural life or rather, the domestic settings there, are bathed in a balmy light.

In one of the innumerable guidebooks published in Britain for emigrants, Kingston warns of the unhealthy nature of colonial towns. 'March boldly up into the country' the prospective settler is advised.[97] The warnings relate both to physical and spiritual matters and when Kingston writes of the attractiveness of a rural existence in colonial Australia he is echoing a sentiment which was commonly held.

Emerging now in greater clarity is the material available to the creative writer and the manner in which it could be deployed. Permeating this body of work is prejudice against an urban existence. It was a belief which, in the first place, surely derived from contemporary circumstances; that is to say, it was consequent upon conditions accompanying the Industrial Revolution. A major result of this upheaval in economic and human terms was the rapid expansion of the cities, the most disturbing aspects of which were documented by Engels in _The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844_ (Leipzig, 1845)[98] and by Henry Mayhew in _London_

96. See, for example, _Gertrude_ 124, _Marian_ 12, _Clara Morison_ Ch.III, and [H. J. Laplastrier], _The Travels and Adventures of Mr. Newchamp_ by H.J.L. 2nd ed. (Melbourne, 1854). N.pag.

97. W. H. G. Kingston, _Emigrant Manuals, No.IV: Arrival in the Colony_ (London, 1851) 12.

98. Engels' reliability has subsequently been questioned. See reference and note in Watson 5. For another viewpoint see Steven Marcus, _Engels, Manchester, and the Working Class_ (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974).

Labour and the London Poor, the first part of which appeared in London in 1849. In the second place, there is a degree to which Sydney Town, above all, was equated with the degradation and debasement of human values; it would seem therefore that urban life in the new land had — or would — come to replicate that of the old. As David Denholm has argued, 'the function of the Industrial Revolution was not to inspire a Golden Age but to give it its greatest stimulus'. He continues: 'At its heart, heavily tinged by Christian precepts, was the conviction that life on the land was morally superior to life in Town'.[99]

In a celebrated work by William Cowper, The Task, of 1785, the poet lauds rural life over urban existence: 'God made the country, and man made the town' (Bk.I, 1.749). The Romantic Movement was to embrace such a dialectic. As I have already proposed, there is a degree to which the Romantic era helped shape the nineteenth century colonial novel. Romanticism heightens solicitude for the natural world, and derives strength from it.

Finally, however, one must acknowledge the formulas of pastoral romance. A constant element is, as we have seen, 'the recognition of a contrast, implicit or expressed, between pastoral life and some more complex type of civilization'. Central, therefore, is the compositional device of juxtaposition and polarization, in Frye's words, of 'ideal and abhorrent worlds'.[100] That this wishfulfilment world was most appropriately defined in pastoral terms must have served to strengthen the attractiveness of the genre for the writer.

An idealized existence in the hinterland became a sustaining metaphor in this body of fiction, and it drew substance, as I have demonstrated, from

99. Denholm 19.

100. Frye, The Secular Scripture 80.

the connection with the world of pastoral romance; the Romantic age; and from the social realities and political expediencies of a world caught up in the throes of coming to terms with a rapidly changing economy. The town stood for central authority, civic administration, and for commerce and trade; so only by means of a distant setting was it possible to address what was new in Australia. And what it offered was envisaged as infinitely exotic. With some exceptions, writers chose to ascribe decadence to the town, and with this was contrasted rural felicity and the welcome hospitality which, they were confident, had developed as a domestic characteristic of the bush.

Just as there are elements antithetical to romance so, manifest in this pastoral schema, is there much that is at odds with European pastoral tradition. It is 'a fair, beautiful, smiling land, and yet one of the most awful the eye ever rested on' Kingsley was later to observe.[101] Factors at the same time intimidating and dangerous to the newcomers and yet ultimately enobling, accrue in earlier colonial fiction and eventually become part of a pastoral myth. Many aspects of the environment make it unsuitable as a pastoral setting; therefore ambivalence towards the land itself is often expressed.

The Travels and Adventures of Mr. Newchamp is a delightful work comprising some eight pages of lithographs, two to a page, with several lines of text under each. Its place of publication — Melbourne — and the whimsical nature of its presentation would argue that, unlike numbers of other works, it had been produced for the pleasure of readers in Australia. How aptly it has been said of this little book that: 'the emigrant novel which comfortably fills out three volumes is here happily condensed into a few

101. Henry Kingsley, The Hillyars and the Burtons: A Story of Two Families (1865; London, 1895) 288.

pages'.[102] One of the lithographs depicts Laplastrier's protagonist employed as a shepherd. Dwarfed by the vastness of a desolate plain and accompanied by his dog, the eponymous hero trudges on his lonely way. Here the symbolic nature of the arid landscape is insisted upon; hence such an existence is the opposite of what might be expected. It was, however, to typify that led by the shepherd of fictional fields in Australia. The travels — or travails — which structure this narrative hint that all is not propitious in the 'Golden Land' in spite of the agreeable ideas accumulating around matters connected with emigration and settlement. The shepherd's isolated existence was, in fact, conceded to be unfortunate. The storyteller compiling the 'Note-Book' which forms A Boy's Adventures in the Wilds of Australia (1854)[103] reveals that this occupation was markedly different from pastoral life as conceived in classical times (p.9) and it is in the nature of the loosely-constructed narrative that an interpolated tale concerning a deranged stockman provides the background to such an observation.

Far from the homestead, the shepherd in the bush was cut off from family life, homely comfort, and the protection that establishment afforded. This was so in the initial stages and at the outskirts of civilized settlement. In such circumstances the shepherd was most often a felon who was assigned to a pastoral property or was a former convict; this situation in itself constituted one of the less agreeable aspects of pastoral life. Authors therefore glossed over the harshness of such employment, its tedium and its danger. Shepherds were at the margins of fictional works; moreover, creative writers were seldom willing to castigate their employers — the colonial gentry. However, the subject does form the basis of a bitter jibe in The Emigrant Family, and here a shepherd's complaint concerns a

102. M.J. Messer, 'Australian Fiction, 1830-1860', diss., U of Queensland, 1973, 12.

103. William Howitt, A Boy's Adventures in the Wilds of Australia Or Herbert's Note-Book (London, [187-]).

landholder who is said to hold the life stock more important that that of men (p.248). Again, in 'Little Jacob''s 'Charlie, the Shepherd', the chief character dies as a result of poor conditions and neglect. Although these two writers could scarcely be more different in their approach, they occasionally defined pastoral by drawing upon aspects of its antithesis. Yet with very few exceptions the writer of fiction was not in the habit of censuring those at the homestead. The latter comprised, after all, the principal characters in colonial romance.

With pastoral still in mind and speculating upon those issues not by convention incorporated into the pastoral mode, I now turn to other material appropriated by the colonial novelist. These and similar factors will be reconsidered in subsequent chapters. At this stage two points must be reiterated and both are connected with the inclusiveness of the form. Within the tradition of both pastoral and romance copious subject matter and considerable variations can be turned to account. As I have said, the romance is in essence adaptable. It has become apparent, moreover, as Lincoln contends, that 'in spite of our associations with the word idyll and with conceptions of bucolic bliss, the pastoral is not a literature of escape'.[104] Withdrawal to an idealized country locale *may* propose peace of mind, but in the Antipodes such a formula may be advantageous, say, for bringing to light matters of contemporary concern. While in literary terms this may seem inept, in reality this is just further evidence of the prosaic and pragmatic in the colonial novel.

As a result, the practicalities of pastoral industry in Australia are recorded — as throughout *The Emigrant Family*, to take one example. The creative writer, it is plain, had other emigrant families in mind. Again, difficulties with the labour force can be utilized in terms of the plot.

104. Lincoln, in her introduction to *Pastoral and Romance* 3.

In Tales of the Colonies assigned convicts turn bushranger and threaten settled society. Station hands quit their posts to make for the goldfields, in Tender and True. The whole question of convict labour, too, and its emphasis on the dichotomy between the powerful and the powerless, provides a major theme. In Bengala the issue is explored in some depth. A pastoral background, therefore, can provide the setting for complex social matters, and yet for all this authors much preferred — and one would sense for personal or for patriotic reasons — to minimize the contentious. That attitude gave rise, surely, to the pastoral romance. The pastoral mode in fiction, Argyle reminds us, 'encourages, even requires, a relaxation of intelligence'.[105] The subject of the acquisition of land is a case in point. The novelist chose to create the illusion that this undertaking was carried out in a spirit of frankness and goodwill. One who knew conditions well was Howitt, and he felt free to allude, albeit briefly, to the uglier aspects of settlement, to circumstances where: 'The fairest place excited the foulest contention' (Tallangetta, Vol.II, p.165). Not surprisingly, such a reprehensible attribute as human greed never characterizes the leading figures in this imagined landscape, or the chief locales.

What does become evident in the colonial novel is that in spite of the goodwill and the happy endings, the subject of human frailty and vulnerability is played out against pastoral settings that are unconventional. They are antipodean. Thus, to the extent that matters just mentioned are of colonial significance, they lend contemporaneity and particularity to the texts under discussion here. So, whether tension is registered overtly or by more oblique means, it is insistent because it originates from within a pastoral mode. There are two controlling themes which introduce tension and which define the nature of pastoral in these early Australian novels

105. Argyle 77.

and it is now appropriate to examine them. There is the theme of the relationship between the newcomers and the indigenous people and, more fundamentally, between the Europeans and the pastoral landscape they had come to occupy.

Manning Clark is one of many historians who have documented the diverse, variable and fluctuating relationships between the Aborigines and Europeans. He has drawn attention to the deterioration of this situation in the years leading up to the mid-century. While colonists saw themselves as bringing the benefits of civilization and Christianity to the wilderness and to the indigenous people there, the Aborigines most often regarded the European 'as an invader who had shattered the conditions of survival and the way of life their people had evolved since the beginning of time'.[106] F.G. Clarke, considering roughly the same period as my study, offers examples of the 'deep-seated cultural chauvinism' of the Europeans following settlement in the Australian hinterland.[107] Examining the situation Denholm has remarked that 'Colonial Australia viewed Aborigines through its own assumptions and preoccupations'; 'Aboriginal society was seen as having never developed'.[108] Such attitudes were to predominate in the prose fiction of the period.

Perhaps only the most percipient, therefore, or those ahead of their time, would have disagreed with Howitt when, in A Boy's Adventures, he described the Aboriginal race as 'very low in the scale of humanity' (p.297). The popular concept of the 'noble savage' had undergone a change by the mid-century, as Bernard Smith has carefully documented in European Vision and

106. C.M.H. Clark, A History of Australia, 5 vols. (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1962-81) III: 255 and passim.

107. Clarke 189. See Ch.6.

108. Denholm 14.

the South Pacific. Proposed in the mid-eighteenth century by Rousseau, who was drawing upon a well-established European convention, such a doctrine idealized primitive existence over a civilized state. By the later eighteenth century exploration had revealed to a fascinated Europe the existence of a profusion of savage races and thus it was that, in the words of Richard White: 'Intellectuals had begun to idealize man in what they regarded as his "natural" state...'.[109] The subject was of the greatest topical interest and, consistent with the times, derived impetus from the Romantic movement. Images of Culture or Art, as opposed to Nature, are projected here, and the dichotomy between cultivated and natural man is thereby addressed.

Becoming the subject of intellectual and philosophical discussion in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the concept of the 'noble savage' received a set-back when the Europeans came into contact with the Aboriginal. The indigenous people did not live up to expectations relating to the perfection of the natural state of development. The reasons behind European disquiet are recorded in the narratives under discussion.

In fact, the forces of savagery and those of civilized progress were to come into violent opposition. As Dixon has commented: 'More often the two were mutually exclusive, with the celebration of progress and civilization involving a denunciation of the noble savage'.[110] Indeed, given the pragmatic approach to the colonial venture there was little room for anything but approbation for the superiority of European enlightenment.

In his book Dixon has persuasively outlined a prevailing theory regarding social and economic development which was termed 'The History of Civil Society' or 'The Course of the Empire'. 'Societies', he writes, were 'seen

109. White 10.
110. Dixon 17.

to develop over time through four consecutive stages: the hunting, the pastoral, the agricultural, and the commercial' (p.1). This innate, observable growth of society was thus a vindication of 'the colonial domination of the Aboriginal people both in terms of a "natural" law of economic growth and the authority of classical history' (p.5). In whatever way it might have been envisaged, the gulf between colonial Australians and the indigenous people was too wide to be bridged without the utmost compassion and intelligence on both sides. Only limited aspects of the ensuing confrontation are present in this body of prose fiction since these are romances in the main; the genre is unable to sustain a topic of such a complex and disturbing nature.

Given the newcomers' background, it is understandable that they were unable to comprehend the culture of the indigenous people; even so, the Aborigines provided subject matter of curiosity, interest and debate for the European. Not surprisingly, such material was soon incorporated into colonial literature. Journals, reports and records comprised the first attempts to come to terms with the differences between the two cultures; following that early period, as I have indicated, colonial novelists sought to include factual matter of every kind into their narratives. It must be said that concord between the two races is haltingly recorded in this body of work. However, I would agree with the statement made by Healy that:

> In its efforts to place its contact with the Aborigine into perspective, Australian literature began with considerable handicaps. Nothing was sufficiently stable to give the writer the necessary grip on his subject. The destruction of the Aboriginal society went hand in hand with the formation of a European society.[111]

Prose fiction was a suitable mode in which to explore the relationship between the cultures in the given circumstances and in this mid-century

111. J.J. Healy, Literature and the Aborigine in Australia 1770-1975 (St. Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1978) 2.

literary context the great gulf between savage state and civilized life, as perceived by the newcomers, is given form and focus.

While this has been achieved in tentative fashion and attuned to the demands of romance, a number of viewpoints are adopted, as the following examples demonstrate. Close domestic co-operation of the two peoples is recorded in several works and Atkinson's Gertrude is one of them. An idealized and partially integrated community is envisaged in Alfred Dudley, a didactic work where paternalism towards the Aboriginal is everywhere evident. Cawthorne's The Kangaroo Islanders[112] likewise explores a domestic relationship between blacks and whites and depicts Aborigines in their natural state on Kangaroo Island. Shocking for the nineteenth century reader here must have been the portrayal of cohabitation between the two peoples, the subject of miscegenation being almost totally avoided by novelists of the period. Within a single work varying circumstances might obtain. In Geoffry Hamlyn, a tribe camped close to the homestead 'Baroona' is shown to be on good terms with the settlers there. Yet when in the course of the plot a party sets out to move cattle one of their number is killed by warriors from another tribe. It is only later revealed that the settlers have taken brutal revenge (p.328). Kingsley omits a first-hand description of the latter action and thus avoids showing his foremost characters in an unfavourable light. As is most often the case, the right of the Europeans to the land remains unquestioned, and it is only in recent years that there has been a serious attempt to reassess this racial conflict; to present the viewpoint of the indigenes.[113]

112. W.A. Cawthorne, The Kangaroo Islanders: A Story of South Australia before Colonization, 1823 (Adelaide: Rigby, 1926). Previously entitled The Islanders, the work was written in 1854.

113. See, for example, Henry Reynolds, The Other Side of the Frontier (Townsville: James Cook U, 1981) and Lyndall Ryan, The Aboriginal Tasmanians (St. Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1981).

Although the Aborigines were defending their territory they were generally seen to be treacherous and cruel. Consequently, the bush might be the antithesis of the accepted notion of pastoral. The Aborigines' attempt to prevent the advance of the colonists was only one of the hazards. But to the self-confident and expansionist European community the image of the indigenes as a barbarous people at the lowest stage of development was opportune for, as White has observed, it was 'an image that conveniently suited those who were gradually destroying Aboriginal society in the name of "civilization" and the expansion of their sheep-runs'.[114]

Many were to write of their colonial experiences against the background of pastoral expansion and three works relating to the period under discussion and serving my purposes are A Visit to the Antipodes by Lloyd;[115] Savage Life and Scenes by Angas;[116] and Curr's Recollections.[117] In these and other contemporary accounts some indication is given of the fear and the danger experienced in remote areas. Aboriginal attacks threatened shepherds, station hands, and the inhabitants of the homestead itself and situations of this kind were recreated by numerous writers in order to provide tension and suspense. To picture the danger experienced by their characters was to illustrate their heroic stature and their mode of life; moreover, such exploits comprised appropriate material for romance and were to form one of the staple elements of narratives with colonial settings in the nineteenth century. In a violent tale, The Captive of Gipps Land,[118] Turner pictured these disturbing circumstances. That Aborigines might spear cattle and

114. White 8.

115. [E. Lloyd], A Visit to the Antipodes, With Some Reminiscences of a Sojourn in Australia by a Squatter (London, 1846).

116. George French Angas, Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand... (London, 1847; facs.rpt. Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1969).

117. Edward M. Curr, Recollections of Squatting in Victoria... (Melbourne,1883

118. H.G. Turner, 'The Captive of Gipps Land' in Illustrated Journal of Australasia II (1857):18+.

steal sheep and that colonists might take their revenge is alluded to in a rather more oblique but telling reference in Lang's The Forger's Wife (p.113). To find the prototypes of the fierce tribesmen who determined to prevent the invasion of their land one must look to the seminal and highly popular Tales of the Colonies.

Rowcroft has an old colonist, Crab, recall the excitement of the 'sweeping expeditions' against the natives (p.531). But since Crab is given to making outrageous statements it is possible for the author to distance himself from such a remark. And Rowcroft, more especially in The Bushranger of Van Diemen's Land (1846)[119] does make an acknowledgement of the newcomer's usurpation of the country (Ch.XXVIII). Although in the minority, a number of writers were to castigate fellow Europeans for their treatment of the Aborigines. Thus, the American novelist, Baker, pictures a massacre of natives in his melodramatic Lucy Marline[120] (p.86). In Wolfingham, a romance employed homiletically, the author includes a diatribe against Europeans (p.62), while in The Captive of Gipps Land Turner asserts that some responsibility for the warfare does rest with them (p.183). Although such affirmations are as a rule made in general terms one does sense the obligation to set these matters down; and it is conceivable that this has been brought about by a number of outrages committed against the Aborigines in the 1830s.[121]

With the colonization of foreign lands the genre of pastoral romance began to take on an altered and disturbing perspective. We can say that

119. Charles Rowcroft, The Bushranger; Or, Mark Brandon the Convict (London, [186-]). This work was issued under a number of titles, but in line with common usage will be referred to throughout as The Bushranger.

120. Louis Baker, Lucy Marline; Or, The Bush-Rangers. A Tale of New South Wales (Boston, 1848).

121. For an account of these massacres see Clark, vol.III passim. See also Denholm, Ch.III, and Judith Wright, The Cry for the Dead (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1981) passim.

pastoral settings in the Antipodes had been anticipated in prose fiction with a North American background, and especially in the more complex works of Fenimore Cooper, and some critics have seen the latter's books as influencing writers of the Australian novels.[122] However this may be, the Australian Aboriginal was most often depicted as violating the tranquillity of pastoral rhythms which had evolved with the presence of the white man. Therefore, when we consider all these factors this pastoral tableau is the antithesis of that by tradition found in European literature and iconography and I would contend it presented an emotional challenge to the contemporary reader.

With few exceptions most writers reveal a gross misunderstanding of a primitive culture. This has given rise to the conception undoubtedly present in a host of works: the firm belief that colonization was justified. The historical, political, economic and social reasons behind colonization of Australia are much debated and cannot be addressed here. Yet of particular relevance for my argument at this juncture is the widespread expression of belief in the right of occupation.

It emerged that the indigenous population did not need the land. It would seem that they did not put it to use. Tucker was one who gave some thought to the matter and in Chs.XXX-XXXI of Ralph Rashleigh he muses over the differences between 'civilized' and 'savage' society. From our own vantage point one of the fundamental ironies here lies in the savage side of the supposedly civilized community in which Tucker's protagonist finds himself — that of the convict era in the early decades of the nineteenth century. But Tucker's concerns are more pragmatic. He refers to the

122. See Ward 303 and The Oxford History of Australian Literature 44. See also D.L.M. Jones, 'The Treatment of the Aborigine in Australian Fiction', diss., U of Adelaide, 1960, 54. A different opinion is expressed by J.J. Healy in 'The Treatment of the Aborigine in Early Australian Fiction, 1840-70', ALS 5.3 (1972): 233-53.

'erratic life of the savage' which he compares with 'the labour and restraint of civilized society' (p.286). Nowhere is this more apparent than in the former's nomadic existence and Tucker is only one of several contemporary writers who notes that the Aborigines did not build a permanent home (p.269).[123] Their further defects are manifested in the depredations against the white man and his stock. Thus, when in the narrative's denouement Rashleigh meets his death at the hands of Aborigines the author asserts that the black men are 'bloodthirsty barbarians, whom the mock philanthropy of the age characterises as inoffensive and injured beings' (p.303). Violence in a pastoral setting is a key element in the colonial novel. It is the disturbing dichotomy that underscores these romances.

Harris's interest in the issues surrounding racial tension is evinced in Settlers and Convicts (Chs.XIX-XXI). In The Emigrant Family, written in the same decade as Tucker's book, he employs the chief Australian character, Reuban Kable, to outline the rights of both peoples. But Kable can say of the Aborigines: '"They grow nothing and have no flocks. There never was a clearer case in the world for the white agriculturalist and herdsman in seizing the land"'. Although there is an attempt at a balanced assessment, the main thrust of the argument is bound up with colonial aspirations. Kable poses a question to which, in these texts, there can be only one answer: '"The first question is, shall we hold the land or resign it?"' (pp.258-9).

From the decade of the 1850s a comment on the relationship between black and white is to be found in A Boy's Adventures. It could be termed a representative one. While taking stock of the tribespeople's admirable traits, Howitt refers to their inability to build; their absence of pastoral

123. See, for example, Rowcroft, Tales of the Colonies 475 and The Bushranger 161.

skills (p.298). A wandering people, they 'never seem to have advanced'. In Howitt's opinion the natives are well-treated by the authorities and he considers that the difficult situation might be remedied if only the Aborigines 'would condescend to adopt the pursuits of civilized life...' (p.301).

Such opinions, numerous in these works and couched in terms which ranged from surprise through rational enquiry to the expression of indignation, entailed, as I have said, the seemingly logical and self-righteous assumption that colonization was justified. The original inhabitants had not taken advantage of the land; it devolved upon the newcomers to do so. The concept of a chosen people and a promised land — with all the biblical connotations that the idea might convey — was the inevitable consequence of such reasoning. Exploitation, bigotry and the more violent effects of racism were often to follow. In prose fiction this might be expressed overtly; or appear in more subtle guise. The ethics of such an occupation were questioned by creative writers on occasion, yet not in a sustained fashion within the dramatic structure of their narratives. McCombie, to take one example, appends 'An Essay on the Aborigines of Australia' to his Arabin (1845)[124] and in it he raises crucial issues pertaining to that problematical factor. Because of an ignorance of the indigenous culture, in no work do we find, within the 'humpy' or 'mia-mia', the representation of social life or the depiction of a protagonist who could match the dignified inhabitants of the European homestead. Ferrier makes the observation that: 'As white settlers built in Australia, they had a sense of starting from scratch, as if they were establishing the first signs of culture here'. And, as it would appear in these novels: 'In Anglo-European cultures at least, the act

124. Thomas McCombie, The Colonist in Australia; Or, The Adventures of Godfrey Arabin (London, 1850). This work was issued under various titles but in line with common usage will be referred to throughout as Arabin.

of building signifies the assertion of culture'.[125] In the general opinion, the rights of the colonists seemed unequivocal. Later, with the publication of Charles Darwin's The Origin of Species (London, 1859), as White has argued, 'Darwin's ideas seemed to justify precisely what happened when the British expanded their empire, populated new lands and dispossessed native races'.[126]

It is a reflection of some aspects of the era that the Aborigines were occasionally seen to co-operate in pastoral concerns. However, in dramatic terms, it was convenient to have a hostile force with whom major characters had to contend and served to generate sympathy for their situation. As to the bitter relationship between black and white, there was an acceptance of such matters. Referring to the tenor of the times Serle, speaking of the Aborigines, has written with ironic perception: 'Providence had designed them to pass away, to die out — a view which fitted the needs of pastoral settlers'.[127] In the fictional representation of the hinterland the pastoral landscape is occupied by Europeans and the potent symbol of their domination and settled existence was the European dwelling house. Shadowy figures, who could be termed 'sable friends' or 'treacherous devils' are to be seen at the margins of these narratives. Viewed in terms which ranged from friendship and respect to violent hostility, they were to play a small role in what had become a pastoral landscape, but which of old had been tribal ground or sacred site.

I have said that there are two controlling themes which govern the nature of Australian pastoral, a subject which, I am suggesting, is fraught with tension. The second of these concerns the relationship between the

125. Elizabeth Ferrier, 'From Pleasure Domes to Bark Huts: Architectural Metaphors in Recent Australian Fiction', ALS 13.1 (1987): 42.

126. White 69.

127. Geoffrey Serle, From Deserts the Prophets Come: The Creative Spirit in Australia 1788-1972 (Melbourne: Heineman, 1973) 6.

Europeans and the country they had colonized. It becomes apparent that questions relating to a European presence in Australia increasingly preoccupied creative writers to whom, it would seem, the whole colonial enterprise was perceived in terms of the triumph of civilization in a wilderness.

At this point it is of value to examine the key word 'wilderness'. The term has been in common use since the thirteenth century in the general senses of 'wild or uncultivated land' (O.E.D.[128] sense 1.a), 'uninhabited' land or land 'inhabited only by wild animals' (1.b). Its figurative senses include the notion of a desolate place in which one is likely to lose one's way, and is applied in religious contexts to 'the present world ... as contrasted with heaven' (sense 3). In the seventeenth century there developed a specialized application, this referring to a park-like area planted so as to produce a maze or labyrinth (sense 1.c). The term therefore held a wealth of connotations in contemporary consciousness and studying these narratives one does begin to comprehend what is being envisaged regarding the land or the primitive people there, as I have explained above. In essence, the lack of pastoral or agricultural pursuits confirmed the Aborigines as barbarous and Europeans civilized in the sense that, as Wilkes has noted, the latter 'were distinct from the original savage inhabitants, altering the landscape with their handiwork'.[129]

The widespread and formal use of that other key word, 'civilization', is likewise illuminating. Almost without exception it is employed, often several times over, in the books under discussion here. The word refers to an 'advanced state of human society' (O.E.D. sense 3). There are, in

128. The Oxford English Dictionary ... on Historical Principles ..., ed. James A.H. Murray et al. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933).

129. G.A. Wilkes, The Stockyard and the Croquet Lawn (Melbourne: Arnold, 1981) 15.

addition, a plethora of connotations concerning intellectual enlightenment and refinement. The word is not recorded as a noun until the eighteenth century; it therefore has its origins in the neo-classical Age of Reason and these are steeped in the values and ideals of the period. In considering this background and the persistence of the term in these novels and, as Smith and Dixon have shown, in other contemporary and earlier writings, one begins to understand the cogency of the theme: civilization in the wilderness. The spirit of the age is conjured up here and one senses that for the nineteenth century reader all this had much to do with cultural identity.

For it is clear that the European colonists took some time adjusting to the environment, the topographical and botanical nature of which, it would seem, profoundly impressed them. Numerous studies have, in fact, documented the time taken for an appropriate descriptive terminology regarding the environment to emerge.[130] However much these impressions may have been coloured by Georgian exactitude, Romantic sensibility, individual temperament, the desire to inform the reader, or the passage of time after initial settlement, it is impossible to tell; but a degree of acceptance and appreciation does find its way into the earlier colonial novel. This is clearly expressed in Frederic de Brébant Cooper's fictionalized autobiography concerning random events, Wild Adventures in Australia (1857).[131]

> I like to follow a road with the consciousness that at any moment I can, if it so please me, turn from the track on either side, and travel for a thousand miles and meet no boundary! (p.127)

Here the spirit of Romantic endeavour of the artist-adventurer is revealed,

130. See, for example, S.J. Baker, The Australian Language (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1945) and G.W. Turner, The English Language in Australia and New Zealand (London: Longmans, 1966).

131. F.de B. Cooper, Wild Adventures in Australia and New South Wales, beyond the Boundaries; With Sketches of Life in the Mining Districts (London, 1857).

but the sentiment is not commonly expressed in these narratives. The opposite could be said to be the case. From evidence gained from the novels one would agree with Serle when he says: 'The process of migrant acclimatization and growth of harmony between man and land was nevertheless slow and painful'.[132] The hinterland's pastoral promise is what inspired the creative writer, to whom the region was the preferred backdrop against which to depict European expansion. In terms of plot this had the advantage of necessitating movement inland and the depiction of the pioneering and civilizing impulse.

Attention has been drawn by Bernard Smith to 'the novel problems in the appreciation of landscape and natural history posed by Australian nature'.[133] Even so, in these books scenes of pastoral tranquillity are useful as settings and with the qualities of the romance in mind one recalls the locus amoenus, the idealized setting of the pastoral romance. While pleasant places are envisaged in the Australian bush (instead of the European forest) and the newcomers are seen upon occasion to relax there, more often the homestead garden is the backdrop for scenes depicting settlers in moments of repose. Reassuring, too, were some pleasing pictures of the bushland which the more competent writers managed. Other than this, scenic effects marked by rugged beauty were occasionally employed and, in line with Romantic considerations, allowed the individual faced with such beauty to exult in the sublime. As Frost has clearly demonstrated with regard New South Wales, a variety of landscapes was encountered; a variety of responses was therefore recorded in contemporary prose in the nineteenth century.[134]

Therefore, with the hinterland as the topographical entity providing

132. Serle 18.

133. Smith, European Vision 184.

134. Alan Frost, 'What Created, What Perceived? Early Responses to New South Wales', ALS 7.2 (1975): 185-205.

many of the settings, a fictional formula is soon seen to emerge. And what strikes one with special clarity is the ambivalence with which the land is considered. Far from enthusiasm, acceptance, and appreciation, set down here are the misgivings and the fear and awe to which the European was prone. This is an aspect of what might be described as a frontier mentality and is suggestive of a limited, and limiting, imagination. Two contradictory and countervailing images are represented. Australia was a promised land and yet it was consistently perceived to be hostile, and this is recorded in a cluster of expressions that I will presently cite. It was, as has often been observed, both a paradise and a wilderness. Overall, and not surprisingly in terms of dramatic need, the creative writer chose to emphasize the country's most threatening aspects. This was achieved with resort to authorial comment and descriptive passage; or as it impinged upon the consciousness of principal characters and as it could be brought to bear upon the mechanics of plot. Given the climatic conditions possible what is stressed is the unremitting nature of the environment. Altogether, it is the precariousness of the newcomer's situation that is depicted here.

It could be argued that this became part of the story-telling formula and one of the earliest of the mythic elements to emerge. However much that might have been true of the later nineteenth century, as Frost indeed has argued, one would judge that the earlier authors assuredly wished to set down their impressions of the hinterland. It is relevant that the great majority were writing from first hand experience: they had travelled in Australia, had lived there, or were colonially-born. Moreover, diaries, letters and journals reveal the same terminology and the same misgivings, so that with regard prose fiction one should accept such modes of thought as being broadly representative of the times — if heightened in literary terms. These narratives reveal the range of thought possible, and, on an artistic level, what the creative writer might have imagined during the period under consideration. The land both impressed and appalled; such were its singular

qualities. That image of the land was a problem that constantly challenged the creative writer.

In addition to the words 'wilderness' and 'wilds', the common descriptive terms, one cannot fail to notice the insistence on the hinterland's vastness, or its seeming boundlessness. It is of significance because of the importance given journeying in narrative structure. Often the topos resorted to was that of a great plain, and an incursion into the wilderness became an important set-piece. Hence the introduction of sequences which were the antithesis of the perceived notion of pastoral in literature. Some writers inclined towards the dramatic in defining pastoral landscape. In A Romance of the Bush[135] of 1855 Ramsey derives some impact from the main location which is described in the establishing scene as a station 'far to the north ... in one of the remotest districts of the interior' (p.4). Although the author's spare, compressed style is limiting, in her treatment of the landscape it works well. The country's primeval aspect was not uncommonly mentioned, as was its tracklessness, a factor of some interest and which will be considered much later. Although appreciation of the natural environment is at times recorded (its magnificence and grandeur are observed, as are its Arcadian and Edenic qualities) what engaged the mind of the creative writer was the sombre, monotonous, and desolate nature of the bush and its overwhelming silence.[136] The fact that the countryside's configurations took on uniformity would imply that Europeans had not yet grown accustomed to their surrounds.

All this was useful material for Leigh, author of The Emigrant[137] of 1847, to take only one example from a multiplicity. What is conceded to be

135. [E.P. Ramsey], A Romance of the Bush by E.P.R. (Edinburgh, 1855).

136. Serle quotes from writers who find the bush monotonous, desolate, or melancholy, 14-17.

137. W.H. Leigh, The Emigrant: A Tale of Australia (London, 1847).

beautiful pastoral country comes to be viewed as an 'unvarying wilderness'. To see this as hackneyed expression would be to ignore the apprehension regarding the environment; for outlook here is shown to depend upon personal circumstances. In this incident, as in many others, the author deals with the implacable force of nature and the vulnerability of the settler. The question of distance was vigorously addressed and hence the hinterland's more awesome, threatening aspects. Its wild and pitiless elements were consistently emphasized, this lending dramatic tension to prose in a way that I would contend is less powerful today, when the land's inhabitants have become accustomed to its prevailing features, and especially its vastness. When reference is made to the inland in our own age we have in mind a region greatly removed from the coast, so much have we become accustomed to the country's size and so much have modes of communication altered. In the period with which I am dealing the concept of remoteness may allude to areas not far removed from civilized settlement by today's standards, and from our own vantage point. The romance, I have explained, favours a preoccupation with the issues of the day. It must be stressed therefore that passages of the kind I have been alluding to proliferate, the manner and mode of their telling giving some indication of literary inventiveness and skill.

Despite the felicity which characterizes these novels, therefore, anxiety is habitually portrayed in relation to the environment. Conflicting emotions are well caught in the lines which preface this chapter. Here hope and anxiety contend. Most commonly articulated are misgivings concerning the surroundings and a sense of estrangement from the outside world. The emotions most often evoked are those concerning desolation and solitude, depression and melancholy. In Peter 'Possum's Portfolio of 1858 Rowe aptly expresses a traveller's impressions: 'Everywhere you are oppressed by the same long miles of loneliness...'.[138] Psychological insecurity is commonly

138. [Richard Rowe], Peter 'Possum's Portfolio (Sydney, 1858) 93.

experienced and is sometimes brought about by the stillness and seeming silence of the bush, conveying the impression that bush sounds had not yet impinged upon European consciousness. A sense of unease and a recognition of isolation result. I have said that the pitiless nature of the country attracts the creative writer's attention. It is shown to give rise to considerable apprehension and profound fear. In The Queen of the South, (1858)[139] the chief character becomes lost (Ch.XII); such an occurrence was, by this time, a popular theme. Attempting to ascertain his whereabouts, Isaac's protagonist sees before him 'but a wilderness of branches' and is temporarily overcome with a paralysis of fear. Ch.VII of The Kangaroo Islanders finds a lost man contemplating 'the great wilderness' which confronts him:

> there was something inconceivably horrible in that profound, immoveable, and silent waste, in the towering heights rising in successive steps, and clothed with the densest mantle of black scrub, that barred his vision on every side. (p.50)

Like numbers of others, Cawthorne was tapping into primal fears regarding exposed places, and such a scene vividly illustrates European vulnerability. The more competent writer occasionally incorporated a metaphysical dimension to an incident of this kind; then readers are reminded of man's insignificance. Here the emotion evoked is awe and a universal quality attaches to man's condition in the bush.

In the recounting of these colonial narratives the conceptual framework was not, however, a tragic one. For reasons I have given, romance is the favoured genre; it utilizes the hostile environment, but it ensures a happy ending. It transpires that those traversing this demanding landscape are eventually received into a civilized domain: the homestead in

139. [George Isaacs], The Queen of the South: A Colonial Romance by A. Pendragon (Gawler, S.Aust., 1858).

the bush. Given the isolated nature of the circumstances and contemporary fears the reader can scarcely have remained unmoved. The isolation I will be referring to throughout is, in effect, two-fold. The bush-dwellers are cut off from urban settlements and, more seriously, from the home country itself. They are doubly exiled. The concept of isolation is thus a pervasive notion and, accordingly, the image of the homestead, symbolizing civilization in the wilderness, a powerful and reassuring one.

Civilization in the wilderness: the theme informs and permeates the works under consideration here. I am focussing now upon the concept of civilization as it is envisaged in prose fiction, on one hand, in a physical and concrete sense and, beyond that, what might be implied by such a term.

There is foremost the imprint on the country's topographical features in the form of buildings, fencing, roads, and signs of agricultural and pastoral pursuits. Hence the concept may often be defined by the absence of such attractions. Their first view of the Adelaide plains confirms the colonists' suspicions in Leigh's The Emigrant that the land is an 'untilled waste' (p.175). In Vidal's The Cabramatta Store (1850)[140] a woman travelling through 'a wild lonely place' experiences unease in an area where 'no sign of civilization or cultivation had met her eye for miles' (p.76). The strong correlation between the two is often postulated. A 'propagandist for emigration',[141] Sidney admits the hardship of exchanging civilization 'for a state of semi-barbarism'.[142] In A Voice from the Far Interior of Australia he affirms that isolation is the essence of pastoral life but stresses that the greater good lies in the fact that 'every rod of land cultivated in the wilderness is a link added on to the chain of civil-

140. Mrs. Francis Vidal, [Mary Theresa], The Cabramatta Store, in Cabramatta and Woodleigh Farm (London, 1850).

141. White 34.

142. [Sidney], A Voice from the Far Interior of Australia 4.

ization' (p.17). The idea is nicely summed up by McCombie: 'Far and wide waved the yellow grain, that unanswerable symbol of civilization'.[143] The visual impact of the image is strong and one begins to see why the concept was so appealing.

One gains the impression that such a scene both confirmed and celebrated a permanent relationship between the colonist and the land. Since theirs was a spiritual affinity paradoxically and ironically no such bond could be shown to exist between the native inhabitants and their country. What further exemplifies the dichotomy between the two cultures, as mentioned above, is the concept of a permanent dwelling-house. The contrast between civilized and savage life therefore gave rise to a number of pastoral images: those to which the creative writer intuitively turned. The requisition of the land, the success of cultivation in savage surroundings and, all in all, the triumph of order over disorder — this was an irresistible proposition in the nineteenth century, as Bernard Smith has so amply demonstrated. Interestingly, such an image fulfilled both Georgian and Romantic assumptions and aspirations.

The relationship between the colonists and the land they now occupied must initially have been tentative and the conditions difficult to accept. Sidney, referring to the bush country of New South Wales, observed: 'In this Bush land, there are no roads, no villages, no churches, little law, and less Gospel'.[144] The writer has settled for a disturbing picture, but the remark helps explain why a domestic institution, the home, became the chosen ambit for those attempting to represent such conditions imaginatively. It helps one comprehend too why the dwelling came to be viewed both in terms of contemporary reality and metaphorically. Yet the ample connotations of

143. Thomas McCombie, Australian Sketches (London, 1861) 174.
144. [Sidney], A Voice from the Far Interior of Australia 11.

the word home or homestead propose that primary and secondary or associated significances are not, in fact, easy to disentangle. Some indication of this will be evident in a prose picture typical of these narratives and taken from 'Emmeline', one of the short stories from Ellen Clacy's collection, Lights and Shadows of Australian Life (1854).[145] After some exploits along the way a newcomer to the country reaches the region of the Illawarra and gazes with pleasure at 'its meadows filled with cattle — its farms and Arcadian-looking homesteads, which told of the presence of civilized man...'(Vol.I,p.55). Methodically foregrounded, a homestead in the purlieus of the southern continent became the stock image of the earlier colonial novel.

Just why this might be so is outlined in a passage from Rowcroft's An Emigrant in Search of a Colony, in which the chief character visits a number of British colonies before fixing upon Australia. New Zealand, then, is the setting for the following remark.

> I may observe here on a remarkable change, in respect to the attractions of rural scenery, which the dweller in cities experiences when he becomes a traveller in the wilderness, and is exposed to the almost constant contemplation of dense woods, and solitary wastes, and uninhabited places. In England, the eye, wearied with houses and the busy haunts of men, seeks for the relief of the secluded forest; and the wild aspect of nature, in her primitive solitudes, is a refreshing contrast to the bustle, the turmoil, and anxieties of social life. But in colonial wilds, the traveller grows weary of the endless trees and the eternal forest; and, melancholy from the interrupted solitude and the oppressive silence of the wilderness, his eye seeks involuntarily for some cleared and cultivated spot, and he longs for the sight of a human habitation. (pp.364-5)

Conveyed in the authorial voice, the passage seems to exemplify all those attitudes to which I have been alluding and which lie at the heart of my discussion. In this novel the observation serves to predicate a ready

145. [Ellen] Clacy, Lights and Shadows of Australian Life, 2 vols. (London, 1854) I:55. These volumes are cited in all subsequent references.

welcome to the traveller, a set-piece to which much later I return and which will be seen to represent in addition the human and social qualities inherent in the domestic institution pictured here. All this would indicate that the central image is redolent with meanings. Because of its context — the 'colonial wilds' — the image moreover attracts heightened significance. One would conjecture that a compensatory factor is at work here: the reader is being reassured as to the nature of civilization when it is envisaged far from the mother culture.

And so, besides its delineation as a physical entity, the homestead was appropriated as a symbol of civilized existence. It came to be one around which mythic elements accrued. This was a highly effective literary strategy and pleasing on a number of levels, as the following chapters will explain. The whole concept proposes a moral and social order; in short, the homestead was depicted in evaluative terms. The seeds of such an approach, to take only one aspect of the question, are to be seen in the stress placed on the work ethic. Vigorously asserted (though given judicious interpretation) the work ethic, 'and the rewards flowing from it', as Wilkes has postulated, 'continued to be emphasized in colonial fiction'.[146] In Prest's The Gold Seekers (1848)[147] the appearance of European habitation in the bush called to mind 'Anglo-Saxon perseverance and tact' (p.63). In The Confessions of a Loafer (1858), Henry Gyles Turner sees 'industry and perseverance' as the qualities necessary for pioneering life (Ch.IV).[148] Rowcroft, one recalls, purported to show what could be achieved by 'prudence, industry and perseverance'. Authors stereotypically propose that by such

146. Wilkes 24.

147. [Thomas Peckett Prest], The Gold Seekers; Or, The Cruise of the Lively Sally by Captain Merry (Philadelphia, c.1848).

148. H.G. Turner, Confessions of a Loafer in Illustrated Journal of Australasia, III (1857): 1+.

means the wilderness can be transformed. And because the British are representatives of European civilization, patriotism is inevitably projected here. These authors dwelt on such fundamental assumptions; they committed themselves to such ideals. Any number of the central locations I could mention — say, 'the Rocky Springs' homestead in The Emigrant Family — became, as Dixon has appreciated, 'a symbol of the new colonial society'.[149]

Fifty years after initial settlement novelists had turned to Australia for the literary possibilities afforded by the southern continent. Inspired by patriotic and human concern, and surely by the Romantic movement and its preoccupation with places both colourful and remote, the creative writer, in Barnes's words, 'used versions of colonial life to provide exotic backgrounds for their formula stories'.[150] A conflation of the twin aims, to educate and to entertain, gave rise to a substantial body of fiction between 1830-1860, a period when there was a widening curiosity in the colonization of Australia.

In European Vision and the South Pacific Bernard Smith has described the change which occurred in contemporary paintings of the region as the nineteenth century advanced. The topographically accurate with its respect for scenes of savage life and picturesque beauty in Nature gave way to depictions of settlement and signs of pioneering endeavour.[151] Of especial interest, therefore, is the fact that, in a similar fashion, colonial records and reminiscences laid the foundation for colonial prose fiction. The art of the period is a worthwhile adjunct to my study because of the parallels and affinities which exist between these paintings and prose narratives and

149. Dixon 184.

150. Dutton, ed., The Literature of Australia 149.

151. Smith, European Vision passim and especially Ch.9.

attention will be drawn to this factor in subsequent chapters. At hand for both painter and novelist were opposed images, but overwhelmingly their choice lay in the subject of pastoral. For the writer, it has been said, 'a sense of the contrast between town and country was essential to the development of a distinctly pastoral literature'.[152] And it was pastoral concerns, or more markedly the taking up of land in the Australian hinterland, which inspired the creative writer to turn to popular fictional formulas and set them against the promise provided by antipodean vistas.

What seems to have fascinated all those novelists who were considering the extraordinary attempt to establish so remote a colony was the rapidity with which a new society could be created. One aspect of colonization which strikes us today is the violence entailed in the act of settlement. The Europeans moved through the country aided by the wheel, metal implements, and technological skills: by such means a passage was made across the land, the axe was brought to bear upon the vegetation, and gunfire broke its stillness. Only occasionally are such things reflected upon. The speed of such progress is what these writers admired and what they sought to convey. In _Ralph Rashleigh_ Tucker draws attention to the

> abundant proofs of the wonted energy of the Anglo-Saxon race, who speedily rescue the most untamed soils from the barbarism of nature and bid the busy sounds of industry and art awaken the silent echoes of every primeval forest in which they are placed. (p.68)

The reference here is to the area of Sydney; given the vast hinterland civilization's imprint there was all the more to be admired. As I have pointed out, Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837; so for almost fifty years there was, in Dixon's words, a 'brief neo-classical period in Australia.[153] The challenge of pioneering life, as Denholm observes, was met with

152. Greg, in Lincoln 10.

153. Dixon 3.

'disciplined organization'. As he says: 'That civilization represented order, regularity and restraint...'. 'Georgian gentlemen ... planted in Australia the last seedling of the Augustan civilization they loved'.[154] Although in my view the enactment of these events was figured forth in domestic terms in the earlier Australian colonial novel, the imposition of such civil organization could not easily have been disregarded or set aside in contemporary writing. It helped define the spirit of the times. Such an argument is mounted with great attention to detail in Dixon's The Course of the Empire.

And yet the salient fact remains that in the ongoing civilizing process the ideas of the Romantic movement were to intrude. As I have already intimated, Romantic concepts surely gained new credence when placed in antipodean perspective and under colonial skies. Charting the transition from Georgian, or Augustan, principles to Romantic taste, Bernard Smith has drawn attention to the development of 'a new reflective attitude to Australian nature'. There came a time, and Smith judges it to be in the 1830s and 1840s, when European settlers began to 'accommodate themselves aesthetically' to their surroundings.[155] Interestingly, such moments are caught, but only on occasion, in the novels under discussion here, and I will have cause to refer to them from time to time. Moreover, as indicated earlier, Denholm also places the advent of Romanticism in the bush at about this period. One can only say that a time came when confrontation gave way to an appreciation. For all this, it would seem that great tracts of virgin land still presented a frightening prospect for many. In terms of the colonial novel, the awesome nature of the environment would provide, as the innumerable examples cited throughout will make plain, a cogent thematic element for years to come What became a literary convention was already developing into a cliché; and

154. Denholm 30-1

155. Smith, European Vision 224-5.

yet in these early novels one does sense the projection of a real fear of the unknown. Possibly the ideas represented in these texts served to reinforce the very emotions being pictured.

Whatever novelists may have made of the landscape they proved the truth of Denholm's observation that: 'The Romantic movement of the nineteenth century idealized the idea of the "squatter". He was the splendid conqueror of the Australian wilderness'.[156] However he was dubbed, squatter or settler, such a character was to hero these narratives. As for the heroine, Anglo-Saxon womanhood provided a fitting model. And now the ethos of another age intrudes upon these works. The heroes and heroines who inhabited the chief locales were of middling class, and become respectable householders in the bush, not very different from their counterparts in the mother country. They were characters with whom the predominantly middle-class reader would readily identify. Attributes said to be symptomatic of Victorian times are invoked here and most notable of these are a desire for home-ownership and domestic well-being, an affirmation of the code of respectability, and a belief in social meliorism. Serle points out that 'doctrines of self-help and self-improvement flourished' then too.[157]

In the northern hemisphere old concepts were giving way to new. Over many decades there was a merging of beliefs as Romanticism entered upon an emancipation of eighteenth century neo-classical thought. Then in the 1830s in Britain the Victorian age was ushered in; with it were ongoing and additional hopes and anxieties. How much greater must these have been in Australia. It must be assumed that the processes which gave rise to the fiction under discussion were fraught with tension. Indeed, it took a considerable time for these narratives to appear and one could speculate that

156. Denholm 157.
157. Serle 19.

a certain disquiet prevented the creative writer from responding at once to the given situation.

It is generally considered that the nineteenth century Australian novels are in fact minor works. Barnes, for example, contends that 'it is useless to expect to find works of art among the Australian novels of the nineteenth century'.[158] Paying tribute to Sinnett's essay, this present-day critic observes:

> Only when the local civilization had an inner identity and strength (when Australia had become more than merely a derivative of England) could it engage the interest of the creative writer — both local and visiting — at a deeper level than that of description.[159]

Of course, not all works sustain equal attention. Even so, I hope to demonstrate that, although varying considerably in competence, imagination, and flair, these authors produced much that repays attention and interest.

I have said that tension is connected with the creative processes which gave rise to this early body of work. I believe that this has resulted in an imaginative framework that is limited in scope. In many respects, these writers fix upon the smaller in place of the larger enterprise in both human and historical terms. Emphasis is on the domestic — instead of the epic — event. My belief is that these writers appeal to the emotions rather than to the intellect. This is, of course, in line with an espousal of the Romantic paradigm; it is a break with the constraints of the Augustan age. And one senses that the complexities of colonial life would have encouraged such an approach, particularly in writers of minor talent. For all this, these authors were not without serious purpose; yet when faced with an immense undertaking — the imposition of a political, civil, and social order upon a land which was, in contemporary idiom, a wilderness — creative

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158. Dutton, ed., The Literature of Australia 149.
159. Dutton, ed., The Literature of Australia 149.

writers turned to a conciliatory mode. They turned, as we have seen, to the rhetoric of romance.

'The perennially childlike quality of romance is marked by its extraordinarily persistent nostalgia, its search for some kind of imaginative golden age in time or space'. The words are those of Northrop Frye, who at the same time likens this literary form to 'the wish-fulfilment dream'.[160] This Edenic vision of a promised land was inherent in the colonial novel for some time to come. Australia was a land of plenty: a new land where a new life was possible. This being so, there was little room for ambiguity or ambivalence; the subversive or the critical would seem intrusive here. I have suggested that inclusiveness of form permitted the selection of much disparate material; however, in line with the Arcadian dream, these novels were formulated so as to preclude the incorporation of the more complex issues of the day. Genre solves such difficulties. Moreover, in addition to genre, and even before the mid-century, the sanctions of the Victorian era are well in evidence. In this guarded approach it is to be observed, as Messer has done, that 'there is reticence in some areas and, indeed, some surprising omissions in the subject matter dealt with by the writers'.[161]

It is also true that there are deficiencies and shortcomings here. Speaking of the nineteenth century in general, Barnes has expressed a belief widely held, namely that: 'Increasingly, colonial writing became a matter of formula — a formula that was acceptable to the English reading public'.[162] A growing Australian public must, nevertheless, be considered and there will be cause to refer to this two-fold or divided audience on subsequent occasions In dubbing these texts 'formula novels' Barnes is alluding to the fact that

160. Frye, in Lincoln 208.

161. Messer 3.

162. J. Barnes, ed., The Writer in Australia xiii.

they are designed to be popular works. The reassuring nature of the genre ensures that. And yet there is infinite variety in both content and craft to be discovered here.

When one surveys the number of works published it becomes clear that by the mid-century writers were increasingly turning to Australia for subject matter. In 1859 Fowler, the author of a miscellaneous collection of writings, Southern Lights and Shadows, can exclaim: 'Pleasant enough it is to find Romance thus transmitting this land of sharp and sheer Reality...' (p.2). That this trend was becoming obvious as early as 1838 may be deduced from The Guardian,[163] 'the first novel to be printed and published on the mainland of Australia'.[164] By means of a pun, mention is made of the usefulness of a far-off land in terms of literary conventions (p.188). In effect, the romance is scarcely a complex or a subtle mode of story-telling. As has been noted more recently: 'What the romance sacrifices in subtlety may be gained in drama'.[165] This will become obvious in the chapters to come. I have implied that, in current opinion, little is gained in attempting too rigid a definition of the term 'romance'. Yet one element which is generally observed to be axiomatic to the genre is the triumph of order over disorder. When subsumed into the larger theme of civilization in the wilderness the concept must have had immense popular appeal.

Umberto Eco, whose interests lie in popular culture and semiotics, has analysed popular literature in a recent study, The Role of the Reader.[166] Here, in examining closed literary structures of which the romance is a prime

163. [Anna Maria Murray], The Guardian; A Tale by 'An Australian' (Sydney, 1838).

164. The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature 501.

165. J.S. Scheckter, 'The Conditions of the Australian Novel', diss., U of Iowa, 1981, 141.

166. Umberto Eco, The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1979).

example, he points up the repetitive plots, narrative techniques and devices, the stock situations, and the common frames and literary <u>topoi</u> which help constitute popular works. Such strategies are seen to recur from culture to culture and age to age and Eco stresses the redundancy of the message contained in this repetitive, or iterative, schema (p.120). Literary mechanisms of that kind are immeasurably reassuring to the reader since the conclusions are foreseen. Thus readers of, say, the colonial romance, take pleasure in the story's outcome because due to the similarity of a range of narratives concerning the popular conception of life in Australia, it could be anticipated. Eco explains such processes in this way:

> The taste for the iterative scheme is presented then as a taste for redundance. The hunger for entertaining narrative based on these mechanisms is a <u>hunger for redundance</u>. From this viewpoint, the greater part of popular narrative is a narrative of redundance. (p.120)

It arises then that in picturing circumstances or events that may appear different, authors can at the same time affirm that everything remains the same. In these novels, therefore, sentimental domestic scenes in the Australian bush assure the reader that cultural continuity is possible in the Antipodes notwithstanding conditions there. Eco sees these structural mechanisms as answering a profound need in the community. Prose fiction of this kind is, on one level, escapist entertainment and it offers consolation. This quality of satisfying the reader is one of the hallmarks of such narratives. What the reader knows, Eco insists, is 'what he wants to know again'; and, with reference to a recent popular work, Eco concludes: 'that is why he has purchased the book' (p.119). To read the earlier colonial novels today is to realize the truth of Eco's observations and thus to comprehend why these books might have been sought after.

Beer, too, has described how the deployment of familiar material has always had the power to reassure.[167] The formulas of romance and a core

167. Beer 2.

of positive and accepted belief allow the emergence of myth, a factor most have seen as inherent in the romance. It is a noticeable feature of the colonial romance and I will be alluding to the presence of mythic elements throughout. That Australia 'figured in the imagination of men as a place where fulfilment was possible, where human effort could still prevail over circumstance' is postulated by Wilkes as the myth which is central to Australian prose fiction until towards the end of the century.[168] By means of the romance and its mythic component an idealized version of colonial existence was formulated. It would seem that this had the power to reassure readers and writers alike.

It is generally contended that the genre of romance allows contemporary sentiments to be formulated. In questioning such an approach Louis James draws attention to the 'formidable problems facing anyone who tries to evaluate popular literature'. However, James does conclude that mental attitudes can be gauged from popular works and, more particularly, 'in situations where the writer can be established as seeking popularity through expressing popular sentiments'.[169] I believe this to be true of the books under discussion here. Regarding popular sentiment, faith in their compatriots, surely, encouraged writers to set forth a spirited portrayal of the colonist. Pictured are a self-sufficient and optimistic people. Christian virtues are acknolwedged, but it is a material rather than a spiritual progress which is recorded here. The romance is, as Northrop Frye contends, a 'secular scripture'.[170] Indeed, philosophical reflections are few. When one contemplates these works one gains the impression that it was difficult for writers to assess the colonial situation overall at the time, or to

168. Wilkes 31.

169. Louis James, Fiction for the Working Man 1830-1850 (London: Oxford UP, 1963) 45-6.

170. Frye, The Secular Scripture 15.

view it dispassionately. 'In the traditional romance no-one is ever disillusioned' says Beer, adding that: 'Disillusionment calls into question the whole wish-fulfilling function of the form...'.[171] Rather, a persuasive interior logic is at work here: namely, that the country is available for settlement and further — the convenient prerequisite of romance — that it is possible to impose order over disorder.

The elements of romance and an underpinning of careful documentation characterize the works under discussion. Challenging conditions in Australia offered the creative writer great scope. Yet for the wealth of material available a conservative approach can collectively be identified. Stylistically what ensues, and surely due to current demand, is an optimistic picture. Success is visualized on large scale, but more particularly in microcosm, in the tale of the individual settler. 'Pastoral retirement and domestic virtue', in Mitchell's opinion, is what Rowcroft stresses in his popular Tales.[172] How such a concept structures the majority of these works will be studied in the course of my thesis. Even so, one image emerges which fulfils both documentary needs and the demands of romance. Centrally placed, both literally and metaphorically, the homestead dwelling in the Australian bush emerges as the focus of interest in these fictional fields. It is an image which reflects the spirit of the age.

When Rowcroft's protagonist Thornley establishes his homestead in the bush of Van Diemen's Land it becomes plain that his creator envisaged this settler as the personification of a civilized Englishman in the wilderness. Rowcroft was not the first to propose the trope, and a host of writers were to emulate him. And it is easy to see why European habitation, paradoxically intrusive in the landscape yet pleasing, became the image at the heart of contemporary prose fiction and, it might be added, of paintings,

171. Beer 40.

172. The Oxford History of Australian Literature 35.

from the period. In terms of concrete reality the dwelling provides shelter and security and is suggestive of domestic well-being. Its outlines, however simple, hint at a technology far in advance of that of the 'noble savage'. Over and above this, the location symbolizes the possibility of a new life in the new land. It stands for stability and cultural continuity and, since these fictional dwellings belong mainly to the colonial gentry or at least to the educated middle-classes, the homestead confirms the continuity of a proven, stable, social structure. Given the bush setting it seems clear, as already proposed, that the power of the image gains much from the surrounding circumstances. In the colonial novel mythic elements and the conventions of romance soon attach to this site.

These novels celebrate the possibility of recreating a recognizable world in the bush. Kingsley provides a good illustration of this in Geoffry Hamlyn. With all the 'old formulas of life scattered to the winds' (p.139), the characters with whom the author's sympathies lie journey inland and establish homes there. Considering country-houses, and especially their surrounding gardens, such as these, Dixon looks on them as signifying 'a particular relationship between the works of nature and the works of civilized man' and, in the case of the homestead 'Baroona', 'an harmonious arrangement between the elements of British country life and the wilderness on the colonial frontier'.[173] Like other writers Kingsley takes pleasure in conjuring up settings which are the polar opposite of the motherland; at the same time an ethical and cultural milieu which recreates the finest from the homeland typifies the favoured locales. In real life doubts and fears must have been almost overwhelming; in prose fiction how much more reassuring it was to fetch up what was intimately known than to dwell upon uncertainties.

What informs this body of fiction is a coherent vision of British colon-

173. Dixon 190.

ists as the representatives of civilization in the wilderness. As a result, one comes to realize why their activities were depicted with pride. For these works to be accepted and for the vision to win approval all that was needed, to borrow a phrase from Frye, was 'a good-natured novelist, backed by a sentimental public'.[174] In the given circumstances, then, it is not to be wondered at that in an imaginative recreation of a colonial society home and hearth emerge as the subject which preoccupies the creative writer in the decades between 1830-1860. One of the chief charms of these narratives is the insistence upon this positive aspect of colonial life.

174. Frye, The Secular Scripture 135.

CH. II
THE HOMESTEAD

> A new weather-boarded cottage for the family, with four good rooms, and verandah in front and behind, was in progress on the point of the hill; but so placed as to leave clear the site for the more substantial edifice hereafter.... (The Emigrant Family, p.92)

In a chapter entitled 'People Building' in The Colonial Australians, Denholm has alluded to the 'moving architectural frontier' which pushed out from the Australian littoral, and to the 'emerging permanence' which came to be associated with settlement inland. Besides the evidence of buildings still extant confirmation of several kinds exists that by the mid-century buildings and their architecture had evolved greatly, and a range of habitation from the lowliest hut or cottage to housing on a far grander scale was located in the Australian hinterland. There is, firstly, the iconography of the period. Painters of particular significance in this regard, although I will refer to others, are Lycett in the 1820s and working round the mid-century Glover, Angas, Martens, Gill, Dowling, and von Guérard. Somewhat later there are early photographs of colonial Australia. In addition, there are descriptive passages from the prose of observers and creative writers of the period.

A book invaluable in this study and which draws upon all such evidence is Archer's Building a Nation;[1] essential also in Freeland's Architecture in Australia.[2] These writers are particularly informative on building methods. What becomes clear is that dwellings of simple Georgian design initially

1. John Archer, Building a Nation: A History of the Australian Home (Sydney: Collins, 1987).
2. J.M. Freeland, Architecture in Australia: A History (1968; Ringwood: Penguin, 1982).

predominated, as Lycett was to illustrate.[3] But this conventional design, basic to early forms, gave way to a vernacular architecture of which it has been said: 'The vernacular process was to produce a building within the simplest possible means and this occurred in a society which was tradition bound'.[4] One of the most notable aspects of colonial architecture is alluded to by, for example, Serle when he asserts:

> The most distinctive form of private housing came to be the pastoral homesteads — not the baronial halls which sometimes disfigured the the bush, but the natural, unpretentious, roomy, sprawling, leafy-verandahed extensions of fairly simple farm-houses.[5]

In his Preface, Freeland has made the observation that

> A country's architecture is a near-perfect record of its history. Every building captures in physical form the climate and resources of a country's geography, the social, economic, technological and political conditions of its society and the moral, philosophical, aesthetic and spiritual values of its people. Every building records, describes and explains the time and the place in which it was built.

To read the prose fiction of the mid-century is to comprehend some aspects of that history.

I have explained that novelists, in coming to terms with the subject matter available, charted the transitional nature of rural architecture; they also drew attention to the range of habitation that was evolving in the back country. The word 'homestead', of Old English derivation, had been in

3. Joseph Lycett, Views in Australia, Or New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land Delineated in Fifty Views, ... (London, 1824). For a depiction of simpler dwellings see 'Agricola', Description of the Barossa Range and Its Neighbourhood in South Australia. Illustrated with maps and coloured plates, from original drawings made on the spot, by George French Angas. (London, 1849; facs. rpt. Adelaide: S.Aust. Govt. Printer, 1979).
4. Philip Cox and Wesley Stacey, The Australian Homestead (Sydney: Lansdowne, 1972) 18.
5. Serle 48.

use for nearly a thousand years. Referring to a 'home or dwelling' (O.E.D., sense 1.b) the word is also employed to denote 'a house with its dependent buildings and offices' (sense 2). No doubt the term became more widespread in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries due to increased colonial settlement and to subsequent reporting of pioneering conditions.

It was already employed in the Antipodes when Savery, in The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land, of 1829-30, made reference to a homestead visited by the writer (p.173). One must assume that — perhaps due to colonial usage — strongly positive connotations began to accrue around the term, making it one that was immediately adopted in Australia (rather than an equivalent such as 'cottage') as will become manifest in the course of my study. It is notable that authors worked to engender positive feelings in the reading public. The building of the homestead was the first step in subordinating the chaos of the wilderness; so that a vision of order was symbolized in its image. It was also, by tradition, central to the pastoral ideal.

Writing of Australian prose fiction of the period up until 1850 Green has observed that 'as a whole [it] is so miscellaneous that it is difficult to generalize about it', adding that 'certain common characteristics' do, however, emerge.[6] It is true that a proliferation of themes can be located in the early Australian narrative but of these one, major and fundamental, is that concerned with the pioneering and early settlement of the Australian hinterland. A seminal work in this regard is Rowcroft's Tales of the Colonies of 1843. It was an extremely popular work, a fifth edition appearing in 1847. In 1856 Sinnett can report that it 'had gone through six large editions in 1850, and we knew not how many more have been published since'.[7]

6. Green 84.
7. Barnes, ed., The Writer in Australia 28. For details of some editions of Rowcroft's work see Miller II:596.

Of the 'Guidebook Period',[8] it portrayed in plain, vigorous style the experiences of a free settler, William Thornley, and his family in Van Diemen's Land. Perhaps, more importantly, the book provided information for those intending to emigrate.

Initially the author has Thornley accompany an established settler to his homestead in New Norfolk. A house is a symbol of settled domestic existence and it marks the European presence in the Antipodes. Rowcroft must have known that the subject would provoke great interest in the homeland. Accordingly, much thought seems to have been given to the matter of the settler's farm. So on one level the dwelling is seen through the eyes of Thornley and we share his mixed feelings, his 'interest and curiosity' regarding it. Along with pleasure, anxiety is experienced since Thornley can see his own future mirrored in such a scene. At another level the dwelling is seen 'as it existed twenty years ago', and this temporal vantage point lends weight to the literary set-piece.

Thornley recalls the scene thus:

> I beheld before me a low building, which I afterwards ascertained was built of the logs of the stringy-bark tree, split in half, and set on end. The building was about thirty feet long, and whitewashed. Its roof was composed of shingles; that is, of slips of wood about nine inches long, four inches broad, and a quarter of an inch thick. These shingles had acquired a bluish cast, from exposure to the atmosphere, and had a slatish appearance. At one end of the house was a rough-looking piece of stone-work, formed of irregular pieces of stone procured near the spot, and forming the end wall and chimney. (p.35)

The double framing device referred to above is an effective method of placing emphasis on this site. Then Rowcroft employs a simple descriptive passage and relies on concrete details. As in the case of the narrator himself, any apprehension the reader may have experienced concerning colonial

8. Cecil Hadgraft, Australian Literature: A Critical Account to 1955, rev. ed. (London: Heinemann, 1962) 14.

living standards is allayed with the account of this quaint rather than outlandish house and the following references to a settled domestic existence. As a result, the small home acquires a level of dignity in our eyes.

Following that admirable example, the Thornley family, with their assigned convict servants and with wagons and bullocks, make their way 'up the country'. 'Not much for a sheep-farm, but enough to make a tidy homestead' is how their grant of twelve hundred acres is described in colonial terms (p.18). And this is revealing of the sturdy values that prevail in the colony; and its vast potential. In the event it is not difficult to acquire sufficient land for pasturing flocks. Rowcroft details the construction of Thornley's house, making use at this point of the brief diary entry, as in: 'April 1 — Took possession of our new house, and worked hard at the doors and window shutters. Frost at night' (p.89). By these means something of the task's urgency is conveyed, as are the conditions, reminding us of the reporting of the concrete and the practical in Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. Thornley catalogues improvements — floors, windows, a ceiling — then the building is stuccoed inside and white-washed outside. There follows fencing in of 'corn-fields, paddocks, sheep-yards and homestead' (p.99).

The housing is adequate and the circumstances deeply rewarding to those of modest background from the motherland. The situation satisfies the demands of romance, too, and its wishfulfilment aspects. Envisaged here are human tenacity and, as in so many books which followed, mastery over colonial conditions. In its tidiness the homestead contrived by Rowcroft's protagonist challenges the wilderness and promises a harmonious, ordered life; even though the notion is underscored by that contrasting theme of vulnerable isolation. Perhaps the painter, Joseph Lycett, had exactly these thoughts in mind when he completed his engraving Raby in 1824.[9] If

9. Dixon has paid some attention to the topographical paintings of the period. This engraving is illustrated and discussed in Ch.3.

only in a small way each dwelling built was perceived to be the embodiment of European civilization and enlightenment, and an aspect of the order which was to be imposed on the country.

It should be said that in a lesser work of several years later, The Bush-ranger, Rowcroft omits any reference to the stages of pioneering. The author has his protagonist 'build a good house, and establish a well-stocked farm' (p.352) and although 'great diligence and industry' are mentioned no evidence of that is given in the plot and few details of the rural dwelling are included. Because of this factor, and the romantic idealism of the final chapter, events here lack credibility. Yet such a judgement must fall on this highly-improbable and colourful tale in its entirety.

With regard the colonial homestead in his first Australian work, however, Rowcroft employs two literary modes: the approach is both diachronic and synchronic. In what must be judged an authentic depiction of conditions, or at least some aspects of them, as opposed to exciting exploits and adventures, Rowcroft chronicles how Thornley travels inland, builds a crude dwelling and, later, establishes himself more comfortably. One writer has remarked upon the three stages of pioneering: the dray, the slab hut, and the more solid home, noting that the domestic dwelling reflected a settler's success.[10] Picturing similar events, but without Rowcroft's attention to detail, a number of other writers took up the theme. As in the case of Tales of the Colonies, this linear progression gave momentum, the chronological approach providing the structure of many colonial novels.

In the Tales Rowcroft also depicts conditions in a synchronic approach in which a range of habitation is described. A broader scope is imposed in this way and the book's interest is widened. Thus while the demands of

10. Messer 71.

time are met in the sequential narrative, the importance of place is paramount in a synchronic mode. As Rowcroft recognized, this is useful in a guidebook because a significant amount of information can be conveyed to prospective emigrants. Although Thornley's dwelling remains at the forefront of such an approach, others recessed in the general design must, due to the circumstances, be of interest. One of these has been examined above. The author feels obliged to include methods of construction: for example the erection of a pisé dwelling is described and here practical details are discussed. Stone buildings are also mentioned. And when, in the course of the fantastic adventures which crowd this work, a deserted hut is discovered, the author interrupts the flow of the narrative to describe the upright stakes, the twigs interlacing them, the rude plastering of mud, the roof of native grass, the door of wooden planks held by bull's-hide hinges, the window opening with curtains of kangaroo skin, and the stone and pebbles held together by mud and brick which make the chimney (p.400). The reader of today might become weary of Rowcroft's narrative which swings, as Barnes has pointed out, between propaganda and entertainment,[11] and yet such is its coherence that one does accept the author's stance and his story-telling mode.

Notable among the dwellings which figure in the novel is that of the settler Crab, whose ambition it is to own a 'nice red-brick house, with a fish-pond in front, and an arbour at the bottom of the garden'. This is finally achieved and becomes 'the very model of an English farm' (Chs.LII, LIII). With its quiet pastoral properties and English attributes it seems only right that its name should derive from the old country. 'Cherry-tree Bottom' is the pride of its owner who, despite an ardent desire to return to his homeland, remains resolutely in the colony. By such means, Rowcroft postulates that vistas of an essentially English character can be created in

11. Dutton, ed., The Literature of Australia 151.

the Antipodes. He is surely drawing on aspects of contemporary reality here, but in literary terms a model was available in Alfred Dudley of 1830. In this work the author recreates an English country-house in the wilds of New South Wales and names it 'Dudley Park'. In Tales of the Colonies there is dramatic advantage and human interest in the farm's novelty when compared with its colonial counterparts, as, for example, the comfortable stone homestead where Thornley passes his old age. Here, in the company of grandchildren, along with a pet kangaroo and a parrot, Rowcroft's main character is found surveying his pastoral domain. In a symbolic sense a link with the future and with the environment is thus established.

Despite the fanciful nature of Thornley's adventures, Rowcroft's long work is to be admired as an authentic response to contemporary circumstances. For Mitchell, 'His depiction of the settlement, if not quite impartial, at least attempts some kind of comprehensiveness'.[12] And yet it must be said that the subject matter is selected with care. Less pleasing attributes or undesirable features relating to the homestead are almost entirely avoided. The great majority followed Rowcroft in this respect; for while the rough-hewn was acceptable to the reading public, the indecorous was not. Plain-speaking was not characteristic of the age, a factor to which Altick is referring when he states: 'The movement for "the reformation of manners", to use the contemporary phrase, acquired greater urgency as the Georgian era was about to dissolve into the Victorian'.[13]

What might be overlooked when describing such a work as belonging to the guidebook period is that the emphasis is not on a dwelling's physical properties, important though these may be, but on those moral and spiritual qualities with which Rowcroft endows these remote homes. This perception,

12. The Oxford History of Australian Literature 38.
13. Altick, Victorian People 9.

that is to say, the mode of seeing the dwellings evaluatively, is true of the majority of works examined; the concept emerges as a major theme.

This being said, it is worthwhile considering Tucker's Ralph Rashleigh. Written in the same decade as Tales of the Colonies it remained unpublished in the nineteenth century. The book's richness and vitality and above all, its frankness, are in part good reason for the attention given it throughout. I will be concentrating, however, on the section in which Tucker's protagonist moves through settled areas of New South Wales and visits a number of dwellings there. In the depiction of these homes readers are provided with some memorable and dramatic vignettes, although such a term seems scarcely suited to Tucker's style. Two facts should be appreciated before glancing at a typical presentation of this set-piece.

As I have demonstrated, a work may gain momentum through the presentation of the stages through which pioneering may pass. However, the thrust of this work derives from the picaresque mode, and this is seen in heightened perspective in the chapters of particular concern to my thesis, that is to say, from the last phase of Rashleigh's period as a convict at Emu Plains prison until he is taken into custody once more (Chs.XIII-XXIII). As in a synchronic approach each of the dwellings at this point is observed with similar exactitude. On the other hand, each is surveyed through the peripatetic protagonist's sturdy sense of values and developing perceptions as he moves through the colony.

An additional point of interest is that Ralph Rashleigh is written from a convict's point of view and so it differs markedly from Rowcroft's Tales and his appeal to the free emigrant. Moral concerns are in evidence, nevertheless, and that is to be expected of early colonial writing, given its historical context. Yet the author, with his evident enjoyment in textual form and manipulation of material, is not prevented from focussing

on the worst aspects of colonial life; its unpleasantness and excesses. He also draws attention to what is admirable. Emphasis is thrown on these issues by defining them against the outlying regions of civilized settlement. Other novelists have dwelt on the pleasant aspect of human habitation there. But Tucker finds dramatic advantage in extremes, employing the homestead as a key symbol in this regard and, accordingly, has Rashleigh visit a number of dwellings from the middle to the lowest level in the social scale.

One of the homes which welcomes Rashleigh is that belonging to 'Big Mick':

> they adjourned to Mick's dwelling, which originally consisted only of two small apartments, with sundry additions made to it at various times, abutting from one or the other side in divers singularly ugly excrescences, with lean-to roofs resting against that of the parent edifice. All these structures were composed of the then unvarying materials of Australian architecture in the interior — slabs or thin pieces split off by means of mauls and wedges from logs, the roof covered with forest box or stringy-bark, which was stripped from the living trees in sheets of about six feet long and from two to four feet wide, laid upon rafters composed of small sapling poles just as they came from being cut in the bush. The sheets of bark, having holes pierced through each in pairs, were then tied on the rafters with cords twisted of the inner rind of the kurrajong tree. The whole framing of the roof was secured as it was needed by wooden pins in order to save the expense of nails, which were then both too scarce and too dear to be used by the lower order of settlers.
>
> Indeed, all kinds of ironwork were equally inaccessible, and instead of hinges to the doors or window shutters, those appurtenances were all made to revolve on wooden pivots in holes, bored a short distance into the corresponding parts of the frames.
>
> Thus the materials of Mick's habitation were pretty much the same as those of the prisoners' huts on Emu Plains; but the chinks in the slab walls of the former were well stopped up with plaster made of cow dung and sand. (pp.104-5)

The account of the slab hut, the house of a poor settler and his family, is one of several descriptive passages which feature close observations of this kind. Elsewhere I will be examining others.

With its emphasis on concrete detail, Tucker's depiction gains validity. The dwelling is of the 'stringy-bark order of architecture' (p.74), but it has none of the neatness Rowcroft assigns to colonial habitation. Tucker's

illustration provides a forceful counterbalance to that conventionally presented and permits a sharper awareness of pioneering exigencies. The careful documentation throughout recalls Tales of the Colonies, of which because of its popularity Tucker may well have been aware. But if he took the earlier work as a model, it was one upon which he wrought great changes. For example, Rowcroft and a number of others laid great stress on the notion that new habitation could be erected as needed, and such a factor points to the climate of expansion which underpins these works. In this case 'Big Mick', unlike those of more substantial means, has had to rely upon makeshift extensions to house his large family.

Tucker is adept at ordering his material and the robust selection and arrangement of the subject matter at this point allows the author to convey Rashleigh's insight into the population's response to pioneering. In bringing forward 'Big Mick''s dwelling Tucker is demonstrating that sturdy independence is a notable aspect of colonization whatever the domestic surroundings. The extraordinary nature of the place, not unlike that of Rashleigh's prison, may have appeared extreme to the reader of the day. For all this, in the plot's quick forward thrust it is surpassed by a later description of an Irish family's habitation and further on, by the rendition of deplorable conditions at the Arlacks' farm. Between the two latter is juxtaposed the delightful little homestead of the Marshalls. That house, 'with more of an English appearance about it than any other Rashleigh had yet seen in Australia' (p.127), is pleasing in every way: an exemplum of social perfectability in the bush. Rashleigh's reflections are brought into play here, and as a result the hero's judgement is validated in our eyes. We observe his position with sympathy when he reaches the Arlacks' farm.

As he has witnessed the domestic niceties, the good farming and careful husbandry at the Marshalls', Rashleigh's apprehension upon seeing this farm is understandable. The illkept nature of the environs and the neglect of

the fields now gives way to the dwelling itself.

> The principal dwelling, or home of all the Arlacks, was a hut which, even in that age of simple materials and rude workmanship, might claim pre-eminence for ugliness and deformity. The walls, having dropped much out of the perpendicular, were shoved up by props applied externally. The gaping orifices in the bark roof bespoke premature decay, occasioned by neglect. The chinks between the slabs, of fully an average width, had once been attempted to be stopped; but the rain having wetted the plaster through the yawning fissures, it had fallen in piecemeal, and was never renewed; and finally, it seemed a moot point whether there was more filth to be found inside, or out, of this <u>most delectable</u> dwelling. (p.136)

If by means of reference to other less than salubrious locations the reader has been forewarned about the Arlacks' establishment one remains unprepared, however, for conditions there, the nature of its owners, or the irony that Rashleigh, as an assigned labourer, is worse off there than when confined at Emu Plains. Somewhat contrived is the fact that the owners' appearance, their 'ugliness and deformity', links them with their surrounds. As often with Tucker, the subject matter of this descriptive passage appears in sharp contrast to the carefully balanced prose style. In addition, the symbolic nature of such a locale, one which has been proposed in the previous dwellings, is here figured forth by means of an absence of perpendicularity — a building's major attribute. Sub-standard housing may be no bar to generosity of spirit; here it is in every way lacking. There is a further irony in the fact that although these conditions are crude they will not be bettered for many years since in the narrative's overall structure Rashleigh then successively follows the life of a bushranger, a convict, and an Aboriginal, and civilized habitation is attained only after a considerable period of hardship.

In the richness of the symbolism, the profusion of detail, and in the freshness of his response, Tucker is unique. No other creative writer of the whole period under discussion depicts with such precision and panache dwellings across the social scale and portrays the settlers who would inhabit them. All this is indicative of Tucker's feeling for balance and style and

structure, a dynamic which, along with the narrative's breadth and momentum, make the work both absorbing and thought-provoking.

About the same time Alexander Harris must have been working on his romance, The Emigrant Family, published in 1849 and again in 1852 retitled Martin Beck: Or, the Story of an Australian Settler. The author's 'main design' as stated in the Preface, was 'the delineation of the actual life of an Emigrant Family, and the scenery about their homestead in the Australian colonies...'. Like Rowcroft, but in lesser detail, Harris mentions the stages of accommodation built for the Bractons on the newly-acquired property in New South Wales. In sequential mode the success of the pioneering venture is recounted and although difficulties and dangers are not ignored all is forward-looking, optimism being inherent in the developing romance tradition. The erection of a small hut signals the beginnings of domestic settlement at 'the Rocky Springs' and a commitment to 'the enterprise of founding a home at the antipodes' (p.17). Then a more comfortable dwelling is achieved with plans for a later and grander establishment, as my epigraph here reveals. That notion is to form a common motif in these narratives. It is noticeable that crude accommodation, such as a tent, is not part of this novelist's plan for his imagined colonists.

The setting up of out-stations on the large run and the development of the head-station as home-station to the Bracton family are chronicled in The Emigrant Family. Stepping out of his role as narrator, Harris will often provide footnotes to facilitate the telling of his tale. The implication is that the author sees the work as both a guidebook and a romance. For example, in the first chapter, a 'run' is described as 'Any tract of land for depasturing stock'. Commenting, Ramson adds: 'While run is used, as Harris explains, of a large open stretch of land for grazing stock, station here and elsewhere in The Emigrant Family clearly implies the occupation of, and erecting of a dwelling or yards on, the stretch of land' (p.13)

Such an explanation is, I believe, also adequate for my purposes. It should be mentioned that 'station' and 'homestead' may be used synonymously although the term 'station' may have a wider sense, 'homestead' referring to a rural dwelling and, often, to its associated outbuildings. And, as will become apparent, the name given a property may also simply refer to its chief dwelling.

Harris's 'design', quoted above, could well preface the earlier Settlers and Convicts, Or: Recollections of Sixteen Years' Labour in the Australian Backwoods. Things don't merely happen here but, as implied in the title, people labour to achieve effects: trees are chopped down, houses are erected, fences are built. Dangers and hazards, boredom and petty annoyances: all play a part in a journal in which fact and fiction mingle. Various locations and homesteads are depicted and the author, not bound by the romantic conventions which shape and sometimes impair The Emigrant Family, is free to describe and comment upon them:

> and every few fields apart some more or less simple edifice marked the homestead. In some places it was no more than the bark hut of a few feet area, with its own dungheap and stack; in others it was the capacious and costly mansion surrounded by farm buildings of all sorts.... (pp.65-6)

With its accumulated detail the work emerges as more truly a guidebook regarding many aspects of Australian colonial society than any other. Green has seen Harris's novel as an 'appendage' to this earlier book; it 'represents an imaginative variation upon the same theme: the new colony, its nature and its possibilities from the point of view of the immigrant'.[14]

If The Emigrant Family is an imaginative variation on such a theme then one would expect the author to be especially selective in the choice and

14. Green 93-4.

presentation of the chief location and to endow the site with particular significance, one that would reach beyond a simple recreation of concrete reality. Indeed besides a firm setting, Harris, in the style of Rowcroft, offers images of a wholesome rural existence at 'The Rocky Springs', these being accentuated when the family is thrown into danger by outside forces. On the coast domestic felicity is likewise characteristic of the neat bush cottage of the native-born Kables. (It would seem that somewhat earlier Augustus Earle had come upon just such a property: Mr. Cowell's Farm (1827).[15]) Here the stress is on propriety. Assigned to the cottage are the attributes of prudence, industry and perseverance: ideals set down by Rowcroft and adhered to by a line of novelists who followed. It is these ideals which must be acquired by the 'emigrant family' at 'the Rocky Springs' before they can become fully established in the bush.

The most interesting location of this work is the homestead belonging to Dr. Mercer, and one which for a short time firmly displaces our attention from any other setting. It is described as viewed by Hurley, the local magistrate, who is there to make enquiries concerning the alleged ill-treatment of convict labourers. One is given some idea of the secluded nature of the place with the description of the journey taken to reach it, and with the additional information that it had been 'speedily cut out of the dense woody wilderness' (p.184).

Surprise is expressed at the haste with which this domain has been established: 'On approaching the homestead, everything bore witness that money had been lavishly expended in expediting the settler's advances upon the natural state of the locality; — the fullest effects had been aimed for in the shortest space of time'. The property's extent not only proposes

15. Reproduced in Jocelyn Hackforth-Jones, Augustus Earle: Travel Artist (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1980) 107.

that extraordinary measures have been taken to achieve it, but casts doubt upon the means by which this has been done. Various aspects of the area having been described, the author moves on to the main dwelling. Of the buildings

> the most conspicuous was the cottage mansion. Reared only for temporary inhabitation, it was entirely of wood, verandahed all round, and weather-boarded, and confined to a ground floor; but painting and ornate embellishments of every available kind within the bounds of good taste, well-designed fencing, and well laid-out garden ground, and its own ample dimensions altogether, rendered it an object which, met with in such a secluded situation, irresistibly awakened surprise and complacency. The kitchen, and other specially domestic buildings, partially flanked it on both sides, and met in the rear: a couple of servants in livery were to be observed amongst various others in ordinary clothing. At respectful distance behind were barn and shearing-shed, cart-houses, stacks, huts, and much more of like order. The garden, the lake-like water, and the fields in front; and behind, the retinue wherewith wealth subordinates the face of nature to its will. (p.185)

What can be deduced from this detailed account? To begin with, the notion of a 'cottage mansion' seems to be one of those apparent paradoxes relating to the Antipodes, and one in which the antithetical nature of things might be expected. The desire for comfortable accommodation in the bush is uppermost. Still, this is true of the majority of imagined dwellings in <u>The Emigrant Family</u>; and elsewhere. What makes this scene unusual is the extent and sophistication of the homestead and its environs and, in consequence, the pleasing nature of the property overall. The descriptive passage recalls those often lavished on the country-house in the homeland; here the attractiveness of the panorama is the greater because of the site's extreme remoteness.

Yet the main thrust of Harris's account is concerned with the 'display of material power' inherent in such a locale. The emphasis is on the desire for power, not only over the environment but, more fundamentally, over one's fellow men. Harris had touched upon issues of this kind in <u>Settlers and Convicts</u>. Here the question looms large. The European domination of the bushland is accepted; one recalls that 'the Rocky Springs' embodies the

process. But one thing that characterizes the latter location is the spirit of fair-dealing and the good intentions connected with the modest homestead. The setting pictured in such detail above, both materially and in relation to the dubious ethos it embodies, is unique. The whole is a dramatic sequence with Gothic overtones. More importantly, it serves to convey the belief that the European's hold over the bushland should be associated with the highest moral principles. In this respect Dr. Mercer's dwelling, despite its appearance, is the antithesis of the country-house, and the ethos traditionally held to obtain there.[16]

Dating from the 1840s, Tales of the Colonies, Ralph Rashleigh, and The Emigrant Family are indicative of the variety of approaches possible to the subject matter under consideration. Those by Rowcroft and Harris must be regarded as seminal works, with the earlier and much reprinted Tales of the Colonies surely the more influential. As Green has observed: 'Rowcroft and Harris present clear pictures of the new life that is developing on the Australian countryside'[17] and that this was intended has been made plain by the authors in their Prefaces. So a description of a dwelling in the Antipodes, even to the method of its construction, was to be expected in narratives in which the site was given centrality and significance. However, since any given work can recreate only aspects of 'the new life' then Tucker can equally be seen to depict a clear picture of conditions. As I have indicated, Tucker is less constrained in his choice of subject matter and more aware of the symbolic value of the material than either Rowcroft or Harris. Had his book appeared in print, either abridged or unabridged, one would imagine it to have greatly influenced others, particularly in regard to the presentation of a range of dwellings, socially speaking, and wider thematic concerns — all leading to a broader literary perspective.

16. This point is expanded upon by Dixon 180-1.

17. Green 84.

It would seem that there was an early recognition of the subject's appeal to those in the homeland, either the interested reader or the would-be emigrant; or again, to those who lived on the Australian littoral, many of whom, one would imagine, had not ventured into the interior. In literary terms, the care with which the homestead dwelling was from the outset delineated would imply that it reflected, along with a rendering of contemporary social reality, contemporary beliefs and ideas. As the outward expression of domestic, cultural, spiritual, and economic ideals it was a likely and perhaps a necessary focal point in the prose fiction of the day. And as — and this will be demonstrated later — the hearth became central to the dwelling so, correspondingly, was the dwelling itself given significance in narratives concerned with the hinterland.

It would be useful therefore to compare two works of less literary merit at this point. Both were published in London in 1830, that is to say, considerably earlier than the three books previously mentioned. They are Porter's Alfred Dudley and Howison's One False Step. A factor which links them is the insistence upon high moral principles. Yet besides the overtly didactic mode, the differences are great. In terms of plot the chief dwelling of the former finally becomes the heart of a prosperous Utopian settlement, bringing happiness and fulfilment to the main character, Alfred Dudley, and his family, and to those emigrants fortunate enough to join them there. In One False Step the narrow-minded and vindictive owner, deserted by his womenfolk, is finally murdered at his neglected house.

It seems apparent that Porter was unacquainted with Australian conditions and in her Preface she acknowledges her debt to Robert Dawson and his book The Present State of Australia (London, 1830). Despite this, some passages are demonstrably inept. Yet Porter can affirm that truth is blended with her fiction. So it must now be reiterated that forewords and prefaces stressed the notion that instruction and entertainment were

to be combined in these colonial narratives. That is to say, the desire to present a recreation of contemporary social realities seems to have been paramount and to have continued for many decades. And on the whole works are to be recalled for settings and background rather than subtleties or felicities of plot, or intricacies of style. Unfortunately, none of the latter features are to be located in Alfred Dudley, although for all that it has the charm of a bygone age and the attraction of a simple moral vision. In Howison's work small details and a number of disparate elements lead one to think that he was better acquainted with his material; or that despite its melodramatic nature he was able to convey his tale more convincingly.

Porter's book recounts how the Dudley family settle in the Hunter's River region of New South Wales. First to emigrate are Alfred and his father, their task being to build a home fit for the family and its station in life. A chronological approach allows mention of a tent dwelling, then more substantial habitation of 'four rooms, built of logs, and covered with bark' (p.34). Finally they achieve their ambition: 'a mansion of stone' modelled upon and named after their former home in England. And so, when the womenfolk arrive in the colony they show their gratitude and their appreciation for such an achievement and Alfred's sisters express 'delight and admiration' (p.142) at the home's surrounds. The whole conjures up pleasing associations in the observer.[18] This rebuilding of 'Dudley Park' provides the foundation for a new way of life and the site is thus the focal point of the narrative.

What is to be admired here is the optimistic stance, the portrayal of a young hero of whom Niall has said the 'moral and material success is

18. The 'cult of associationism' is explored in some detail by Dixon passim.

never in doubt'.[19] Though positive and forward-looking, the story exists on an idealistic and superficial level. Giving weight to contemporary preoccupations, Rowcroft also utilized the same subject matter as Porter. For example, there is the journey to claim new land and the presentation of three stages of pioneering settlement. There is stress on strong family ties; on the home and homely virtues. In both, too, there are dangers and reversals, but all ends happily. Porter draws attention to the need for 'industry and perseverance' (p.30) while Rowcroft adds prudence to these moral imperatives. However, while Rowcroft is precise about the construction and the description of the family dwelling and envisages it as a colonial homestead, Porter gives no clear word-picture of 'Dudley Park' although, two-storied and elegant, it appears in one of the quaint illustrations which mark the narrative.

Such a point bears comment. Nowhere in this whole body of work is there an account of a dwelling so closely modelled upon Georgian lines, so typical of a country estate in England. Dwellings of neo-classical design were built in early colonial times and are depicted by artists of the period. In particular, one recalls paintings by Lycett and Glover in the 1820s and 1830s. No doubt the sight was pleasing in the strange landscape and must have evoked nostalgic associations and a sense of pride; to which one might add a feeling of complacency.

Yet there came a time when, as Bernard Smith has observed, eighteenth century tradition 'became only a shimmering mirage upon the hot sands of a still unknown country'.[20] In Taste, Place, and Tradition Smith has documented the changing cultural ethos in Australia. He has pointed to the evolving mode in which the artist rendered Australian subject matter in the nineteenth century. For a time, of course, two modes of approach must

19. Niall 8.
20. Smith, Place, Taste and Tradition 53.

have existed side by side, as differing styles of architecture were co-existent, similarly. In literary terms, a like position can be seen in these two works published in 1830. Whereas Porter's depiction of 'Dudley Park' is studied and prosaic and seems to derive, it could be said, from acquaintance with a work such as Lycett's Views, Howison's account is Romantic and richly impressionistic. In literary terms, it looks forward.

There is a passage in One False Step which describes a small house in the Nepean region of New South Wales. Notable here is the smallness of the dwelling and the sense of isolation attached to it and emphasized in the immensity of the landscape. The writer's emotions are clearly involved: they embrace a Romantic mode. With Porter, attention is directed to human achievement in the bushland — an achievement which is idealized and magnified in every way. As a literary metaphor then, its polar opposite is to be seen in the farm as perceived by a convict who is assigned and sent there in One False Step. Mr. Bronde's house 'stood upon a rising ground, and was only one story high, and was formed of logs of wood, weather-boarded on the outside, in a clumsy manner' (p.91). This building belongs to the second stage of domestic settlement; a more substantial home ought to follow. Yet that prediction does not allow for the morbid nature of the work which admits disappointment and tragedy — rare for the colonial narrative. The land close to the house is cleared and fenced, while beyond 'a vast expanse of level country stretched on every side as far as the eye could reach'. The plain is 'covered with long grass, which waved and undulated, when the wind blew strongly, like the billows of an agitated sea' (p.91). What imparts special force here is the emphasis on the farm's remoteness. Its vulnerability seems paramount. Travellers, writers, and authors found such a scene, emblematic of a tenuous European presence in areas remote from seaboard settlements, of great attraction and Romantic appeal. This image of the homestead, seen against the sweep of the inland and visualized by an outsider, was to appear frequently. Here, embodying

those patterns of thought alluded to earlier, an image of an island of civilization set within a wilderness is conveyed in striking fashion.

Some time was to elapse before another work appeared with the hinterland as a major setting for narrative action. This was Christie's A Love Story, a long novel published in Sydney in 1841. Colourful and melodramatic, it is principally set in Europe and could be seen to provide escapist entertainment for colonists far removed from European culture. Miller, for example, has suggested that with 'his meditations on manor house life in England, the writer desired to compensate for the austerities and lack of elegance of Australian bush society in the 'thirties'.[21]

The penultimate action is set in New South Wales where an English baronet has settled and lives alone after many travels undertaken to forget the tragedy which has dogged his life. In Vol.II,Ch.XVI the plot has us follow a messenger sent from his ancestral seat in order to persuade Sir Henry Delmé to return to his rightful home. As the envoy passes through the exotic and fertile landscape of the Hunter's River each moment brings to view 'the location of some enterprising settler, which, ever varying in appearance, in importance, and in extent, yet told the same tale of difficulties overcome, and success ensuing' (p.237). The brief scene allows a comment on colonial establishments and further, on the collective success of the pioneering venture.

The journey inland also makes possible a depiction of pastoral and bush scenery which, it is evident, the author knows well and appreciates. Nevertheless, by delaying its presentation, he places special emphasis on the main setting — the baronet's antipodean 'mansion' — and the extent of its isolation. In addition, the length of the journey allows one to anticipate Delmé's home and, finally, to experience surprise at its insig-

21. Miller I:399.

nificance. In this case, the house resembles 'the common weather-boarded cottage of the early settler' (p.241). With pointed use of the word 'mansion', the reader is reminded of the opening description of 'Delmé Park', 'its mansion bronzed by time', its 'heavy gateways' and 'ancient splendour' (Vol.I,p.5), so that the little bush homestead, in contrast, appears all the more insubstantial and lowly. This comparison of dwellings on either side of the globe is not uncommon and is effective here since it serves to focus interest on Delmé's circumstances. More than merely material concerns are under consideration at this point, it is clear. At issue are honours and traditions and a cultural heritage; in the main, however, the comparison of dwellings is envisaged in the light of middle-class mores.

Paradoxically, though, the bush home with its commanding site, its 'range of English rose trees, in full flower', its willing native servants, interesting flora and fauna and peaceful surroundings, has an innate attractiveness, and its owner is evidently at home there. Yet the messenger is successful. And in terms of plot it is fitting that Christie's protagonist should return to his place in English society. One discerns a certain ambivalence of direction at the story's conclusion, even so. While the author is working within what was to become a popular convention in returning his chief character to a rightful inheritance and comfortable social milieu, one senses that his own feelings are uppermost in his expression of confidence in the future of the colony. This is a dichotomy not uncommon in these colonial novels. It stems from an attempt to fuse two narrative elements, the one registering authorial viewpoint and the other related to genre. A newcomer to Australia, Christie gives free reign to concern for his new homeland, and this is one of the interesting and positive features of the work.[22]

Furthermore, in his Preface, the author expresses the hope that his

22. For details of Christie's life see Miller I:399.

book might be 'the humble corner-stone to some enduring and highly ornamental structure'. That anticipation of a body of literature comes as a surprise; an imaginative response of this kind has the power to move one today. Primarily, perhaps, for such an expectation and, too, for the time and the place of its publication, the book must be considered at the base of such a structure. A Love Story is all but forgotten now, yet notwithstanding its highly melodramatic nature and colourful events, most of which have nothing to do with Australia, it proposes in one chapter thematic elements which were to become fundamental.

With this in mind it is worthwhile reconsidering the three works just examined — those by Porter, Howison, and Christie — because they are among the very earliest with a sustained Australian background. It must be reiterated that since their settings are predominantly urban, the earlier books, Vaux' Memoirs and Savery's Quintus Servinton, are marginal to my puposes. In addition, it is appropriate to set aside Charlotte Barton's A Mother's Offering to Her Children of 1841 at this point as the work does not fit the description of a prose narrative. It has been seen as 'a collection of facts and anecdotes within a fictional framework'.[23] As such, the advice offered to young readers does not require a setting that is rigorously sustained.

Foremost among the themes given prominence in the fictions of Porter, Howison, and Christie, is that of the successful establishment of a dwelling in rural Australia. Associated with the theme is the notion of assimilation and of adjustment to the surrounding environment; and to particular circumstances. That each of the dwellings described in these three works is of different appearance tells us much regarding the authors' response to colonial habitation; their knowledge of conditions in New

23. Niall 58.

South Wales; and the requirements of their diverse works. Thus while each locale is shaped to the author's design it is recognizable as a domestic setting of familiarity in a strange environment. Further, although the houses are seen in terms of concrete reality, each is perceived as a useful literary metaphor.

In only one work are those attributes necessary for domestic felicity present; but the absence of such values is of deep significance in the other two — One False Step and A Love Story. Importantly, the expression of nostalgia for the mother culture is not avoided. Most obviously, it is figured forth in the rose trees at Delmé's dwelling. But it is apparent in the reconstruction of an entire establishment in Alfred Dudley and in the attempt to create a garden based upon former memories in One False Step. Another common theme is the relationship between the bush residence and its environment. In the context of these three tales the homestead is seen at the far edge of civilized settlement. This is more in evidence in One False Step and A Love Story, but the notion is also utilized in Alfred Dudley. Significantly, in all the works focus lights on one homestead, these being simple prose narratives; but other houses too are recalled, although they are recessed in the general design and are given less attention. Only in one, Alfred Dudley, the story of an emigrant family, are the stages of pioneering observed in sequential mode, this giving the narrative a particular momentum.

The question of isolation and loneliness is taken into consideration, but it is noteworthy that it is of less importance in Alfred Dudley, since this is concerned with the domestic enterprise of a family group. In some ways it can be seen as the more influential work because it takes such a subject, dear to the imagination in early Victorian times, as its central theme. Finally, the question as to whether to remain in the colony or, on the other hand, return to the home country, was one in vogue at the time.

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It is settled as the plot demands; that is to say, in a substantially different way in each of these works and is a matter elaborated upon in my final chapters.

The interplay of these key themes and the way in which they are given significance may be crude, but the ideas expressed and given form in these three early narratives were to become indispensable. So when they are developed in Rowcroft's Tales of the Colonies of 1843 the work becomes a cornerstone to that literary structure proposed by the newly-arrived colonist and creative writer, Christie. Yet it is only fitting that Porter, Howison and Christie, slight though their contribution may have been, should receive recognition for the part their works would seem to have played in the development of Australian prose fiction.

Finally, it is of particular interest that in these three books are formulated the major strands that were to characterize the colonial narrative. There is, in Alfred Dudley, the story of the emigrant family. Secondly, there is the narrative in which a convict is the main character, although it must be recalled that the subject has been prefigured in the works of Vaux and Savery. Thus, in Howison's One False Step there is depicted a homestead as seen by an outsider — belonging to and yet alienated from this principal setting. Finally, as in Christie's work, the plot which concerns an English settler of some social standing may in the end return him to his ancestral homeland.

While a number of books which appeared before 1850 were published in the colony the majority were not, and as Messer has proposed, the incorporation of much that was merely informative would argue for the greater importance of readers in the British Isles.[24] One would infer that this

24. Messer 82.

was the case on studying Sinnett's essay; later in the century Byrne's observations seem to confirm it.[25] And, as Webby has shown, Australian readers seem to have been attracted to eighteenth century works and to those of Scott, Dickens and Fenimore Cooper amongst others at this time.[26] The topicality of the antipodean settings was surely responsible also for the publication of two American novels with Australian backgrounds which appeared in the 1840s. Although, therefore, not all works were directed at those who intended to emigrate to Australia, almost all touched upon pioneering and settlement. So important was the major theme and so fundamental its central image, that this emphasis is found in every one. The mode of approach often reveals much concerning the author's capabilities and craft, and it is fair to say that not all the narratives sustain equal attention in this respect.

It is not my intention overall to make a close study of the two American novels. Both very minor works, their full titles propose the adventures and exploits which colour them, if not the contrived events which give them shape. Both, however, are lively and have this advantage: that care has been taken in the depiction of the major settings. Small details in Lucy Marline imply that Baker was well-informed regarding conditions in Australia. This does not necessarily mean that the author had observed them for himself since, as will be shown later, the ability to convey aspects of colonial life, however these may have been obtained, relies more on an imaginative understanding of such circumstances and the artistic skill to depict them, rather than first-hand knowledge. For example, not only does Baker name the main location but, unusually for the

25. Desmond Byrne, Australian Writers (London, 1896).

26. Elizabeth Webby, 'English Literature in Early Australia'. Part I, 1820-9, Southerly 27.4 (1967) 266-85; Part II, 1830-9, 36.1 (1976) 73-87; Part III, 1840-9, 36.2 (1976) 200-22; Part IV, 1840-9, 36.3 (1976) 297-317.

period, he explains the reason for it. In this, the 'first novel by an American author on an Australian theme'[27] a property is called 'Kurryjong' and is said to derive its name from the trees nearby (p.7). One senses that Baker, free from colonial prejudices or pressures, recognised the attractiveness and uniqueness of the native word more readily than his Australian counterparts.

'Kurryjong' is a single-storied wooden building with a verandah. It is noted for its 'neatness and taste', for its 'trim and well-cultivated garden' and these factors, though descriptive, are common-place. Yet small details propose a palpably Australian setting. There is the convolvulus which grows over the latticed posts of the verandah (p.21), a popular architectural feature. Not only does such an account draw attention to the Australian setting, but it points to the comfort and permanence of the home, this notion being strengthened with reference to the domestic life within. Baker also refers to other dwellings in the colony: on one hand, to a small slab hut, with the 'luxury' of glazed windows (p.63); again, to 'the many snug little thriving homesteads of the small settlers' (p.53). Pointed remark and time-worn description exist side by side in Baker's work, this leading to its unevenness. However, the main location is put in perspective thereby and the story's scope is widened. From such a standpoint, something of the variety and vitality of New South Wales around the mid-century is conveyed.

This, too, is rendered in The Gold Seekers. Of special interest is Prest's illustration of a rural community:

> To all the attractions of a majestic scenery that united the champagne landscape with a forest background, there lay, in addition to the large farm and out-houses of the new settler, at the rear of his orchards, kitchen-garden, paddocks, and several smaller houses;

27. E. Morris Miller and Frederick T. Macartney, Australian Literature: A Bibliography to 1938, extended to 1950... (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1956) 47.

> forming quite a village, where a carpenter, a blacksmith, and a brick-layer had taken up their abode; and where, in all, some twenty stalwart men with their wives and children, formed the nucleus around which in the course of time an interior town would spring up. Everything bore the marks of prosperity and labor. There was, to break the heavy and monotonous silence of the plains, the sound of ax and hammer, and the cheerful voices of the men at work both in-doors and a-field. (pp.63-4)

The author refers to the 'Anglo-Saxon energy, perseverance, and tact' which gave rise to this idealized pastoral setting. While it is a generalized scene, the author gives it specificity with reference to sounds — those relating to progress and goodwill — that befit the settlement. Further, the locale has been firmly placed in a physical and temporal sense, as well as in a national and cultural context. In its remoteness and self-sufficiency a feudal estate is suggested here, and though due to colonial exigencies a past era seems to have been revived, one suspects that a country-house landscape, and its prevailing ethos, is what is intended. Prest was, after all, an Englishman.[28]

Interesting here is the similarity of the viewpoint to that expressed in the novels with which we have been dealing, and which I designate Anglo-Australian. That is to say, to a well-drawn though carefully selective recreation of a given locale the creative writer attributes special qualities: those especially suited to colonialism. While Baker and Prest may have drawn on that body of fiction already mentioned, it is likely that they were looking to an American audience, and were acquainted with the narratives of Fenimore Cooper. This writer's most celebrated works relate to European settlement in the United States and his themes were closely similar to that of the creative writer working against an antipodean

28. See James, Fiction for the Working Man. James describes Prest as a 'general literary hack' (p.25); however confusion seems to exist regarding Prest and Thomas Rymer, who published in America. See James passim.

background. Linking these two bodies of prose fiction one discerns subject matter relating to European expansion, and an expression of similar fears and aspirations. In each case the domestic dwelling is represented in ideal form; particularly is it invested with moral qualities; it is given prominence in a way which makes it a location of great attractiveness. It is worthy to be at the centre of a narrative dealing with the pioneering of a new land and the establishing of a civilized society there.

By the decade of the 1850s many must have considered that the latter had been substantially achieved in Australia. And events must have encouraged such a belief. The cessation of transportation to the eastern states early in the decade, the influx of free immigrants, the discovery of gold, the establishment of distinct and separate states, and the exploration and opening up for settlement of vast tracts of the inland: the confluence of these events provides the background to the era.

The impulse towards expansion is possible here. Undoubtedly in response to such a spirit and in answer to the interest that such circumstances aroused, a substantial number of narratives with Australian settings appeared in the fifties. In fact, half as many works again were published in this decade than in the twenty years immediately preceding it. By far the greatest number of these were set away from the Australian littoral, the rural areas, as I have already indicated, having those qualities which, early on, attracted the creative writer. In moving away from the urban these authors embraced the unknown, the unusual and the unexpected — all marketable factors and a major aspect of the romance. But more seriously, in terms of contemporary belief the land was there to be settled and civilized. In the climate of opinion of the mid-nineteenth century such an ideal was a powerful and attractive one. For the creative writer a terrain beckoned which was larger in both a physical and a metaphysical sense. If a sequential narrative concerning the establishment of

a dwelling-place, perhaps a series of them, was a favoured literary convention and potential structuring device before 1850 then one could infer that such plots would continue in popularity. With emigration greatly increased and the topic of widespread interest, both in England and the colony, it does seem that the material would have remained valid and appealing.

Yet the pioneering of the country, a factor uppermost in the earlier works, is of less significance later. Novelists seemed impelled to move beyond mere beginnings; alternatively, to place less emphasis on such events. Geoffry Hamlyn provides an example, and although pioneering underlines that part of the story set in Australia the subject in fact receives scant attention. It is true, of course, that earlier works had already depicted a well-established, though widely-separated rural community; this was in accord with contemporary conditions. The accent came to be on the resultant success of pioneering rather than on undignified beginnings or rough-hewn accommodation, as had been alluded to, even if in a muted fashion. Characters now were possessed of great tracts of land, named properties, and comfortable homesteads. A less tenuous existence was in evidence and is apparent in the chief works of the decade of the fifties — those by Vidal, Atkinson, Spence, Howitt and Kingsley. Not only were these and others able to picture more substantial dwellings but, significantly, they placed them at the centre of more complex and sophisticated novels. There was little need now to interrupt the text with reference to building methods, although the idea was not entirely forgotten. Hadgraft envisaged a date as late as 1860 for the end of the guidebook period.[29]

Creative writers of this decade followed those before them in recognizing the value of explanation and commentary. This was only natural,

29. Hadgraft 14.

given the situation. One should also be aware of the course of the novel in the homeland. Writing of authors of the early Victorian period in England, Allen has stressed their 'sense of identity with their times'.[30] This whole idea is, of course, inherent in the colonial novel itself and has given rise to the genre. Likewise, much has been written about the 'Victorian ideal of domesticity',[31] a point which will subsequently be pursued. But it should be stressed that due to colonial circumstances such an ideal was the matrix which helped shape colonial prose fiction. So that novelists, freeing themselves from material relating to initial settlement, fixed upon the theme of agricultural and pastoral pursuits and upon domestic concerns. It seems reasonable to suppose that writer and reader alike must have surveyed such processes approvingly.

Various levels of the social hierarchy attracted attention; even so, I would contend that the stock image relates to those of middling class. Characters in the main espoused middle-class manners and morals, ideals and desires, all this proposing a conservative and conformist stance. Writers of the 1850s — early to mid-Victorian times — strove to keep a balance between documentary realism and the need to comply with reader's expectations. And in settling for the romance, the creative writer was obliged to embrace a further set of conventions. The romance, Beer reminds us, 'sets out to satisfy contemporary appetites'.[32] Allen is only one of many to observe that writers of early Victorian times closely reflected good taste and public morality; they were 'at one with their public to a quite remarkable degree'.[33] Therefore and with the subject

30. Walter Allen, <u>The English Novel: A Short Critical History</u> (1954; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965) 140.

31. David Cecil, <u>Early Victorian Novelists</u> (1934; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1948) 12.

32. Beer 14.

33. Allen 139.

matter of this chapter in mind, while much that was noteworthy or unique could be set down, what departed from the generally acceptable was avoided in the main.

It is true that some scenes are too generalized to give any real indication of the circumstances. Besides, one is occasionally aware that actual appearance has been avoided and in its place are interesting or novel features. Very early photographs which reveal the decrepit nature of some bush dwellings help us to comprehend why this might be so.[34] In such a context Rowe's book of sketches and reminiscences, Peter 'Possum's Portfolio, and his comment upon the ubiquitous 'bark-roofed slab-huts, not so respectable as English pigsties...' (p.93) is revealing.

For Dutton, 'Houses have a double history, architectural and human'.[35] While the sequential mode could outline improved conditions, writers began to refer to social progress in more subtle fashion. They looked, then, to the human history of the colonial homestead; imaginative vision began to override more practical demands. It was still possible to convey information and the novel continued to educate and entertain; and yet with increased emigration came a flood of guidebooks and emigrant manuals in the home country. The requirements of fiction began to gain precedence, therefore, and in the course of this thesis I give due regard to the solid literary achievements of the authors of the fifties.

Given the commercial and materialistic spirit of the Victorian age, the creative writer was to depict imagined homesteads in terms of bricks

34. See Archer passim and, for example, D.I. Stone and D.S. Garden, Squatters and Settlers (Sydney: Reed, 1978).

35. Geoffrey Dutton, The Squatters (South Yarra, Vic.: Currey O'Neil, 1985) 51. Building methods and illustrations of homesteads dating from the mid-century are included in this work. For further illustrations see Beatrice Bligh, Cherish the Earth: The Story of Gardening in Australia (Sydney: Ure Smith in assoc. with The National Trust of Aust., N.S.W., 1975).

and mortar — or rather, a colonial equivalent; so when they fixed upon homes for their foremost characters, they chose houses of some substance. They did not succumb to grand illusions, however, and those imposing residences set down by Lycett, say, or von Guérard, do not find a place in the earlier colonial novel. Instead, with good sense (and not wishing, perhaps, to strain their reader's credulity regarding conditions in the colonies), they chose comfortable dwellings or simple cottages and, following the conventions of the genre of romance, they provided details of architectural interest. Thus, local colour was provided for; besides, readers could rest content that, despite some disturbing factors, colonists could dwell almost as comfortably as those in the motherland. It is my contention that authors glossed over the least appealing features of vernacular architecture and instead pictured the homestead in praiseworthy terms. Some of these matters will already have become evident; others will become clearer in the course of this chapter.

Generally speaking, the fictive homestead of the 1850s was substantial and attractive, a basic and symbolic attribute of a settled and civilized social order. Similarly, the colonial artist most often painted like subjects, although it should be recalled that numbers of these works were commissioned by well-to-do landowners. The similarity between the two branches of the arts is revealed in a statement by Tim Bonyhady:

> Working in the English tradition of estate or country house portraits which showed views of or from English country residences, artists in Australia painted 'homestead portraits' of the squatters' landholdings which they presented as a pastoral arcadia.[36]

The writer goes on to explain that these 'portraits' were realistic and yet 'arcadian, however, in their sense of ease and plenitude and their con-

36. Tim Bonyhady, <u>Images in Opposition : Australian Landscape Painting 1801-1890</u> (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1985) 40. Footnote omitted.

cealment of the hardships faced by the early settlers'. In both books and paintings, therefore, the key symbol of the dwelling is employed as an assertive metaphor of cultural continuity in the southern hemisphere. Because of the singularity of the surrounding environment to European eyes the symbol was a particularly forceful one.

I have previously found significance in the fact that initially a diachronic mode predominated since it allowed authors to chronicle the era of pioneering. The topographical is then subordinate to the temporal. Still, this did not prevent the better writer from expanding the narrative to include locales of special interest or those which might serve to express a favourite theme. Tales of the Colonies and The Emigrant Family are recalled in this respect. With later works that element is reversed and while chronological sequence imposes a form upon the narrative — and one which is not unimportant — what predominates is the emphasis on place. I see this changed orientation as typical of the decade. As proposed elsewhere in my thesis the later era seems to allow time for expansiveness and digression. Circumstances can be seen to favour a wider perspective now that the initial period of colonization has been accomplished and novelists are responding to the tenor of the times. It would be a truism to state that such a process is gradual; and yet the large number of works in the decade of the fifties would suggest a quickening in the colonial consciousness. It must be remembered that the creative writer can now picture an extensive colonial settlement and can gain confidence from order, stability and permanence. This is illustrated in the works of Vidal, Atkinson and Spence, where the emphasis is on a broad social framework and a range of habitation. With Kingsley and Howitt such a notion culminates in the great sweep of the colonial romance.

Both these authors employ the trope of the homestead as a means to

highlight European settlement which they locate in the hinterland of south-eastern Australia. Both place emphasis on the site and the cultural continuity which obtains there. As implied above, circumstances now favoured works of the scope of Kingsley's Geoffry Hamlyn and Howitt's Tallangetta and the imaginative response to the landscape that these entailed. The similarities between the two are many. Both novelists portrayed a landed gentry composed of newcomers whose exploits shape the narrative. The latter occupy substantial and named properties, the nomenclature of which is an assertion of the confidence of the Europeans in their hold over the land. These two books celebrate the colonial achievement. For all this, the principal characters are returned ultimately to their homeland, European ties being paramount. Similar motifs are pursued and there is a close connection between these and the homestead. I refer to the bushfire, the necessity of a long ride by horse, and the circumstance of being lost in the bush. Both plots are resonant with romance conventions.

If the novelists of earlier times, such as Rowcroft, located their characters in newly-erected or makeshift accommodation, then those coming after could afford to house theirs more substantially. That conveyed success in a tangible and material fashion. In the later works, as I have said, the importance of place is a key feature. In structuring Geoffry Hamlyn, however, Kingsley manipulated time and place in quite a skilful manner. In Ch.XX Hamlyn, the narrator of the story, comes upon the small building constructed by the Buckleys after they have journeyed by dray inland. It is a setting of familiarity against the sweep of bushland which is pictured with particular reference to the expansive vista which surrounds it: a framing device used with some subtlety by the author. But here the topographical is underlined by the temporal. As Rowcroft had done, and in an autobiographical mode, Hamlyn, in these recollections, sees the humble dwelling across a period of many years. Here a forward movement is proposed in Hamlyn's musings: '"What a lovely place they will make of this

in time!"' (p.148). Thus, two years and a dozen pages later there is a concise description of the Buckleys' new homestead:

> See Baroona now. Would you know it? I think not. That hut where we spent the pleasant Christmas-day you know of is degraded into the kitchen, and seems moved backward, although it stands in the same place, for a new house is built nearer the river, quite overwhelming the old slab hut in its grandeur — a long low wooden house, with deep cool verandahs all round, already festooned with passion flowers, and young grape-vines, and fronted by a flower garden, all a-blaze with petunias and geraniums. (p.160)

The dwellings in Kingsley's work confirm that settlers have adapted well to their surroundings. The solidity and practicality of the sprawling design of vernacular architecture is represented in 'Baroona'. The notion of a dwelling being superseded is something novelists occasionally thought to record; this house, quite literally, is connected with a family's advancement. For Ferrier, 'The passage of time is often spatialized and stabilized through the image of the house; the dwelling endures (even if only in memory) and creates a sense of continuity between past and present'.[37] The notion was gainfully employed by several of the more competent early writers, as this study reveals.

A few pages more and Mary Hawker's 'Toonarbin' is before us. Somewhat later we are regarding 'Garoopna', the Brentwoods' home station (p.221). With each the author has created a fitting vista and the dwelling is briefly described. By these means Kingsley has introduced the three sites that are to play a central and structuring role in his work. Events within these homes, and on the verandahs of 'Baroona' and 'Garoopna' in particular, will now establish the settings in terms of concrete reality and domestic milieu. 'The harsh, unpleasant realities are kept out of sight', Barnes has observed of such homestead life.[38]

37. Ferrier 45.
38. Dutton, ed., The Literature of Australia 157.

Tallangetta — novel and homestead — is an altogether more flamboyant affair. The reader participates in the initial sighting of the house with colonists from England, and in retrospect it is clear that the author has absolved the family, the Fitzpatricks, from the labour connected with the erection of such an establishment. Instead, in a key moment in the story, we share their elation at this scene of rural perfection. 'Tallangetta' is enobled by its setting on a hillside and a lyric celebration of tranquillity is uppermost here. All is Edenic. The confident sprawl of the homestead is characteristic of those who have pioneered the land and raised this house. The painter, von Guérard, has caught precisely the same spirit of confidence in the properties he painted in Victoria about this time, whether the neat, fenced dwelling, <u>Mr. Muirhead's Station</u> (1856), or much grander establishments, such as <u>Koort Koort-nong</u> (1860).[39] As I have already implied, the patterns of imagery of both the painter and the writer are closely allied. In Howitt's word-picture, the pristine quality of the dwelling is conveyed. It is a white building, with a colonnade with pillars of gum-tree trunks. Separated from the main house are the kitchen and numerous outbuildings, and 'around it extended a considerable space of gardens and vineyards, enclosed in a ring fence' (Vol.I,p.25). The newcomers are struck by the homestead's appropriateness to the environment, the point being made that it is Australian in appearance, rather than English. It is evident that, in the author's mind at least, some received idea of what was considered to be Australian in this respect had at length evolved. Such an opinion is rare in this body of literature. What gives it force is that Howitt, one would infer from the Preface, is extrapolating from first-hand experience. Despite the antipodean qualities of Howitt's chief location, what emerges is its idealized nature: social perfectability in an Australian pastoral is pro-

39. Reproduced in Candice Bruce, <u>Eugen von Guérard</u> (Canberra: Australian Gallery Directors Council, 1980) 45,61.

posed. This being said, it is only fair to remark that there is an attempt to undercut such an idea. The house is described as 'rather home-like than grand' (p.29).

The qualities deemed Australian and which are delineated at the outset have lent a special colour to this setting. Above all, the Aboriginal name, 'Tallangetta', is romantic and appealing and Howitt lends weight to his novel by taking it as the title. Gill has observed that 'basing the title of a novel on a country-house setting has become a characteristic convention of English fiction...'.[40] Here an Australian literary convention is instituted; two years later Atkinson will employ it in Cowanda. By these means the creative writer elevates the site and asserts the primacy of the image. Naming a work after its major location ensures that such a place and its attributes are commemorated.

Howitt's lofty style invites admiration for his narrative and for its subject matter, and yet a necessary consequence is that the site should become established as a domestic entity. Certainly, Howitt is drawing on a recognized literary technique in his fulsome description of the property. But if the harsh realities of life around the homestead have been set aside in Geoffry Hamlyn, now they are even more firmly evaded. In addition, the author does not portray his characters convincingly in their household. For example, he does not have them enjoy the 'broad verandah', although the location's possibilities are initially proposed. In all, one senses a disjunction between the sense of place presented in the opening chapters and that conveyed as the story unfolds. In the depiction of 'Daisy Grange', the favoured location in Bowman's The Kangaroo Hunters, much the same kind of problem is in evidence. The sites are visualized but are not conclusively realized. Fortunately, as will be

40. Richard Gill, Happy Rural Seat: The English Country House and the Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale UP, 1972) 6.

discussed in different contexts, other dwellings in Tallangetta are dealt with more satisfactorily. Still, when we compare the book overall with Geoffry Hamlyn it is clear that style and craft and humour are lacking in this epic tale, as it is similarly and to a greater degree in The Kangaroo Hunters and numerous minor works of the period. For while it might be said that a descriptive passage goes some way in establishing a location, yet this needs to evolve into an imaginative conception of place if such a location is to become something more than merely a stock allusion.

If some of the earlier texts speak of a tenuous presence in the bush then Kingsley's and Howitt's approach admits a more assured occupation. The expansiveness governing many of the later novels is well in evidence here. In the depiction of the chief locations a formal approach came to be the strategy most often adopted and following earlier writers many fixed on a framing device of some kind. This served to place additional emphasis on the scene and to give it visual impact within the narrative. The most imaginative writers located the homestead in a firm physical, spatial and temporal sense and conveyed the social ambience which obtained there. So that nicely-judged descriptive passages highlight many works; and not only the best known. I would contend that because of their commitment to the subject matter women writers occupy an important position here. Warmth and spontaneity often characterize their prose.

Such a spirit is caught in the following lines from Bengala. Although the confident sprawl of the homestead community had been envisaged in earlier works, as in, for example, that paragraph by Prest quoted above, a more personal note is caught here.

> Langville was a new stone house, with a handsome suite of sitting rooms, and every other convenience, including a wide verandah round three sides of the building. The original dwelling was still left standing, half buried in creepers, and was now used for a schoolroom and spare bedrooms. From the drawing-room windows were seen the farm buildings, forming quite a little village of huts, with a

> horse-mill, a forge, and a wheelwright's shed, the overseer's cottage, extensive fowl-houses, a good water-hole and a stock-yard, all of which Mr. Lang was justly proud of. The road leading up to the house was worse than even the usual average of colonial roads, full of holes and stumps.... (Vol.I,p.35)

'Langville' is the major dwelling and the major location in Vidal's third Australian novel. The comfortable and extensive nature of this home and some idea of its solidity are well conveyed, but elsewhere throughout the text additional particulars are disclosed. For example, Mr. Lang and his favourite daughter, Isabel, overlooking the site from a hill nearby, admire the 'new and pretty house' with its 'white chimney-tops' (p.42). We learn of the architectural feature of the bow windows through Isabel's attempt to observe events within the drawing-room much later in the narrative (Vol.II,Ch.1). Further on I will draw attention to similar examples.

A passage to describe the homestead is common enough in colonial fiction, but what in principle makes this one different is that the scene is viewed from two perspectives. Thus in both a physical sense and as through the consciousness of the owner our view opens out on to the surrounding prospect. By these means the property's extent can be surveyed and, furthermore, one begins to comprehend the pride of ownership. But although we share Mr. Lang's feeling regarding this pleasant setting we are at the same time aware of the authorial stance. Vidal's tone conveys her attempt at objectivity, not only in relation to 'Langville', but to the events which will take place there. Thus the first sentence points to the concrete details of the 'new stone house' and as these could be observed by an outsider. More pertinently, they relate to the house as real estate. Here is a revelation of colonial consciousness and of the assumptions and expectations of the age. It is evident that the initial difficulties of pioneering have been largely overcome and the passage is suggestive of pride in such an achievement. Again, Vidal's comments regarding the

property's road reveal her knowledge of colonial conditions and her attempt to render aspects of contemporary reality. Such a factor would not in any way have been endorsed by her character Mr. Lang, although his daughter, caught between filial admiration and her own inherent honesty, might have been prepared to admit the truth of the situation, as a conversation which ensues makes plain.

Although not named as such the location is a homestead in the broader sense of the term and, as in Vidal's earlier The Cabramatta Store, the small community connected with the property has almost as important a part to play as those who reside at the main house itself. The author touches upon aspects of pioneering history with the mention of the original house close by. This building retains a romantic air, and it conveys a sense of the past. Yet its present purpose is practical, and by such a means something of the domestic rhythm as 'Langville' is revealed, as it will be in more detail as the story unfolds. The larger pattern of life associated with the property is disclosed with reference to the numerous outbuildings which help comprise the site. Thus a major theme, the relationship of the newcomers to the land, is proposed in this short establishing scene.

As with the majority of novelists, the image of the house, or rather, the home, was fundamental to Vidal. It is one of the quiet achievements of Bengala that the two main settings, and some minor ones, are well depicted both in a visual sense and in terms of social milieu. The work's scope allows numerous and representative locations, these ranging from 'Langville' and other adjacent and comfortable homesteads, to the dwellings of assigned workers and the isolated huts of rural labourers. Middle-class assumptions and assertiveness and the confidence of the land-owning gentry may be gauged by the fact that the large establishments are named; those of the rural workers are not. With the name 'Langville' one senses

that Vidal, like Harris in The Emigrant Family, is making fun of pretentiousness and, more pointedly, colonial attitudes.[41] 'Langville' is the 'great house' of the district and the family well aware of its standing. Such a name contributes to the social ambience here. Possibilities for the creative writer were far-reaching in this respect and allowed for much inventiveness.

Careful selection of detail differentiates the many locales in Bengala. 'Warratah Brush', for example, 'was a pretty specimen of the generality of colonial cottages, such as they were before people began to build those comfortable stone houses which are now becoming so numerous' (Vol.I,p.24). Changing conditions are revealed here. A sense of history is already becoming apparent, and it adds weight to the narrative. In another sense, such a factor helps explain why Mrs. Lang of 'Langville' is so condescending towards the owners of this colonial cottage: the Herberts, a brother and sister. The attractive and homely dwelling is envisaged with its garden and numerous out-buildings, among which Vidal thinks to include the kitchen and the wash-house. It is a fact that the women writers felt more free than the men to touch upon such matters, an issue which I will take up elsewhere. In short, it can be said that Vidal does not find it necessary to recreate in detail all the properties in the long narrative. As will be shown, she relies on the inclusion of concrete features to place them vividly before us.

Less complex than Bengala and with less intellectual grasp, but similar in its careful delineation of many aspects of colonial society, is Louisa Atkinson's Gertrude. This was published anonymously in Sydney in 1857, after first being issued in serial form. One suspects that the author, the first native-born woman novelist, has drawn largely from her

41. The Emigrant Family 46. See also Settlers and Convicts 152.

own experience in the Berrima region of New South Wales where she was born in 1834. This is most often a reliable source of material for a young writer. In the words of the Preface the book purports to be 'an Australian's endeavours to portray the incidents of every day life enacting around her...'. Not as adept in constructing her narrative as the much older Vidal, Atkinson is nevertheless remembered for specific locations which are inserted into the text with some ingenuity. It may not be too harsh to suggest that the story has been constructed around as wide a range as possible of domestic settings; that all of these are seen in evaluative terms; that Gertrude is simply a roman a thèse. There are, in addition, highly didactic overtones to the work. Roderick has spoken of Atkinson's 'ever-present tendency to preach'.[42] Yet the quarto-volume, printed in two columns and with numerous engravings has a naively attractive quality, as has the author's measured prose. And the emphasis on balance and symmetry is in general its strength.

One of the illustrations in Gertrude depicts 'The Homestead', an idealized pastoral scene from which the darker antipodean elements I alluded to in Ch.I are absent. The dwelling in this picture is centrally placed as, actually and metaphorically speaking, 'Murrumbowrie' is in the text of Gertrude. In Atkinson's second novel 'Cowanda' is the foremost homestead and is envisaged with great attention to detail, as the passage concerning the exterior (below) will demonstrate. This is not so in Gertrude where scant notice is paid to a building's exterior. 'Murrumbowrie' is initially seen as 'a large white cottage' with a 'broad verandah' (p.7). That simple statement is expanded throughout by means of a number of scenes which involve both members of the household and outsiders. Such incidents take place on the verandah, in the garden and in the yard

42. Colin A. Roderick, An Introduction to Australian Fiction (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1950) 12.

and, as in the case of Vidal, assist the reader to visualize those features which comprise a comfortable homestead in a more significant way than any long descriptive passage could achieve. By these means we come to comprehend the nature of the place and how it helps shape the lives of the inhabitants.

Sometimes, and even though constructing a sustained narrative, authors can move their protagonists through a range of locales. Such a structure forms the basis of the picaresque mode which in general is episodic in nature. That element was to prove useful to the colonial novelist. Tucker, to take a more noteworthy example, devised Ralph Rashleigh thereby. Atkinson has borrowed this episodic form, and it places the author in a position to bring to light her heroine's good character. Here it becomes apparent that Atkinson is drawing on the literary convention of the Bildungsroman and the strengths inherent in the genre. Such narratives are concerned with youthful development and with recourse to diverse experiences, growth to maturity.

Employed at the 'Murrumbowrie' homestead in the hinterland of New South Wales at the mid-century, Gertrude Gonthier is an emigrant who espouses every Christian virtue. Miller has stated that the novel 'shows how an ordinary young woman-emigrant, relying upon her goodness of character, becomes absorbed into the social structure of a new country'.[43] Whether she is an 'ordinary' young woman may be queried by some. Even so, to become absorbed into the colonial social structure a newcomer needed to reconcile feelings for the old country with a readiness to come to terms with the new. In this Gertrude succeeds, despite the obstacles put in her way. Such a character may be considered tedious today, and yet interest lies in the fact that the bush community is seen through the growing per-

43. Miller I:407.

ceptions of the heroine. What is more, young Gertrude is exceptionally responsive to her surroundings.

How convenient this is for her creator. Hence the concise passages which reveal the concrete details of a variety of homes work to acquaint the reader with the heroine's powers of observation, with her sense and sensibilities. A rough little homestead often visited by Gertrude belongs to the Kenlows. It is remarked that there was 'not even a garden, beyond a few cabbage plants' at this locale. Gertrude, however,

> had become reconciled to the appearance of such bush huts in a great measure, but it struck her saddened senses just then as particularly dreary, and wanting in taste; a rose, or honeysuckle trained up the rough grey slabs composing the walls would have beautified the building not a little.... (p.117)

It should be said that these two flowers flourish most profusely in the colonial novel, this surely echoing contemporary taste. Still, given that Gertrude has earlier been pictured in the 'Murrumbowrie' garden seated beneath a trellis of honeysuckle and roses, the notion is apposite. This unpretentious work is in many ways quite carefully crafted. In the extract above the softening influence that European domestic habits may have on the exigencies of colonial architecture is well in evidence.

Elsewhere, a neighbouring property is described:

> The Mimosa, from which the farm took its name, grew in dense scrubs over the hills, that abutted upon the level occupied by the cultivation, and homestead. The latter was a collection of slab buildings, whitewashed, and shingled; but far from presenting an imposing appearance: while huge rambling barked sheds of hay, and wheat, backed up the cottages, and at least added the promise of plenty to the scene. (p.90)

Although most locales in Atkinson's novel are viewed with a broad moral concern there is often, as here, a realistic evaluation of the lot of the small farmer. One senses throughout that the prose is tempered by an under-

standing of the circumstances. With Atkinson, aspects of everyday reality are of significance; her Preface has promised as much.

A realistic evaluation of life in the Australian hinterland likewise defines Colonial Pen-Scratchings and 'Little Jacob' relies similarly on a range of settings: a literary convention of some worth. Stock characters and situations, however, mar these sketches, and the sentimental plots might invite one's condescension today. Yet what gives Colonial Pen-Scratchings its unique quality is its tone. Bluff, ironic, satiric: this contrasts oddly with the banal and the melodramatic. Such a tone, however, does not in the main intrude on the brief descriptive passages which foreground the anonymous writer's competently drawn locations.

The dwellings range from small cottages to establishments which are larger though not elaborate. 'Little Jacob' quickly achieves a setting in its entirety, as in this account of Stanleys' farm which is 'three days' journey' from Adelaide:

> The farm house was a large, curiously built affair, with no end of niches and gables, but the trellis work of the front veranda was one mass of roses and passion flower; at the back was a vineyard and an orchard, beautiful in its spring raiment of peach and almond blossom while the fragrant odours of pea and bean blossoms came from a large kitchen garden at a little distance. Poultry of every description were pecking and scratching about, and a certain inharmonious grunting gave evident tokens of a sty not being far away. Then there was a stockyard of cows waiting to be milked, and corn fields waved their full ears stately to the breeze of that pleasant, pleasant morning.
> (p.120)

Such a passage, from 'Emigrating', reveals 'Little Jacob''s strengths and weaknesses. Clearly, this is not a major writer but, rather, an interesting one. Whatever may be the appearance of the building described, the writer has established its domestic and rural nature, and its physical solidity is revealed when it is later described as a 'large flourishing homestead'. A colonial note is struck with mention of the trellis work and the felicious blending of European and Australian creepers. The stable

and enduring nature of the site is suggested with reference to the kitchen garden and orchard and the numerous animals at hand. It is noticeable that cows are not simply present, but their relationship with the occupants of the house is particularly referred to, a matter so often disregarded in colonial fiction up to this time. In all, the word-picture conveys the kind of domestic environment that one would expect of such a dwelling. Yet, as often in the work, one has the sense of being present there, of taking in the surrounding sights and sounds and smells on a particular morning.

It is, perhaps, to carp to point to the writer's inexperience in employing the poetic cliché 'spring raiment', or to suggest that one could dispense with the final adjective. But whatever the infelicities of 'Little Jacob''s style, there is a freshness about the descriptive passages where the subjective and the objective are nicely merged. There is a sense that these are apt reflections upon an environment with which the writer is deeply familiar. One is drawn to brief accounts in which concrete details trigger our interest. A station homestead, 'Tangaroo', is, for example, a 'large, rambling, wide-added house' (p.95). As so often in colonial fiction the passage of time is conveyed with reference to architectural development. My point here, however, is that not only does such a feature lend movement to a text but, in colonial terms, it denotes improvement and advancement in a social sense and in a way which, on the face of it, is not simply axiomatic today.

It has become apparent that one of the ways in which creative writers could place emphasis on their locations was by the means of nomenclature, and this has emerged as an attractive and imaginative feature of the earlier Australian novels. As in actuality such names may be informative or descriptive. They help establish the uniqueness of the site. A place-name like 'Cherry-tree Bottom' is suggestive of nostalgia for the past;

it reveals a need to recreate aspects of a former way of life. One feels that authors were reflecting on a human need in these instances: the desire to recreate a landscape that had comforting links and affinities with the motherland. Something additional is gained here. Familiar terms employed by these writers — like park, bottom, grange, lodge, and dale — may be revitalized given new surrounds.

Place-names were commonly connected with the natural environment and the first seeming to propose this is Rowcroft in The Bushranger. In the foregrounding of a farm in the final chapter it would appear that a landmark there, the 'Blue Gum Tree', has given its name to the dwelling or property. Harris drew particular attention to the name-giving process in The Emigrant Family (p.24) and, later again, Atkinson in her first two novels. In adopting this feature of rural life novelists could testify to the bond existing between the settler and the land and, at the same time, convey something of colonial consciousness.

In Settlers and Convicts of 1847 Harris, writing on the subject of Aboriginal place-names, states: 'The reader will easily distinguish the native names of places from English names'. He adds: 'I give them as much as possible, to convey an idea of the language. It will be perceived that it is, for the most part, exceedingly soft and euphonious' (p.137). And, in The Emigrant Family, he informs his readers that 'it becomes more proper now than hitherto to retain the native names' (p.54). Such a comment is rare in early colonial fiction. In fact, 'the Rocky Springs' is the chief locale in this narrative but another setting of importance is the evocatively-named station, 'Coolarama Creek'. Harris's comments do propose a developing identification with the landscape. Here is a positive approach in adapting to the new environment.

The creative writer is free to exploit whatever material is available, and it was not long before authors were drawing upon the strange and softly

evocative sounds of the Aboriginal language. In the period under discussion my study reveals that such place-names are more numerous in all. One scholar has pointed out that: 'Romanticism and the yearning to find a "spirit of the land" ... are related to the Australian's feeling about place-names...'.[44] This may have been true of the visiting William Howitt; yet one guesses that he may simply have wished to colour his prose fancifully. 'Moolap', 'Gurragong', 'Bongubine', 'Bullarook', 'Corbella', 'Ballera Plains': these are amongst names devised by Howitt in _Tallangetta_. In _Geoffry Hamlyn_, Kingsley has 'Baroona', 'Garoopna', 'Toonarbin' and 'the Durnongs' as his main locations, and so successfully does he evoke and differentiate these homesteads that the settings and their names quickly become established in the reader's mind.

By the mid-century not all would have found Aboriginal words melodious, though. Spence offers insight into the question in _Clara Morison_. Charles Reginald, writing home to England, admits that his sheep-station is many miles from civilization and he offers to change its name, 'Taringa', into something 'more English' if it would please his mother (p.39). Amongst other things this does suggest that the subject was open to question.

In the same decade, that of the fifties, Haydon makes an interesting reference to the naming of a property in _The Australian Emigrant_. Having built their bush dwelling two settlers are found discussing what the place is to be called:

> "What do you think of a native name? They are often very musical, and I like the notion of preserving some memento of the tribes who are passing away, leaving nothing to indicate that they ever existed. I have heard the natives speak of a river situated about here called 'Lan-lan-borin.' Will that do?"
>
> "Yes, never mind what it means. It is far preferable to such appellations as 'No Good Damper,' 'Wet Jacket Hump,' 'Razor-back Pinch,' and a hundred other such outlandish names." So the station was called 'Lan-lan-borin.' (p.187)

44. G.W. Turner 190.

Perhaps Haydon finds it fashionable to draw attention to toponymic features of Australian culture. Nevertheless, some important aspects of colonial mentality are revealed here. There is a casual and passive acceptance which perhaps masks guilt at the passing of Aboriginal tribes and the disappearance of their tongue; and yet there is a recognition that some part of that culture should be retained. Interestingly, the name is chosen for sound rather than meaning, and quite uncommonly the meaning is supplied in this instance. As to the catalogue of names, it is apparent that Haydon is having fun at the expense of his fellow colonials. Such a note is rare in the earlier colonial novel. For the most part colonial novelists approached their material seriously. There was little room for levity in the choice of name for property or homestead.[45] In the extract above we are reminded that minor authors can touch upon subjects strong in interest and which are often overlooked by the more accomplished.

If there were a problem in name-giving then it must be said that attractive choices were available to the creative writer. Only one thing is surprising: that beyond the act of name-giving the novelist did not generally attempt to associate name and location. But this is one aspect of a larger question — that of the difficulty experienced by many writers in dealing with conditions that were unique. From our own vantage point it can be seen that after an initial subservience to traditional culture, assimilation came slowly but inevitably. In the coming to terms with the bush there came an acceptance of some aspects of the bush environment. Then along with place-names having Australian colouring, Aboriginal names began to seem appropriate and even compatible with the homestead and the ethos it sustained. Additionally, of course, the Aboriginal toponym placed the setting as uniquely Australian. For author and for reader there was a

45. For interesting remarks on place-names see S.J. Baker 190-4 and G.W. Turner <u>passim</u>.

pleasing authenticity here. And whatever that might have revealed of outlook or mentality, more importantly, perhaps, the native word lent an exotic edge to the colonial narrative.

It could be said that the latter aspect underscores one side of the European's relationship with the Aborigines. There is another side and this I have dealt with in Ch.I. Accordingly, the use of such names was an effortless way of touching upon Aboriginal culture without becoming too deeply involved in questions concerning the ownership of the land. So that it surely sums up and epitomizes one side of the newcomers' attitude that writers did not think it necessary to translate a chosen name, whether an actual or a nonce-word.

In the selection of place-names authors are responding to Australian conditions. At the same time they are reflecting upon European attitudes. Recently Paul Carter has concluded that 'by the act of place-naming, space is transformed symbolically into a place...'.[46] In appropriating place-names these writers are giving special significance to the difference between settled country and the wilderness. Certainly the power of ownership is illustrated in the name-giving process and in a way that is firmly individualistic. More importantly, in this period — one in which the communal is stressed over the personal — stability and permanence are affirmed. A social order is laid down. With the possession of a holding, the building of a homestead, and above all in the ritual of its naming, the land is seen to be subjugated. Then its boundlessness is held in check, its vastness curbed and controlled. Such an achievement appears to have influenced the creative writer strongly. With the foregrounding of the more substantial residence in the literary decade of the 1850s one discerns

46. Paul Carter, The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History (London: Faber, 1987) xxiv.

a partiality for assigning names, and one senses that a Romantic impulse is invested in each. Clearly, a literary convention is developing in this regard. And yet, despite all these factors, it must be said that so named, a homely quality attaches to the rural dwelling, however isolated. Perhaps, after all, it was this quality which proposed the narrative device of naming the homestead to the writer of prose fiction in these three decades. For as Rybczynski reminds us, an emotional impulse is generated when a house is personified with a proper name.[47]

Besides constructing one or two elaborate set-pieces or fabricating a range of colonial establishments there are other ways in which writers, concerned with place, can attract one to the social settings they devised and, to conclude, the following examples will serve to illustrate such a premise. In the earlier colonial novel connections between dwellings on both sides of the world became a recurring and useful motif; although this was most commonly achieved with recourse to interior scenes. The metropolitan _and_ the antipodean 'Dudley Park' come to mind, however. In another vein is Christie's pointed and gently ironic use of the word 'mansion' in reference to Delmé's bush home in _A Love Story_. A cottage garden, or the flowers there, may give rise to similar nostalgic fantasies, as Tucker proposed. Similarly, a decade later Bowman pictured 'Daisy Grange' and here 'green turf ... enamelled with the daisies of England' gives point to the property's name. Here it is a fact that conditions favoured a building with a colonial appearance (p.435); even so, such a paradox may serve to heighten the reader's interest.

Howitt's unassuming _A Boy's Adventures_, 'a hybrid of description and

47. Witold Rybczynski, _Home: A Short History of an Idea_ (1986; New York: Penguin, 1987) 35.

fiction',[48] is informal in tone and structured around the exploits of a number of characters who emigrate to Australia. Here a building likened to a 'Highland hut' in a remote area of Victoria would seem to be an anomaly (p.140), yet despite the desolate surroundings it must have appeal as a home for a family called Macdonald who have made the difficult journey inland to make their future there. Although they may incorporate diversity, colonial counterparts are redolent with nostalgic recollections and, as in other and similar instances, there is reassurance in correspondences which are visual.

Among the numerous bush homes visited by two young adventurers in Howitt's book is a deserted station, unusual for its connection with delapidation and decay. Both Rowcroft and Harris had prefigured the theme by focussing the reader's attention on deserted buildings — in <u>Tales of the Colonies</u> a deserted hut (p.400) and in <u>The Emigrant Family</u> an abandoned farm (pp.81-2). But in <u>A Boy's Adventures</u> the station provides both the setting and the texture of a story concerning a flood (pp.49-71). Kingsley, in <u>Geoffry Hamlyn</u>, also developed the theme (Ch.XXVII). In these two later books the inclusion of such an image marks the recognition of human impotence in the face of prevailing conditions so for precisely such a fact it was a subject generally avoided. Nevertheless, a setting like this is resonant with a sense of the past. In Howitt's work the deserted station is termed an 'antiquity', and with the comment: '"We have not many yet"' (p.71). Material of this nature goes some way in establishing or creating a myth of the Australian back country. In <u>The Fiction Fields of Australia</u> Sinnett explores the notion of the absence of a past heritage and when one considers the needs of the creative writer it is clear that settings like this may be employed to throw an additional weight on to the achievements of subsequent colonists. The present is then seen to triumph over

48. Miller I:404.

the past, in itself a cause for celebration.

Sometimes, as earlier writers had shown, European habitation was the result of innovation and expertise. So it is interesting to see how Haydon in The Australian Emigrant enlarges on that idea when he places a squatter named Dodge in an outlandish station in the region called Australia Felix. Accommodation, 'a building in the semi-demi-savage style', has been contrived by the wily owner, and humour arises from the innovations perfected. Haydon obviously delights in picturing the 'hospitable mansion', in reality 'a bush hut', with 'an apology for a window' and a door ingeniously made with hinges of empty rum bottles — the latter, 'a triumph of inventive skill' (p.99). Sadly, all this gives way to the received image of a rural dwelling when the author exultantly establishes Dodge at the 'comfortable and picturesque homestead' called 'Lan-lan-borin' at the story's end. It is revealing to see how a writer has employed, and enjoyed, the subject matter, has derived humour from the situation, and has finally rewarded his character — and the reader — with the pleasing concept of domestic felicity in the bush. An insistence on conformity is uppermost here notwithstanding the images which predominate earlier in this narrative.

As already apparent the greater number courted readers of the day with the presentation of colonial residences in which the harshness of colonial architecture was softened by the addition of climbing foliage; and the idea quickly gained in popularity. Haydon made good use of it in The Australian Emigrant. For the moment I will simply cite one of Ellen Clacy's stories: 'Emmeline'. The 'Arcadian-looking homesteads' mentioned here provide one aspect of the happier side of pioneering envisaged in the metaphor of the title, Lights and Shadows of Australian Life, and borne out in the text. One of these dwellings is the Mortimers' station which is a large stone dwelling with a shady verandah 'nearly hidden beneath clusters of wild creepers and ferns' (Vol.I,p.61). The notion of acclimatization was one which

authors of the 1850s, like earlier writers, seemed eager to convey.

A more skilled handling of the subject matter can be seen in Cowanda, to take one example from a number. Atkinson often draws attention to unique features. Here she describes the piece-meal construction of the house which gives the name to Cowanda of 1859:

> In defiance of all architectural rules, Captain Dell had, as his means or inclination prompted, added to the original size of his dwelling, — here a long dining-room, there a library, — then a cluster of domestic offices, and so on, till every room boasted some three or four doors, beneath which — for bush-carpenters never manage to make things fit — the winter's winds whistled in chorus, rather to the discomfiture of the inmates. Yet it was a pleasant house and a very happy household....
>
> The irregular form of the building caused many nooks and corners: there were shady borders, which suited currants and gooseberries; and sunny walls, where figs and grapes ripened; there were seats shaded by Cape honeysuckles, and angles where the ivy held the walls with its many fibres. Altogether it was a pleasant spot; if the windows and doors were all of different heights and sizes, and the roof mossy and disposed to admit the rain in certain places where its odd points were intended to join, it bore throughout the signs of the hand of the "rough carpenter", and he had evidently determined not to forfeit his name. (p.5)

It is worth quoting the passage at length here since overall it points to an ability to create a location with a well-defined notion of its solidity and compactness. It must be said that there is the usual assortment of dwellings of mid-century colonial prose fiction to be found in Cowanda; but in comparison with Gertrude the writer has now become more disciplined and selective.

Finally, and as is now well-evident, a dwelling's appearance may be made to throw light on the lives within, as the following examples will demonstrate. There was room for latitude here. Appearances might be deceptive and a few writers manifested some ingenuity in this regard. However, the concept was inherent in the moral vision with which both the more competent and lesser texts were imbued.

Vidal, whose later works are more skilfully crafted, utilized the idea somewhat heavy-handedly in Tales for the Bush. Intended for the edification of the servant class, the Tales have little of the creative vitality the author was later to reveal. For example, the ambivalent qualities attached to 'Langville' are absent in this earlier work, where the settings are, with some exceptions, an expression of the author's attitude rather than a wish to represent these homes in terms of factual or social reality. I cite the small bush establishment in 'Susan's Dream' where the changing fortunes of the inhabitants are reflected in the condition of their modest homestead, and the author specifically links the social and spiritual well-being of the man of the house, prone to the evils of alcoholism, with his place of habitation.

Utilizing two different modes of approach one writer in 1860 pictured a neglected house as part of a schema in which the didactic is paramount. At the same time, however, a comparison is drawn between this location and one in the motherland. The work is the anonymous Wolfingham. The protagonist, the 'convict-settler of Jervis Bay', has settled in the region after a long period as both convict, then bushranger. But uppermost in the reader's mind must be Wolfingham's former home in England. 'An attractive, well-cared for, happy-looking place it was, suggesting notions of order, contentment, and affection within, — nor falsely suggesting them' (p.1). In this case the author feels the need to spell out what many would leave textually implicit. Yet it is noteworthy that the home's outward appearance mirrors the situation within.

Its antipodean counterpart is depicted thus:

> A hut of gum-slabs, rough-split from the tree, with earthen floor, gravelly and full of holes, containing but one apartment, while a small skillean, or lean-to-room, stood at one side. The windows and doors were of the simplest construction possible, being merely holes cut in the gum-slabs and defended by a loose plank or bit of old sacking from the invasions of the rough weather. A small, dirty stockyard surrounded the back and one side of the dwelling, and con-

> tributed its share of odours and vermin to the human habitation; on the other side lay a pile of sawn timber. (p.63)

A simple literary device and one that has dramatic overtones, this link is, in the extract above, pushed to its furthest extremes. Not only is the homestead of the most rudimentary kind and of a type most often avoided in colonial fiction but, moreover, notice is drawn to affairs within. In particular, there is mention of the adulterous union of a former convict woman and Wolfingham ('not, alas! her husband') and the size of their ill-kept family. Deeply symbolic is the fact that the garden beautifying the home in England is entirely absent here. Tucker has, with similar effectiveness, voiced the same concerns in the locales visited by Ralph Rashleigh. Wolfingham's dwelling is on another level contrasted with two other Australian settings. One of these is made to have strong connections with the cottage in England and is thus linked to the past. The other, belonging to Wolfingham's son, looks to the future and the inherent possibilities in Australia. Any biblical connotations that one may associate with these houses are fitting since the book is strongly propagandist and concludes with an appraisal of the Church's work in Australia. It should be stressed in conclusion that the rich and elaborate connotations linked to the image of the house, although generally not as forcefully rendered as in the model here, are part of a larger moral design which will be demonstrated in the course of my thesis. A moralizing impulse is in general present in the depiction of the dwelling-house.

If one setting could be said to be largely characteristic of the colonial novel up until 1860 it is a homestead in the Australian hinterland. Such was the imaginative response to conditions and the subject matter available that the placing of this central image appears to have been a formal literary strategy adopted in order to come to terms with the land-

scape itself. One senses that it served, then, to demonstrate the inherent relationship between the European newcomers and the land they had assumed. A powerful trope and an invaluable literary metaphor, it was one around which connotations and associations, already rich and complex, collected and accrued. In this chapter I have examined the homestead's appearance, although the many works in print make it impossible to study each in detail. Subsequent chapters will demonstrate further the points I have made here.

While care was often taken with this physical setting's concrete details or evolutionary aspects, the imaginative response of the creative writer was to evaluate the dwelling: to judge as well as describe. It was a stance that was deeply conservative. With a choice of material available the writer fixed upon the respectable and the admirable — at least for the foremost locations. Neatness was all. In fact, there was a predictability which must have been reassuring to the largely middle-class readership in the homeland, or even to those in urban Australia. Prudence, industry, and perseverance: these are the attributes readily located within the domestic dwelling. It might even seem evident that moral perfectability was possible here; and given that habitual need to affirm cultural continuity there is almost no room for any radical questioning of circumstances. The ongoing success of the colonial venture is unhesitatingly given credence; or almost wholly so. It is easy today to recognize the propagandist colouring of these works. The homestead became both a literary metaphor and a cliché. It was not only an idea; it came to be an ideal. In the fiction fields of the colonial narrative up until 1860, the homestead is a persistently recurring and pleasing image and one around which, as in colonial contemporary reality, mythic qualities began to accrue. It is no surprise to find that the artist was responding to the times in the same vein.

This body of prose fiction is a celebration of those who had settled in the Australian hinterland. Besides the gravity of tone, what characterizes these books is the expression of pride and satisfaction in colonial achievement. The sentiment is indicated in the numerous prefaces and forewords; it is revealed through plot and structure; but it is inherent in the presentation of the chief dwelling-house in each. Freedom and power (the two had to be carefully represented) and the depiction of domestic stability: all this derives from the triumph of a people over extraordinary circumstances. One would agree with Ferrier that: 'In literature houses are often symbolically linked with cultural identity and the social order'.[49] In this instance the image is one that is greatly revealing of the newcomers' relationship with the land; and the ownership of land and a house was central to the relationship. In many ways such a process was the antithesis of that embraced by the indigenous inhabitants. However, the European took some time to comprehend that alien mode of thought. Presented with subject matter available the creative writer chose, to take a phrase from Manning Clark, to respond to 'the graces and refinements of civilization over and above the crude struggle for survival'.[50]

49. Ferrier 40.

50. Clark III:249.

CH. III
THE HOMESTEAD INTERIOR

> ...a glowing log breathed a warm welcome on the wide hearth of the homestead sitting-room, and the rich light danced and gleamed over the plentifully set tea-table, glittering on the bright spoons and shining blue ware, and immense can-like teapot....
>
> (Marian, p.15)

'"You'll find that the best thing you can do, is to house yourselves comfortably..."' (p.65). Such advice is given to the 'new chum' settler, William Thornley, in Rowcroft's Tales of the Colonies. And this is what writers of the prose fiction of the period had their principal characters attain, although the manner in which this was effected was by no means always clearly defined. Even so, the achievement of a host of novelists was that they responded wholly and positively to such a concept. And in spite of the accent on exploit and adventure, the domestic setting was a major sphere of activity. I raise the matter here where the response to spatial areas will be considered; in the chapter entitled 'Homestead as Household' different aspects of the topic will be studied.

In charting the evolving importance of domestic life in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Rybczynski comments: 'The home was a social place, but it was so in a curiously private way'.[1] Here Rybczynski is alluding to the educated classes in Britain, and at once it can be seen how this singular quality would prompt the creative writer who is addressing just that sector of society, to utilize the dwelling as a set-piece. However although the home was a private domain, for reasons which will be addressed subsequently it was its social aspect that these writers sought to convey. Models in English literature were readily available, but it does seem possible that the well-realized set-pieces of Dickens and Scott in-

1. Rybczynski 107.

fluenced those writing about Australia. It is also probable that contemporary models proposed the consequent depiction of the interiors of the diversified dwellings that appeared in the colonial novel. Referring to the contemporary ethos — that of the Victorian age — one writer has recently reminded us that it forms 'the basis of English thought about Australia, at a period when the native Australian novel was in its infancy'. Therefore, he concludes, 'English Victorian novelists asserted themselves most strongly upon the formative stages of the Australian literary consciousness'.[2]

Nowhere is this more in evidence, I believe, than in the depiction of the bush home and the concomitant homely virtues and traditional values that one finds in the Australian colonial novel. For if the 'revered cluster of Victorian domestic virtues served as a norm' in England, as Altick has observed,[3] such a pattern would be repeated in the Australian colonial novel for many years to come. Here one must consider the country's remoteness and thus its extreme reliance on the mother culture. Significant, too, were readers' expectations. It is scarcely surprising, then, that one set-piece was to assume particular importance. Fixed on by Dickens, it formed 'one of the most vital images of his fictional world'. Dickens commonly employed 'the contrast of the warm, happy, family fireside within and the desolate streets and wastelands outside'.[4] Suitably transposed, this image of cosy enclosure was to prove invaluable.

It was a simple thing to describe the exterior features of a colonial dwelling; however it was only with a rendering of that dwelling's interiority — its physical and social and other less tangible attributes — that aspects of contemporary reality could be obtained. Or, indeed, an artistic

2. Scheckter 39.
3. Altick, Victorian People 56.
4. Angus Wilson, The World of Charles Dickens (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970) 50.

whole be created. As in the case of the homestead's exterior, the interior was pictured in simple prose passages. In addition, the author could expand upon elements peculiar to colonial life; or, by contrast, draw attention to those features which derived from the European homeland. The sense of place had to be forcefully conveyed for a work to be regarded as memorable in literary terms or credible to contemporary readers. In all, changing conditions are represented here, so while the earliest writers described the interiors of simple slab huts, with the decade of the fifties interest came to be fixed on substantial and comfortably furnished bush residences. Although the latter were in the foreground of the later novels, the slab hut still had a part to play and was given due attention by a number of writers. And it should be remembered that all may be termed 'homesteads' whatever their proportions or social standing.

In the author's imaginative conception of the homestead's interior the accent is more predominantly on those areas connected with the social and communal aspects of colonial existence. In the earliest works there is therefore an emphasis on the main communal room and its rudimentary facilities. With the appearance of larger houses interest still centred on the room which was rightfully a parlour — and, too, on the homestead verandah. While these foremost living areas attracted notice other areas might be obliquely referred to, if mentioned at all, in this body of fiction. It may be that such constraint results from the need to preserve the niceties of life in works with a pioneering background, yet it is worth recalling that similar conventions prevailed in the English novel of the first half of the nineteenth century. Although local colour could be exploited in colonial literature it was unlikely that the author would depart too far from standard practice or from accepted and established literary models.

The code underlying such an emphasis stems from the growing importance placed on the social and the communal aspects of the colonial household.

There is, moreover, a preoccupation with high ideals and expectations, and in social terms with what is culturally acceptable. One likely corollary of all of this is that what is unexceptional, conservative, and safe will be associated with the homestead, and with its principal room or parlour. And in these novels that is largely so. A literary convention quickly became established and was maintained for a considerable time. The use of the communal living room and, sometime later, the verandah, fulfilled a special purpose within the author's imaginative intention. As a spatial area, it served as background to the expression of both private and public preoccupations, but more often the latter, and especially those relating to cultural continuity.

The Principal Room, or Parlour

One of the most attractive features of colonial fiction is its affirmative stance; its positive approach to the subject matter in hand. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the presentation of the homestead and, generally speaking, with its main room. Here fireplace, table and chairs are made emblematic of the room's social and public position within the dwelling, these objects embodying the sense of well-being conventionally assigned to the area.

There are a number of works which appear earlier than Rowcroft's Tales and yet as an extended and credible prose narrative it is 'very much relevant to the history of Australian prose fiction, however, for it takes Australian life as its subject'.[5] And that life, a 'new life' in a 'new world', is a pioneering existence which has been experienced, however briefly, by the author. Given the strangeness of the surroundings it is not surprising that domestic details might be recognized with pleasure by the reader, and expecially when set alongside the colourful happenings recounted in the long work.

5. Dutton, ed., The Literature of Australia 150.

Before Thornley establishes himself in the wilderness of Van Diemen's Land he goes 'up the country' in order to see conditions for himself. In his travels he comes to the slab hut of a New Norfolk man and he recalls:

> We entered the habitation, which consisted of one spacious apartment, opening into the air. At the end opposite the chimney a space was divided off into two small bedrooms. Opposite to the entrance of the house a door led to a skillion, which served for a kitchen; and it was from that spot that the hissing sounds, now become more violent, proceeded. In the middle of the principal apartment was a rough table of boards, on which were disposed sundry tin pannikins, a few plates, with some odd knives and forks. A gigantic green bottle, containing rum, graced one corner of the table, and in the centre was set, as a place of honour, the pannikin of milk which had been obtained by the united efforts of the establishments within reach. (p.37)

Rowcroft has already described the dwelling's exterior and the framing device he employs has thrown special emphasis on the small home, as I have already explained. That emphasis, while not indicated here, is carried over to the interior. Thornley has admitted that the 'golden visions' which he had previously entertained 'had already begun to vanish before the rough realities' of colonial settlement (p.35). Some of the latter are in evidence here: as, for example, the table setting. For all this, it is obvious that certain values are being preserved. The characteristic themes of the early colonial novel are highlighted at this locale: happy domesticity amid rough conditions and, in addition, the offering of generous hospitality. Typically, too, it is the main room which is pictured, although others are mentioned. The accent here is on the home's comfort and security and, at a more elevated level, on civilized values and cultural continuity. It is noticeable, too, that the social sentiments ascribed to the humble abode are suggested on a wider scale with the mention of the 'united efforts' of the scattered pioneering community to aid both neighbours and newcomers.

In Ch.III of <u>Arabin</u> McCombie's protagonist becomes lost when riding to an isolated station. He eventually arrives at a miserable outstation, a shepherd's hut, and then is taken to one only slightly less dilapidated. The following morning he approaches a house nearby:

> About twenty yards from the hut where Arabin had passed the night, was a large, and, for the Bush, respectable looking cottage. Entering at the back, he passed through a narrow passage, and entered the front parlour. He perceived that he was in the dwelling of a settler of respectability.
>
> The walls of the room were plastered; the floor was covered with matting: the furniture was of mahogany; a formidable array of weapons were arranged about, which showed that the Australian settler is occasionally visited by Bushrangers. The taste of well-cultivated feminine hands was also to be observed in the elegant ornamental trifles which adorned the mantelpiece. The piano and music-stool formed a singular contrast to the fire-arms which were ranged alongside. (p.36)

This is a home of some substance, and its respectability a major asset. The stress here is on cleanliness, good taste and refinement. Furniture of mahogany rather than Australian cedar, the 'elegant ornamental trifles', and the musical accoutrements — these all derive from Europe. However, the perils of the bush cannot be ignored and the author has specifically contrasted instruments of music with those of conflict. Two diametrically opposed modes of existence are reflected upon here: settled domesticity and lawlessness. This room is representative of the civilized virtues. The quality of adaptability to the colonial environment, which is in evidence in a number of different ways, is another attribute to be admired, and one of the colonial ideals. Here, too, refreshments are offered without question.

Also appearing in the forties is Frank Kennedy, the Australian Settler or, to be more precise, some sixteen pages of a narrative edited by the anonymous 'Yarra-Guinea'. Published in Sydney in 1847, it features a title page with Australian scenes and motifs topped by a reminder of British imperial power. Little is known of the work but it appears to be the first episode of a serial publication. In the words of the narrator the text is 'an attempt to pourtray a few of the scenes and adventures that I have witnessed and encountered during my wanderings in the interior...' (p.2).

One scene which may have been encountered is the primitive living area of a slab hut, here that of the 'gully-raker', Kangaroo Ned:

> I sat down on a stool at a little distance from the fire, and cast my eye over the interior of the hut. It was built simply of slabs, and covered in with bark, having a partition also of slabs across the centre of it, with a door-way before which hung an old blanket as a screen. The floor was composed of earth, and a table stood against the side, upon which were the remains of a meal that some person had evidently but lately partaken. A rough bed-place in the corner, and two or three stools, and logs of wood used as seats, completed the furniture. Across the tie-beam were a saddle, a green hide rope, and one or two pair of hobbles; and in the corner lay a branding-iron, an axe, and several horse-shoes. The fire-place was exceedingly large; and on one side of it sat the old crone, now in conversation with my companion, Morrison. (pp.13-14)

Here, too, fireplace and table and chairs are present and a welcome is extended, but other details propose a different kind of existence from either the simple interior of Rowcroft's pioneering settlers or that connected with the more sophisticated squatter's residence pictured by McCombie. Here the none-too-clean conditions, the rough attempt at domesticity, and the inhabitants — an old crone and a mysterious girl — point to circumstances unlike those habitually found. That it is not the narrative's main setting is self-evident and this may be guessed from the mention of numerous articles connected with the occupation of 'gully-raking' or cattle-stealing. Here the interior would seem to be the background for subject matter of some interest. Although much is promised on the delightful title-page, unfortunately all that is extant of the work ends just after the incident described above.

Admirable qualities are, however, characteristic of the home and the hearth in both Harris and Tucker, major writers of the 1840s. In the former's book, The Emigrant Family, the parlour is the area preferred. A spirit which the author has described as 'genteel domestic' is assigned to the communal room at the homestead of the brother and sister, Reuban and Mary Kable, and it could likewise be applied to the interior of 'the Rocky Springs', the property of the Bracton family. By these means, Harris, like Rowcroft, demonstrates that acceptable standards can be kept up whatever the conditions. What is needed, as Rowcroft insisted, are qualities

of 'prudence, industry and perseverance'. Such attributes are associated with the Marshalls' neat home in Tucker's Ralph Rashleigh but it will suit me to examine this setting in more detail further on. Sometimes in these early works the main living area housed cooking facilities, so that my section relating to the kitchen must be seen in the light of this remark. Sufficient to say here that Tucker has endowed the interior of the Marshalls' home with all that is to be admired in a colonial household.

However, some other interior settings are employed by Tucker, the crudest of conditions being represented at each. Tucker treats them in a humorous and ironic manner which at this time is innovative and unexpected. The descriptive passages relating to the locales therefore become a memorable part of this 'entertaining picaresque', as Barnes has aptly defined Tucker's work.[6] The main living area of 'Big Mick''s home is, in part, depicted thus:

> As usual, the fireplace occupied nearly the whole of one end of the hut, and being composed entirely of wood, the danger of its igniting had been diminished by hard dry clods of clay built up about a couple of feet high round its interior and laid in a sort of mortar also composed of clay tempered with water to a semi-liquid consistency. On the sides of the ample fireplace were constructed rough seats for the winter nights, above which might be seen store of pieces of salted beef and pork, pigs' heads, bags of cabbage and pumpkin seeds, and a multitude of other articles which required to be kept dry, this being by courtesy considered the most secure part of the dwelling from the incursions of rain....
>
> The furniture was truly of a primitive cast. A number of tin pint pots and dishes, half a dozen three-legged cast-iron boilers of various sizes, a long-handled frying-pan, a few rough stools, mostly fixed on stumps sunk in the floor, two or three short round blocks of wood cut off trees with a cross-cut saw to serve as movable seats, and two stationary tables made of unplaned slabs, one fixed in the centre and the other on one side, completed the accommodation of the outer apartment. (pp.105-6)

Tucker's description of the home's exterior has already been noted; he approaches the interior with similar panache. His response is to convey both

6. Dutton, ed., The Literature of Australia 159.

the building's material features and a catalogue of its appurtenances. Despite a tendency towards florid descriptive passages this author's attention to detail is greatly revealing of social realities. Furthermore, he has the ability to communicate domestic ambience. One recalls similar though less colourful descriptions of the huts of rural labourers in Settlers and Convicts. However, Tucker's concerns are with a family home — a domestic entity — which is what is presented here, although in a way seldom reported contemporaneously.

The same must be said of a '*choice domicile*' belonging to an Irish family. A raffish quality characterizes the domestic setting where Ralph is invited to share the family meal.

> Supper being at length over, the "equipage" was soon removed and the fragments were equitably shared among two or three pet pigs, which enjoyed the privilege of the *entrée* into this Australian dining-room, where, indeed, if certain indubitable symptoms on the floor might be credited, they felt themselves, if anything, rather more at home than the inmates; for the human inhabitants of this *choice domicile*, though they were sufficiently indifferent to filth, yet did not go the length of defiling the room to quite so great an extent as the four-footed denizens. (pp.121-2)

The account of the meal and the party that follows must, of course, be read in full; however, it is obvious that Tucker is enjoying the effect created. What is clear is that the literary set-piece of the parlour, or main living area, has been remodelled. Critics have focussed little upon Tucker's interior settings. Yet they serve not only to illuminate the text, but work to shape Rashleigh's social and moral education as he moves through the colony.

Regarding the passage above,no writer has attempted to convey an interior of this type, the text in full revealing the raw existence there. Tucker's gritty realism proposes an aspect of colonial settlement rigorously denied by the creative writer. In mid-nineteenth century terms the notion of the outlandish would seem to be pushed to its extremes in the

two dwellings just examined. As I propose elsewhere, had Tucker's work been published it is certain that much which could be considered offensive would previously have been eliminated. One has only to consider a lesser example — the difficulties experienced by Kingsley in regard to the final drafts of Geoffry Hamlyn — to be assured of this.[7]

Most commonly in the earlier texts the hearth became emblematic of domestic well-being. It was that part of the dwelling most often recreated. Numbers of writers chose to depict a range of habitation in their texts; hence any attempt to assess or to evaluate the creative writer's presentation of the homestead interior up until 1860 raises an inherent problem. With over fifty books and more than forty writers to examine, the bulk of the subject matter available would propose a study of some length. As I have explained, not all of these works can be examined in detail. Intentions can be gauged and textual concerns evaluated, but it is impossible to do justice to them all.

What did the numerous writers of the 1850s make of the given material? By the mid-century, there was a foregrounding of dwellings of some substance. The main room could be envisaged as a parlour — perhaps it was called a sitting-room — and a whole new way of life is postulated in the terminology. A more leisurely existence is proposed, as it is in the lines from Franc's novel which preface the chapter. Moreover, as in actuality, the fictive dwelling is enlarged. It includes other communal areas and, as is more than likely, it can boast a verandah. Although kitchen and parlour were one in the earliest stage of settlement, drawbacks of that kind could now be best forgotten. However, the former and more testing existence could still be connected with those at the lower end of the social scale. Then the reader was permitted to enter these less agree-

7. For brief details concerning the matter see Mellick's introduction to Geoffry Hamlyn.

able places because authors found them invaluable to point up contrasts and comparisons; and convenient for providing local colour. The ambience here might be similar to that of the major homestead, or homesteads, and reflect a spirit to be admired. A few were viewed pejoratively and scenes of low life were contrived to evoke a different response altogether.

If one were working in the colonial narrative tradition at the time three main examples were available for representing the domestic interior although matters were not, of course, so clear-cut as my divisions would seem to imply. The similarity of such an area to its counterpart in the home country could be stressed;[8] again, a room of this kind could reflect local or colonial colouring. Finally, the author could insist upon the frontier quality of the dwelling and then its novel aspect was paramount.

It is understandable that what was novel would attract authors writing of colonial conditions. If this factor were to be associated with European habitation and indeed its hearth, then such were the social sentiments inherently attached to it that considerable interest would result. When these conditions could be described as outlandish then a fascinated response could be provoked. (Perhaps, after all, such things were to be expected in the Antipodes.) The following examples will show how a number of writers chose to incorporate such material into their narratives and will illustrate their particular mode of presentation.

One dwelling worth contemplating is Dodge's station in Haydon's The Australian Emigrant. Here the canny and ingenious Dodge invites his companions into his house where

8. Writers of other nationalities could also make this point. See F. Gerstaecker, Narrative of a Journey round the World, 3 vols. (London, 1853) III:66. For an account of the German writer's travels in Australia see The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature 291.

> the visitors had leisure to admire the domestic arrangements of their host. The great box, which occupied so conspicuous a position in the hut, served as a table, chest of drawers, and bedstead; a block of wood answered the double purpose of chair and pillow, the beef-barrel was also a kind of side-table, whilst the cover of it was made to do duty occasionally as a rat-trap by setting it up with a stick and a string, and Dodge described the destruction he wrought upon the rat species by these simple means as something quite astonishing. After spending by no means an uncomfortable evening, a shake-down was made and they all turned in. (pp.106-7)

The 'domestic arrangements' of this building are indeed basic, and no doubt the author enjoyed dreaming up the small room that comprises the house. Not that it would be classed as extraordinary in actuality, one supposes. Yet such practicalities are generally avoided by writers of fiction, anxious to avoid the crudities of colonial accommodation. The passage is therefore enhanced by its rarity in this body of work; however, it serves most importantly to emphasize the freedom of Dodge's existence in the bush. Here the situation is made more bizarre with the mention of the rodents. An idea of their numbers carries a certain shock value, but Haydon offsets this with a laconic vein: a tone adopted to highlight the strangeness of colonial life. Some might recognize Australian colouring in this humorous mode. I mention the idea elsewhere. And one does discern a yarn-like quality in the description of Dodge's station. It is worthwhile, in this respect, to recall the sub-title of the book: 'a rambling story, containing as much fact as fiction'. Here it would seem that all practical necessities are present in one main room, and in proof of that contention Dodge's dog takes the place of a pillow on the box which, amongst other things, is utilized as a bed.

There is no suggestion that Dodge's house is neglected through lack of industry and perseverance. So this differentiates it from another bodied forth in the 1850s, that of the convict-settler, Wolfingham, whose accommodation I have previously noted. The latter's interior mirrors the moral degradation of the owner whereas Dodge is amusingly and peculiarly suited to pioneering, as is made apparent in a domestic context. With these works,

two strands of the notion of the outlandish are in evidence. On one hand domestic living space is judged, as is most common, evaluatively, and generally speaking with the exterior pointing up the circumstances within. The theme has been most clearly defined in Ralph Rashleigh, although, of course, the work did not exist as a model. Argyle has seen Tucker as 'Australia's first symbolist'[9] and the section of the narrative with which I am chiefly concerned exemplifies that statement. However, in The Australian Emigrant sense of place is not so pointedly differentiated, although colonial ideals are still upheld. As in Ralph Rashleigh, the appurtenances of a rural dwelling may be employed to add a comic touch. In this instance it must be admitted that colour is lost when Dodge departs from his unconventional station in the bush. But the author needs to shape his material towards the story's conclusion; and conformity is assuredly a component of the romance and, accordingly, of the values it espouses.

What is novel in The Australian Emigrant and Wolfingham is the crudeness of the domestic interior. So public is the main living area, so prominent its place in the home, that the situation is therefore accentuated. Are civilized ways being eroded here? Echoes reverberate around that disturbing thought. And the concept takes on symbolic overtones in the narratives of the fifties — whether in moral and social terms as with the house inhabited by Wolfingham; or in the case of Dodge's station, colourful, surprising, and serving to give a pleasurable *frisson* to those unacquainted with Australia. The latter point is one which attracted authors because it highlighted what was vivid or unusual in the domestic dwelling in the bush.

When Charles Fitzpatrick becomes lost in Vol.I,Ch.VIII of Tallangetta he finds his way to 'Bongubine' station, the home of the Martins. The author has him welcomed into the wooden building where the usual comforts of a

9. Argyle 83.

station homestead can be observed. The essential table and chairs are there as is also a great fire-place, several details of which proclaim a colonial setting. That is likewise apparent in a carpet composed of sugar-bags. But it is, above all, the wallpaper which must have appeared exceptional to middle-class readers of the day.

> During the evening Charles Fitzpatrick had leisure, notwithstanding the excited state of his mind, to notice some of the circumstances about him. He perceived that the room in which they were was as humbly furnished as it was built. The bare slabs, indeed, which in such stations are most commonly bare, and presenting ample interstices, were here clothed with a remarkable paper, consisting of nothing less than a collection of the Illustrated London News, varied by a considerable sprinkling of Punch. These had been disposed so as to display to the eye the largest possible amount of pictures; so that the squatter's sitting-room was at once a library and a picture-gallery.
> (Vol.I,p.178)

The setting gains an odd credibility with these details; paradoxically so unusual are they that an air of authenticity is conveyed in the description of the apartment. While such a custom may seem strange or even comic, the passage does serve to bring home to one the exigencies of pioneering. Simultaneously, the scene highlights the civilized nature of the homestead and its inhabitants and demonstrates that an aspect of life which is intrinsically English is present in a house which is isolated in every sense. The reader's sympathetic response can be elicited as a result.

Atkinson, too, has drawn upon the notion for one brief setting in Cowanda where some idea of the household is conveyed by means of the pattern of life depicted there. At this dwelling the walls are also lined with newspapers and we learn that the woman of the house can read them while sewing, thus enlarging upon her education (p.133). Reversals are to be expected in the Antipodes; unfavourable conditions, then, can be turned to advantage. For all that, one detects a comic note here. As in Tallangetta, ingenuity and adaptability are expressed in such an image and it further enhances the received notion of the enterprising colonist of narrative fiction. That British settlers could adjust to bush conditions was cause for pride.

The colonial narrative represents the writer's attitude to colonial conditions; it mirrors his or her response to them. So it is an interesting fact that few writers of the 1850s chose to depict the outlandish in the colonial homestead. What was novel could be incorporated judiciously into the narrative: it could add zest. But it was time to forget crude beginnings.

The similarity between this spatial area and its European counterpart could be figured forth in two main ways. In the first place a descriptive passage could help the reader visualize the setting. In addition, the established routines, customs and rituals of civilized people could be enacted in this principal and communal room. In fact, I believe that if the creative writer's response to circumstances can be said to be present in one distinctive way then it is seen in the appeal to, and presentation of, conservatism and continuity. These texts propose that, notwithstanding the environment, European culture could be preserved in the southern continent, and even in its hinterland.

Such a representation gives the reader reason to applaud colonization and settlement. The keenest satisfaction might then be experienced — both by the urban reader in Australia as well as readers in Europe — and because an imaginative sharing of the lives of those who have maintained links with the motherland is possible. A propagandist stance is inherent here, and is especially obvious when, as happens most often, the European dwelling is idealized. The foremost room, its very centre, then becomes the repository of civilized values and established mores in conditions of hardship and difficulty. If such a mode is adopted authors have this advantage: that they are in a position to evade the less agreeable features of colonial housing. So that in a quiet way there is a dramatic edge to these works; and it is possibly overlooked today. Yet, paradoxically, the mode of approach is conservative. There is evidence of the development of a narrative

tradition here and it has become firmly established around the mid-century.

In referring to the concept of the outlandish I mentioned 'Bongubine' in Tallangetta. The homestead of the title, however, is the chief locale, and the work opens attractively with the Fitzpatricks making for that property in Victoria. Furniture and belongings by the drayload have been brought through the bush, and this is just as well since the home is endowed with more main rooms than are usually envisaged in the colonial novel and they all need to be furnished.

Inside there are two drawing-rooms and a dining-room and, in a colonial vein, an area used as a gun-room, a smoking-room and 'a general sleeping-room for gentlemen visitors' (Vol.I,p.39). Even so, any colonial impressions that one may gain are undercut by a narrative tending to the following:

> In a few days the house at Tallangetta displayed an internal beauty and richness, if not splendour, which certainly no squatting station in the colony could at all approach. Handsome cabinets and wardrobes, tasteful chairs, tables, cheval and pier-glasses, a superb collection of books, no inconsiderable number of fine engravings, and several excellent though small pictures on the walls, with all sorts of drawing-room and other room embellishments, curtains and sofas, presented a scene which would have been termed elegant in a country residence in England, and certainly stood quite sui generis in the Australian bush.
> (Vol.I,p.40)

In every way there is a harkening back to the old country here. The effect of the juxtaposition of exterior and interior scenes is to place considerable emphasis on this English gentleman's home in the wilds. One senses that the descriptive passage works as a heightening device and enables the contemporary reader to respond positively. If today there is the feeling that Howitt spoils the narrative with an exalted presentation of his characters and their dwelling it should be remembered that Howitt is working in the tradition of high romance. And rather carefully he has offset any tendency to disbelief with the reminder that 'Tallangetta' stands 'sui generis' in the bush. Miller reasons that the book 'may be regarded as Land, Labour

and Gold in the form of fiction'.[10] It lacks that work's force, however.

In terms of a comparison, 'Bongubine' is of greater interest, and its well-drawn interior is more memorable in a literary sense. The dominant quality is colonial and picturesque. As for the homestead 'Tallangetta', despite Howitt's care in its creation and in the initial proliferation of detail, he does not manage to portray his characters convincingly there, as already explained. The firm sense of place which is initially apparent is not in fact borne out as the story unfolds. I have noted the similar handling of the idealized 'Daisy Grange' in The Kangaroo Hunters. However, viewed in relation to their isolation in the Australian bush there is something wondrous about both these dwellings, and that is a conventional feature of the romance.

The traditional and the conservative are esteemed in Geoffry Hamlyn where Kingsley pictures his homestead interiors with some craft. There is an ambience here which is altogether lacking at 'Tallangetta'. Although Kingsley has chosen the verandah as his major setting there are a number of interior set-pieces. The author's usual ploy is to make the latter areas the scene of action, often with the arrival of newcomers — both family and outsiders. Thus the static and confined aspect possible in an interior setting is offset by news from elsewhere. Such a schema may also allow the counterpointing of different modes of existence, a strategy which is turned to good account when a 'currency lad', a representative of the 'rising Australian generation', enters Mrs. Buckley's thoroughly English drawing-room with a message (Ch.XXXIII).[11]

The following passage provides the background for another arrival:

One evening towards the end of that winter Mrs. Buckley and Sam sat alone before the fire, in the quickly-gathering darkness. The candles

10. Miller I:405.
11. The incident is discussed in Wilkes, The Stockyard and the Croquet Lawn 32-3.

> were yet unlighted, but the cheerful flickering light produced by the combustion of three or four logs of sheoak, topped by one of dead gum, shone most pleasantly on the well-ordered dining-room, on the close-drawn curtains, on the nicely-polished furniture, on the dinner-table, laid with fair array of white linen, silver, and glass, but, above all, on the honest, quiet face of Sam, who sat before his mother in an easy chair, with his head back, fast asleep. (p.195)

Comfort, prosperity and goodwill prevail here and the conditions of initial settlement seem far removed. Perhaps a warmer glow is thrown over the scene because it follows that in which one of the Buckleys' neighbours is killed in a skirmish with Aborigines far inland. The notion that centipedes might come out of a gum-log is the only danger now envisaged, and this provides another instance of Mrs. Buckley's adaptability. As a result of their rich connotations the fireside scene and the underlying ideal of family life have strengthened into a narrative tradition in the colonial novel. Drawing on literary and folk tradition the motif gains an added dimension when depicted in a colonial context.

To the setting described above, Kingsley brings Major Buckley and Captain Brentwood and the interplay of the domestic and the communal can be observed in the ensuing conversation. Soon after, a newcomer, the Rev. Frank Maberly, arrives on horseback. Dogs are heard barking outside with the arrival of the newcomers and in the second instance a dog is found to be hiding under the sofa. Perhaps it is fair to say that all this is homely and cheerful rather than colonial but, certainly, the 'revered cluster of Victorian domestic virtues' to which I alluded earlier are present here as they are at the Brentwood's homestead 'Garoopna'. The third major homestead, 'Toonarbin', home of Mary Hawker, is less happily placed, in moral terms, and serves as a useful contrast to the former dwellings.

The formulas of romance rather than the texture of daily life seem to give rise to this account of the parlour at 'Garoopna', seen through the eyes of Sam Buckley:

> What a charming room it was! A couple of good pictures, and several fine prints on the walls. Over the chimneypiece, a sword, and an old gold-laced cap, on which Sam looked with reverence. Three French windows opened on to a dark cool verandah, beyond which was a beautiful flower-garden. The floor of the room, uncarpeted, shone dark and smooth, and the air was perfumed by vases of magnificent flowers, a hundred pounds worth of them, I should say, if you could have taken them to Convent-garden that December morning. But what took Sam's attention more than anything was an open piano, in a shady recess, and on the keys a little fairy white glove. (p.222)

Along with the verandah the main room is chosen as a representative setting. Later a table laden with food draws attention to the fertile and hospitable nature of the place. The conventions of this literary genre serve at the same time to throw an attractive light on the comfort and sense of permanence there.

Now all this might be seen as pure romance. But it is to be remembered that the author is well acquainted with the framework of colonial society and he resolves the inadequacies of the romance with the inclusion of elements revealing of colonial consciousness and contemporary reality. Links with the old country are suggested in a number of the allusions as a result. The 'dark cool verandah' and the uncarpeted floor are, however, Australian. Just previously too Sam has entered through 'a cool shady hall, hung round with coats, hats, stockwhips' (p.221). Here a gun and an arrangement of flowers point to the inhabitants, Captain Brentwood and his daughter Alice. She is soon to appear on the verandah — and this _is_ pure romance — but the reader has already guessed at her presence. And her appearance has been prefigured in the conversation which took place at 'Baroona' and to which I alluded above. Kingsley's attention to craft I have already mentioned. His colouring of the larger event with smaller detail gives his domestic settings an incisiveness and proposes a way of life which balances, or even outweighs, the narrative's epic events.

It is not, of course, possible to examine the many principal rooms or parlours which duplicate English models in this body of work. On one hand

there is the overstated elegance of 'Tallangetta', the interior of which reminds us of an English gentleman's residence, and although few writers attempted such a catalogue of desirable features there was a tendency to draw such parallels. Kingsley, on the other hand, while employing the notion, manages to counterbalance it with a colonial view-point, this two-fold process resulting in quite a subtle evocation of place. In almost every narrative, however, one senses a need to express cultural continuity. Both _Tallangetta_ and _Geoffry Hamlyn_ are symptomatic of the patriotism of the age.

At this stage mention should be made of a number of women writing at the mid-century. Their attention to detail in the presentation of rural households implies some skill, and what is noticeable is the manner in which they have figured forth the social, domestic, and cultural ambience of the parlour. On the whole it could be stated that women writers have avoided over-statement or exaggeration regarding material appurtenances. They have, however, insisted upon the homely virtues by tradition represented in settings which are often the backdrop for conventional ways and polite society. Women novelists highlighted ritual and ceremony and occupations connected with the home, as will be demonstrated in more detail in Ch.VII.

In her earliest work, _Gertrude_, Atkinson responds to emerging literary convention and the parlour or its equivalent is the area preferred. The intimate scenes in the parlour of the comfortable homestead 'Murrumbowrie' are important to my discussion here, and must be seen within the context of Victorian notions of home and hearth, a subject expanded upon in Ch.X. It is sufficient at this stage to say that the author places great emphasis on the homely aspect of the locale, the antithesis of which is the coldly formal drawing-room at 'Markarld Park', the substantial country residence where Gertrude finds employment after the death of her employer at 'Murrumbowrie'. Most significantly, this ill-regulated home lacks those qualities with which the author has endowed 'Murrumbowrie'.

The chief means by which Atkinson conveys the country's burgeoning social structure is to take Gertrude inside numerous locations. Seen across the plane of the narrative each are given consideration in a way unusual for the time, as I have previously explained. At 'Murrumbowrie' there is the home of Tudor, the high-principled, hard-working superintendent of the property. In his cottage 'the windows were glazed, the door painted, the floors boarded, and the walls white-washed'. Well-suited to the occupant, there is good plain furniture in the sitting-room (p.39). In fact, good taste characterizes Tudor and this is fortuitous since he is the successful suitor of Gertrude. The heroine, of course, cannot visit Tudor's home due to the conventions of the period; instead it is depicted by means of authorial comment. What interests us today is the description of the furniture. Are Tudor's pieces examples of early colonial cabinet-making? It may be so. The furniture is 'perfectly plain' and there is a 'colonial couch', but the evidence seems confirmed with regard to the table. It is made of cedar.[12] Such details illuminate the small room from our own vantage point, for a setting of this kind is coterminous with the more traditional parlour of the 'Murrumbowrie' homestead.

Atkinson has a fine eye for detail and one location which attracts our attention is the Wedlakes' farm, deep in the bush.

> The rude extension of the cottage had not led the visitor to look for refinement within, the room they entered was of that convenient class which serve for kitchen and sitting-room. Above the blazing logs, hung the tea-kettle and beneath a set of shelves containing a rather large assortment of earthenware, some cooking utensils shewed their homely proportions.
>
> The opposite wall was adorned with a few shelves of books, and several coloured prints; the Crucifixion, Moses in the bulrushes, the martyrdom of Stephen, and an English fox hunting scene, all equally brilliant in colouring and style.

12. For details of this subject see <u>Early Colonial Furniture in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land</u> (1972; Melbourne: Georgian, 1980) by C. Craig, K. Fahy, and E.G. Robertson. Interestingly, the authors refer to information concerning the cedar industry in Harris's <u>Settlers and Convicts</u>.

> Some rather yellow anti-macassars were displayed in various parts of the room; and a chest of drawers covered with a crochet cover glittered with glass and grotesque specimens of shepherdesses, and dogs in china.
>
> The welcome was cordial from all. (p.151)

This passage is nicely descriptive of the home's interior, which is essentially that of an English cottage. There is nothing that could be defined 'Australian'. It is interesting, however, that the author reveals her colonial birth and upbringing by describing the sporting print as 'English', a denomination which clearly points to a colonial stance. Here the author chooses to convey qualities of practicality and comfort, and the warmth of the room is expressed in a disparate number of ways. All is seen through the subjective judgement of Gertrude, a heroine whose good sense and high ideals lead the reader to think the perceptions valid. If any lack of taste is implied, a matter which generally concerns both Gertrude and her creator, then this is offset with the ready admission of the dignity and the generosity there.

In addition to these qualities, social and cultural aspirations are given prominence. Atkinson pictures a further living-room in the house. It is the 'best room', but it is one which is seldom used:

> Gertrude had seen the piano, it stood in the best room, keeping a few chairs and a table company, as they stood in gloomy state, only broken in upon when the young ladies were musically inclined, or some grand visitor called. (p.156)

The pattern and texture of life in the bush is splendidly conveyed in this chapter (XXIII) and in the two passages above. Though the contrast of the two more important rooms is somewhat contrived, nevertheless the visual impact is strong and an effect of the juxtaposition is to force one to look more closely at existence here. A great deal is revealed of the life of a small landholder in the sequence — both outside and within. While much is rendered of the dichotomy between colonial aspirations and colonial

realities by means of a conversation between Gertrude and the Wedlakes, important for setting the scene is the word-picture of the small home.

This is so of all of the dwellings in Gertrude. Atkinson attributes special values to each and through them she achieves her literary end: 'to portray the incidents of everyday life enacting around her'. Over and above this, she sets down broad moral concerns regarding the rewards of a virtuous and industrious existence, both in local or colonial terms, and in a wider sense. The same is true of Cowanda although the insistence is less heavy-handed. And here the author has narrowed down the number of her settings — a well-judged approach which lends them weight.

Although Clara Morison and Tender and True are generally recalled for urban locations, the stations to the north of Adelaide are not unimportant. Here it is worth observing that the author avoids detail relating to pastoral matters of which, perhaps, she had no great knowledge; however, in common with Atkinson and Vidal she depicts the living areas of the dwellings she creates with some perception. Speaking of Clara Morison, a writer today has aptly observed: 'The domestic quality of this novel, the first of any importance to be written in Australia by a woman, is its most distinctive characteristic and its greatest strength'.[13] My interest is with the domestic aspect of the station homesteads because it is by such a means that Spence gives substance to social themes in a region far removed from urban refinements.

It is significant that there are two main station properties in Clara Morison and the necessary end of such a presentation is that the reader must compare and contrast them. One is 'The Barn', the substantial though neglected homestead belonging to the Beauforts. The other is 'Taringa', the home of Charles Reginald. It, too, is neglected by its

13. Eade in her introduction to Clara Morison xiv.

owner, but the lack of attention results from different circumstances. The plight of the bachelor is a common theme in the novels, and will be touched on subsequently. 'Taringa''s owner is in need of a wife and companion to share his lonely house, whereas the owner of 'The Barn' has neglected his property in a desire for easy material gain. Reginald eventually finds a wife in the affectionate and dutiful Clara. Before this can happen, though, the plot has taken the young woman to 'The Barn' to act as a nurse-companion to Mrs. Beaufort and her daughter. We see the household, then, through the eyes of Clara. We share her moral concerns at the domestic situation there. In common with Atkinson and Vidal, the author moves beyond the representation of a token room at 'The Barn'; that is to say, she utilizes other than communal areas. There are, unusually, a number of bedroom scenes. However, the parlour is chiefly depicted and although we gain no clear idea of its appearance, something of the circumstances there are made known. Spence gives import to social mores: family and friends converse in the parlour and tea is served in the English fashion. Ritual and tradition are maintained here, it would seem. However, with the marriage of Clara and Mr. Reginald his home becomes the symbol of propriety and stability. High ideals and cultural continuity will be established at 'Taringa' at the narrative's conclusion; at 'The Barn' such qualities are put in jeopardy once Mrs. Beaufort has died.

As in Tender and True, the parlour is chosen for a number of scenes of a private nature. They concern human relationships. Perhaps the most important is that in which Beaufort makes romantic overtures to Clara soon after his wife's death. Of course, by means of such a confrontation the reader gains a further indication (if it were necessary) of the heroine's moral integrity. It is appropriate, in terms of characterization and in accepted literary tradition, that Clara should attempt to leave the homestead. Yet this, for the moment, she is unable to achieve, and now the narrative focusses afresh on the theme of solitude and loneliness. It has

been said that 'Clara's isolation and vulnerability are stressed throughout the novel'.[14] Yet circumstances at 'The Barn' have put her in a far more difficult position than would perhaps be possible in the town. By means of the plot the young woman's plight is dramatically but very briefly illustrated, thus enabling readers to envisage the kind of isolation possible in the bush. It has both a social and a moral quality. In all manner of ways, characters at the northern stations are seen to be affected by the uncertainties of this pastoral existence; so, once more, the importance of the homestead and the standards upheld there become paramount.

In Tender and True it is likewise evident that the main living room is one where the social and communal aspects of domesticity can be presented. Yet Spence also employs the room against which to portray the drama of personal relationships. This we have seen in Mr. Beaufort's confrontation with Clara Morison; and in the depiction of the marital difficulties of the Norths in Tender and True. It is chosen again in the latter work for a delicate confrontation between an unmarried couple, and this time at a station to the north of Adelaide.

Mr. Davanent's home station is 'white-washed, adorned with a verandah, and has a little garden round it' (p.159). Inside

> There was no such thing as hall or passage in the house; one room led to another, and the front door opened into the parlour; but it really was not such a rough-looking place as many might suppose. The walls were white-washed though the roof was unceiled, leaving visible the rafters and the reed thatch overhead. There was a pretty and comfortable-looking carpet on the floor; half a dozen handsome mahogany chairs, a round claw-footed table, a hair-cloth sofa, and two easy chairs. A bookcase, well filled with handsomely bound books, occupied one recess formed by the square projecting chimney; the other was appropriated to a secrétaire, which showed there was some use for pen and ink, even in the bush; six fine oil-paintings, some of them portraits, and some good engravings, hung on the white-washed walls; and in one of the easy chairs sat a handsomely dressed young girl with a baby on her knee. (Vol.II,p.163-4)

14. The Oxford History of Australian Literature 45.

We can detect colonial colouring in this passage. The apartment's physical attributes are of an undeniably pioneering aspect, but the extract does stress links with the old country. For example, chairs made of mahogany instead of colonial cedar, the details of the table, the books and paintings — all suggest traditional cultural associations. Comfort and permanence are implied. Yet, with regard to parlours in the mid-century novel something is at fault, and it is exemplified in the young woman and the baby . In terms of narrative strategy Spence has emphasized the social dilemma by mentioning their presence at the end of the descriptive passage. The virtues and qualities that by convention have come to be expected are demonstrably lacking at Mr. Davanent's station and this has been realized with some competence. Perhaps such a sequence helped Barnes towards the belief that 'Catherine Spence is more of a realist — and more of an artist — than any of her contemporaries.'[15]

Later, the author's response gives rise to a moralistic strain. Such a predicament could bring disgrace to an urban parlour, but circumstances differ in the bush. Spence has Davanent benefit from the situation by marrying off the girl to a rural worker. It is interesting that in depicting the nature of the domestic ideal the author has defined it here by its absence. At the narrative's conclusion the antithesis of this locale is the happy parlour of the Norths' family home in Adelaide. We have seen a strategy of a similar kind in Clara Morison. In each case Spence has envisaged a parlour where circumstances are less than perfect. It is an image of colonial society that, at least in terms of fiction, was seldom allowed to emerge.

I have observed that in their response to conditions colonial writers had several approaches open to them. This became evident in my appraisal

15. Dutton, ed., The Literature of Australia 155.

of the homestead itself. With regard to its interior, the novel could prevail, as I have said. Again, traditional and cultural links could be emphasized, as we have just immediately seen. However, another line of approach was possible, and it has already been suggested in a number of the extracts discussed.

In what could be seen as a more perceptive stance a combination of factors could be recorded: so that both European <u>and</u> colonial features are represented. Perhaps, in general, this is what writers encountered about them around the mid-century. Yet it is to be expected that so far from the homeland the conventional would have the greatest appeal to writers and, above all, when they pictured the confines of the domestic dwelling or, rather, that area most appropriately chosen to represent it. The parlour, then, is predominantly English. From another point of view, nevertheless, it could be argued that by this time, that is to say, about seven decades after first settlement, the colonial household must have taken on ostensibly Australian characteristics; that a colonial matrix would have given rise to distinctive, recognizable features. It is worthwhile then to look again at one work by Atkinson and works by Vidal here. Both these authors are especially recalled for their representation of rooms with an Australian flavour.

In <u>Cowanda</u> the homestead of the title is in many ways Australian, both in its appearance and its domestic ambience. An extract quoted in Ch.II has pictured the exterior. An establishing scene on the verandah places the setting as colonial, and presently we move inside, into a room where

> the ceiling was very low; the stained walls were to all appearances tinted with brickdust, and perfect revolutionists in their independence of line and rule, swelling out into odd and capricious rises and ridges; the wide fireplace supported on its brick hobs a pile of logs, for winter was approaching, and a ruddy blaze richly tinted the ceiling and glowed on the dark cedar furniture. Aunt Nancy was already seated at the teaboard. (p.6)

It must be admitted that this could be tea-time at an English hearth, but cedar furniture would seem to preclude the idea. Moreover, the author has already informed the reader that the room forms one of the home's earliest sections. An indication of the dwelling's evolution, as we saw in an earlier extract, has been splendidly conveyed. Consequently the parlour appears to be an inherent part of the home: it shares its piecemeal proportions and lack of symmetry. By such a means 'Cowanda' becomes a physical and domestic entity, this enabling one to learn something of the circumstances there. One tends to agree with the remark that Atkinson's two novels, in 'plot and background are intimate with Australian life of the time'; that the author 'reveals her characters as homely men and women who are the main foundations of a nation's strength'.[16]

Aware of the civilized nature of this existence and the sense of permanence attached to 'Cowanda', the reader shares the shock experienced by the leading characters when it is learnt that the homestead and most of its contents must be sold (Ch.IX). An auction sale, competently achieved by Atkinson, is an unusual way of exposing the house and its furnishings to view. The event is dramatic because we, too, feel the impact of strangers in the house. Domestic privacy seems outraged in such circumstances. Interestingly, two points of view may be discerned. We learn how the house appears to strangers within the setting of the main room; and again, what it is like to have outsiders enter one's home in such an eventuality. At the same time Atkinson's gentle satire finds its mark in colonial pretensions and, in wider terms, in human idiosyncrasy.

Vidal, a much under-rated author, is at this time the other woman writer who successfully enlightens the reader regarding the workings of a colonial household and its given ambience — one which is taking on aspects

16. Miller I:407.

undeniably Australian. In her earliest work, Tales for the Bush, the dwellings belong to the small settlers and rural workers who are the chief characters. Although some idea of these homes is gained Vidal has not yet the literary sophistication to realise their interiority. In any case her concerns are moral and didactic; these tales are for the bush, rather than of the bush. However, there are two major strands in a later work, The Cabramatta Store, where the domestic dwellings are of rich significance. The plot concerns Grace and John Lester and their children who live in the small settlement of Cabramatta. It is the wish of Grace Lester to own a store in the township. Nearby, Grace's sister, Anne Moore, is a servant at the large residence of 'Yandilla House', which is owned by the Parkers. Numerous others are briefly portrayed: those who live and work at 'Yandilla House', those from the surrounding area, and those at a settlement far inland. In her response to the social environment Vidal has chosen, like Atkinson, to consider a range of dwellings and while it is sometimes possible to see some of the homes morally speaking and in terms of a binary opposition, it is the delineation of emerging social conventions in each that makes the works by Atkinson and Vidal so interesting today.

Bushland surrounds the Lesters' small homestead, the site chosen for the establishing scene of The Cabramatta Store. Its seclusion throws a warm glow over attempts within to create comfort and a feeling of permanence. Rough construction marks the dwelling, and inside domestic arrangements are humble. Grace Lester is preparing a meal while awaiting her husband's return:

> The piece of beef was quite done, and the kettle boiling for his tea. The things were neatly arranged on the table, including a tin pot full of coarse sugar; tea, damper, and salt beef being their usual fare. The hut was rough; daylight peeped through the logs; and the roof was made of sheets of bark. Within, there was an attempt to make things comfortable, even smart; — a white coverlet hung over their travelling-chest, which had conveyed all their goods from England, and on it were placed a few books, a cotton box, and a gay red waiter, with a couple or more of tumblers. A few tin articles hung over the fire-place, sadly dimmed and disfigured by the number of flies, which swarmed in every direction; and Grace often stopped in her work to brush them off her face and neck. (pp.3-4)

Contrasted here are colonial conditions and colonial aspirations, especially as they are experienced by a woman, Grace Lester, and discerned by a woman — her creator, Vidal. It is my belief that the consideration given by women writers to this aspect of colonial culture is a memorable element in early Australian fiction. It is one which has largely been ignored. Here there is pathos in the catalogue of belongings brought from the old country, and their importance in the unpretentious room. Yet this interior is Australian, not English. And the setting exists against that well-conveyed opening passage describing a bush clearing which will be quoted in Ch. VIII. It has been admired by Green, a critic who has in fact commented upon the 'excellent little vignettes' achieved by Vidal.[17] In this instance the tedium of the fare, which is at variance with the meals at 'Yandilla House' and the mention of the flies which are present at that residence too and seem characteristically Australian, draw attention to domestic circumstances.

While I could regard this room, which is revealed to be both parlour and kitchen, in relation to the kitchen, it suits me to discuss it at this point. It makes an interesting contrast to the parlour at 'Yandilla House' and is surely devised as such. One of the strengths of Vidal's work is her ability to render a dwelling's interior, and more particularly, its cultural ethos. The word-picture of the Lesters' humble home could be compared with Atkinson's achievement in the same vein, or again with that of the South Australian writer, 'Little Jacob'.

At 'Yandilla House' there are both parlour and kitchen and numerous other rooms; one learns of them through the duties assigned to Anne Moore. At this point in the narrative Anne is serving at the parlour-breakfast where

17. Green 92.

> There was an ample spread of cold meat and fresh beef-steaks; the bullock having been killed on the farm that very morning. There was peach and orange-marmalade, grapes and loquats, damper and hot rolls, and many other good things; and there was also a swarm of busy, buzzing bottle-flies, which kept Mr. Alison, a new comer, in a state of alarm, even for the safety of his roll and butter. As to meat — to look at it was enough! — not even a wire cover! No! — the Parkers, old-established settlers in the colony, never thought of the flies; — they ate, and drank, and laughed, and talked, and never even brushed them off. (p.49)

Such a meal brings to light the country's nurturing and fruitful aspect, and although it has been expostulated that the author 'had grapes and loquats ripe at the same time'[18] the scene is nicely contrived. An amusing note is the newcomer's concern for his food, and we catch both his and the Parkers' feelings, and those of the author. Few creative writers are willing to mention the household fly; in this book the pest is shown to irritate without discrimination. In terms of plot Vidal has Anne Moore present in order to overhear the conversation at the table, and the information is of significance in forwarding the narrative. The contrast between this meal and the one at the Lesters' parlour creates some interest, although it is not a point that Vidal questions at this stage.

It is with great assurance that Vidal presents 'Langville' which is central to the long work, Bengala. (A descriptive passage concerning the homestead is included in my previous chapter, p.115). It is, we learn, 'a new stone house, with a handsome suite of sitting rooms, and every other convenience' (Vol.I,p.35). One discerns here the successful recreation of a dwelling which is both a physical and a domestic entity. Seen at 'Langville' too is a sharply defined social hierarchy. Vidal has set her story in the 1840s so in addition to the inhabitants of the homestead assigned servants have an important part to play. Numerous events, both inside and outside the home, are recounted against this domestic backdrop

18. Franklin 24.

and involve the Lang family, their retainers, and their friends. A fine sense of dialogue leads to the vividness of these passages. While a more comprehensive setting than usual is deployed it is characteristically the living rooms which are pictured. Good use, too, is made of the verandah.

As implied, 'Langville' is a well-to-do estate, and within this imaginative framework the author moves her characters quite extensively. Family members are portrayed in numerous domestic scenes, both of a small and intimate nature or a larger social event. In using a work-room for a small domestic scene Vidal is surely drawing upon literary traditions from England. In fact, one is occasionally reminded of Jane Austen in Bengala. However, this is a colonial work-room and amongst other things, its presence in the home reminds us of the building's extent.

> There was a very pleasant room at Langville, called the 'work-room,' or 'morning-room.' It was well screened by dark venetian shutters. A fine specimen of the Lyre-bird's tail ornamented the cedar chimney-piece, and some of Kate's school flower and fruit paintings, in richly-gilt frames, relieved the white-washed walls. There was but little furniture, save some comfortable American rocking-chairs and a large table covered with work and work-baskets, at which Mrs. Lang and her daughter Kate sat busily employed.
>
> A smaller table stood near the window, where Isabel was stationed, apparently drawing.... (Vol.I,p.90)

A number of more obviously Australian features are present here, as one might expect of a literary work published in 1860. Surely it is characteristic of colonial thought that a well-screened apartment could be considered 'a very pleasant room'? The feather and the cedar chimney-piece fix the scene as Australian, however. The ensuing conversation which concerns marriage and manners tells us much about the Lang family, and the pattern of life at 'Langville' can be ascertained from these few lines. There is the willingness to conserve old paintings from schooldays, for instance, and this serves to reinforce our feelings that the family is a caring and devoted one. Again, the work undertaken here may not be very arduous (a similar scene is depicted on the verandah of 'Yandilla House'),

nevertheless Mrs. Lang and her daughters are accustomed to household chores. One can detect here those precise details that we have already admired in The Cabramatta Store, and they are delineative of an Australian setting.

Beyond the merely domestic, something of the country's changing state — from a convict colony to a trading colony — is suggested in the presence of the American chairs in the work-room. Yet while this may be true, the thought must be put aside: Vidal's narrative is set during the period of assigned labour. There are convict labourers at 'Langville' where the system is firmly entrenched. The social structure forms a disturbing element in the long work, and the author seizes upon the dramatic possibilities inherent in the subject matter. For example, the chapter which this extract commences bears the legend: 'From a Lady's Boudoir to a Convict's Hut', and the author dwells on the antithesis. There is ironic pathos in the fact that the Lang womenfolk can discuss marriage so complacently in the work-room.

For the plot which forms the narrative's other strand poses a different set of circumstances. It concerns the convict Lynch and his plan to gain freedom through a ticket-of-leave from the owner of 'Langville'. Mr. Lang's irascibility, his refusal to grant this request, and thus Lynch's inability to marry and to control his own destiny, leads to the tragedy that ensues. However, returning to the 'work-room', I hope that by expanding upon the subject matter which commences Ch.VII I have demonstrated that while there is a colonial flavour in Vidal's homely scene at 'Langville' the salient features help to cast light on a wider social framework. This in turn reflects back on the work-room or morning-room, giving the scene substance, adding to its 'Australianness'.

In England and thus able to see Australia — and a particular period in its history — retrospectively, Vidal displays preoccupations in Bengala not guessed at in Tales for the Bush or The Cabramatta Store. In Bengala

she still endows 'Langville' with those elevated ideals that we have come to expect of such a location. In this she is following in a literary mode first adumbrated about 1830. But Vidal has recognized that in the complex relationships connected with the system of assignment in those colonies which were initially penal settlements anxiety and bitterness might be experienced on the part of both masters and their men. In such circumstances colonial ideals become 'dimmed and disfigured', like those articles brought from England and hung with such pride over the hearth in the Lesters' little bush dwelling in The Cabramatta Store. The enormous difficulties inherent in such a situation were factors about which most creative writers were guarded but it furnished vital material for this novel. The domestic and social life of the colonial gentry is the dominant factor in Bengala. The life of the yard and the outbuildings can almost be forgotten in the 'handsome suite of sitting rooms' at 'Langville' and the other comfortable homes of the surrounding area.

The Bedroom

When it is mentioned the bedroom is usually alluded to in brief terms and that is so of narratives up to and beyond the mid-century. In the main this occurs when the room is numbered along with others in an account of a homestead's spatial design, and especially with authors whose wish to describe a bush dwelling leads to detail of its interior. Yet in works which depict living conditions the mention of sleeping accommodation can sometimes offer the possibility of providing local colour. This occurs in references to verandah rooms, a point which will be taken up in Ch.IV. Overall, however, it can be seen that the subject matter is dealt with concisely and in a decorous fashion, as is demonstrated in the two following examples.

Bedrooms are referred to by Rowcroft in his Tales in the passage where Thornley visits a settler's home in Vol.I,Ch.IV. Here, alluding to the

rude dwelling the observer recalls: 'At the end opposite the chimney a space was divided off into two small bedrooms'. Naturally enough the newcomer does not enter these rooms; nor does the reader. In such surroundings the bedroom cannot be ignored, but the emphasis is upon the larger living area and the nearby kitchen, where events of a public and social nature take place. This is so in The Emigrant Family, where the bedrooms of the Bractons are not described, although the reader does learn something of the tact necessary in that confined domestic world (p.44). For there are limitations to the way of life imposed by space — fundamental, one imagines, in the dwellings of the pioneers. Yet this is not a factor authors chose to reveal or emphasize, and surely because it would tend to diminish the Romantic notion of settlement in a land which was, after all, notable for its boundlessness.

With Tucker there is a certain freedom of expression since he is writing out of the mainstream of Australian prose fiction. A greater acceptance of the facts and a lack of hesitation in recording them is the dominant trait of Ralph Rashleigh. The sleeping accommodation at the house of 'Big Mick', a farm where Rashleigh is helping with the harvest, is pictured thus:

> When the doors of any of the sleeping-rooms admitted a view of their contents, it did not appear that luxury was by any means the besetting sin of either Big Mick or his family. The sleeping-berths were all fixtures, made of slabs and sheets of bark, only the one belonging to the father and mother being furnished with any attempt at curtains, which for economy's sake were confined to the foot of the bed and one side. The berth being fixed in a corner, all was thus enclosed, partly by the slabs and partly by the curtain, which exactly answered the description given by Pope of those "in the worst inn's worst room", being tied with tape and never meant to draw; instead of which, the blue-striped shirting of which it was composed was secured back by loops and buttons which hung them partly aside and exposed to view a tattered patchwork quilt, apparently innocent of the washing-tub since its formation.
>
> The effeminacy of sheets was unknown to any of the inmates. ...each of the family slept on beds of chaff contained in rough ticks, many of which, being the worse for wear, suffered their contents to escape through their numberless orifices, when it littered the earthern floor. Being scattered thence into unknown corners, where brooms never penetrated, the rubbish proved fruitful nurseries of "flaas", to the extreme annoyance of the good matron of the house, who strove in vain to abate it by repeated libations of water, until mud was by no means a scarce article, either within or without the domicile. (p.106)

The contrast of the formal prose and, by nineteenth century standards, indecorous subject matter, and the disparity between the two, is typical of Tucker's style. It is often the source of humour in the novel.

To Tucker, besides, we owe much for what appears to be reportage because the passage above and others like it bear the stamp of authenticity. In terms of social history, an aspect which one feels should always be considered, there is profound importance in the fact that a dwelling of this type belongs to a class of persons who, surely with few exceptions, did not record their circumstances in diary or journal form. Later, of course, the camera was to capture some aspects of such an existence although not, perhaps, interior scenes like this.

Equally bad conditions prevail at the Irish family's dwelling depicted in Ch.XV; and even worse at the Arlacks' 'recherché retreat'. It has been observed that Tucker's style becomes 'urbane in describing the sordid homestead of the Arlacks'.[19] Here is another example of the literary mode referred to above. The antithesis of these homes is the Marshalls' immaculate house. However, my point here is that the presentation of these dwellings is, in the main, a compositional device, the contrast pointing up differing standards of living, and Rashleigh's assessment of them. Rashleigh is grateful, though, for being 'accommodated with a shake-down of straw on a sheet of bark before the fire' at the Irish family's house (p.125). Being a convict, he is much more appreciative of the 'comfortable bed and the luxury of a clean pair of sheets' provided by the Marshalls (p.134). For their home is the paradigm of decency and cleanliness. At this dwelling the author has a female character enter 'an inner apartment' in order to change her clothes, and the term 'bedroom' is employed later (p.128).

19. Dutton, ed., The Literature of Australia 160.

And yet such a simple action is mainly avoided and one imagines for those reasons of good taste and propriety that I am discussing now, and will speak of again presently.

I come next to the idea that colonial customs can be introduced with the mention of sleeping accommodation. Novelty and local colour are epitomized in a passage from Sidney's Gallops and Gossips. It is one of the works in which the adventures of one or more figures structure the narrative, this tending towards a reporting of rural conditions. Here the author depicts Alfred Barnard's living quarters:

> At Gumscrew's station, I took up my abode in a wooden hut, thatched with bark, on which well-bred short horns would have looked with contempt. The sun and moon shone clearly through the chinks between the weather boards; my bedstead was a bullock's hide stretched over four posts driven into the ground; a slip of green hide, hanging between the walls, formed at once my clothes-horse and chest of drawers.
>
> To the great contempt of my companion and fellow-lodger, I did put up a shelf for a few books, and drive in a nail for a small shaving-glass, without being able to boast a beard. (pp.31-2)

Despite such matters Sidney's industrious settler is content with arrangements since he wishes to quit town life and is willing to accept hardship. The need to cling to former habits, as demonstrated here, is still strong though, and the standards maintained by the young settler, and his persistence, lead eventually to his own home — a 'verandahed cottage'. In these texts material success rewards the virtuous.

The existence led by those employed around the larger homesteads was likely to provide interesting material for writers of prose fiction and will be dealt with in a later chapter. At this point it is relevant to note that in such settings conventions may be put aside in order to draw upon scenes of low life which in the Antipodes may be substantially different from that of the old country. Because, in European terms, the hands were the lowest in the social hierarchy, many of them still bearing the convict

tag, it seems that it was possible to move aside from the established literary code. When this happens an alternative aspect of colonial society is formulated although even here, by using one's imagination, one suspects that a further set of conventions may obtain, that is to say, those relating to the crudities of hut life. Clearly, sleeping accommodation, cooking amenities, and living space are not separated in this kind of habitation. The working men lead a communal and primitive existence. Its antithesis is that encountered at the homestead, even one of the most humble design. The homestead is representative of family life and of the taste for privacy; the bedroom, perhaps, the summation of that desire.[20] Even at the dwelling which belongs to 'Big Mick', members of the family have bedrooms and these are fitted with doors.

For reasons surely related to notions of decorum and the prevailing expectations of the reading public, bedrooms very seldom become the backdrop against which events occur, or relationships develop. Sometimes it would appear that such a room exists as a place of refuge for young heroines in times of emotional crisis. In developing a situation where a nurse-companion appears to be at moral risk at an isolated station, Spence portrays the sensible but vulnerable Clara Morison in her bedroom. That position is heightened when the widowed Beaufort persuades Clara to talk with him in the parlour late at night — an occurrence which moves us little today, but which may well have held some tension for the contemporary reader, as I proposed earlier.

Very occasionally characters are seen ill in bedrooms and then it is quite fitting for others to join them there. For example, in Ch.XI of the book of that name, Gertrude, the personification of a literary heroine in

20. The taste for privacy is a subject explored by Robin Boyd in <u>Australia's Home: Its Origins, Builders, and Occupiers</u> (1952; Ringwood: Penguin, 1968).

Victorian times, visits a sick woman with provisions. In Atkinson's Cowanda Capt. Dell makes a long ride in order to visit a sick friend, Osman, on his property, 'The Ranges' (Ch.III). In the fashion of the Victorian novel a satisfactory end is made by the dying man. Naturally enough the bedroom forms the setting; here the growing evening shadows are linked with the final moments of Osman's life. Though a common-place, this is effectively done and reminds us that although the scene was popular in literature, it was not one which figured largely in earlier colonial fiction. For in the pioneering of the Antipodes, death generally comes in more Romantic modes.

Spence expands upon the idea in Clara Morison to have the sick woman invite those in the house to join her for tea (Ch.XVII). Earlier, seemingly to avoid a moment of reconciliation in the bedroom (and the reconciliation scene, in the event, is also avoided), the author has Mrs. Beaufort insist upon dressing so as to meet her husband in the parlour after his long absence at the goldfields (p.344). Later, there is a bedroom conversation between husband and wife, but this occurs on the eve of Mrs. Beaufort's death (pp.362-3). Spence renders her many indoor scenes well, and one must agree with the observation that the background, and with it, importantly, the cultural context, moves to the foreground in her work.[21] The nineteenth century critic, Sinnett, highly praising this book, remarks that 'we almost insensibly imbibe conceptions of the state of society which was peculiar to the time and place' in Clara Morison.[22] In addition, it is a fact that we also learn much about its literary conventions.

It is true to say of the women authors that they are more ready to depict intimate domestic scenes (I am, of course, speaking in a nineteenth

21. The Oxford History of Australian Literature 46-7.
22. Barnes, ed., The Writer in Australia 25.

century context) and they will sometimes place female characters, such as sisters or friends, in the bedroom. It is, however, rare to find a married couple there. Vidal has portrayed the Scotts talking in their bedroom at night in Bengala (Vol.II,p.278), and Atkinson appears, similarly, to have devised a conversation relating to an unhappy marriage in such a room in Cowanda (p.113). In this respect, it becomes clear that social harmony reigns in the imagined colonial household and the family unit is idealized. Close relationships are not avoided, but couples are shown to be loyal and affectionate as befits the Victorian epoch, and are portrayed against the wider social sphere of the communal areas most often depicted: the parlour, or the verandah or the garden. Accordingly, it could be said that by convention the bedroom is avoided as a setting in the earlier colonial novel, and this is surely one aspect of a larger structure in evidence here: that private life, its reflections and intimations, is of less concern than that which is public.

It follows that any allusion to the bedroom must have had a stronger impact on the contemporary reader than might be expected today. I observed above that Tucker pays less heed to decorum than other writers we are examining; so when the Marshalls' home is raided by the bushrangers, he has them ransack the bedroom:

> The door being left open when they came out, Rashleigh cast a glance into the once neat bedroom, which was now strewn with articles of dress and bedding, broken drawers, boxes, etc., in dire confusion. (p.155)

The reference here to the door is curious, given the circumstances, and it surely implies that bedroom doors are kept closed in a home of this kind. There is even that suggestion in the extract above relating to the establishment of 'Big Mick'. One aspect of colonial mores is demonstrated here and it would appear that even Tucker's reflections are touched by constraint.

With its moral and emotional colouring, the impact of the scene we are

examining is dramatic, and the more so when one recalls the homestead's former appearance. The visual imagery throughout the work is of the robust nature favoured by the author but not common at the time. My belief is that this word-picture is rather more powerful than one would infer from mere words on the page. As I point out elsewhere, Tucker's work did not exist in print in the nineteenth century. What Mitchell has seen as 'narrative zest'[23] may well have influenced contemporary authors had they been aware of the textual quality of Ralph Rashleigh. What is interesting here is that whereas Tucker has not found it necessary to tone down a number of his domestic scenes it does appear that he is aware of certain literary conventions. Particularly is this so in his delination of the home that he has affirmed as a paradigm of the pioneering enterprise. My contention, then, is that with regard to the bedroom as a setting good taste is the guideline; this has been adhered to by all writers published in the period under discussion.

The Kitchen

That women writers, in particular, thought that cooking should play some part in their narratives is not surprising, given the conditions. Such a matter is seldom alluded to by the men, although Kingsley, for example, makes one of his token references in mentioning that Mrs. Buckley had 'an imperial sort of way of manoeuvring a frying-pan' (p.141). In Geoffry Hamlyn the kitchen is unimportant; the dining-room is not. The ritual sharing of food here serves to highlight a mode of life which is cultivated in spite of circumstances. In stating that, as befits the romance, meal-making seems to go unnoticed in many of the novels, it should not be necessary to point out that the meal is central to the notion of hospitality, one of the major themes in these texts and one which takes on mythic proportions.

23. The Oxford History of Australian Literature 42.

There is something unspoilt, romantic and attractive in Rowcroft's description of the family meal served in Tales of the Colonies, where the settler's slab hut referred to above is the locale for the welcome offered to Thornley and Crab (Ch.IV). The skillion kitchen adjoins the main room, the cooking sounds are not forgotten, and the woman of the house emerges with food she herself has prepared. That such practicalities should be included is typical of Rowcroft's mode of approach. Although attention is drawn to the primitiveness of the dwelling, a more arresting factor is the inhabitants' generosity and conviviality. Above all, there is an emphasis on the survival of social mores and Green, for example, has reminded us of the similarity between this work and those earlier in the European tradition, Robinson Crusoe and The Swiss Family Robinson.[24]

Meals eaten under near primitive conditions form one aspect of existence delineated in a number of works concerning early colonial Australia. There is something attractive and appealing in this communal and ritual sharing of food. Such a scene may take place in the bushland, being seen as a bivouac in antipodean surrounds; however I am more concerned with the serving of food in a domestic context. Two modes of existence are represented. There are those lowest in the colonial social scale, and settlers whose middle-class respectability leads, in the fictional framework we are dealing with, to a more comfortable situation.

Little bound by convention and yet demonstrably aligning himself with a variety of literary modes stylistically, Tucker fixes upon diverse homesteads as centres of interest in Ralph Rashleigh. Primitive conditions exist at the homes of 'Big Mick', the Irish family, and at the Arlacks'. Here Tucker employs long descriptive passages, his formal prose the means to depict such excesses. Nevertheless, there is a certain exub-

24. Green 87.

erance in these sections, as if Tucker is enjoying the effect created. Some attention having been paid in my thesis to two of these establishments, the following extract concerns the hut of the Arlacks. Here readers are plunged into the interior with Rashleigh, a 'government man', who has been assigned to the property:

> As Mrs Arlack was so philosophically negligent of the means of setting off her own most powerful natural charms by any recourse to the fastidious arts of tidiness or cleanliness, it may easily be conceived that her dwelling was none of the neatest on earth. Indeed, the complicated arrangement of unhewn timber, which by the greatest stretch of courtesy was called a table, appeared never to have been cleansed or washed since it first was put together and at present afforded a singular mélange of movables, among which may just be mentioned a large black iron pot, leaning negligently on one side, so as to show a little hominy in the bottom; a few wooden spoons, of most indubitable native manufacture, as they might vie in size as well as rudeness with the paddles used by the Tonga Islanders; some half-munched fragments of corn cake; in divers places a plentiful sprinkling of tobacco ashes from the pipe of the proprietor; a lump of blackish-yellow home-made soap swimming in a puddle of slop; a lot of ragged children's clothing, with a few filthy napkins among them; and some four or five dirty tin pots, which were battered and bruised into all manner of shapes. (pp.137-8)

The passage is the more striking because a comparison must be made between this dwelling and the one previously visited by Tucker's protagonist: that of the Marshalls. A pot boiling over on a crude fireplace nearby ends Rashleigh's reflections concerning the house, the frank description of which allows one to grasp his apprehension concerning it.

Contrasted with the three establishments referred to above is the Marshalls' residence.

> The floor, 'tis true, was only made of cow dung and ashes trod into a solid and firm mass, but then, it was level and clean-swept. The stools and tables, though all of the coarsest make, being apparently the handiwork of the settler himself, were scoured until they were perfectly white. The tin pots and dishes all shone with the resplendence of new-minted silver, and the whole of the interior was whitewashed to almost a degree of fastidious purity. The walls, in place of pictures or any other production of art, were decorated and relieved by suspended bunches of fresh-gathered and sweetly-scented flowering shrubs, the most choice indigenous produce of the neighbouring bush. (pp.127-8)

An item of interest here is the presence of indigenous flowers within the

homestead, and the point will be taken up elsewhere. Besides picturing the meal served the author reveals his knowledge of affairs by describing the method of preparation. It can be said, however, that Tucker is concerned to convey a moral. The fastidiousness of the inhabitants and their surroundings leads Rashleigh to ponder at the discrepancy between present conditions and those at the Irish family's dwelling 'though it had been occupied by persons of the same rank in life and having the same means of improvement with his present hosts' (p.128). These polar extremes suit Tucker's purposes which are clearly didactic here. And the dwelling house as a literary metaphor travels well and can be adapted easily to colonial circumstances.

Unlike Tucker, the majority of authors of the thirties and forties were wary of including too much detail relating to domestic practicalities. In The Emigrant Family, for example, Harris imagines the living area at 'the Rocky Springs' but we learn little of the cooking arrangements save that: 'All the tin pots were ranged upside down in a solid square in the darkest corner of the hut' (p.44). This tells us as much about the author's intentions as it does about local customs. Here few indications are given concerning the running of the household. On the other hand, the locale of the men's huts presents material of greater interest, and the preparation of the station hands' Christmas pudding is an incident one recalls with amusement.

At Reuban Kable's cottage domestic affairs are envisaged more imaginatively. In Vol.I,Ch.8, circumstances are pictured through the arrival of a visitor, Willoughby Bracton. Invited into the small house for breakfast the newcomer, taking 'a deliberate survey of the domestic department of his friend's homestead, gave utterance to an expression of surprise at its neat and comfortable trim' (p.80). I have earlier used the term 'genteel domestic', and have drawn it from this incident where it is employed to

describe the Kables' breakfast-parlour. It is a term which could be said to be exactly descriptive of the way of life Harris likes to imagine for his protagonists. Yet it is fair to say that the kitchen is at the margin of such an existence — in actual terms and metaphorically speaking. And with few exceptions it is the characteristic style of homestead life that is depicted, and valorized, in the prose fiction which appeared in print up until 1850. This, of course, excludes Ralph Rashleigh. Yet even here 'genteel domestic' is applicable to the mode of life at the Marshalls' home which is the preferred authorial environment (and this despite the fact that such an existence seems a little sterile when compared with others portrayed by Tucker). Also excepted from my observation is Tales for the Bush, where dwellings are less substantial and conditions scarcely adequate. But to say this is to ignore Vidal's intentions. For Green, these Tales 'are insistent upon duty, religious, moral and social'.[25] So that thoughts relating to 'genteel domestic' or, rather, domestic gentility, are, in fact, exactly those which Vidal would wish to inculcate in her readers. They relate to the originating impulse behind her book.

As pioneering gave way to more civilized ways, for the fortunate the slab hut evolved into a more spacious building. The kitchen had generally been separated from the main dwelling where possible; one would imagine because of fire-risk.[26] However, in the convict colonies there was a further consideration. Free settlers felt the need to be cut off from their convict, or later their ex-convict, servants. That point and vexed questions arising from the situation are a reflection of current attitudes. This emphasis on social stratification raises an important issue which will be considered much later.

25. Green 90-1.

26. Ian Evans points out that until the 1850s the kitchen was usually partly detached from the house. There was often a covered walkway between the two (p.24). See also Archer passim.

I have already mentioned the early work by Howison, One False Step. Deveral Hermsdill — the assigned convict — is doubly separated from his peers. Firstly, his place of servitude is on a remote farm in the Nepean region, and additionally, because of birth and upbringing, he finds it intolerable to live with those of the servant class. His mean room is in a small building along with the store-room and kitchen (p.95). As in several other early works, we see life through the eyes of a convict: here, one who believed he was of superior social standing to his employer. In surveying his room, feelings of despair are outweighed by the recognition that here he can retain his privacy; the close proximity of the kitchen and the servant there, a woman of doubtful moral character, makes this impossible. While Ralph Rashleigh is a notable exception, the system of assigned servants is seen most often from the point of view of those who would engage them. This makes One False Step an interesting tale, if a minor one.

Writers of the mid-century do mention the location of the homestead kitchen, but it is the women writers (and especially Vidal) who have drawn on such information imaginatively for the purposes of their fiction. Vidal, whose sense of place is less developed in Tales for the Bush, demonstrates a surer technique in The Cabramatta Store, and something of greater significance in Bengala. In The Cabramatta Store the servant's world is well conveyed, and is contrasted with the comfortable existence of the main dwelling from which it is separated physically and socially.

The focus is upon Anne Moore, whose life and domestic duties become of interest to the reader. In Ch.X the ample breakfast in the parlour at 'Yandilla House' and the preoccupations of the inhabitants and their visitors are seen in comparison with the kitchen where two Chilean horse-breakers and a number of servants share a meal. 'Passing to and fro; for the kitchen was detached from the house' Anne, the housemaid, acts as a connecting link between these two small communities of people. While these

two worlds are separated by class and occupation, Vidal has created a unifying concern in the property's continuing prosperity. Here it is observed in the interest of all at 'Yandilla' in the horses: the owners and their friends, the house servants, and the outside staff. Hunting for parasol and sun-bonnets — a nice touch of local colour — the children and their governess also go to see the horse-breaking. The rendering of events is well handled and the attitude of the staff seems feasible, and such a situation has the advantage that it is more believable than the exaggerated praise of employers found in the romances of Bowman, Howitt, and Kingsley. The sense of security at this homestead both for the owners and their servants is contrasted by Vidal with the uncertain existence of Grace Lester, one of the leading characters. As in her Tales for the Bush, the author has the ability to evoke, with a minimum of detail, small domestic scenes: here flies get to the meat; there is the attempt 'to make things comfortable, even smart' in a bush home; an iron heats on the stove and two women gossip in the kitchen. Though not an important work — marred for some by an overt moral stance — The Cabramatta Store reveals social (rather than national) patterns, a phrase which Inglis Moore correctly recognizes as being historically 'more precise here, since Australia developed a distinctive society with its own mores long before it evolved into the further stage of nation-hood'.[27]

The more complex Bengala is, as we have seen, concerned with the lives and the relationships of the rural gentry and their convict servants. Scenes of labourers cooking meat and damper over fires outside huts which have unglazed windows and bark shutters remain with the reader as much as those within 'Langville' itself. In that well-run establishment a bell rings when meals are ready, yet Mrs. Lang and her daughters are no strangers to the kitchen — a point Vidal emphasizes both in action and dialogue. In her

27. T. Inglis Moore, Social Patterns in Australian Literature (1971; Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1976) 4.

Introduction she states that she is offering 'a homlier and greyer tinted sketch' than other 'highly-coloured pictures of the same subject'. (Her book came at the end of a number published in the 1850s although some think that Vidal was referring to Kingsley's recently published work.[28]) The striving for social niceties — a fact of colonial life which the author gently mocks — does not mean that the 'Langville' women are divorced from household commitments.

Vidal records that the kitchen is separated from the homestead. However, it is a small matter, that of transferring dishes across the covered way to the main house in bad weather and having them arrive wet at the table, which works to establish the setting's authenticity (Vol.I,p.153). Such detail helps create the ambience which pertains to 'Langville', and adds to our information concerning existence there. The fact that the staff are removed from the house makes it possible for bushrangers to raid it, a point in the plot which accentuates the differing standards and values within the colonial community (Vol.II,Ch.III).

The two worlds of the narrative are illustrated in the contrast and comparison of the hospitality at 'Langville' with that obtained at less substantial dwellings. Good examples of the latter are seen in the description of the rough conditions and plain food served to Lynch, the assigned convict who has absconded from the Langs' estate. At one of these, Charlie's hut, the meat is tainted — 'flies getting into the cask' (Vol.II, p.44). At another:

> The woman had spread some food meanwhile, a couple of empty tea-chests turned up, forming the table. Cold salt beef, rather hard; freshly baked damper, and a bottle of pickled anchovies, with tea of course sweetened with plenty of coarse sugar, but no milk, was the fare. And a stone jar was very soon lifted up, and one wine glass, pushed round

28. See, for example, Green 92.

> to each in turn. The boy and two or three children having shown their heads, were sent off quickly, with a good allowance of damper and beef, and told to keep off till bed-time. (Vol.II,p.50)

The contrast of such a scene with the comfortable home 'Langville' and, more pointedly, with the well-observed family meals, in Vol.II, at the Scotts' homestead, 'Currajong Park', is most striking. Propriety characterizes this residence and is expressed, to take one example, in the Scotts' concern for their children — a developing facet of Victorian respectability.[29] Vidal thinks to reveal how such manners may be relaxed in a colonial household. Different standards and values are in evidence in the extract quoted above, the passage serving to throw an even more attractive light on the chief locales in Bengala. A sequence of this kind exemplifies Vidal's recognition of the dramatic value in the presentation of low-life characters who are graphically portrayed.

Because the author does not feel the need to suppress domestic realities and because she has thought to draw upon the rich diversity of the colonial social structure the novel is one of the most interesting studied. It could be argued that all this is possible when a writer of some competence expands upon the romance genre and imposes a clearer-eyed perspective. As Green has remarked, it can be observed in Vidal after she has departed from Australia.[30] And, one might add, when she places her narrative in a historical context.

Atkinson also utilizes the diversity of the colonial social structure, and in Gertrude in particular. With a tale like this in mind, perhaps, one critic has remarked generally that 'the novels of the colonial period

29. See the writings of G.M. Young, especially 'The Happy Family', in Victorian Essays (London: Oxford UP, 1962) 116-23.

30. Green 92.

were mainly realistic, even although some adopted at times certain melodramatic or sentimental conventions of the English Victorian novel'.[31] Small domestic details — cameos of colonial life rather than the larger narrative event — highlight the text, as we have seen for example in Ch. XXIII when Gertrude visits a small farm. We learn that there is a piano in the house; the room, however, is kept for more important occasions. Instead, the young woman is offered simple hospitality in a room 'of that convenient class which serve for kitchen and sitting-room'. For today's reader interest lies in the homely details: in the earthenware china and the tea-kettle over the log-fire and, more particularly, in Atkinson's imaginative understanding of that kind of household. At the central location here the author has an Aboriginal woman as a cook, and while there are melodramatic and sentimental conventions within the narrative, Gertrude, as one of the staff, is quite naturally seen at work in the kitchen.

As the genre of romance became firmly established round the mid-century, interest in the main was directed to the land-owning gentry and to masculine achievements. So it was unlikely that domestic facilities would attract much attention from other than women. Such a locale could, of course, still provide the background for scenes of rural life, as is illustrated in one incident in Howitt's A Boy's Adventures. Here the author has two young men who have been lost made welcome by a family at an outlying station, 'one of those homely but comfortable slab-huts, which are the first residences of the squatters...' (p.179). A good fire is burning in the main living area, mutton-chops are cut and put in a frying-pan, a kettle is placed on the grate. This is a simple and credible event — one of the many which colour the work.

Yet, as we have seen, the area under discussion was fixed upon by women writers in a more positive manner. Celebrating feminine achievements they placed female characters there with assurance. There is already indication

31. Inglis Moore 133.

that a literary convention was evolving through these means. It is one with a true colonial flavour. We have examined firm settings of this kind devised by Vidal and Atkinson. But others, too, should be mentioned. The kitchen very briefly forms the background for conversation in Bowman's The Kangaroo Hunters as it does in the works of Spence. With the latter this applies more to her urban locations, and the same can be seen in Leakey's The Broad Arrow. To these authors we may perhaps add 'Little Jacob' and because of this writer's imaginative response to the domestic environment. What is apparent here is an ability to employ a common interior setting — and in these modest rural homes a living area of some significance — and to render observations and reflections concerning it with animation. An overt stance of this kind does hint at a woman's hand and a woman's consciousness. Occasionally, subtlety adds a certain charm to these short prose pieces, a point that is acknowledged by Depasquale, one of the very few who has given any attention to their author.[32]

I am not concerned with pointing out the melodramatic nature of Colonial Pen-Scratchings or, for example, the inappropriate use of sentimental, often poetic, and highly-coloured language, which becomes most apparent on reading the volume as a whole. That would be only too easy to do. However, it is worthwhile at this juncture considering a statement by Reed with regard to Victorian literature.

> Insofar as writers alter, attack, or ironically reverse stylizations or conventions, these conventions become indicators of new modes of perception, and often of some form of discontent as well.[33]

Such an observation applies to 'Little Jacob'; above all because Reed is accepting what he terms 'insignificant literature' into the canon of work he

32. Paul Depasquale, A Critical History of South Australian Literature 1836-1930 (Warradale, S.Aust.: Pioneer, 1978) 82.
33. John R. Reed, Victorian Conventions (Ohio: Ohio UP, 1975) 491.

is considering since, like Louis James, he believes that it is valuably indicative of the contemporary cultural ethos. While embracing the plot of the colonial romance and many of its motifs, 'Little Jacob' steps aside from a number of literary conventions, especially in regard to subject matter and setting. More particularly and fundamentally, the satiric and ironic vein which colours this work differentiates it substantially from earlier narratives. Whether the author is reacting against the limitations of such fiction or is simply writing out of the mainstream of colonial literature, it is difficult to know. Of course, both these ideas may apply.

In the small bush homesteads which interest 'Little Jacob' the depiction of the kitchen, often the main living area, is frequent. Plain and comfortable circumstances are convincingly evoked and the consistency of presentation reminds me of only two other authors, Vidal and Atkinson, both women.

While romance elements structure the plots 'Little Jacob' makes use of a seemingly well-known social background. 'Little Cary's Experiences as a "New Chum"' provides a typical example. In the denouement a newcomer arrives at 'Tangaroo' station, situated 'somewhere up the Murray' (p.95). The description of the large house, its 'flower-wreathed' verandah and garden of European and native trees, suggests a settled existence. As he comes through the garden the stranger is met by a child who offers him refreshment. Little girls are seen playing 'hop scotch' near the back door. The visitor enters the kitchen where a woman is making bread. Such a scene is appealing, and the interchange of the domestic and the wider community takes on a more personal note with the revelation that the woman is well known to the visitor. He had remembered her as a child newly arrived in the colony, and now dreamed of marriage; however, Cary has become a plump housewife in the intervening years. She is a wife of the owner of 'Tangaroo' station and mother of numerous children, and the author appropriately places her in the kitchen. How fitting, too, that the homestead is a 'large, rambling, wide-added house'

(p.95). It is worth noting that the surprise meeting in the bush provides a minor motif in the colonial narrative.

The same convention is employed in 'The Rose of Kanmantoo'. Within the kitchen at the Rundles' station a young woman is nursing her baby, while her husband rests on the settle nearby. Seeking shelter from bad weather, a young man is welcomed inside. There is a large fire burning and

> there was no other light needed in the room, for the rich red gleam threw a social glow up to the very rafters, the flames hissed and crackled in defiance of the storm outside, and the rashers of pork that were browning away for supper in the large frying pan, spat and sputtered in defiance of the flames. (p.11)

In such a light, and because he is inebriated, the newcomer does not recognize Fanny Rundle, but she knows him to be her rejected lover. She has made a marriage of convenience, but is not unhappy. As the author explains: 'But if a pretty homestead, a large sheeprun, and a nice riding horse make people happy...' (p.10). It is a tone commonly employed in these sketches. The young man departs the next morning but is found to have taken a number of valuables with him. The use of the kitchen as the main setting and the inclusion of the features I have just mentioned, indicate how far 'Little Jacob' has departed from the accepted elements of colonial prose fiction.

For all this, the warmth and conviviality of homestead life and its simple pleasures are represented in the <u>Pen-Scratchings</u>. At a deeper level, questions of adjustment to the environment have been addressed. Few authors thought to draw attention to dissatisfaction with improvized accommodation. However, one of 'Little Jacob''s characters, Letty May, could not accustom herself to bush life, to a slab hut with calico doors and windows, and a rough mud floor (p.13). In the main the interior settings are well-realized. This is, in part, due to the author's descriptive powers, which are not inconsiderable; additionally, one feels that it derives from an ability to impart the developing sense of social identity that was becoming associated with a

given region. Other extracts elsewhere in my thesis reveal a like proficiency. While there is unevenness in the style, it is evident that a narrative tradition is being maintained. It is one observed in earlier works and is seen in those by Howitt and Kingsley in the 1850s. It is a tradition having its origins in the simple domestic scenes as depicted in Rowcroft's Tales and, as I have implied elsewhere, appears even earlier, perhaps, in the domestic felicities adumbrated in Porter's Alfred Dudley. This quality of domestic wellbeing, I would contend, is an aspect which is valorised in the colonial novel from the earliest times. It is insisted upon by both male and female writers, although it is apparent that women are more ready to incorporate domestic realities into their texts. What is unusual in Colonial Pen-Scratchings is the tone in which the theme is addressed. Coming right at the end of the period under discussion, such an element is suggestive of a new mode of perception and in spite of constraints, both moral and literary, a certain freedom of expression. At another level, greater imaginative control and design would, of course, have resulted in a more substantial work.

Finally, and closely linked with the notion of domestic wellbeing, there is a homespun quality about these short stories; this, too, being more in evidence in the works of women. Indeed, it is revealed in their incorporation of the kitchen and its concerns into the imagined plan of the homestead. In Colonial Pen-Scratchings it is this attention to detail which impinges on the reader's consciousness today. Against such a background 'Little Jacob' unfolds vivid but unremarkable tales which, in one way, are largely typical of the evolving narrative form. That is to say, there is a predeliction for highly-coloured plots which are then underscored by the dictates of contemporary reality. That dichotomy is an obvious feature in the emerging tradition.

There is no reason why the locale of the kitchen should not have found a place in works known to have been written by men. With very few exceptions,

however, it is not, this helping to confirm my belief that 'Little Jacob' was the pseudonym of a woman, and probably one who resided in the region north of Adelaide soon after the colony was established in 1836, and who drew upon closely observed facts concerning the rural area and its social framework around the mid-century. The precision of description and the place of publication would lead one to think so. As to the subject matter included, one tends to think that this book was intended for a colonial audience.

Although not evading domestic issues — the majority of the colonial narratives are, after all, concerned with family life — men tended to avoid such a topic. No doubt they deemed it unworthy of their texts. And it seems reasonable to suppose that as pioneering gave way to a more settled, organized way of life, such an area again became the domain of womenfolk. This is at least implied in a number of the narratives, and is in contrast to the initial period of pioneering when primitive ways were unavoidable. We can say that the inclusion of such material added a fresh perspective to prose fiction. At the same time, the subject could engage readers in the frontier spirit. However, with the passage of time and a more settled existence, the wish to dispense with the practicalities and particularities of this aspect of colonial domesticity is understandable. Instead, numerous writers fixed upon and highlighted a more lofty theme — that of hospitality.

Given that the principal living area or parlour was at the imaginative centre of prose fiction up until 1860, attention is drawn to different modes of presentation: from the humblest communal room of the early settler to the comfortable drawing-room of the later and larger homestead, and from rooms similar to likenesses in the old country to those which are unconventional. Especially interesting are interior settings incorporating features which today we may consider Australian. It should be reiterated that the humble

communal room of the earliest stage of settlement was later to become of a type common to dwellings of those lowest in the European social hierarchy. Creative writers began to utilize a gamut of dwellings in the bush. As in the depiction of the homestead itself, interiors could then be seen across a wide narrative plane; some more prominent, some recessed and proportionately of less significance in terms of plot. Most often these houses are viewed synchronically, such a ploy allowing for the counterpointing of differing life styles. As observed in Ch.II, only occasionally have novelists mounted an extended sequential mode of presentation. Vidal imagined a chronological sequence of homes belonging to one family, the Langs, in Bengala and though the references are brief, there is a sense of continuity here. Kingsley has achieved this with the homestead 'Baroona' in Geoffry Hamlyn. However, one must say that the processes of domestic change have not been dealt with creatively or in any depth in this body of work.

Within these locations household appointments stand for the necessities, the practicalities, and the refinements of life; they represent the civilizing hand of the European and comprised, therefore, the mental furniture of the reading public. Often pictured is the fire, a homely image and popular in nineteenth century fiction. Here, then, is the background against which are enacted a host of domestic episodes and, importantly, scenes of celebration, the latter incorporating the expression of 'communal delight' which derives from the ancient form of the romance.[34] In this setting the family is found, and encapsulated here is the public role of women and social expectations concerning them, a matter which will be taken up subsequently. Images of cosy enclosure proliferate and writers, eager to draw correspondences between this fictional dwelling and its European counterpart, highlighted cultural links and traditional ties. These could seldom be expressed of the building's exterior; the interior could be so devised. Along with

34. Beer 64.

homely attributes and virtues the colonial ideals are asserted and associated with household life in the great majority of instances. Stability, security, and permanence — inherent in the concept of a homestead in the hinterland — are emphasized when interior scenes are turned to account. The set-piece of the parlour gives expression to all these concerns; accordingly such a setting becomes the received image of domestic settlement. In this regard, from homely tale to high romance and over a period of three decades, the imaginative response of major and minor writers to the homestead interior varied very little.

On consideration it can be seen that conditions occasion, and surely propose, an evasion of the less palatable features of domestic settlement. From our own standpoint it is evident that in the nexus of literary convention and actual experience real difficulties must have arisen for writers and, above all, when such experience came outside that generally formulated in prose fiction. Here the constraints of the Victorian age appear to have reinforced the need to follow the accepted patterns which characterize the romance. Given the evidence of these novels one would agree with Houghton that the Victorians of this period 'refused to look at life candidly'.[35] The avoidance of some domestic features proposes a shift in emphasis — a dislocation of interest — from one area to another. Accordingly, the main room is that most often depicted while the verandah, an area commonly linked to it in the homesteads spatial design, later formed a useful adjunct as a setting. With women authors the duties and pleasures of the kitchen are not forgotten; however we learn nothing of the difficulties and inconveniences there — those we may guess at or may learn from diaries and letters of the day.[36] It has

35. Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870 (New Haven: Yale UP, 1957) 395.

36. See, for example, Louisa Meredith, Notes and Sketches and My Home in Tasmania (London, 1852), Jane Watts, Family Life in South Australia Fifty-Three Years Ago. Dating from October, 1837 (Adelaide, 1890; facs. rpt. Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1978), and Eve Pownall, Australian Pioneer Women, 5th ed. enl. (Melbourne: Currey O'Neil, 1980).

now become plain that the homestead was a precinct of which not all spatial areas were visible and this shift in emphasis is a major structural element in the works overall. The parlour is not only the front room; it is a 'front' for other domestic areas which given the exigencies of settlement might have revealed a somewhat rudimentary existence in actuality. I am alluding, for example, to the circumscribed nature of the colonial homestead; to the extremely limited living space it may have provided. In these novels such a factor remains undeveloped in dramatic or in psychological terms.

Despite some omissions a firm sense of place is apparent in numbers of these works, and concerning the principal room, a wealth of detail. But scenes carry conviction and art is achieved not merely when fine descriptive passages colour a text. In the case of the parlour one would want to know how the inhabitants of such a dwelling arranged their lives, and what they thought. Some of these questions will be answered in subsequent chapters. Colonial aspirations were tempered by colonial conditions and the dichotomy has only sometimes been defined. Women writers, adept at revealing diverse aspects of the burgeoning culture, are remembered for their depiction of the domestic circle. Women, too, have well conveyed the willingness of their sex to create a home drawn upon the European model but of necessity adapted to circumstances. One senses that an act of this kind was in actuality a strategy for survival; as such it seems to have caught the imagination and captured the conscience of fellow women. For many of their narratives draw attention to the small victories of the parlour. Overall, however, civilized social proceedings take place in the principal living area and such material will be more closely examined in Ch.VII. Even now it has become evident that the domestic image is fundamental to this body of fiction.

CH. IV.

THE VERANDAH

But about this verandah. (Geoffry Hamlyn, p.397)

One of the earliest references that I can find to the verandah in prose fiction relating to Australia occurs in Christie's A Love Story of 1841. As I have noted earlier, the small homestead with this architectural feature belongs to an English baronet, Sir Henry Delmé, but it resembles

> the common weather-boarded cottage of the early settler, — a wide verandah was over the front entrance, — and two small rooms, the exact width of this, jutted out on either side of it. (Vol. II, p.241)

Like many bush dwellings in fiction it is seen through the eyes of a newcomer, and so in this chapter we share his feelings concerning the building's rude appearance and its isolation. Typical of early references to the verandah the description is brief and simply done. Christie, who wrote under the pseudonym of 'A Bushman', had been resident in New South Wales for several years before the publication of his work in Sydney, and must have been aware of the attributes and value of this sheltered living area; and yet like other early authors he draws attention merely to the verandah's concrete and material details. Some time was to elapse before authors felt free to employ the area as an inherent part of the homestead dwelling or a locale against which they could convey aspects of Australian colonial life or the texture of its social relationships.

A major architectural feature providing additional shade and shelter and serving to protect the building itself, the verandah is indicative of the practicality and adaptability required of European newcomers in order to combat climate and conditions in the southern continent. Serle sees the verandah as the first local architectural characteristic to develop in the Australian colony. Like many, he regards it as 'a transmission from India

and other tropical imperial possessions'.[1] Another view is formulated by Bell who examines the matter more comprehensively, and especially as it relates to Australia.[2] He writes:

> The origins of the veranda are not a regional or even a national historical issue. The essential principle of shading the walls by means of a horizontal extension of the roof is so ancient as to be a fundamental axiom of building. Verandas and loggias are known throughout Europe, and indeed although the word is commonly taken to be an English borrowing from India, there is serious doubt whether it is in fact Hindi or Portuguese in origin, reflecting uncertainty whether the form's origins are exotic or indigenous to Europe. The veranda is known wherever Europeans have settled in warm climates. (p.89)

Citing Freeland's Architecture in Australia, Ian Evans points out that the verandah came to be established in Australia between 1800 and 1810, and he continues: 'Such was the desirability of a verandah that its presence as an essential feature of an Australian house was often stressed in real estate advertisements before about 1850'.[3]

This addition to domestic dwellings was to become almost mandatory in the hinterland. Peter Freeman points to the verandah's early appearance and states: 'By the 1830s the verandah had become widely accepted in the more substantial town and rural residences... '.[4] He cites some early references and descriptive passages amongst which is one by Harris whose Settlers and Convicts of 1847 depicts the erection of a slab hut in which the addition of a verandah is mentioned (pp.41-2). Harris makes use of such an area in his novel The Emigrant Family where it appears that colonists have become accustomed to the novel living space.

1. Serle 12.
2. Peter Bell, Timber and Iron (St. Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1984). Footnote omitted here.
3. Evans 8.
4. Peter Freeman, The Homestead: A Riverina Anthology (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1982) 56. For further details see Ch. 3 and notes to same.

As Evans has observed, it was due to the colder climate in Tasmania that here 'the unadorned face of the Georgian house continued to be seen in large numbers'.[5] For Robert Hughes, Tasmania was a 'Georgian frontier'.[6] Interesting, then, for my purposes is a painting of 1835 by John Glover: A View of the Artist's House and Garden, Mills Plains which represents exactly such a traditional dwelling in the Tasmanian hinterland.[7] It is fronted by an English cottage garden remarkable for its assortment of European plants. In this painting European species are in vivid contrast to the encompassing natural vegetation. On the left, however, is a rustic building (perhaps the artist's studio) from which has been thrown forward a rudimentary verandah, this providing shade and shelter below. In a number of ways the subject matter can be seen to reflect upon aspects of the colonial mentality. More obviously, practicality and adaptability are pictured here. However, on the mainland it would seem that the need and the desire for comfortable living conditions and for greater protection beyond that provided by the unadorned dwellings of the earliest period of settlement soon became paramount. Indeed, innovation gave rise to extended verandahs in vernacular architecture.

That such a feature should be fixed upon by writers keen to provide local colour in their narratives is not surprising. In the selection and organization of the material available the verandah had about it a touch of the exotic, the allure of a life that was antipodean. In responding to this area of living space and its near surroundings authors were singularly placed to draw upon aspects of colonial culture; to evoke a feeling

5. Evans 8.
6. Hughes, The Fatal Shore (London: Collins Harvill, 1987) 126.
7. Reproduced in Bonyhady 50.

peculiar to the hinterland or, again, to point up circumstances which could give rise to local traditions. That such traditions could take time to emerge in Australian literature, or that narrative conventions might vary from source material is, of course, axiomatic to my study.

At the simplest level the verandah of fiction is enhanced with the addition of creepers, vines, and flowers. The associative value of known and traditional plants can be considered; again, the reader's imagination and curiosity can be stimulated with the mention of native species. Closely connected with this location is the garden — a subject dealt with subsequently. Animals, likewise, might be envisaged on the verandah — both European and indigenous creatures.

Events enacted might be of an intimate and private nature, or public and social, and in the case of the latter, due to the verandah's location, activities occurring there could signal an existence in some ways radically different from that of the homeland. There was, for example, the possibility of depicting a way of life closely connected with the outdoors. Therefore, such a setting could be functionally employed since, as a transitional area midway between a dwelling's interior and exterior, it could help advance the plot by providing a background for the interplay of the domestic and the communal — and in this case the rural — life that lay beyond. Here, also, characters might recall the past; or dream of the future. But of greater significance is the fact that, like the dwelling itself, the verandah took on metaphorical meaning, and several writers would seem to have employed the setting in this sense. The possibilities inherent in the new land could be surveyed from this point; at the same time writers made acknowledgement of processes, both benign and intimidating, which were connected with the integration of the European into the hinterland. Finally, the presence of such a feature, or its absence, could reveal as much concerning the evolutionary nature of a dwelling as

it could about the formation of a colonial social hierarchy, these ideas being encapsulated in the homestead dwelling of fiction. The foregrounding of the verandah only becomes apparent as time elapses; it is to be remembered that novelists are breaking new ground here.

In the decade of the forties a few authors began to see the possibilities that this area could hold for their narratives. One of these was Harris who, in describing the Kables' dwelling in The Emigrant Family, felt obliged to explain the term 'verandah', and does so rather stiffly in the following passage:

> a bush cottage, with that appanage almost universal throughout the colony, as a protection from the sunbeams during the hottest period of the day, a verandah. (p.76)

Here something of the mandatory nature of this appurtenance comes across in Harris's use of the word 'appanage', and with the term both rights and privileges are acknowledged in a skilful manner. In addition, the reader learns something of the social standing of the occupants and this notion is verified with the delineation of the well-kept interior.

In Vol. I, Ch. 8 the small homestead is visited by the English settler, Willoughby Bracton, who is Reuban Kable's friend. As the two men approach they are greeted by a number of dogs, working animals, it seems, though one of them is a household pet. A common feature, you would think, and yet dogs, especially pet dogs, do not have a large part to play in early colonial fiction. However, in this scene the dogs group themselves around the woman of the house at the approach of a stranger. In this way the author stresses the vulnerability of the young woman and praises the qualities of these animals. Harris does not use the locale of the verandah at this point, but simply places Mary Kable 'in front of the verandah' as she welcomes the newcomer (p.79). In the same work the police-magistrate

going to investigate a charge of cruelty towards assigned labourers at the Mercers' elaborate homestead is put off guard when he is warmly welcomed on the verandah by the lady of the house and her children.

Elsewhere Harris visualizes a 'weather-boarded cottage', 'with four good rooms, and a verandah in front and behind' (p.92): the home of the Bracton family. In one episode the Bracton womenfolk, alone at 'the Rocky Springs', greet Reuban Kable at the end of a long ride undertaken to protect them from the imminent attack of bushrangers. 'All hastened out to the front verandah. The traveller rode up as their eager hands contended which should open to him the garden-gate' (p.374). By this stage the dwelling has become well-established, and with the mention of specific details the reader has been given an idea of the permanence and degree of comfort which has been attained by the 'emigrant family'. For example, the fact that there are two verandahs gives us some idea of the extent of the small dwelling. There is also a garden, but here is an evocation rather than a description of a garden. However, it is an area which, typically in narratives of the time, is pictured as being fenced off from the surrounding bush, a pattern of confinement which may well mirror contemporary reality, but which is singled out for special mention in prose fiction. This matter will be discussed at length in my next chapter. It is sufficient to say now that the novelist's intention here seems to be to define the boundary between a domestic and therefore civilized locale, and the bush wilderness beyond.

And yet, at this point in Harris's narrative the untamed bushland does not pose a danger to the new settlers; rather, savage and malevolent forces from within the culture of the newcomers themselves jeopardize this domestic existence. Here the verandah, because of its location, provides the background for a dramatic event; that is to say, the arrival of an outsider. With his warning comes the reminder of the threat of a confront-

ation between disruptive outside forces and those the author has represented at the homestead.

Tucker was also among the few writers of fiction who mention the verandah in the forties; however it does not become the setting for events in Ralph Rashleigh. Tucker valorizes a small home and garden with an English appearance — the one that is a welcome sight to the assigned labourer Rashleigh after a long journey on foot. The garden reminds the traveller of the mother country, but the house appears to be in the vernacular tradition. Amongst other details, Tucker imagines 'a verandah ranging along the whole front, around the rough untrimmed wooden pillars of which a few parasitical plants had been trained' (p.127). The particulars here are slight, but conveyed to the reader is a significant amount of information. There is the notion of the comfort possible in colonial housing, with the associated idea that this has been achieved, not only through pioneering endeavour, but through adjustment to antipodean conditions. The reference to the pillars adds a picturesque note, but it equally alludes to colonial ingenuity and to expediency. A decade later Howitt refers to this same architectural feature, but it is to a dwelling on a much grander scale. Here the neat homestead, endowed with both English and colonial attributes, characterizes all that is to be admired in the settlement of the colony.

Although not so unequivocally drawn, Lieutenant Marline's home 'Kurryjong' in Lucy Marline has similar desirable qualities. It has 'a trim and well-cultivated garden', while the verandah casts its 'welcome shade' round three sides of the house. The 'neatness and taste' of the dwelling 'spoke much for the character of its master' (p.7) as likewise did the Marshalls' cottage just mentioned. With Baker's story, then, the reader need not be surprised when the Marline family at breakfast one morning and seeing a stranger on their verandah, at once offer him their hospitality and friendship. He has, it seems, been lost 'in the bush' and is glad to receive their help.

Such scenes of welcome, the given setting, and the offering of food, shelter and friendship, are essentially simple narrative actions, yet they are enhanced by their universality. All from the decade of the forties, they are the first encountered in Australian narrative prose in which the verandah is employed as a background. With the theme of hospitality a major one, the expression of welcome is to be found in numerous works and one feels that the strength of such passages stems from the mythic impulse invested in them. In terms of fiction there is traditional and symbolic value here; furthermore, to an ancient literary theme comes Australian colouring. These scenes give substance to the notion of hospitality and enable creative writers to figure forth a vital aspect of communal life. Events of this kind were to become a part of local custom and, not surprisingly, soon became a popular element in the developing Australian novel.

Around the mid-century, with a rise in prosperity due to the success of pastoral and agricultural pursuits, and with confidence engendered through wider settlement, many sizeable dwellings had appeared in the hinterland. One writer has seen homesteads of this kind, with 'their spreading plans and encompassing verandahs [as] unconsciously the first words in an Australian building vernacular'.[8] We know much concerning them from letters and journals of the period and from travellers' accounts. As to the major homesteads (and less important ones), we learn from artists of the period, as I have mentioned elsewhere. One recalls in particular Eugen von Guérard's paintings of homesteads in Victoria in the 1850s and 1860s. It seems clear that by this time verandahs were widespread, reasons of prestige as well as utility combining to create them. Certainly, writers of narrative prose, initially content in the main with the simple, unadorned dwellings we tend to link with the earliest period of settlement, now seized upon more

8. Boyd 28.

elaborate homes as their favoured locations and these, as we have seen, patterned the fictional landscape of the mid-century.

Of those writing before 1850 Harris undoubtedly employs the locale of the verandah to best advantage, though the subject attracted others. It is noteworthy that all refer to the concrete detail of proportion, and this could be said to mark the beginning of a cluster of adjectives connected with the location. The notion of spaciousness is thus becoming incorporated into the narative tradition, and one would surmise that it is a reflection upon the possibility of expansiveness, in both physical and material terms, in the new land. A mental and emotional expansiveness is formulated here above all, however.

One other point should be observed. As we have seen in Lucy Marline, Baker adds to the notion of proportion with reference to a further property: that of the welcoming aspect of a shady verandah. Strangely, very few of the earlier colonial writers alluded to the glare imposed by climatic and environmental conditions but it is implied with the mention of such an attribute, and the appreciation of shade is natural enough. By these means a further and attractive dimension is attached to colonial habitation. Most commonly, this is achieved by taking up the viewpoint of those approaching the dwelling, as I have demonstrated in Ch. II. As a result, attention is drawn to the quality of the shelter offered, this serving to heighten the emotional colouring that is coming to be associated with the homestead. Very occasionally the verandah is seen as from the interior. Here, too, shelter and protection are available but in this case it is an extension of domestic living space, the furthermost part, and an area exposed to outside influences. The following will serve to demonstrate some of these ideas.

As we saw in Ch. II, novelists felt the need to report on the homestead's exterior, and they also wrote about gardens and, less often, outbuildings. The verandah began to be one feature which was generally

mentioned in the decade of the fifties. In dimension, verandahs are found to be 'wide', or 'deep', or 'broad', while their shady, comfortable and welcoming aspects are to be expected in these narratives. In Clara Morison, Spence can visualize 'The Barn' as

> a large low building, thatched with reeds, with a broad verandah all round it, and French windows with green venetian blinds in great abundance. (p.322)

Its name and some external details here propose a rude dwelling, but this is belied with the mention of the verandah and its appurtenances. Spence is giving prominence to the continuity of European architectural tradition in the southern hemisphere. However, the combination of crudeness and comfort may have surprised readers of the period, such an element adding a dramatic edge to a description of this type. The dichotomy inherent in such a passage is one that authors chose to emphasize in their accounts of colonial life.

The following is the initial description of Mr. Mortimer's station in 'Emmeline', one of Clacy's tales:

> the house itself was built of stone, and was large and commodious, with a shady verandah, which was nearly hidden beneath clusters of wild creepers and ferns. (Vol. I, p.61)

An attractive, substantial home is described here. One would infer that a degree of comfort has been attained by the inhabitants, and it is borne out as the story unfolds. In this case an exotic note is struck with the mention of vegetation which is both ornamental and protective; it posits settlement of some duration and a degree of acclimatization. Readers accustomed to the temperate climbers of Europe may have been surprised at the reference to these more exotic and vigorous plants, which may have seemed to them to typify Australian conditions.

Again, in Adventures in Australia, Lee pictures Mr. Onslow's homestead as a 'long low white house'. Amongst other details are, notably, 'an extensive kitchen and flower-garden' encircling the home and a green verandah which 'shaded the front and the sides of the house' and helped render it 'a perfect picture of a settler's home' (p.324). This is surely what Lee and the majority of creative writers of the mid-century wished to share with their readers. For almost all authors of the 1850s, most of whom chose rural settings, imagined similar appealing comfortable, and often idealized homes. The examples just given are typical of simple descriptive passages concerning the verandah during the decade and it can be observed that they contain the basic attributes I have alluded to, that is to say, those of spaciousness and shadiness. As is most common, too, this seemingly extensive and sheltered locale is pictured as from an exterior vantage point.

Reworking known material, some writers of this later period chose to follow earlier models and simply alluded to special features, such as concrete and material details, which had come by now to be assigned to the verandah. These added local colour or helped explain colonial circumstances and hence attracted, one would conjecture, an interested response. For example, Howitt in Tallangetta alludes to the use of columns of tree trunks, typical of Australian vernacular architecture, though seldom mentioned in contemporary literature. Unacceptable as they must have been to many, Howitt finds them aesthetically pleasing, placing them on a colonnade at the homestead 'Tallangetta'. Here he describes pillars which were 'merely of white gum-trees, cut just when they had shed their outward bark, and therefore ... as round, clean, and white as marble' (Vol. I, p.29). It is noteworthy that the author, while accepting and even admiring the vagaries of bush architecture, feels the need to compare the material of such a structure with a known and traditional form, one that harks back to Europe. This is in line with the tone of the work as a whole. It looks back to Europe, eventually returning its leading figures there.

The privacy possible on front verandahs which overlook gardens is mentioned by Atkinson, and is apparent in events at 'Murrumbowrie' in Gertrude. The author often interrupts the flow of her story to divulge information about homestead life. In this case she notes that in her experience visitors often must enter houses at the rear. This is convenient when arriving by horseback as servants are then available to assist one there (p.62). Vidal, in Bengala, describes verandah-rooms which are used for various purposes (Vol. I, p.25). From a passage concerning 'Westbrooke' we learn of 'two other small sleeping-closets, called "verandah-rooms", being enclosed off the deep, double verandah' and with the following account, the reader begins to comprehend something of the rhythm of life there: 'and they served for a passing guest, or for the boys when at home' (Vol. II, p.194). Such a remark reminds us that Vidal, and Atkinson too, are authors who moved beyond simple descriptions to convey something of the prevailing practices at a colonial homestead.

Another feature which appealed to the creative writer was the growing of vegetation in connection with the area. Only several examples need be mentioned. Exotic plants in pots on the steps leading up to the verandah of 'Tangaroo' colour one of the settings in Colonial Pen-Scratchings and reveal the interests and aspirations of the owners (p.96). To take another example from the same work: the trellis-work on a verandah is here 'one mass of roses and passion-flower' (p.120). The central location in Bowman's The Kangaroo Hunters likewise illustrates this telling combination of flowers. At the isolated residence a broad verandah with columns is host to European species while the portico is 'curtained with draperies of the rich flowering climbers of Australia' (p.435). Here a brief scene of welcome is enacted.

The two latter references would imply that European and native species can mingle on the homestead, and such a feature, rich in its connotations,

becomes a popular and credible aspect of the fictional dwelling of the period. Examples will be found both in this chapter and elsewhere. Ramsey, in A Romance of the Bush, can picture a verandah covered with vines at an inland station — to European taste, perhaps, exotic ornamentation (p.4). In considering the topic in more depth in my next chapter I make the observation that the passage of time can be effected with reference to established creepers, as can the notion of adaption to climatic conditions.

The passage of time has given rise to the verandahed form of dwelling, as I have noted above, and accordingly to the availability of the subject matter under discussion here. And these well-established homes seem naturally to have appeared at a later period than the earlier and essentially simple habitation described by authors of the 1830s and 1840s, but more particularly of the later decade, such as Christie, Rowcroft, McCombie, Tucker and Harris and a few that are lesser known. By the 1850s a good number of authors were attempting to define and assess the evolving colonial culture. Interestingly for the purposes of my study several writers of prose fiction drew attention to architectural development. One of these was Sidney in Gallops and Gossips. Here the author chronicles the life of Alfred Barnard whose bark hut, in the course of time, 'had changed into a verandahed cottage' (p.222). Implied here are materially improved conditions and, presumably, a more elevated social status. Kingsley mentions a similar circumstance in Geoffry Hamlyn. Likewise, in Bengala, Vidal reveals how 'Langville' has taken the place of an earlier home on the property. The new house boasts 'a wide verandah round three sides of the building (Vol. I, p.35). Thus 'Langville' is altogether more substantial and elegant than 'Warratah Brush', the other main homestead in Vidal's work. The latter is more correctly termed a cottage and is a simple building fronted by a verandah. Vidal is well aware of the colonial social hierarchy at the mid-century and in her works a range of establishments forms the back-

ground to her delineation of the social environment of a rural settlement.

While writers of prose fiction could evoke settings of some credibility with reference to features of this kind, such were the attributes of the area that a larger imaginative framework seemed called for. The subject matter was exploited by a number of writers. The most notable and consistent of these were Vidal, Atkinson and Kingsley and it is significant therefore that each chose the setting to commence a novel: Vidal in Bengala, Atkinson in Cowanda, and Kingsley in Geoffry Hamlyn.

The establishing scene of Bengala takes place on the verandah fronting the unpretentious 'Warratah Brush', which is the home of the Herberts who have settled in New South Wales at some distance from Sydney in the 1840s. The narrative commences:

> The sun had reached the horizon, and the fringe of gum-trees on the edge of the hill was thrown out in strong relief by the bright, intense light behind, while the rest of the wooded country lay in shade.
> The evening breeze was faintly rising, and stirred the leaves of bignonias and cedar trees in front of a low, steep-roofed cottage, in the verandah of which a lady sat, alternately patting a huge kangaroo dog and speaking to a man who stood without the gate which separated the verandah from the yard. (Vol. I, p.1)

With appropriate references the author is able to establish her story convincingly; although as they read on some might say, heavy-handedly. Allusions to the gum-trees and the bignonia, the bright, intense light, the verandahed cottage, and finally the kangaroo-dog, immediately place the story as Australian. Within a few paragraphs words such as slip-rails, the bush, an opossum, and the expression 'up the country' add to our impressions, while references to a number of colonial circumstances serve to confirm them.

In Ch. II we learn of the passion-flower and bignonia which 'completely covered the roof and the verandah' of the home which is pictured thus:

> Warratah Brush was a pretty specimen of the generality of colonial cottages, such as they were before people began to build those comfortable stone houses which are now becoming so numerous. It consisted of four rooms on the ground floor, leading into each other without any passage. At the end of the deep verandah there were two small closets boarded in, which went by the name of 'verandah rooms', one was used as a spare bedroom for travellers, the other for a kind of pantry or store. (pp.24-25)

Vidal's concern with the groundplan and the physical details of the dwelling, and later its close surroundings, is typical of her craft. That lends an immediacy and intimacy to the dwellings in her works not matched by many writers of the period. In the passage above the sequence of home building, surely of fundamental importance in social terms, is clearly defined as, in the last section, are the contingencies of everyday life. And already, it is demonstrated, terms are being appropriated in response to colonial conditions. Vidal places her characters convincingly in these dwellings, and often catches their dialogue in fine style. The discourse on the verandah in the opening chapter of Bengala is of a formal nature: between Lynch, an assigned convict labourer, and Miss Herbert. Thus the two social levels which provide the background to the narrative are prefigured at the novel's beginning, as is the unease which exists between them, and which quickly becomes apparent as the plot unfolds.

In the first of these extracts it is noticeable that the woman of the house is placed on the verandah with a dog. Because of the circumstances it may be thought to guard her. It is also made clear that she is separated from the yard, and the convict labourer, by a fence, this serving as a barrier in both concrete and symbolic terms. Now this is an example, often seen, of a boundary which appears to hold at bay that which lies beyond. It would seem to be envisaged in the numerous allusions to the fenced nature of the colonial garden and additionally, though less often mentioned, in the references to the edging of the homestead verandah. And that space, as I will presently discuss in more detail, although an intermediate area, is the defining edge of the domestic dwelling. Though still offering the home-

stead's shelter and protection, it is simultaneously open to outside influences, both benign or more intimidating; so that mixed emotions are expressed in connection with such scenes. I believe a schematic presentation of this kind is revealed in the opening paragraphs of Vidal's work, and thus the scene most appropriately opens the novel since tension serves to trigger the reader's interest.

Two elderly gentlemen reposing on a verandah are depicted in the opening scene of Cowanda. Both settlers, they have much in common, although something which differentiates them is the convict tag in the background of one of them, the wealthy Rylston. Vidal had set her Bengala some twenty years in the past, but in Cowanda the system of transportation has not yet been forgotten. It seems appropriate, however, that elderly settlers who are neighbours should be found in conversation on the 'broad verandah' of Captain Dell's comfortable homestead — that which gives its name to Atkinson's romance. As in Bengala, a number of colonial allusions very soon place the antipodean locale.

As I have said, the passage of time has given rise to more substantial dwellings, one quintessential part of these being their verandahs; again, the passing of time and the completion of certain tasks have made possible the pursuit of leisure in such a spot. The concept may be represented in this imaginary world in general terms, or more specifically, with regard the lives of those who have helped pioneer the land. The latter idea is illustrated here. Two men of differing backgrounds, but bound by colonial experience and interests, have time to contemplate the future in the privacy of the verandah. In this quiet exchange the orientation is forward-looking and is in contrast to the following example where the novelist uses the location to focus on events of the past.

The opening paragraphs of Geoffry Hamlyn convey the characteristic mood of the work and establish the mode of story-telling. The recollections

are commenced as a number of the principal characters are at leisure on the verandah at 'Baroona', one of the stations to play a major part in the story. Interest is soon drawn to a horse nearby. It is evident that the animal has been of some importance in the lives of the observers. Here, in Ch. I, there is a combination of both European and antipodean elements, and evidence of their co-existence, and this is fitting in a family who has lived for some considerable time in the region.

At both 'Baroona' and 'Garoopna' and at Hamlyn's own station, 'the Durnongs', the verandah is continually shown to play a large part in the lives of the inhabitants, and scenes of a private and a more general nature are played out here. An example of the former takes place in Ch. XXVII when Sam Buckley of 'Baroona' visits 'Garoopna', the comfortable station homestead of the Brentwoods. Moving through the house he comes to the cool of the verandah, and to the exotic flora that can be raised in the Antipodes: 'tangled passion-flowers, jessamines and magnolias'. From here the grandeur and mystery of the distant landscape is doubly emphasized. Not only does Kingsley have his young protagonist view the scene 'through an arch in the dark mass of verdure which clothes the trellis-work, only broken through in this one place, as though to make a frame for the picture', but, in addition, the brilliance of the vista is intensified because it is seen from the cool gloom experienced on the verandah. There is often in Kingsley's writing a rich suggestiveness which is not often matched by the other authors of the colonial romances.

To contradict such a statement, Kingsley now introduces a cavalcade of animals — a clumsy catalogue of both domestic and native creatures — to entertain the young squatter. Sinnett, whose essay appeared three years prior to Geoffry Hamlyn, would surely have singled out the passage for comment. Castigating the 'unnatural crowding together of local peculiar-

ities' the critic argues that such features detract from a work of art.[9] However, the catalogue is not unique in this period.[10] Perhaps the author introduced such a feature in order to demonstrate the co-existence possible amongst such creatures around the homestead or, of importance at this juncture, to tell us something about one member of the family, Alice Brentwood. Here on the verandah Sam Buckley meets the beautiful young woman who, much later, is depicted feeding her birds in the same setting. The contrast of these two events, and the circumstances surrounding them, is striking. In the earlier incident the story-teller returns the youthful couple to this attractive spot where 'a cool wind came up, bending the flowers, swinging the creepers to and fro, and raising a rushing sound, like the sea, from the distant forest' (p.228). Throughout, the author has portrayed an idealized hero and heroine and an idyllic setting and yet the verandah itself, living space and a concrete reality, is firmly drawn.

That the verandah at 'Garoopna' holds a special place in Hamlyn's memory is made clear in Ch. XLIV where a scene of a more public nature is played out. The coolness experienced there provides comfort in the extreme conditions of high summer, and, taking things easy, family and friends gather and relax. 'One thing only was wanted to make it perfect, and that was niggers', writes Hamlyn, or rather Henry Kingsley, in a facetious mood, surely, as he continues the recollections, deliberately drawing attention to the energy that can be expended smoking and drinking in such a place in the heat. Of course, the notion of a plantation is evoked here, and critics have in fact noted the West Indian connections in the Kingsley family.[11]

9. Barnes, ed., The Writer in Australia 20-1.
10. See also One False Step 227 and The Bushranger Ch.XII.
11. See Mellick Chs. 1,2 and The Oxford History of Australian Literature 49.

But it is a light-hearted passage, and such an element is all too absent from these early narratives. Kingsley, in a waggish mood, emphasizes the fact by commencing the paragraph with the words: 'Now that broad cool verandah of Captain Brentwood's, with its deep recesses of shadow, was a place not to be lightly spoken of' (p.397).

The digression over, Hamlyn returns to the setting. At this point in the story there is time for reflection of another sort — not related to fantasy, but to the colonial past. 'But about this verandah. It was the model and type of all verandahs'. After a joke at the expense of the Irish, who had originally occupied the homestead, Hamlyn goes on to speak of the creepers to be observed there: 'the native passion-flower, scarlet and orange, was tangled up with the common purple sarsaparilla and the English honeysuckle and jessamine'. Earlier we have learnt of the passion-flowers, jessamines, magnolias, and the red china roses growing there. Our understanding of the place, and of Hamlyn's affection for it, is facilitated by Kingsley's emphasis on its beauty, and the creepers tell us much about the homestead.

And now Hamlyn returns to the time, and the extreme conditions, which concern him: 'In this verandah, one blazing morning, sat Mrs. Buckley and Alice making believe to work' (p.398). A period of leisure is pictured here and the details bring the scene to mind. There is mention of a pet magpie, a colonial element; and reference to the fact that one of the party is reading The Pickwick Papers, which stresses ties with the mother country. In such an episode the verandah becomes an extension of the house, domestic life spilling outside due to climatic conditions and, moreover, the possibility of time for recreation. In the overall structure of the book this scene of happy domesticity is in dramatic contrast to the events which precede it: the murderous attack of the bushrangers and its aftermath.

By all of these means — and other passages are recalled elsewhere in my thesis — considerable emphasis has been placed on the verandah. It is one of the main spheres of domestic activity in Geoffry Hamlyn. One imagines it possible that Kingsley has drawn upon events remembered and has exploited details of his own experience at stations he visited in south-eastern Australia in the 1850s.[12]

These few examples, to which I also allude in my next chapter, might serve to demonstrate that of the writers of the earlier colonial novel Kingsley employs this locale to best advantage. He draws on all those features which I earlier proposed could be derived from the subject matter and this adds both colour and movement to the text of Geoffry Hamlyn. Paradoxically, what in fact emerges are moments of composure, since the possibility of leisure allows time for repose; time to recall the past. Hamlyn's 'recollections' are presented in response to precisely such a moment on the verandah at 'Baroona' in Ch. I, the point at which the story opens.

These moments of relaxation and the recollection of the past and the attempt to understand it, are part of a larger structure, one supposes. It might be described as a period of stock-taking and a climate of expansion with time for digression and discursiveness now that the initial period of settlement is over and the colonial venture well under way. Such a period is being recreated in Kingsley's romance. When we consider these factors, and with this whole idea in mind, it is not surprising then that a greater number of novels make their appearance in the decade after the mid-century than in the two decades prior to 1850. A few of these must to some degree

12. Details of Kingsley's life in Australia and a photograph of the verandahed homestead 'Langi Willi' which was visited by Kingsley are included in Mellick's The Passing Guest.

be seen to respond to Sinnett's comments of 1856 concerning the 'feasibility of writing Australian novels; ... into the suitability of Australian life and scenery for the novel writers' purpose; and, secondly, into the right manner of their treatment'.[13] I am not implying that the response was in fact a deliberate one. One would infer that both Sinnett's remarks and this increased publication are simply indicative of the contemporary climate of opinion.

With regard the verandah, as I have already intimated, two authors besides Kingsley from the 1850s are particularly recalled. Hence periods of relaxation and informal conversation, small gatherings and more formal discourse: this subject matter has been well rendered by Atkinson and Vidal. Along with Kingsley, as we have seen, these two writers attempted to realize as well as to visualize the nature of circumstances in rural Australia by their choice of the verandah as background for a narrative's establishing scene. That is fitting in the colonial context. It is significant too in terms of what it can tell the reader of the conflation of the domestic and the larger world beyond in Australia around the mid-century.

Passages in Atkinson remind us that the woman authors are foremost in depicting domestic scenes, often of a routine nature. In a quiet way these are revealing of social structures and evolving colonial mores and add an attractive dimension to their works. And so when the young heroine, Gertrude, is seen arranging flowers on the verandah at 'Murrumbowrie' we learn something of the customs there. Similarly, in visualizing the Burtons' comfortable residence in the Adelaide Hills Franc places the family both inside and in the close vicinity of the home. Sometimes they are seen on the verandah which 'extended round the house' (p.73), and on occasion the

13. Barnes, ed., The Writer in Australia 8-9.

area permits conversations of a private nature. Although this writer's response to the colonial subject matter is limited by her overt didacticism certain set-pieces, with family members on the verandah or in the garden, remain with the reader to hint at Franc's responsiveness to colonial ways. A scene is pictured where 'doors and windows were thrown widely open to catch the fresh breeze, and the whole household were scattered about enjoying the evening ...' (p.135). The integration of these settlers and their residence into the landscape is most aptly outlined with this vivid image and the manner in which the dwelling is being utilized here is a reminder that a decided development in Australian life and its literature is taking place. It is hard to imagine that the metaphor of a house 'thrown widely open' could have appeared in an earlier decade.

Vidal, also, employs the verandah as an extension of the living area of 'Langville' in Bengala: it becomes the background for similar kinds of occasions. In this way she has visitors standing there in Vol. I, p.52 and, as examined in more detail presently, Isabel Lang standing alone there and contemplating the vista before her. From this point she sees her father returning home on horseback.

> But some one was to be seen riding through the wet, braving the falling torrents, and guiding the slipping horse over the now hidden ruts and stumps. He came nearer, into the entrance road. The only gate of which Langville could boast, was heard to bang heavily through the pattering of the rain as it fell on the pavement round the verandah. For one moment the horseman was lost to Isabel's view — as he descended the dip — then again he appeared. 'It must be Mr. Herbert', thought she. 'I am glad he is come. No — why it is my father; where can he have been — for the letters perhaps. He must have expected an important one, to go on such a day!' It was Mr. Lang, and in five minutes more he rode up to the house; 'hallooed' for the man to take his horse, and swore at him for not being quick enough. Then muttering beneath his slouched and dripping hat something about 'Rascals and vagabonds and cursed times', he came on to the verandah — stopped short at seeing Isabel, and asked what she did there; whether she wanted to grow like the green barley?
>
> (Vol. I, p.159)

This episode catches a moment of intimate domesticity, providing the reader with an insight into Mr. Lang's character and into the bond which exists

between father and daughter. Something of the nature of the home and its close environs are revealed too, both in this passage and just previously where Isabel is depicted pacing 'up and down the verandah, on that side of the house where the rain did not beat in' (Vol. I, p.158). The reader knows already that 'Langville' has a wide verandah around three sides of the house, but with this additional information the place is shown to be governed by the dictates of reality.

Well drawn, similarly, is 'Yandilla House' in The Cabramatta Store, and this in regard to its interior and its near surroundings. As with the best of these narratives, one accepts the verandah as part of the domestic sphere because, as such, it plays a part in the lives of those who reside at the homestead and others who can naturally be made to make an appearance there. Thus Anne Moore, a servant at 'Yandilla' and one of the main characters, is portrayed washing the verandah floor while a stockman, wishing to speak to her, leans over the low railing (p.78). One would not wish to label this work as sophisticated, speaking in literary terms, so that one could only say that it seems apt that the stockman should scatter the rose petals and break off a geranium stem as he bends to speak to the girl, and likely too, that she should wish to keep the broken cutting. Again, at work inside in the evening, Anne is able to hear the labouring men as they prepare their meal out in the yard (p.93). She goes out and holds a conversation with one of them near the back verandah. These two scenes, brief as they are, are well conceived because through them one senses the pattern of life associated with the large establishment.

In Ch. X Anne Moore is portrayed seated in the garden, sewing, while the children play 'in the cool of the evening'. Later the young employee has a visitor and is given permission to walk with him 'down the cedar walk'.

Nearby

> in the long spacious verandah, half covered with luxuriant and brilliant creepers, sat Mrs. Parker and her daughters at work, and feeding a little tame kangaroo. (p.53)

The rural gentry's comfortable standard of living, which Vidal has contrasted with that of the labouring class, is well caught here, as it is in Bengala. The ease of this existence seems to have been conveyed in order to throw into sharper contrast Anne Moore's discussion with her brother-in-law, a labourer, concerning his financial circumstances. Such difficulties lead him eventually into a life of crime. Vidal's moral concerns are strongly in evidence in The Cabramatta Store; even so, what can be discerned is a development in outlook, so that an understanding of the rural worker's social condition becomes more in evidence in the later work, Bengala. In the short extract above it is clear that a number of points to which I have already given prominence have been utilized. In addition, and quite deftly, Vidal has conveyed the somewhat languid nature of the 'work' being undertaken on the verandah. It should be reiterated that the assurance in depicting the background against which her plots develop is to be admired in the texts of this writer.

The beginnings of such assurance may be found in the little known Tales for the Bush, although the details here are brief. The locations described are lacking many amenities, and are certainly without verandahs, an architectural feature which may differentiate dwellings socially speaking. In one tale, 'The Good Sister Amy', there is an account of a house of this type; and a small detail here hints at the absence of a verandah. Tired at the end of a hot day a family takes an evening meal outside 'to the shady side of the hut' (p.253) and enjoys the cool air and the scenery. Interestingly, this is the earliest literary reference I can find to a social custom which continues to play so much a part of Australian domestic life in the summer.

As with Atkinson, the attention that Vidal gives to local manners and customs is a marked attribute of her work. So that in the choice of the verandah for a number of settings and events in The Cabramatta Store and Bengala there is evidence of a textual awareness of the special quality of colonial life. In the two later works Vidal has the literary sophistication to devise action in an area which, due to the events occurring there, is revealed to be, or is suggested to be, an essential part of the dwelling she is visualizing.

I have just demonstrated that three authors who must be considered of major importance at the mid-century all contrived scenes involving the verandah. However, along with these, I would like to consider one other. Samuel Sidney must be classed as minor in terms of his achievement in prose fiction. His narrative relating to Australia is a simple one concerned with the gaining of experience in the bush. And yet, as remarked elsewhere, the notion that a work is minor does not of necessity preclude competence or craft in such a narrative, as the following passages will serve to remind us.

In Gallops and Gossips the protagonist, Alfred Barnard, is welcomed at a property he has reached at the end of a ride in pursuit of a wild horse. Sidney describes the scene thus:

> It was a long, low building of slabs, like a wooden barn, with a sharply peaked roof, extending on both sides forward, so as to form a large verandah, supported by uncarved stumps; creepers, green, red, and purple, almost covered the colour of the wood in front; at the back it was shaded by three large trees, growing on the spur of a rocky range which pushed in upon and bounded the plain. On one side, under the shade of one of the trees, was a dairy, half sunk in the ground; and next to it, carefully fenced in, with rails wattled, a garden; and I could hear some calves mooing behind the house, in a yard where their dams were being milked. Poultry and ducks were luxuriating over a few curds thrown outside the dairy; a sow, with a litter of half-grown piglings, was making her way from the bed of the creek to join the repast; a shepherd-bitch and her half-dozen pups, with three or four kangaroo dogs, rushed out, fiercely barking at me, but were driven back by two fat, sun-burnt, bare-footed little children, with miniature stock-whips, dressed in little shirts and nothing else.

> The noise of the dogs, and the shrill scoldings of the children, brought out the mother and mistress of the station from the far end of the verandah. (pp.51-2)

Here the author has caught the physical attributes of the house and its social environment as well. Here a house has become a home and the verandah more than merely an architectural embellishment to be catalogued along with others that would seem appropriate given the circumstances. It is shown to be an area that is lived in, and in the context of the setting children and animals naturally have a place there. Here the colour, sound, and movement connected with the locale lend the passage a particular liveliness and attractiveness. The fact that the women of the house have been involved in a common domestic chore, 'a grand wash', which is a factor almost never considered during this period, is one which gives the scene an air of verisimilitude. More generally, one senses that the rhythm of domestic existence has not been overlooked, as it so often seems to be in less competent works.

On the assumption that the stranger is from the mother country, the family gather round, and

> their shyness vanished; I was in a moment an old friend. I sat down with the good woman on a bench in the verandah; — the little ones took hold of my hands and clambered on my knees; — the elder ones stood apart, gazing on me with curious friendly faces; — my heart beat thick — my eyes filled with tears. These kind voices were the first echoes of the homes of my native land that had fallen on my ears since I had been in the colony. (pp.52-3)

These passages gain immediacy because of the carefully observed details and, moreover, because of the recognition of the significance of such encounters, and the emotions that would colour them. Now the verandah has a special relevance because it appears to be an essential part of the homestead. It is therefore a background for events revealing of the mode of life there, and in this episode with the interaction between the inhabitants and an outsider. One would say that Sidney had made use of experiences in Australia

as so many others had done, however it is believed that he worked on material supplied by his brother, John.[14] While some of it is formulaic and unexceptional, the quality of spontaneity that Sidney injects into the subject matter is often effective. What he has done here is to recognize that this domestic area was one of fundamental importance in rural Australia and should, accordingly, be drawn upon.

Finally, it must be observed that the verandah is generally presented as an area of a homestead where inhabitants and others can be shown to be involved with everyday events, or, again, those of a more uncommon nature, this revealing something of themselves and the colonial Zeitgeist. A more common occurrence could be that of the arrival of an outsider, as we have just seen. Usually the newcomer is offered hospitality, as has been demonstrated. However, in the isolation of the bush such a newcomer may bring information; and of a kind which could lead to dramatic events. This scene has not been fully realized in earlier colonial fiction, although several can be recalled. For example, in Geoffry Hamlyn those relaxing on the verandah at Hamlyn's homestead one evening see a horseman 'making for the station at full speed' (p.186). It is their friend, Dr. Mulhaus, a naturalist, and his news is the foreknowledge of a violent antipodean storm, one which brings to an end a serious drought. It is also part of a narrative structure in which the events of human beings are prefigured or mirrored in nature.

The arrival of an outsider with untoward information has been devised by Clacy in 'Emmeline'. In first picturing the Mortimers' station, its Arcadian seclusion has been emphasized. The author then stresses the substantial, attractive, and comfortable aspects of the home, some of this

14. For details of the work of the two brothers see The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature 630.

being conveyed with reference to the verandah. However, this satisfactory domestic life is interrupted when

> one evening, as they were all seated beneath the verandah, watching the sun go down behind the tall palm-trees, the sound of a horse's feet, galloping towards the station, arrested their attention; and, before they had time to form any conjectures as to whom the approaching visitor might be, Mr. Stapleton rode up to the door. "Not a moment is to be lost", cried he; "Colney will be here immediately; get your fire-arms ready, and send the ladies into the house". (Vol. I, p.110)

A melodramatic speech and melodramatic events; and the writer does not improve things in revealing that, by coincidence, the newcomer has overheard the bushranger's plans. However, this is a romance, and in the ensuing battle, the settlers and their way of life triumph. Though not memorable in literary terms, paradoxically such a scene does remain in the memory. I believe that is because a number of those features to which I have been referring are included in the passage, and are given significance in the story itself.

A similar event occurs, as noted, when Reuban Kable arrives at 'the Rocky Springs' homestead to aid the Bracton women in <u>The Emigrant Family</u>. Kingsley, likewise, brings Sam Buckley to 'Garoopna' at the end of his celebrated ride to save Alice Brentwood from the bushrangers. The personification of purity and happy domesticity, the girl stands 'white-robed in the verandah, feeding her birds' (p.365). In each of these examples the verandah forms the credible setting for the reminder of the confrontation which may come about between two modes of existence in the colony: the one exemplified at the homestead, the other in the disruptive and lawless outside forces, and the dichotomy between the two. In narrative terms, the visual impact is strong here, and it heightens the emotional overtones of such processes. In the working out of the plot the author's emphasis and approbation fall on the homestead, the way of life it stands for, and the values it represents.

It should be said that one feature that might be associated with the verandah is the presence of domestic pets there, and a few writers have utilized the notion. Occasionally native animals are introduced and they provide a distinctly Australian element. Working dogs are sometimes seen in the homestead's vicinity. Sensibly enough, they are visualized with the appearance of a stranger, as in the lean dogs that rush at a newcomer at the Arlacks' neglected farm in _Ralph Rashleigh_, or those portrayed in that expressive word-picture dreamed up by Sidney in far-away England in his _Gallops and Gossips_. However, I am thinking of those companionable animals that one would expect on the verandah, such as are mentioned briefly by Harris in _The Emigrant Family_, Vidal in _Bengala_ and Kingsley in _Geoffry Hamlyn_, and perhaps a few other writers.

One can only propose that this absence is part of the general hesitation discernible in the imaginative response to colonial circumstances; and it has become evident in my studies that such discrepancies and variations exist over a wide area in relation to source material and subject matter. Of interest, then, is a passage from the traveller William Howitt. He tells of the presence of dogs at one station in _A Boy's Adventures_, and observes:

> There were numbers of dogs about the house, which were never permitted to come into it — they never are at these stations — but lay at night under the spacious verandah in front. There were also plenty of cocks and hens, and cats and kittens, so there was a good deal of life of one sort or another. (pp.210-11)

Strangely, Howitt does not make use of such information in his own _Tallangetta_. The fine dwelling of this name and numerous others in the work may well have taken on a greater liveliness if such an aspect of rural life were embodied there.

As with the homestead's communal room the verandah is generally treated as a public domain where social relationships of a formal nature can be

established. For example, in a number of works formalities such as greetings and farewells and the offering of hospitality take place there, with family, friends, and outsiders being the characters involved. It is noticeable, too, that some authors begin to exploit the subject matter in the depiction of informal gatherings, conversations and events; and eventually in the registering of periods of relaxation and leisure there. As I have demonstrated, incidents of this kind, when they appear to have arisen from the way of life developing in the colony, are those most successful. Because in real terms the locale is fitting; and symbolically speaking one can see the verandah as the outer edge of what must be considered as a core of European civilization in the wilderness. In prose fiction the verandah forms an intermediate area. It is a domestic backdrop against which the relationship between the pioneer settlers and the land they have occupied can be played out. The area marks the conjunction of the civilized and the domestic with what lies beyond, the garden only providing a barrier, this both physical and psychological, as we will see. One would therefore expect the verandah, and the events enacted there, to have a special colouring, one that is determined by its particular location in the homestead's spatial design. As has been seen, this has been conveyed to a greater or lesser degree throughout the body of fiction from two decades.

As a result, numerous writers linked the garden with the verandah, the most assured of them in an apparent attempt to render the homestead's physical exterior in its entirety. Several examples given here, and others in my next chapter, demonstrate the notion in inchoate form, that is to say, with simple reference to plants in the vicinity. Rather more can be conveyed by placing creepers and foliage there. One sees a certain development in this body of literature when authors begin to treat both verandah and garden as one locale, as a physical entity. In the best of these works characters move freely and social interaction takes place against such a

background. Episodes of this kind do not appear until later in the period under discussion and only occasionally does one have the impression that the potential of the set-piece has been achieved.

However, it is often true of Kingsley in Geoffry Hamlyn. In addition, successive references to the same locales appear to be a strategy to place them firmly before us. Since the verandahs at 'Baroona' and 'Garoopna' are of great attractiveness such visual imagery is connected with them by the reader. The verandah becomes an inherent part of these domestic settings and finally in this work a distinctive feature of the narrative as a whole. Atkinson has briefly achieved this at 'Murrumbowrie' as has Vidal, but with rather more finesse, with her major homesteads.

I have stated elsewhere that 'Langville' in Vidal's Bengala is a most competently depicted fictional dwelling. I am alluding to its physical dimensions, its domestic concerns, and to less tangible attributes. With her main characters established there, the author moves them, for example, from house to garden, so in many respects the location is firmly before us. In the scene examined earlier Isabel Lang is found standing on the verandah, and looking to the distant bushland, the oddness and wildness of which is caught with the mention of the trees and their 'fantastic ribbons of hanging bark' (Vol. I, p.158). Close to the house is the deeply symbolic European garden and from this, and numerous other fictive gardens like it, native Australian species appear to be carefully excluded. Beyond the perimeter of the fenced garden its antithesis, the bushland, is sharply defined. For all this, there is an expansive mood here. One senses a responsiveness on the part of Vidal's protagonist to the surrounding environment.

At Kingsley's homesteads also the verandah is shown to be a vantage point. The perspective offered is of both the near and the far distance, this being envisaged as from the dwelling itself. Accordingly, from

'Baroona' the grey plains can be seen at the height of summer; from 'Garoopna' the mystery and sublimity of the far mountains; while from 'the Durnongs' Hamlyn watches the approach of a bushfire with anxious expectation. The dichotomy present in this perspective, between the foreground with its European accoutrements and the further terrain — the bushland and its alien qualities — is one that is often employed by Kingsley. The work is composed around the contrasts and parallels which exist between the old world and the new; but counterpointed also, within the latter, are concepts of civilization and wilderness. As I will presently explain, the verandah is a convenient and congenial setting in which to focus upon the juxtaposition of the two. What is of significance here is that two of the more competent and discerning writers have chosen a similar vista; they have most appropriately fixed upon the verandah as a setting or rather, a means, through which aspects of the colonial mentality could be conveyed. More particularly, this relates to the evolving relationship between Europeans and the landscape.

Speaking now in actual terms it is clear that the verandah is placed so as to offer an unusual perspective; it is one that is at the same time both sheltered and exposed. That is to say, it is an enclave that has attributes of the homestead's interior and exterior features. Consequently the protection it offers is both physical and psychological. And so in appraising the landscape from such a position the European is advantageously placed, and this midway point may well aid the individual to adapt or to adjust to the environment; to become integrated into it. The verandah itself can be seen as part of the adaptive spirit necessary in the Antipodes and in fact with its appearance and its manifestation as part of a dwelling one imagines that a new dimension opened to those within. Encouraged to come out of their dwellings more readily they are placed in closer contact with their surroundings. From the verandah, then, the garden, a psychologically comforting barrier, is at hand to be admired and enjoyed;

yet from such a standpoint one must be ever aware of the greater landscape beyond. This factor has surely been recognized by Kingsley and Vidal, writers who have drawn on the unique potential of such a vantage point and the possibilities that it offered.

It has taken time for this location to be considered an integral part of the homestead dwelling, and in literary terms one that could thus be of value in its representation. How readily we accept this architectural feature today; from the position of the earlier nineteenth century there appears to have been some hesitation. Verandahs were remarked upon by observers and depicted by artists during the second decade of the century, yet it is only with the 1850s that the creative writer came to see the area as an inherent aspect of homestead existence and subject matter to be considered. As one critic has observed:

> The writer in the colonies was in a dilemma, however, when he took up his pen. He looked to English literature for his models, but the literary tradition was remote from his own experience of life in a country that was so strange in English eyes. The writers of the colonial period wanted to express their sense of Australia, but they lacked the assurance that a living tradition could have given them. They were uneasily conscious of dealing with materials that were new and unfamiliar in literature.[15]

Barnes is commenting in general terms here, but the passage is interesting in relation to the subject matter under discussion. With the locale of the verandah only a handful of writers succeeded in this respect and the resulting key scenes I have examined. For despite some infelicities and omissions the setting rendered in these is especially suggestive of time and place and of some aspects of the culture and customs of the hinterland.

Rudimentary as an architectural feature to begin with, the verandah's

15. Barnes, ed., The Writer in Australia xii.

depiction in colonial narratives is at first presented in similar fashion. One would surmise that few literary models existed; and the creative writer's approach does seem to have been cautious. Even so, it is clear that as a domestic area it begins to function effectively in the delineation of the life of the Australian hinterland, and that by the 1850s authors were utilizing the verandahs of the more substantial homes which they chose to pattern imagined landscapes.

It is now worthwhile noting that many years were to elapse before informal scenes on the verandah were considered sufficiently important to become the subject of iconography. A range of painters, from the celebrated to the unknown, pictured the verandahed homesteads that became landmarks in the Australian countryside, but what is noticeable is the earnestness and sobriety associated with their representation, as I have earlier observed. Just before 1830 Earle, as the subject of a watercolour, has colonists sheltered by their verandah, surveying some Aborigines close at hand.[16] Entitled A Native Family of N.S. Wales, the picture captures the profound gulf existing between the two peoples. As in prose fiction, the larger establishment tended to become the subject of interest around the mid-century; however, it must be recalled that paintings were often commissioned works, and the gravity of presentation precludes the emergence of an informal note. I have mentioned the work of von Guérard already. Bonyhady has stated of From the Verandah of 'Purrumbete' of 1858 that the verandah has been employed as a framing device: that it is 'exceptional among colonial homestead portraits for its inventiveness'. Bonyhady rightly makes the point that 'like other homestead portraits' it 'still records a squatter's success in creating an English environment and in accumulating property'.[17] Clearly formulated in both the paintings and the prose fiction

16. Reproduced in Hackforth-Jones 103.

17. Bonyhady 55-6. Of special interest in this respect is Ch.3. Also reproduced in Bruce 78.

of the mid-century, therefore, is the confidence of the era.

From a literary viewpoint I hope to have demonstrated how a setting and the rendering of its particular attributes — if made vivid in imaginative terms — can add a fresh dimension to a narrative and invest it with a special character. If one can see the relevance of the verandah to Australian circumstances, agreeing in fact with the statement that the verandah is 'perhaps the outstanding contribution to the distinctive architecture of Australia in the nineteenth century',[18] and if one observes the creative writer's treatment of such a locale, then this suggests with some cogency that a literary convention has developed in this regard. When one considers the details that writers assembled here it becomes apparent that the convention is identifiably Australian.

18. Douglas Baglin and Peter Moffitt, The Australian Verandah (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1976) 5.

CH. V
THE HOMESTEAD GARDEN

> Your flower-garden you will find much more showy and more various than the one in England. (Alfred Dudley, p.118)

An early novella briefly describes the formation of a garden in the Nepean region of New South Wales, the particulars making the story unique in works which relate to pioneering conditions in Australia. I have already referred to Howison's One False Step and to Bronde's isolated dwelling. In such an environment it is unremarkable that the heroine, Bronde's niece, should fall in love with the convict gardener, Deveral Hermsdill, in spite of apparent differences in their social status. However Hermsdill is a former gentleman, and drawing on his knowledge of gardening theory and his recollections of rural England he lays out a two-acre antipodean garden with seeming expertise. He then establishes himself in a hut at its centre, where his singing of Italian airs naturally attracts attention. Here there is pathos in the chance of happiness for Howison's protagonist, while in dramatic terms that existence is in telling contrast to the penal system of which Hermsdill is a part, and through which he ultimately meets his death. Although a moral tale rather than a romance, the narrative at this stage owes something to the conventions of pastoral romance. Yet Howison's selection of detail — a fence to give protection against the depredations of kangaroos and other animals, and the fact that native trees have been retained for their shade — points to the Australian colouring of the subject matter and grounds this tale in reality. Practical concerns, an inherent aspect of colonial gardening, are seldom recorded in the early Australian novel. The topic does not constitute material which interested the creative writer.

The setting up of an establishment which is a likeness of the family seat in the mother country is a major consideration in Alfred Dudley, also

published in 1830. With the 'mansion of stone' almost completed attention is turned to the garden which, although it must rely upon some native vegetation, is based upon the former 'Dudley Park'. The author's social and moral concerns separate the outbuildings and the convict labourers from the main dwelling; however, there are also aesthetic interests and these reveal that the philosophy of English landscape design has not been forgotten in the colony.[1] We learn that 'both Mr. Dudley and his son wished to give to the whole that <u>proprété</u> of appearance to which they had been accustomed, and to study beauty as well as appearance in the arrangement' (pp.91-2). It is clear that the author has something to say about the quality of life in the Antipodes, but what is of interest is the revelation of colonial expectations and assumptions, at least as they are set forth in contemporary prose fiction. A fusion of the real and the ideal is in evidence throughout and is seen, for example, in one of the illustrations where the fine dwelling and well-dressed inhabitants are contrasted with an Aboriginal in European clothing, exotic vegetation, and a kangaroo. In the working out of the plot the domestic setting is made complete and a seal of approval is placed on the new 'Dudley Park' with the arrival from England of the Dudley womenfolk (Ch.XIV).

Nostalgia for the home culture coupled with a sense of a past heritage lend the garden significance here and that is so of numerous works relating to colonization. The establishment of an orchard and garden has been achieved with little difficulty and great rapidity, and this will become a conventional literary ploy. Providence has lent a hand to worthy and enterprising colonists: 'Success still smiled on their exertions, and everything multiplied around them' (p.92). The concept of the new land as

1. Dixon considers the question of landscape design in some detail in <u>The Course of the Empire</u> <u>passim</u>.

a paradise is effected here; the Arcadian and the Edenic are uppermost. Although it was also deemed a wilderness, the nurturing quality of the land could still be insisted upon in the earlier colonial novel — romances in the main.

Bernard Smith has described in some detail the beginnings of horticulture and gardening in Australia in his European Vision and the South Pacific. He points out that as the Australian colonies progressed gardening developed from a practical pursuit to 'an expression of colonial taste' (p.221). In Ch.10 the author tells of the avid English interest in botanical specimens from the Antipodes at this time. It would seem ironic therefore that in the fiction under discussion here colonists were seen to cultivate European species familiar to them. I will be examining reasons for this seeming discrepancy further on. As the recording and depiction of Australian landscape could be tempered by taste and sensibility, as Smith has observed, it does seem possible that writers of prose fiction likewise modified their reflections on the homestead garden. This historian's observation that horticulture had become a favoured and fashionable pursuit in England helps explain the emphasis on the presence of a garden in these narratives, while a study of them provides many examples of the notion that gardens formed 'the material evidence of man's improvement and his love of nature' (p.223). His comment here paraphrases a nineteenth century statement and is connected with growing colonial interest in landscaping, horticulture and picturesque scenery — a concern which parallelled that in the mother country. Noted throughout European Vision is the transition from Augustan principles to a Romantic attitude with its appreciation of the unspoilt beauty of the new environment. But it is only at the end of the period under discussion that one becomes aware of a greater acceptance of native flora; then these flowers begin to be accepted alongside known and loved European plants in the fictional garden.

From all accounts the cultivation of land for domestic purposes involved greater difficulties and was of more urgency than the two narratives cited above would seem to indicate. It has been said of gardening that it is 'an exercise in optimism. Sometimes, it is the triumph of hope over experience'.[2] Such a perception surely underscored the efforts of the men, women and children who attempted cultivation in the bush. In the bush, the planting of fruit trees and kitchen gardens was a first consideration. 'Later, with time available, beds of annuals were made and creepers grown against the house'.[3] One imagines however, and the narratives appear to indicate this fact, that creepers would have been considered of prime importance in less temperate areas. Expediency rather than design was the determining factor in such pursuits and it seems clear that necessity and colonial conditions restrained metropolitan custom and tradition; so that practicality _and_ sentimentality propagated the first simple gardens of the Australian colonies.

Freeman sees the presence of women in the hinterland — and here he is referring especially to the Riverina district — as being instrumental in the development of colonial gardens.[4] Closely related to that idea is the fact that women such as Lee, Atkinson, Meredith, and perhaps 'Little Jacob', contributed much in their writings on the subject of horticulture. Sidney is a writer who purports to be drawing on experience in the bush and it is interesting that his comment throws light on the remark by Freeman. In Ch.VII attention will be given to a passage concerning a bachelor's station in the bush in _Gallops and Gossips_. One of the distinguishing features of such a dwelling, in general, is the lack of a garden. The narrative con-

2. Marina Schinz and Susan Littlefield, _Visions of Paradise_, photographs Marina Schinz (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985) 11.
3. Howard Tanner and Jane Begg, _The Great Gardens of Australia_ (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1976) 20. I am indebted to this book and to the works of Bernard Smith and Beatrice Bligh for my brief account of gardening in colonial Australia.
4. Freeman 60. See also Bligh 19.

tinues with Alfred Barnard's account of the antithesis of the bachelor's neglected station.

> But on the stations of married squatters, or where small settlers of a good sort have settled, either on grants or purchases, as dairy and grain-growing farmers, a very different sight is presented, — wives and gardens, children and green vegetables, improve the fare, the scenery, and the society. (p.96)

Sidney can build word-pictures attractively, as the juxtaposition of positive elements here demonstrates. It is noticeable that Sidney fixes on the nurturing aspect of the land, this being a theme which runs counter to the country's intimidating nature; Gallops and Gossips, however, was aimed directly at the intending emigrant.

In the nineteenth century English-speaking colonists had become well-renowned for their horticultural skills;[5] and even in these colonial novels it becomes evident that a patriotic impulse is connected with the associations that a garden might conjure up. By drawing on contemporary references Dixon has thrown light on such a climate of opinion.[6] Smith sees the gardens planted by Australian colonists as only part of an endeavour 'to transform the Australian landscape into an English one'.[7] Lack of appreciation of the native vegetation and the difficulties arising from the conditions 'combined with a hankering for "Home", made emulation of the English garden the ideal', it has been observed.[8] Clark states colourfully, rather than with strict accuracy, that on the central plains of New South Wales 'freeholders and leaseholders laboured to reproduce an English

5. See, for example, Bligh 3.
6. Dixon 105 and passim.
7. Smith, Place, Taste and Tradition 65.
8. Tanner and Begg 9.

gentleman's establishment. They surrounded their huts or stone houses with rose-bushes, honeysuckle, and ivy and hawthorn hedges...'.[9] At the top of the colonial social hierarchy from the outset was Government House in Sydney and it was noted for its gardens. Such a fact was recalled, amongst others, by Cozens in Adventures of a Guardsman (p.109). By the mid-century, with increasing prosperity, a supply of all kinds of plants, and more time to consider their properties, many of the colonial gentry had gardens worthy of large estates. Their presence has been recorded in diaries and journals, and in the paintings of colonial artists to some of whom I have already referred.[10] It is clear, although less is known of them, that other gardens were cultivated in humbler homesteads, those of small settlers and labourers in rural settlements. Swayed by contemporary realities and colonial ideals, the creative writer thought to picture a range of such dwellings in the bush.

Considerable use could be made of this conventional element of the romance. One imagines, for example, that particulars concerning plants, either European or indigenous, and the planning of gardens and orchards under new conditions, to have been worthy of interest — especially to readers in the mother country. At a deeper level of significance there is importance in the expression of a continuity of a tradition at once domestic, British, and in wider terms, European, in the hinterland of a remote continent. It is a fundamental way of attesting the link between the new country and the old. Besides providing a setting which is familiar — and yet in such surroundings novel — the garden may also establish the locale for out-of-doors activities of a domestic nature and related to the homestead rather than to the huts or yard. A garden implies domestic permanence: here roots

9. Clark III:260.
10. See also Bligh passim.

are put down in both the literal and the figurative sense. Mention of a garden can indicate the passage of time, and this means much in a colony with a past of little duration from a European standpoint. Further, a descriptive passage concerning a garden can draw attention to the homestead in social terms, both in relation to other homesteads, or to lesser dwellings such as nearby cottages or huts. Additionally, it may be used to convey something about the occupants of all such dwellings and here there is room for moral homilies, lyrical expression or nostalgic reflection. Again, the setting may be termed domestic as opposed to the wider environment: the uncultivated land beyond. In this, the working out of a personal response to the environment, there is evidence of the civilizing hand of man, and an ongoing dialectic of Culture and Nature. With all these points in mind it is worth examining this early period in Australian literature to see how writers have drawn on the subject matter, and its significance in their works.

Authors at first made little use of such material. So the two narratives initially referred to are unusual for their time. One False Step is of particular interest, historically speaking, in that it proposes how a colonial garden might have evolved, its planning owing much to chance. Porter's work, with its emphasis on a middle-class family, is more closely linked to the high ideals connected with that domestic institution. Both, however, demonstrate the European capacity for organization and for ordering the landscape. Yet taking into consideration the setting and the combination of the actual and the ideal and the greater stress upon the latter, Alfred Dudley is more closely the forerunner of a host of novels relating to settlement.

Of the earliest works it is true to say that although the garden was mentioned it was not often elaborated upon, and its characteristics were generally associated with the type of dwelling and often gave some indication of the status, or the sensibility, of the inhabitants. In stating this I

should emphasize that such information, working subliminally, may well have had a more powerful effect on readers both in the colony and in the mother country than mere words on the page would today suggest.

For example, the author of A Love Story focussed attention on an English baronet's yearning for his native country by placing roses close to his house. The strongly symbolic 'range of English rose trees, in full flower' (Vol.II, p.242) surely constitutes an appeal to patriotic sentiment. It is a pleasing image and one wonders whether, for the author, it was in fact compensatory in nature. Christie, having resided in the colony, can describe himself in the Preface as a 'solitary companionless bushman'. Whether that is so or not, the choice of rose trees here is perhaps motivated by his own feelings of nostalgia, since the numerous references to the rose in these nineteenth century narratives point to the particular esteem in which the flower was held. It is interesting to note that while Christie considers it worthwhile to mention the 'fragrant mimosa', the rose trees form the dominant image. For inherent in their presence is a disclosure of a European, or rather a British, presence in the southern hemisphere. Moreover, here is evidence of the imprint of the domestic over the uncivilized and the uncultivated. This whole notion has been prefigured in Vol.II, Ch.XVI, with an earlier reference to the fertility of the new land and the signs of industry and domestic enterprise there. The idea is now figured forth in the rose trees. Representing one aspect of colonial culture they likewise tell us something of this writer's reflections on settlement in New South Wales before the mid-century.

Tales of the Colonies describes settlement in Van Diemen's Land during the same period; here too the imprint of the domestic constitutes powerful imagery. With the emigrant in mind, the author reveals the order in which tasks must be undertaken. Vegetables appear to be planted first, which is just as well, given Thornley's growing family; but although Rowcroft's

protagonist plans a garden (p.69) we learn little about it. As a newcomer he had been given hospitality at a settler's farm and in that key scene already examined the rough conditions are seen to be mitigated by the family's well-being and independence. It is not surprising, therefore, that 'luxuriant vegetation' is contained in an enclosed garden at the small homestead (p.35). The other mentioned is at 'Cherry-tree Bottom'; it replicates an English garden. What is noticeable is that such developments are possible only after the initial hardships have been overcome. Permanence and comfort may be conveyed by these means and that is something which Harris has briefly evoked in <u>The Emigrant Family</u>. When he describes the homestead's construction he alludes to the plan for a flower garden and a kitchen garden (p.122) and further on he refers to the jessamine which, in the intervening years, has grown over this dwelling at 'the Rocky Springs' (p.374).

Another work from the decade of the forties is <u>Ralph Rashleigh</u>. We naturally associate permanence and comfort with the cottage garden that Rashleigh is attracted to on his travels and, in contrast to the other places of habitation visited, the Marshalls' home in Ch.XVI is notable for the neatness of its surrounds. Fronted by a verandah with creepers, the house is recalled for what this author has seen as 'a most uncommon rarity' for the period: 'a plot of flowers'.

> Small, indeed, was the extent of that little parterre, and very very common were its plants; yet, from its extreme rarity, it breathed the balmy breath of old England's cherished homes around the travellers as sweetly as if it had contained many acres and had been appended to a palace. (p.127)

Rashleigh's pleasure here is rendered in that heightened prose which abounds in the narrative. It works at this point to throw a warm glow over the garden and homestead; above all, over the occupants whose hospitality the assigned convict enjoys. The passage above tells us something of the emotions that such a garden could have aroused during this period, especially

emotions relating to patriotic sentiment and nostalgia. At the same time Tucker has the homestead and its surrounds epitomize those qualities of prudence and industry which the errant Rashleigh comes to recognise as conducive to well-being, prosperity and independence in the pioneering of the colony, and which are apparent both around and inside this model home.

Not that writers of fiction wished to concern themselves with descriptive passages concerning the actual planting of a garden, or the reality of its care. As observed earlier, <u>One False Step</u> and <u>Alfred Dudley</u>, both of which refer to a garden's establishment, are unusual and interesting in this respect. In <u>Alfred Dudley</u> house and garden are emblematic of civilized values and high ideals. Moreover, house and garden combined structure the pattern of the colony' domestic settlement. That these dwellings were family homes is a point which emerges in the majority of works. That the family was generally not of the lower classes and that the story was equated with middle-class values and expectations is a factor already dealt with. So I would now like to look at the garden as it appears in a work which foregrounds the less substantial homestead of the servant class and the bush labourer: Vidal's <u>Tales for the Bush</u>.

A garden may tell us much concerning a homestead's inhabitants. That is to say, on a moral plane, it can be used to demonstrate qualities held in high esteem, at least in the prose fiction of the period. At the same time it can be suggestive of class structure: one not unlike that of the home country. Both are in evidence in 'Ruth Walsh'. The dwellings here are representative of a social hierarchy which is fairly rigid in nature. The labourers' bark huts are seen in comparison with the farmer's house, which appears to be at some distance from the huts, and which has 'a long sloping roof and a deep verandah' (p.51). Closer is the overseer's cottage, also a slab hut but with a verandah, paling fence, and 'a few geraniums and roses' (p.51). These factors make it 'snugger and more

comfortable' than the other huts which, in the opinion of the young emigrant, Ruth Walsh, 'looked more like cow-sheds or pigsties than dwellings for human beings' (p.51). Vidal's point here, however, is that the homes have been neglected. In this tale cleanliness goes hand in hand with godliness, so that the young heroine, a regular church-goer, makes her hut 'neat and clean'. A year later the hut appears 'tight and tidy' with geraniums and honeysuckle against it. Such details encourage one to share Vidal's moral concerns. (Tucker has used the same literary device in setting the Marshalls' neat cottage between two less congenial places of habitation in Ralph Rashleigh.) Similar sentiments are voiced in 'Apton Farm'. Because of the unprincipled action of family members in both these stories, the family home must be vacated. In the latter the author has thrown emotional and moral weight on to the humble but well-kept property because of the improvements made there. We learn that a 'sober and industrious' son 'added to the garden, and made it very neat...' (p. 82).

I have been referring to the garden as it appeared in the decade of the forties. With the fifties we begin to see the emergence of a firm literary tradition, greater confidence of the part of the writer, and an increasing awareness of all those possible qualities which could be deployed relating to the garden. By the mid-century a number of authors tackled the site in a more imaginative fashion. Vidal, with Australian works spanning a period of fifteen years, exemplifies that idea. What is noticeable in these later narratives is the confidence with which certain spatial areas are used. Vidal, for example, places her characters firmly in the garden at her principal settings. Accordingly, this locale becomes not simply a background but is envisaged as a place of privacy or recreation for family or friends. Attention has already been drawn to the garden scene at 'Yandilla House' in The Cabramatta Store. The homestead's appearance becomes clearer in the mind's eye with mention of the roses and 'magnificent scarlet geraniums' growing profusely in front of the verandah (p.77).

Greater use is made of the garden at the main location in Bengala. Vidal places Isabel Lang appropriately in the privacy of a 'trellised vine-walk' with a visiting priest (Vol.I,Ch.XXII); and again with an admirer, Mr.Herbert, in 'the garden by the arbour' (Ch.XXV). On yet another occasion we observe members of the Lang family in their garden at dusk. The light-hearted domestic scene is brought more sharply into focus with the mention of Mr.Lang's vexation at seeing his daughter's skirt trailing on the ground. Teasing the girl, he raises the hem with his stick (Vol.I, pp.81-2). The colonial novel will sometimes point up the possibility of changing attitudes and mores and this passage provides such an example. An incident elsewhere on the property has thrown greater emphasis on the conviviality and sense of security in the garden. At the huts assigned men, of convict background, have stoned and driven away a former flogger, Dan Cat's Tail. Their hatred for the man gives rise to a commotion which can just be heard — and guessed at — by the Lang family. The narrative exists on two social planes and, as noted, juxtaposition is employed as a compositional device in order to have us contrast and compare two very different modes of existence. Within the upper echelons of this social framework the Langs can relax in what is shown to be a spacious garden. All Lynch, the assigned labourer, can aspire to (and this in the end is denied him) is a 'a tidy, convenient hut' with flowers around it (Vol.I, p.101).

Although a lesser dwelling, the adjacent 'Warratah Brush', home of the Herberts, is on the same social level as 'Langville'. (Vidal's gentle social satire makes it clear, however, that such an opinion would have been quite unacceptable to Mrs. Lang.) The Herberts' neat garden is mentioned in the establishing scenes and again in Ch.III, and Vidal has chosen to describe it with some care. We learn that the area boasts roses and geraniums, a vine-walk and bee-house, a white cedar-tree and a native fig, and that a low fence is 'one mass of passion-flower and the multiflora rose intermixed' (p.46).

It is, the author explains, 'a pretty specimen of the generality of colonial cottages' (p.24). A slip-rail in the fence allows access by those on horseback and this is a rural detail favoured by the author in her three Australian works. The notion of a fence dividing an English-style garden from the bushland beyond is mentioned in the colonial novels, and especially by Vidal. Such a boundary, I believe, would have held particular significance for contemporary readers. 'Warratah Brush', as its name might imply, presents a varied planting. Vidal festoons the unpretentious home with passionflower and bignonia, and there is further evidence of a greater acceptance of indigenous plants here. In terms of literary craft the garden is well suited to its owner, John Herbert, given his adjustment to colonial conditions. Thus 'Warratah Brush' forms a nice contrast to the grand and more formal 'Langville' where there is a greater attempt to conform to the traditions and conventions of an English rural gentry.

Pride in improvements is an aspect of colonial life depicted in Bengala. One recalls Isabel Lang's statement: '"We Bush folks are prouder of a bit of cultivation — cultivated, cleared land — than of all the forest and wild country in the world"' (Vol.I,p.108). Several ideas seem uppermost at this point. First, there is a limited vision, a focussing on the familiar — here crops and domestic cultivation. One sees too an emphasis on the ordered over the disordered world beyond, and thus weight is added to the whole concept of colonial horticulture. Isabel recognizes that 'Langville' has been 'redeemed from the wilderness by her father' (Vol.II,p.14) and earlier Vidal has drawn attention to the resilience of the natural vegetation which 'had again sprung into life' and had 'encroached on the palisade fence which bounded the garden' (Vol.I,p.82). Similarly, there is importance in the occasion which celebrates the completion of a land-clearance, a factor which will be referred to subsequently. Returning to Isabel's remark, it can be seen that the author is touching on contemporary patterns of thought here. The Langs' pride in their establishment is apparent, yet their neighbours, the

Herberts, can still complain about the disrepair of Mr. Lang's roads. Mr. Herbert 'never fails' to comment upon the inconsistency; this leads to humorous banter between himself and Isabel while at the same time telling us something of their relationship. Miss Herbert, however, puts the matter more succinctly: '"Now he had built such a fine house he ought to have a good garden, and also a good road up to his house"' (Vol.I,p.46). By these means the author achieves a greater solidity in her setting, and reveals her impressions of some aspects of the colonial mentality.

Of the other dwellings in Bengala 'Currajong Park', the Scotts' property, figures predominantly in the latter part of this long work. Vidal does away with describing another 'Langville'; in fact, her plot demands different circumstances. Using Mr. Lang's death and the actual event of the financial crash of the 1840s to bring about the breakup of the Lang family and their comfortable way of life, Vidal places Isabel as a governess at 'Currajong Park'. However, factors which have brought about the Langs' difficulties are shown to be in evidence at the Scotts' dwelling. Thus the well-ordered interior is not matched by its surroundings: the outside is 'only half-finished' and waiting for 'better times' (Vol.II,p.223). Vidal's craft in projecting the story forward is also seen in her description of the Bengala settlement. As time passes the area expands and smaller settlers are in a favourable position: they supply 'distant stations' with produce (Vol.II, p.154). With these words Vidal can indicate not only this settlement's progress, but expansion further inland. In addition, employing a technique and an image not uncommon in the colonial narratives, Vidal makes further reference to the passage of time by describing another dwelling. She writes 'The Parsonage was now covered with creepers, and the garden was a model for the neighbourhood' (Vol.II,p.154). One detects here that firm moral stance more openly expressed in her two earlier works but particularly so in Tales for the Bush.

Kingsley is undoubtedly the best known of the mid-century authors, and principally for his Geoffry Hamlyn. Mitchell has drawn attention to Kingsley's use of the vista, and particularly to his characteristic of describing views from a height.[11] Such points are exemplified in the opening scene. Kingsley has Hamlyn commence his recollections on the verandah overlooking the garden at 'Baroona' and quickly establishes the precariousness, although muted here, of bush life. Late summer conditions of extreme heat are stressed; an element of danger is present with the mention of bushfire and drought. Thus additional emphasis is placed on the dwelling's comfort, coolness and security. In fact, the homestead envisaged as an oasis — in both physical and cultural terms — may be observed in this work and numerous others. From such a vantage point, then, our gaze is directed to 'the beautiful flower-garden' in the near foreground, and yet with this account notions of a traditional and romantic setting are undercut by inescapable facts of colonial life: the scene is a faded antipodean garden of late summer. Though simply done, such an acknowledgement of seasonal conditions lends the scene a chronological perspective. Its particulars are rare in the earlier colonial narrative, however. Along with information relating to setting and to some of Kingsley's main characters, the domestic attributes of the European are registered with details of these horticultural pursuits, such as the long vista of trellised vines and the orange trees.

Within the Recollections Kingsley achieves that coherence typical of the work by demonstrating the relationship of those at 'Baroona' to their dwelling. For example, an area is 'marked out for a garden' initially (p.148). A later description indicates the passage of time and also the homely nature of the place, while the reference to exotic and traditional creepers and plants contributes to this strongly visual passage (p.160).

11. The Oxford History of Australian Literature 51.

Here fictional representation takes on a particularly Australian flavour with mention of the cool evening following 'a scorching day', and the story-teller recalls 'Mrs. Buckley and Sam watering the flowers, attended by a man who drew water from a new-made reservoir near the house'. A little later Mrs. Buckley appears 'with a basketful of fresh-gathered flowers' (p.162), an event which follows on quite naturally from the former scene. What emerges in Kingsley's book and what is particularly recalled is his skill in relating this area to the dwelling itself. In doing so he maintains a fine balance between romance and realism. The romantic nature of the garden at 'Baroona' gains sudden substantiality, to take one instance, when it is unexpectedly glimpsed through a French window from the home's interior (p.166). This striking image serves to illustrate the novelist's craft.

'Garoopna' is an 'exceedingly pretty station' and 'one of the most beautiful' that Hamlyn can recollect (p.221). I have already mentioned the descriptive passage concerning the well-kept property, and the scene where the visiting Sam Buckley rests on the shaded verandah. There he and Alice Brentwood relax in idyllic surrounds while creepers swing in the wind and a rose amongst them can be thought to cast its colour on the girl's cheek. Later the young couple walk through the garden:

> Down the garden, faint with the afternoon scents of the flowers before the western sun, among petunias and roses, oleander and magnolia; here a towering Indian lily, there a thicket of scarlet geranium and fuchsia. By shady young orange trees, covered with fruit and blossom, between rows of trellissed vines, bearing rich promise of a purple vintage. Among fig trees and pomegranates, and so leaving the garden, along the dry slippery grass, towards the hoarse rushing river, both silent till they reached it. There is a silence that is golden. (p.229)

Disregarding the final sentence, I find Kingsley's catalogue effective in terms of sound and imagery and, true to the genre of romance, there is something wondrous about the setting. The profusion of plants both homely and exotic growing in the open must have attracted contemporary interest. With the mention of the fruit there is a distinctly biblical allusion and the

richness of the area recalls the Edenic and Arcadian references throughout. Above all, the garden epitomizes civilized attributes. While no fence is referred to here, the garden's boundary is clearly delineated: beyond it lies 'the dry slippery grass', 'the hoarse rushing river'. There is the sense that beyond the romantic spot lies the menace of the bush which, although slight here, in the account which follows becomes more alarming. In this contrast of Culture and Nature the notion uppermost is of the land 'redeemed from the wilderness' — a phrase I borrow from Bengala. Perfection is possible in the idyllic setting and with the escalation of detail the country's fertility is made manifest, that strengthening the notion of the homestead as an oasis. Something of 'Garoopna's' beauty is conveyed and the factors which help create this quality serve also to provide an interesting setting for everyday events and, here, activities of a romantic nature. Although located in a number of the narratives, the 'serene gardens' of romance[12] are perhaps most perfectly recreated by Kingsley.

In contrast to these and other flourishing homes is the Donovans' former station which has been destroyed by fire. Blackened ruins are overgrown with native vegetation amongst which 'you were surprised to see an English rose or two' (p.231). Such evidence of European settlement leads to the account of an Aboriginal attack in earlier pioneering days and it endows the place with a mythic importance and a sense of history unusual in a young colony. Kingsley's reference to the encroachment of the native vegetation and likewise his symbolic use of the rose at this point is simply effective. Even today the image that emerges is a powerful one. And the juxtaposition of the setting in Ch.XXVII with the one immediately preceding it — the homestead 'Garoopna' — seems to lay stress on those qualities which characterize that homestead and others like it.

12. Beer 79.

I have been dealing with some substantial and attractive locations, those depicted by Kingsley and Vidal. One also recalls Atkinson, and the dwellings 'Murrumbowrie' and 'Cowanda'. In Gertrude, we first sight 'Murrumbowrie' with the heroine; it is 'a pretty place'. While verandahs, both back and front, are a reminder of vernacular architecture, the garden retains links with the home country. Atkinson has Gertrude walk in the garden and alludes to the flowers there: 'china roses, yellow and lilac chrysanthemums, and a few dahlias' (p.12). There is a seat in the garden 'under a trellis overhung by cape honeysuckle and cluster roses' (p.16) and here the young girl reads and prays on a Sunday. Elsewhere, roses and lilies are associated with the ritual of Christmas as celebrated in the colony (p.76).

Small domestic scenes featuring closely observed facts of colonial life are handled well in this work, and one relating to the garden takes place on the verandah where the author places Mrs. Doherty, her supervisor Tudor, and Gertrude (Ch.XII). Here it is pleasant to lounge on easy chairs, to 'read, or work, or converse'. Gertrude, a heroine endowed with saintly virtues by her creator and who fills every idle moment with worthwhile pursuits, indulges in all three activities. Her employer relaxes. Tudor, who helps in the garden, 'used to train the creepers round the verandah posts'. Here he prunes the honeysuckle. They are joined by an outsider, the local doctor, who travels in the evening to avoid the heat of the day, and now stops to share tea in the cool of the verandah. Through the scene we learn more regarding the relationship of the characters, especially that of Gertrude and Tudor. Of greater interest perhaps is the fact that the writer has thrown light on to a popular English custom seen in an altered perspective.

And so in the rendering of Atkinson's fictional homestead the garden plays an important part. The dominant note of the work is domestic, this area adding colour and substance to the homely setting and quite naturally

providing a place of relaxation and privacy. Others are seen here too, such as the doctor; and from the yard, the chief shearer. Making his annual appearance, the latter is warmly greeted by Mrs. Doherty. The 'simple moral tone' of this work has been observed, as have the 'indications of the beginnings of a distinctive Australian life...'.[13] Although without the panache of Kingsley or Vidal, Atkinson draws attention to the traditional and conventional nature of the comfortable colonial homestead and its garden. Thus it is contrasted to the outbuildings and yard where further customs and rituals are being worked out. Beyond this area again lies the bush and attractive native flora, these too having a part to play in the life which Atkinson depicts of the country.

I have already referred to the homestead 'Cowanda' from the book of that name. It may be recalled for the unusual nature of its extensions, a passage concerning the dwelling being included above (p.131). The haphazard design is shown to have influenced the layout of the garden, as the following lines demonstrate:

> The irregular form of the building caused many nooks and corners: there were shady borders, which suited currants and gooseberries; and sunny walls, where figs and grapes ripened; there were seats shaded by Cape honeysuckles and angles where ivy held the walls with its many fibres. (p.5)

The garden's fertility and attractiveness are well rendered here. The homely honeysuckle and ivy are contrasted with more exotic plants which are shown to be flourishing in the Antipodes in open surroundings. The passage of time, which has been conveyed with reference to the building's additions, is now reinforced with the mention of the growth of numerous plants, the dwelling's settled nature being established in consequence. The location

13. Miller and Macartney 42.

is made more credible with the allusion to the garden's shaded and unshaded areas, while the mention of 'seats shaded by Cape honeysuckles' would suggest a place that is inhabited. With the further description concerning an orchard on three sides of the house, this 'at once an orchard and vegetable garden' (p.5), the location can be clearly envisaged. A house has been transformed by these means into a home.

The establishing scene is on a verandah overlooking roses and mignonettes and here Captain Dell, the owner, converses with another settler. However, beyond this, Atkinson does not place her characters in the garden, so although the description is persuasive, in no sense does the garden become an important locale. Nor is it shown to impinge upon the consciousness of the household's numerous inhabitants as has been achieved in, for example, Geoffry Hamlyn or Bengala, or Atkinson's own Gertrude. This could be seen as a flaw, since one feels that a relationship could well have been established, or in some way demonstrated, between the seemingly cherished garden and the dwelling's inhabitants. Here, in fact, unlike 'Murrumbowrie', 'Cowanda''s close environment has little significance. One feels that the author, having achieved a firm exterior setting initially, has not attempted to realise its potential in the working out of the narrative.

Perhaps this location goes some way in answering the questions raised by Sinnett in the opening of his essay. Writing, as we have seen, on the feasibility of employing Australian locales which hold no historical connections, and of the difficulties experienced by writers in a country without a literary tradition, the critic points out that the writer is 'debarred from all the interest to be extracted from any kind of archaeological accessories'.[14] Sinnett continues facetiously by alluding to the excesses of the

14. Barnes, ed., The Writer in Australia 9.

Gothic novel, and his remarks bring to mind a little known work by Thomas Hall. Yet 'Cowanda', despite its trails of ivy, has no Gothic associations; we learn in fact that it is 'a pleasant house and a very happy household' (p.5). It is the paradigm of a homestead in early colonial fiction and one that will remain for a considerable period of time.

For contrast, then, I cite an incident set in a garden in Hall's _Floss_. Sinnett observed that 'it is always difficult to believe in the possibility of anything of which there is no existing example or type'. 'No Australian author can hope to extricate his hero or heroine, however pressing the emergency may be, by means of a spring panel and a subterranean passage...'. This critic, however, has reckoned without the popularity of Gothic horror or Hall's ingenuity. In the garden of 'an immense wool estate' the author places a fruit-tree which can be manipulated to reveal a secret trap-door and underground room where the heroine is hidden away (Ch.XXIV). In his reference to 'modern novelists' and their imagination Sinnett could have been alluding to precisely such a lurid and melodramatic story.

'Tallangetta', which Howitt describes in close detail, designating the homestead as unique to the bush and thus valorizing it in our minds, is initially firmly established. Yet although its dimensions and variety are stipulated, and although the settlers are shown to be attracted from the outset to its beauty, the area of cultivation exists as a concept, little being revealed of the relationship of those at the dwelling to their garden. It is representative of abstract qualities of beauty, fertility and permanence, as opposed to those satisfying and convincing locations achieved in _Bengala_, _Geoffry Hamlyn_, and _Gertrude_.

In the opening chapter we accompany English newcomers, the Fitzpatricks, and their retainers, Abner and Peggy Wilks, on their long journey to 'Tallangetta' in the book of that name. In evocative fashion Howitt

pictures the attractive dwelling around which extends 'a considerable space of gardens and vineyards, enclosed in a ring fence' (p.25). We gain some notion of the garden's entirety in Ch.II with the mention of 'beds of mingled shrubs and flowers', of steps and terraces and 'a great kitchen garden', while a variety of fruit trees are listed in catalogue form. The flourishing aspect of the place is insisted upon. A small, isolated, self-supporting community, its feudal nature is paramount. Here the notion is reinforced in the attitude of the Wilks to their employers. Additionally, the couple are seen in close relationship to the garden, living in 'a comfortable slab hut' and tending the fruit-trees. While token reference is made by the Fitzpatricks to the garden's abundance (Vol.I,Ch.II), it is by virtue of the Wilks that we learn of colonial horticulture or the nature of drought.

Thus, while the garden's aesthetic qualities may be said to be linked with the Fitzpatricks, we associate its more practical concerns with the Wilks. And in what appears to be a displacement of interest, but what is perhaps in line with Howitt's recognition of colonial realities and, in literary terms, in accord with one major thematic strand of the colonial novel, the author returns the high-born Fitzpatricks to England and places final emphasis on this adaptable, practical couple. For all their appreciation of the property's beauty, the Fitzpatricks return to their rightful home, to 'great duties and great advantages' (Vol.II,p.304) — an event not uncommon in the genre. When the final image conjures up the 'lovely heights' of the homestead, it is the Wilks who are ensconced there. Comic characters who have been sentimentalized, they nevertheless emerge as rounded human beings endowed with qualities which fit them to remain in the colony. (Howitt does not see things in terms which are too clearcut though, and the disgruntled Peggy Wilks reminds us of a similar character: Crab in Rowcroft' *Tales of the Colonies*.) The garden in this instance, but without the detail that would have lifted the work beyond the ordinary, is seen as inherently beautiful, but practical matters are ultimately given significance. This

final shift in emphasis to a 'comfortable slab hut' set within a garden highlights the workaday world and sturdy pioneering endeavour. Closely attuned to the reality of everyday experience, the setting is one also having a place in Howitt's A Boy's Adventures and in his Land, Labour and Gold. As happens often in the colonial romance the need to divulge personal insights may simply outweigh concerns that are purely literary.

The reader tends to remember the larger station homesteads in these narratives: those of the kind I have been examining. They are of the type that Rowcroft has George Mayford come across in An Emigrant in Search of a Colony. On his travels inland Mayford has observed 'handsome country houses' with gardens (p.415). Rowcroft may be drawing attention to colonial realities here; or to colonists' aspirations. For this is, after all, one of many works recounting a newcomer's impressions and, as we have seen, Rowcroft's earlier Tales was written to encourage emigration. As a result, moral and aesthetic qualities are embodied in these 'handsome country houses'. And in their gardens. Reference to the garden was becoming a commonplace by the mid-century. However, along with these impressive establishments which pattern the narratives of the period and win our attention there are, additionally, smaller dwellings in the fictional bushland: cottages, or even huts. The image of the small bush home, as distinct from the substantial homestead, is sometimes equated with the notion of an English cottage, there being associated with it a neat cottage garden where plants — traditional ones — abound. The orderliness of this area of cultivation is a concept which is assiduously conveyed. The usual qualities are suggested thereby; further, there is an element of tension in the presentation of a cottage garden which is fenced. More so than with the larger estate, this small area of cultivation is obviously the antithesis of the wilderness.

What connotations must the cottage and its garden have held for the contemporary reader? The force of such an image results from its dual origins.

As a literary device it is an ancient one and, as observed in relation to the homestead in Ch.II, is suggestive of a simple domestic existence amid rural surrounds. Yet the cottage stands for more than a shelter against the elements since with its garden it epitomizes an Arcadian existence. In its quiet way the image is solid and sacramental: the decencies of life seem represented here. And this is so in literature relating to the Antipodes where the pastoral mode gains added connotations in a bush setting. Cottage and garden then become emblematic of a continuity of tradition and, as with the larger homestead, whatever modifications or distortions are present the effect is still powerful. Indeed, nostalgic reflection, which some might label as sentimentality, is a dominant mode in colonial literature, one being aware of a leaning toward the home country throughout. It has been suggested in relation to the early colonial verse, for example, that 'the overriding Australian theme is memory'.[15]

The pleasing trope of the cottage takes on an added dimension with the advent of the industrial era in Britain. Attractive pastoral surroundings are a world away from the exigencies of a new urban existence. Here ties with the countryside, strong since medieval times, began to weaken due to the rapid expansion of city and town and changes in economic conditions. 'The image of the rose-covered cottage', as Lansbury has remarked, '...would always provide a sentimental memory for the town-dweller'.[16] This writer has pointed to the fact that the memory of a 'golden age', that is to say, of a rural heritage, reinforced with the Arcadianism of the Romantic movement, became a dominant mode of thought in the nineteenth century whatever the truth of such Arcadian perfection may have been. These issues I dealt with in Ch.I and as recognised there, while the past could not be redeemed in the

15. Brian Elliott and Adrian Mitchell, eds., Bards in the Wilderness (Melbourne: Nelson, 1970) xvi.

16. Lansbury 33.

old country, in the 'land of promise' fresh opportunities presented themselves. Here, most could succeed in agricultural and pastoral pursuits. This was the lesson so engagingly presented with the depiction of the neat cottage and small garden in Ralph Rashleigh. So that in a literary sense and in actuality the attributes of a cottage and its garden in an Australian setting were many, and what united them in the eyes of the observer was nostalgia for the past.[17]

Gertrude is remembered for numerous dwellings other than the chief location. Atkinson's realistic evaluation of the lives of small farmers and settlers means that she will regard these cottage homesteads with frankness; often she succeeds in conveying the isolation and hardship of such an existence. However, one small house equates with what seems to have attracted many. Gertrude visits a small cottage where a 'very minute garden enclosed by white pailings spread before the door...' (p.159). Here, once more, is the image of small home with an enclosed garden surrounded by the bush. For the same reasons, surely, painters were attracted to such a scene and the subject, though on a larger scale, is best exemplified in von Guérard's painting, Mr. Muirhead's Station, of 1856.[18] At this time, Atkinson must have been working on Gertrude and she too employs the idea as an expression of the continuity of the domestic tradition. In both these cases, and in other narratives too, what could be considered as a hackneyed image is now seen anew. And to add to what readers might have seen as a paradox — an English cottage in the bush — Atkinson has Gertrude arrange native flowers in the cottage parlour (p.171): a nice touch. The incident is revealing of this young woman's homely qualities.

17. See Peter Cuffley, Cottage Gardens in Australia, rev. ed., (Canterbury, Vic.: Five Mile, 1984).
18. Reproduced in Bruce 45.

Reference to a cottage and its garden will often link the rose to the simple dwelling and although a commonplace it remains a pleasing set-piece and popular in the nineteenth century. Such a scene is employed when the author of *Wolfingham* invites the reader to compare the convict-settler's habitation with the rustic charm of his former home in England. The absence of a garden at the 'hut of gum-slabs' (p.63) and the bleak surrounds reveal much concerning the quality of Wolfingham's life in the colony. Above all, the contrast serves to point up the moral of the tale.

If one regarded this body of fiction as a true reflection of contemporary reality one would assume that the rose held pride of place in the new land. In actuality the rose was dear to colonists from early times, this being observed by numerous contemporary writers and diarists.[19] And so, for those reasons outlined above in relation to the garden, the rose, *a fortiori*, soon made its appearance and climbed the verandahs of numerous imaginary homesteads. Of the authors who are specific, almost every one mentions the rose. What could be more striking in *A Love Story* than the remote dwelling with its 'range of English rose trees, in full flower'? As observed earlier, Christie does mention the 'fragrant mimosa' at this point, yet the rose trees provide more insistent associations for those as yet uncertain how to relate to the native vegetation. These roses have a direct relationship to the dwelling and to its owner, the mimosa surely being seen in different terms, as alien, and therefore as quite separate from the cultural specificity inherent in the site. As we have seen, the roses surviving amid ruins in *Geoffry Hamlyn* give rise to a similarly potent image and one designed to summon up a favourable response in the reading public on both sides of the world.

19. I am indebted to Pauline Payne for the information that the proliferation of the rose was in large part due to the extreme hardiness of the older varieties.

The rose, traditionally for the English, is emblematic of their country. It is therefore connected with those sentiments and emotions that one imagines to be bound up with the whole notion of a flower garden in the colonies and recognition of this yearning for the homeland is surely apparent in the frequent allusion to the rose. The two other flowers most often specified are the honeysuckle and the jessamine (or jasmine). Perhaps the homely geranium is included for similar reasons. However, it is with the mention of the three former plants, it would seem, that an attempt was made to evoke strong feelings in the reader. Certainly, although many species were available even before the mid-century, these three were selected by the creative writer.

The idea is forcefully presented in the final pages of Haydon's The Australian Emigrant. I have referred to the station 'Lan-lan-borin'. After a period of some years it is seen at this point in the story 'emerging from the surrounding wilderness'.

> That peaceful group of cottages, so English in their aspect in all but the luxuriant creepers with which they are netted together, contain within their walls two prosperous and happy families. The garden, common to both, is full of the most lovely flowers such as money could scarcely purchase in England, though here they are in themselves mere weeds. It is the tasteful arrangement of colours which give them all their value. Do you not feel at the first glance that garden was ordered and arranged by woman's hand; that it is to her delicate sensibilities you are indebted for the perfume and the home associations called up by the English honeysuckle creeping round and almost hiding the burly stem of its Australian namesake? The old country is not forgotten. No: no. The tendrils of that fragile plant just strong enough to resist the sea breezes which sweep up the valley, yet form a link in an enduring chain which binds the memory of the exiles to the land of their birth. (p.190)

Here cherished beliefs and high ideals are again characteristic of a domestic setting, and further reference will be made to this important passage. Described as 'comfortable and picturesque' the dwellings achieve perfection with the mention of the garden, and although a tone of self-satisfaction is present, the practicalities of pioneering are not ignored. But preference for the traditional is clearly indicated, the cottages rendered more appealing with their English honeysuckle, the only plant mentioned by name

and brought suddenly to mind through the allusion to a common sensory experience. We are reminded of the power of nostalgic reflection in the fiction of the period, and additionally, that vivid word-pictures can emerge in works today regarded as minor. The very nature of the homestead's isolation gives rise to the expression of optimism for the future, to the note of exultation in the final chapter. However, the rhetoric here is undercut by the ambivalence registered in the word 'exiles'. This is strongly indicative of the colonial Zeitgeist, and explains much concerning the garden — imagined or real. The feelings expressed by Haydon form a quiet leit-motif in numerous works, but are more obviously apparent in the thoughts relating to the small plot of flowers that are contained in Ch.XVI of Ralph Rashleigh, from which I have quoted above.

If one recalls the major locations and the cottage gardens of the mid-century novels, flowers, fruit and vines come to mind. What defines the quality of these gardens is their beauty and fecundity. That is an element of the tradition of romance and one which, for aesthetic reasons, is heightened given the background. Howitt touches on such an aspect in A Boy's Adventures when he mentions the astonishment experienced at the 'bright, clear green of the European fruit trees' seen in station gardens (p.24). Literally and figuratively speaking the wilderness is perceived to flourish and the effect of these areas of cultivation is to arouse intense emotion.[20] In colonial fiction this becomes a component of the narrative formula. A sense of the Edenic is not uncommon and, as observed in Ch.I, such imagery is forceful because it carries both biblical and literary allusions and connotations. However, all this may be given further emphasis with reference to its antithesis. Howitt provides an example in counter-pointing of

20. In A Boy's Adventures (pp.211-3) Howitt pictures a less common sight: a forsaken garden in the bush.

two modes of existence in Tallangetta. In addition to the appealing central setting there is 'Lahni Mill' station, 'a good brick house in the midst of gardens and vineyards' and which is hailed as an 'Eden of the wilderness' (Vol.I,p.190). Within the narrative's structure the next location encountered is the utterly barren and desolate 'Bullarook' which in appearance at least, if not in terms of morals and manners, is the polar opposite of the two former properties.

More commonly, this antithetical presentation is figured forth with reference to a neglected garden. Spence has utilized this literary ploy in her northern stations in Clara Morison. The unmarried Mr. Reginald admits that his property is neglected. However, in the happy denouement he marries Clara and as a result, a more ordered existence characterizes his domestic affairs and 'Taringa' takes on a different appearance. Seen through the eyes of an outsider, it is finally 'a cheerful, pretty place'. The garden is then seen to be 'thriving' (p.407). Perseverance and industry are not forgotten but Spence lets her heroine off lightly: 'Clara was industrious without being a drudge...'. While the gardens at Spence's rural properties add to our information concerning them these gardens flourish — as they do in many colonial novels — in print rather than in any evocative way in the reader's imagination.

That might be said of such an area in Marian. For a garden might be utilized to point up a moral, and given her 'cloying earnestness of style'[21] one is not surprised that Franc should imagine the setting in such a light. Yet at the same time the garden is a conventional topos of the romance, and was becoming a regular feature of the homestead romance; so Franc finds it appropriate to place her young people there. It tells us much concerning the author and contemporary modes of thought, however, that the garden

21. Depasquale 87.

should be 'tastefully laid out' with a 'close, neat railing' instead of a 'rude brush fence' (p.168). Most revealing of all is the observation of Franc's protagonist, Marian, concerning such a location: '"And with a garden, and that ugly stockyard out of sight, what a pretty place it might be made"' (p.74). The idea might be said to typify the response of many novelists to the homestead's close surrounds.

So it is refreshing to turn to 'Little Jacob' who although writing at the same time and presumably of the same region reveals a more flexible approach. In the following passage from 'Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady' the associations which have come to prevail in the colonial novel have been set aside:

> There was a garden to that little house. Such a garden! why one half was grass, and the other half rubbish, old glass bottles, cabbage leaves, potato parings, broken crockery, and other refuse, bequeathed by the last residents to the Neate family, who were either too unsettled or too lazy to clear them away, but I believe at the bottom of this garden, there were a few native geraniums, whose tall small flowered affairs were as unlike as possible to our own glorious English flowers. (p.3)

A less guarded response is represented now and by an author who is simply working out of the mainstream of colonial literature, or is reacting against established modes. However, that the writer intended to speak out about everyday realities and contemporary preoccupations seems evident, especially given the name conferred on the occupants. Anonymity perhaps encouraged 'Little Jacob' to reflect upon aspects of early settlement in South Australia with a greater frankness than was usual in 1860. Although in this passage dissatisfaction is expressed concerning the geraniums, the writer has a good knowledge of native plants, bringing them into the stories in a number of ways and, in certain settings, combining them with European species. There is here a suggestion of assimilation and adjustment to circumstances in the colony, and the theme plays a large part in the collection.

This more practical response to conditions is seen throughout Colonial Pen-Scratchings. Pictured therefore are the orchards, flower and vegetable gardens of small settlers in South Australia, the stories revolving around huts, cottages or larger homesteads. While the prose is often heavy-handed, the narratives reveal a close knowledge of colonial conditions. In 'Speak Gently' are pictured 'bushes of roses, and yellow broom,instead of fences...' (p.29). Similarly in 'Emigrating' a homestead's verandah is recalled for its associated trellis-work: here 'one mass of roses and passion-flower'. In this story the farm is depicted as a homely place as I have demonstrated with reference to a passage quoted in Ch.II. With everyday activities not forgotten the property is mentioned as having a vineyard, an orchard and 'a large kitchen garden'. The particularity of small details around rural dwellings in a number of the sketches means that the settings engage the reader's interested response. In this case the flowering peach and almond trees and the kitchen garden, fragrant with pea and bean blossom, help place the scene convincingly.

It is apparent that the prose fiction of the period is mainly concerned with the attempt to transpose family life to the Antipodes. 'Little Jacob' depicts the existence of the less substantial settler. I referred in Ch.III to the rough interior of the homestead in a story entitled 'Letty May'. While the author does not dwell on the work out of doors chores are listed in this and likewise in a number of other tales: 'Letty learnt with the rest to fetch water, hoe potatoes, transplant onions, besides a thousand other farm jobs' (p.14). Something of the harshness of the life is made plain here. 'Little Jacob' seems unable to avoid time-worn expressions and yet it is more rewarding to point out that in these books such chores go largely unrecorded. One may see, however, a similarity between the depiction of such locations and those of Atkinson and Vidal who also reveal interest in settlers of humble background.

At this stage it is worthwhile reiterating that although some are modelled upon moral fables, many of these sketches are satiric in tone or are tinged with pessimism. As observed above it is the settings which attract attention in the main because 'Little Jacob' is dependent upon romantic cliché for plot structure and language. There is interest then in the discrepancy between the shaping of material in response to literary conventions and the freshness of the approach to the bush environment which mostly forms the background to these tales. One is reminded in some respects of the naive painter. With a degree of familiarity with the technicalities of art such an untutored artist, often drawing upon rural subjects, gives fresh insights to the subject matter by means of a naive approach to acknowledged forms. Paradoxically, what modest strengths these texts possess are enhanced by the very unevenness of the prose and the ambivalence of attitude to the subject matter. It should be added that it is appropriate to examine Colonial Pen-Scratchings in more detail at this point since horticultural themes, central to the writer's approach, help pattern his — or her — response to the matter of colonial settlement.

For the most part the garden may simply represent an ideal. That point of view is possible, I believe, when one considers the frequent reference to the rose and to other ostensibly English flowers and, at the same time, the signs of a slow acceptance of native species into the garden of earlier colonial fiction. We have seen the brief acknowledgement that the latter could help comprise a cultivated area in the two early works initially discussed, One False Step and Alfred Dudley; however with the exception of indigenous creepers, one finds few such references thereafter for a considerable time. This hesitation does suggest the functioning of a limited imagination in the earlier works. As a result, the homestead garden is doubly confined: first by means of a fence, as will subsequently be demonstrated and, additionally, in terms of its composition. In each case a marked reaction to the physical environment seems apparent. One discerns

here the expression of what is generally termed a frontier mentality. I have drawn some attention to this matter in Ch.I. With exposure to Australian conditions comes a very gradual modification of the ideal, with its traditional links and affinities.

If authors were slow to accept native species then a number of reasons suggest themselves. One may cite, for example, a lack of accepted names for indigenous plants. That difficulty is mentioned by Sarah Lee in the Preface to the first edition of her Adventures. In reading Meredith's Notes and Sketches of New South Wales, published in 1844, one is aware of uncertainty regarding botanical names. The book, she reveals, was written in response to a general ignorance concerning colonial matters. Again, in their deliberate choice of the traditional, authors may have been prompted by their own preferences or what they discerned to be the attitude of their readers. (One wonders, in retrospect, whether the colonials were quite as unenterprising as these writers of fiction would seem to imply.) However, nostalgia coupled with the desire for cultural continuity were surely paramount here. Additionally, as has often been commented upon, most newcomers found it hard to come to terms with what was seen as a reversal of nature in the Antipodes. This manifestation of nature developed into a theme which has since been widely acknowledged.[22] One strand of this belief, and often repeated, was that native flowers lacked perfume. Howitt is one writer who denies this,[23] yet Clacy in the same decade can still voice the common complaint — 'the flowers are mostly without perfume' — in 'Leaves from a Young Lady's Diary' (Vol.II,p.257). This sensory factor is of importance. It is surely not unconnected with the fact that the scented rose, honeysuckle and jasmine were, as I have indicated, most cultivated

22. See, for example, Elliott, Landscape of Australian Poetry passim. Elliott has observed that 'brightness without sweetness' was one of the recurrent themes in earlier colonial poetry (p.62).

23. Howitt, A Boy's Adventures 22.

in the gardens of fiction.

One would conjecture that the stress of acclimatization and the psychological difficulties in coming to terms with the unknown are inherently linked with the garden imagery of these texts. Something of the mentality of the period can be seen in the Letters of Rachel Henning. She writes of her indifference to native flora and contrasts her emotions relating to wild flowers 'at Home' where, she acknowledges, each 'seemed like a friend to me'. There is a recognition of the fact that this apathy is connected with 'the want of any pleasant associations' in the Australian counterpart.[24] Similar feelings of nostalgia are more succinctly expressed in the poetry of the period. Richard Howitt's 'To the Daisy' is such an example.[25] The specificity of the additional information in the title, 'on finding one unexpectedly in Australia, 30th July, 1840', emphasizes this event's importance to the poet. Howitt dwells upon the emblematic significance of the flower. While the presence of indigenous species of great beauty is acknowledged, they can hold no literary or sentimental associations. The daisy is an emblem, like that of the rose, which with the absence of Australian counterparts takes on even richer connotations in a bushland setting. Such a theme is formulated in contemporary prose fiction.

I am not implying that novelists were unaware of the attractiveness of native plants, as a study of the works of, say, Atkinson, Clacy, Howitt, Kingsley and 'Little Jacob' would show, and although there is an emphasis on the conventional garden a handful of writers, no doubt aware of the simple pleasures of colonial life, mention the decorative possibilities of native species. The earliest of them is Tucker who places 'bush flowers' in the

24. The Letters of Rachel Henning, ed. David Adams, foreword and drawings Norman Lindsay (1952; Ringwood: Penguin, 1969). See letter of 29th March, 1855.
25. Richard Howitt, 'To the Daisy' in Elliott and Mitchell, eds., Bards in the Wilderness 47-8. See also Caroline Leakey, 'English Wild Flowers' in the same anthology (57).

Marshalls' dwelling. It is one of the ways in which this model family's affinity with the land is implied.

Women writers of the fifties, especially those with an understanding of the importance of small homely details, also comment upon this activity. Atkinson has her common-sense Gertrude arrange native flowers 'in a large colonial jar' (p.62) on the verandah at 'Murrumbowrie'. Here mention of the flowers by name reminds us that Atkinson, like Meredith, had a good knowledge of Australian natural history and wrote extensively on the subject matter.[26] At the small bushland cottage visited by Gertrude a 'bunch of native flowers' is 'tastefully arranged' by the heroine (Ch.XXV). Clacy, similarly, mentions the picking of wild flowers for the house in 'The Bush Fire' (p.174). In 'The Good Sister Amy', one of the Tales for the Bush, wattle blossom is put in a jug over the dresser in a small bush home (p.253) while in a like setting in The Cabramatta Store warratahs are picked 'to stick in a jug' (p.45). Again, wild flowers are brought into a simple dwelling to make the parlour 'smart' in a story entitled 'The Bush Rose Bud' by 'Little 'Jacob' (p.32).

Here, the portrayal of an activity that is at once spontaneous, yet has the weight of European practice, leads to the presence of these flowers inside the home. Bypassing the garden from which they seem largely excluded, native species by these means become accepted into the domestic milieu. The inference is that they have some meaning to the lives there. Such an acknowledgement points to a developing bond with the land and appears to be the initial stage leading to a later and more public expression of acceptance. Common-sense would argue that the picking of wild flowers existed

26. See M. Swann, 'Mrs. Meredith and Miss Atkinson, Writers and Naturalists', Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Australian Historical Society XV.I (1929): 1-29.

prior to their cultivation; and that, similarly, both actions preceded their depiction in literature. Colonial culture, and the literature connected with it, was essentially conformist; but this is less apparent when matters relate to the lower classes. It is noteworthy, for example, that with one exception the homesteads referred to above in this respect are humble. And while 'Murrumbowrie' is more substantial, Gertrude, who has gathered the flowers, is a simple servant girl. I am proposing that, at least as it relates to fiction, wild flowers which would be deemed inappropriate, say, in the spacious homes of 'Baroona' or 'Tallangetta' would have found acceptance in the small bush dwellings pictured in many of these works. Through necessity, surely, indigenous plants were more quickly accepted by the less affluent; these few texts seem to suggest so. That does imply a coming to terms with colonial conditions in those who, unlike the inhabitants of the two stations just mentioned, had little or no chance of returning to the home country.

> 'A cottage small be mine, with porch
> Enwreathed with ivy green,
> And brightsome flowers with dew-filled bells
> 'Mid brown old wattles seen'.

These lines, the opening stanza of Daniel Deniehy's 'Amans Amare' of 1847,[27] and the poem *in toto*, draw attention to the bond that can develop with the environment in such circumstances. It was one upon which authors began increasingly to reflect as the century progressed.

In terms of the garden's composition in actuality intemperate conditions and a pragmatic approach may have induced settlers to accept one group of plants, the native creeper, for ornament and for shade. Such a factor was bound to attract observers and the phrase 'luxuriant creepers'

27. Contained in *Bards in the Wilderness* 50.

is not uncommon in these narratives. That aspect of 'Lan-lan-borin' is commented upon in the extract included above. The numerous examples quoted in this chapter and in relation to the verandah can be seen to lend an exotic edge to a scene, while also indicating comfort and permanence. In a literal and a metaphorical sense a close relationship with the land is implied, the dwelling becoming almost at one with the environment. That image becomes almost a cliché in narrative prose. A similar colourful and romantic feature is the creeper-covered hut. In 'Little Jacob''s 'Charlie the Shepherd' an isolated bark hut's roof is covered with 'the scarlet blooms of an exquisite bush creeper' (p.42). At this setting too bush plants are present, a factor not often conceded but appropriate here since expediency has fashioned the simple garden.

The indigenous passion-flower and bignonia are the creepers most often mentioned in addition to the rose. This conjunction of opposites, to take one example, is seen in Bowman's 'Daisy Grange'. While there is much that seems artificial in this exemplary locale, the resultant image is pleasing because of the deliberate linking of European and native plants fronting the house; and confronting the newcomers. A new ideal appears fashioned here. What is of interest in this passage however is that the 'roses, honeysuckles, and the well-loved creeping flowers of England' are on the columns, while the portico hosts 'the rich flowering climbers of Australia — the convolvulus, the curious passion-flower, and other graceful unknown plants...' (p.435). Does this deliberate separation point to an ambivalence towards native species? Or a recognition of their more dominant qualities?

Whatever the case, the two do come together in the extensive grounds of 'Daisy Grange'. And in only a few other narratives up to 1860. I have already referred to the idyllic nature of Bowman's major setting. The attractiveness of the tastefully laid out gardens is lent special force because it is viewed by outsiders who have been long lost in inland Australia

The notion of the homestead as an oasis emerges insistently in The Kangaroo Hunters (Ch.XXXIII). And here indeed is a garden which is 'showy' and 'various'. Of special interest is the combination of English and indigenous plants figured forth at this location: past and present seem reconciled.

The garden at 'Yandilla House' is envisaged similarly and in The Cabramatta Store good use is made of that setting in Ch.X. 'Luxuriant and brilliant creepers' add colour to the scene, the English nature of which is registered with a 'cedar walk' and with roses and geraniums. However — and it is noticeable that this site is somewhat distanced from the house — there is a shrubbery where

> The silver-flowered acacias, and the rich orange-trees, the formal aloe with its spiky leaves, and numberless strange but graceful shrubs, were tastefully intermingled. (p.163)

Here there is a varied planting and the mixture of native, domestic, and exotic vegetation points to a change from the ideal garden to one reliant upon general availability. The reference to 'strange but graceful shrubs' may refer to native species but it does imply that modifications were being made in colonial Australia. One notes that Vidal feels obliged to mention that although such plants are present this has been achieved 'tastefully'. There is an indication here, sometimes apparent, of a hesitance in accepting the non-European into the colonial garden. With regard to native plants, this would seem to stem from the fundamental caution with which the natural environment is regarded.

Colonial gardens could be limited in a physical sense too and that factor has already become evident. Whether of substantial size or merely a cottage garden these areas are generally seen to be confined by a fence. The latter, of course, may be said to help define that area of domestic cultivation termed a garden. Moreover, given the conditions such protection was a necessity. However, I find significance in the fact that creative

writers chose to draw attention to this particular manifestation of horticultural pursuits.

In 'It Is Never Too Late to Mend'[28] of 1856 Reade has described a bush home which, in appearance, is innately English. Here a fence encloses not a garden but a small plantation from which 'all the magnificant trees and shrubs of Australia had been excluded with amazing resolution and consistency...' (p.359). (The word 'magnificent' reminds us here that a range of attitudes was possible at the mid-century.) Seemingly envisaged as a frontier, the fence in general limits the domestic domain: it is the determining edge of civilization. Such a barrier serves to exclude the wilderness, as several writers explained. Closely related to this idea is the fact that, at the same time, the fence keeps intact the European garden, enhancing this colourful enclave and elevating its importance in one's estimation. These contrasting tropes provide a further element of tension in the earlier colonial novel and it would seem that with recourse to such imagery writers were placing especial stress on the dichotomy between pastoral and wilderness.

These impulses, although encapsulated in various passages mentioned here, are best defined in Vidal's works. In Tales for the Bush Vidal alludes to the slip-rail on a number of occasions. This, I would contend, is more than merely an incorporation of rural particulars. She is certainly referring to the practicalities of rural life; at the same time she is fixing on the enclosed nature of domestic cultivation. Such an image occurs also in The Cabramatta Store (p.10). In Bengala our attention is drawn to the fenced nature of properties and it is noticeable that the novelist alerts the reader to the encroaching native vegetation round the

28. Charles Reade, 'It Is Never Too Late to Mend'. A Matter of Fact Romance (London, 1889).

'Langville' garden. Thus she contrasts the ordered with the disordered world beyond. Kingsley, we remember, pictures 'Garoopna' similarly.

While the fence as dividing point must be deemed important, especially to those who have gained property rights in the new land, the garden's confinement seems paradoxical given the land's vast extent — and as its literature would have it, the country's boundlessness. Practicalities aside, the concerns here would seem to stem from the notion of the bushland's encroachment. Because cultivation differentiated the European occupant of the land from the indigenes the sight of untilled wastes made an immense impression on Europeans. That element gave an edge to narratives relating to pioneering: one that is less cogent today. The fictional garden, then, could be seen as a part of such cultivation, and therefore civilization, and this gave the site relevance whatever its extent.

I am not implying that these areas are invariably described as fenced, although often there is an indication of their enclosure. In essence, its distinctive features separated such a plot from its surrounds. What is interesting in Vidal is that we can observe the working of a particular response to the bush in her numerous references to the concept of a fixed boundary. However, in Bengala, the division between the garden at 'Langville' and the surrounding land is described as a 'palisade fence', it being noticeable that even this cannot restrain the natural vegetation's resilience. Something of Vidal's character may be seen here; and her way of experiencing the Australian environment. At the same time, such a stance is greatly revealing of a contemporary outlook.

To conclude, it should be stressed that, as in the case of the fictive homestead, variations preclude a simple generalization. Whereas the writer

of Alfred Dudley could devise a garden 'much more showy and more various than the one in England', some time elapsed before authors were in fact willing to envisage such a locale. It would seem that Porter had not visited Australia or taken into consideration the tensions of existence there. Possibly, to give this idealized garden additional emphasis, she created one comprising cultivated and natural vegetation. Here the imagery of romance is also an expression of the theme of acclimatization present in this early work; at the same time it allows for the impulse towards pleasing associations.

The gardens consistently depicted are of the kind generally termed 'English' and are hence a reminder that by the nineteenth century they had become one of the 'great accomplishments' of this race.[29] Novelists liked to picture the area as part of the larger homestead's environment. They delighted also in focussing upon the smallholder's attempts to subjugate the wilderness, and I have drawn attention to the extensive tradition relating to the cottage and its garden. In Australia that agreeable but diminutive setting lent weight to the concept of the settler's vulnerability. However, all these homestead gardens constituted an appeal to patriotism and to the emotions while winning immediate recognition and acceptance. They were a tangible link with the homeland.

The difficulties inherent in early colonial horticulture, hinted at in the texts first examined, One False Step and Alfred Dudley, were overlooked in contemporary fiction. As will be seen presently in relation to the outbuildings and the yard, material too close to the humdrum nature of colonial life or to its difficulties, frustrations and anxieties, was simply avoided. In terms of colonial literature, the cabbage patch was too humble

29. Rybczynski 107. See also Cuffley Ch.I.

a location to attract the colonial chronicler. On occasion, however, the orchard was alluded to; there is an attractiveness and robustness in such a place and with its pleasing pastoral imagery, the orchard is a conventional topos of the long literary tradition of the romance. Not that authors placed main characters there, or had them enjoy the fruits of such labours, and it is one of the weaknesses of these texts that authors did not reap the benefits of many imagined settings in the open.

It can be argued that the inclusion of the kind of material I have been alluding to could have been employed to enhance the homestead location in the public regard or, in addition, to invite respect for its inhabitants. Yet, as I have demonstrated, a cautious approach underscores the whole idea of a colonial garden, which is a location seldom intrinsically realized. For example, it is rarely conceived with thought to seasonal change; it is as a rule found to be 'neat' or 'trim' or 'well-cultivated'. It is often observed in full-bloom. Very occasionally are characters permitted interest in its care. If today one forms the impression that a necessary earthiness is absent here such a hiatus is simply part of the refinement which, in general, governs the fiction of the period. However, any such incongruity is masked, I believe, by an evocation of plenitude which these writers favoured. The emergent picture easily elicits the reader's sympathy and we find that by the 1850s the set-piece had become a stock allusion in the colonial narrative.

At the heart of these issues is the portrayal of a society which when thrown into a frontier existence adheres to established standards and traditions. That is why in these narratives neatness is paramount. So is good taste, which was bound up with the concept of respectability and had become a desirable attribute in early Victorian society. Likewise, in the presentation and interpretation of the subject matter the conventional is uppermost; so that paradoxically these narratives are backward rather than

forward looking and their plots deal with an idealized existence ordered by recognized mores and customs. The homestead together with its garden can be made to stand as an enclave of such values in the wilderness; and habitation and horticulture are representative of civilization in a colonized country where the two were consistently associated.

Tensions exist when such factors are incorporated into a fictional schema. To begin with, the creative writer's response to indigenous vegetation tells us much about contemporary preoccupations, and the hesitancy in coming to terms with conditions is inevitably linked to the concept that the bush presented an intimidating and hostile appearance. I have indicated the emphasis on the physical containment of the garden. The fence defined and confined the homestead garden, defining it in terms of ownership, confining it to domestic surrounds. That barrier served to separate the bush from what was European and, in the eyes of the European, immeasurably more precious. It can be said that the frontier present in the nexus of garden and bushland is one which is mirrored in the colonial mentality. Within the security of such an enclosure the settler is able to survey — and perhaps come to terms with — the surrounding environment.

In the prose fiction I have been examining garden and orchard stand as a powerful expression of the domestic customs and practices of Europe in the Antipodes. The site's importance lies in the fact that it forms a visible and dramatic sign of the nominally English nature of settlement, this being of significance when one recalls that the dwelling's undoubtedly colonial and pioneering appearance is coeval with the likelihood of the garden's similarity to its counterpart in the homeland. Nostalgia is therefore often connected with the flower garden and is both voiced in the narrative or is inherent in the whole idea of such a locale, authors themselves exhibiting these sentiments in its depiction and, above all, in the manner of flowers there. In fact, the choice of these must be seen as compensatory

and conciliatory, one being reminded that the popular narrative works to reinforce entrenched values. As Eco explains: 'After surprising the reader by telling him what he did not yet know, the author reassures him by repeating what he knows already'.[30]

In the juxtaposition of two aspects of the natural world — the cultivated and the uncultivated — the garden is a further reminder of a European presence in the southern continent. Close at hand and an additional manifestation of a settled population are the homestead's outbuildings and yard and the formal possibilities of evoking a more dynamic aspect of colonization are proposed in this locale.

30. Eco, The Role of the Reader 137.

CH. VI

THE HUTS AND THE YARD

> The dray now entered into a sort of rough paddock, round which stood some dozen bark huts, roughly put up. A little further on was the farm and stockyard; and beyond that was seen a house, with a long sloping roof and a deep verandah.
>
> ('Ruth Walsh', p.51)

It has become evident that the pattern of emphasis which gives prominence to rural dwellings is a marked feature of the prose fiction we are discussing. Such a pattern becomes more clearly defined when one considers the concomitant lack of emphasis on the homestead's close environs — but with the notable exception, as we have just seen, of the garden. I am referring here to the habitation of working men, to stores and sheds and stockyards, and to other features which help make up the agglomeration of effects to which the term homestead, in its widest sense, may be given.

Yet some novelists did utilize the subject matter, especially that concerning station hands and their working environment, by incorporating its themes and motifs into their narratives with imagination and occasional subtlety. In these cases the enlarged imaginative framework animates the text and provides a vigour lacking in other narratives. It is noticeable that instead of depicting the private domain of the men, women writers opted for the more public locale of the yard. Presumably they had a wider knowledge of this area and the activities there. In addition, one would conjecture that they experienced reticence in picturing the interior of men's dwellings. Where there is reference to the huts, stores, sheds, and stockyards in general, therefore, two modes of approach are in evidence. Besides a simple catalogue approach, there are some more thoughtful appraisals of the subject matter.

A number of reasons might be advanced for the hesitancy with which such material has been exploited. The romance generally stands aside from more unpalatable truths and from the practicalities of existence. Moreover, I

have implied that the circumstances which surrounded the system of transportation and assigned labour imposed certain restrictions in the portrayal of the lowest echelons of society. If, as Altick has argued, rural workers were the 'forgotten people' of the early Victorian period (or were noted for actions which in the eyes of the middle-classes linked them with social disturbance in Britain[1]) then with the reading public in mind authors were unlikely to romanticize that class or its ongoing concerns in the colonial novel. However, the presence of a convict workforce in real, and in fictive terms, imposed a need to come to grips with some of the uglier realities of the colonial social structure. It is worthwhile noting that the convict tag lasted for some considerable time. Gerstaecker, for example, in his Narrative of a Journey round the World of 1853 confirms the truth of the common belief that 'of twenty white men on the Murray, sixteen had been old convicts, or "government's men", as they more politely are called, amongst themselves' (Vol.III,p.14). While factors of this kind may have influenced writers against the depiction of such a class, others actually made use of these low-life characters and their social milieu. A number of authors, influenced no doubt by Utopian theories of the period, proposed idealized conditions and settlements of contented and subservient workers. But with the great influx of newcomers of all classes to Australia as the various settlements prospered and above all, after the gold discoveries at the mid-century, one could not maintain that prejudice existed in fiction against the workforce simply on the grounds of the convict label. Here individual bias must be taken into consideration; yet one suspects that social stratification became more deeply ingrained when the workforce was composed of felons.

I implied above that the more unpalatable truths generally did not find a place in colonial fiction and refer to the exigencies imposed by the

1. Altick, Victorian People 38.

conditions both within the homestead and central to this chapter, close at hand. Certain realities associated with the outbuildings and the yard were, in the main, avoided. I allude to inferior housing and questions of hygiene; to the extremes of heat and cold and the rigours of existence in the inland; to the hard work and danger imposed by the circumstances. As for unpleasant, unsanitary, and distasteful elements in rural life or, say, the ill-treatment of animals, authors distanced themselves from such possibilities. Do aesthetic and moral concerns screen the yard and its occupants away in these fictionalized accounts?

In answer, it should be mentioned that a number of writers were known for works other than fiction. By taking a single work, Howitt's _Land, Labour and Gold_ of 1855, it can be seen that the author, not bound by the romance tradition, as in _Tallangetta_, or the need to conform to certain conventions as in a book for young people, _A Boy's Adventures_, wrote of contemporary realities with energy and perception. Amongst topics on which he was willing to dwell were the colonial habit of abandoning animal carcases unburied (_Letter_ III), the unattractiveness of primitive dwellings and gardens which exhibited 'patches of cultivation and rampant crops of weeds' (_Letter_ IV), the unpleasantness of dust-storms and vivid details of the ravages of disease amongst sheep (_Letter_ XXXIII). That is not to say that Howitt felt free to report on all the manifestations of colonial life he encountered in his travels, but there is here an ostensible freedom not apparent in his fictional schema. All this might propose that a homestead's close environment could have been unsightly if not ugly, as a quotation from Louisa Meredith, which I cite further on, goes so far as to suggest.

Of the reasons one can put forward for omissions of this kind, those related to propriety and respectability would seem to be uppermost. With authors and the reading public having largely the same background, the choice of subject matter seems directly related to shared expectations and assumptions.

And one must consider the pride with which colonial activities were regarded. Many works were directed to free settlers and would-be emigrants, so that earnest optimism is the sentiment articulated above all. As to the facts to be incorporated into colonial prose fiction, the parameters were generally to be determined by the good taste of authors and the reading public and by certain restrictions defined by genre. It must be admitted, however, that to unravel these strands is in practice impossible.

The Huts

Harris provides a range of interesting locations in The Emigrant Family, the story's scope allowing a more balanced representation of conditions than usual in the 1840s. Besides the foremost setting at 'the Rocky Springs' lesser dwellings are seen, both close to the Bractons' station, and further afield — outstations which are inhabited by shepherds and stockmen. The depiction of a hut at 'Coolarama Creek Station' helps establish the background for subsequent happenings there.

> It was thus nearly noon before Beck reached the top of the ridge where it looked down on the hut; a bark erection of only a single apartment, such as two or three persons could move about in without being in each other's way. It had apparently been built some years, and not very carefully, for the bark, both of the sides and roof, was ragged looking, weather marked, and warped; a more than ordinary volume of smoke issued from it, sailing away almost in a straight line on the wind, through the cold, dull atmosphere of the day. (p.64)

The detail of the smoking chimney elicits surprise because, except for a couple of animals, 'the whole station, hut, yard, and vicinity, had a solitary and desolate aspect' (p.65). Here a voice with an accent revealing convict origins and the words of a popular song and the ensuing dialogue are deployed to recreate a scene rather different from that generally found. Beck's entrance to the windowless, smoke-filled hut is well-conceived: given the account above the reader is unprepared for the number of men gathered there. A 'shiveau' or 'get-together' is taking place, and the conversation reveals the bonds that hold these men together; bonds which are examined more closely and with some acumen in Settlers and Convicts.

Settlers and Convicts purports to be the 'Recollections of Sixteen Years' Labour in the Australian Backwoods by An Emigrant Mechanic'. Numerous huts are present in this work. Not only does Harris describe them but, more interestingly, he reveals what it is like to inhabit these rough dwellings. Factual information, as in the chapter entitled 'Life among the Shepherds' (Ch.XVI), is interspersed with comment regarding the lives of shepherds and hutkeepers on sheep-stations 'up the country'. The accumulation of detail builds up a picture of early pioneering life, and the exploits of the 'Emigrant Mechanic' become less important than the background against which they occur. However, the informing theme, one man's impression of the social, economic and political nature of the colonial venture, gives weight to the narrative and makes it, as one critic has stated, 'one of the best descriptions we have of the way of life and the values of those men who, by the labour of their hands, built the colony of New South Wales'.[2] The travels from station to station are recorded in Ch.XII in journal form, the misery of hut life described on the second day being balanced with the comparative ease of the time spent at the station at Jambecombène where 'very liberal and welcome entertainment' was received. A notable feature of the journal is the recollection of male companionship and the sharing of tea and smokes and yarns. Elsewhere there is occasion, in guidebook style, to give practical details concerning the building of a hut (Ch.V), information of a kind acceptable here, although it may be seen as intrusive in The Emigrant Family. The balance of the subject matter in the latter has been debated and amongst others by Ramson who raises the question as to whether the novel 'remains essentially a handbook of practical information, wearing only thinly a guise of fiction'.[3] However, the delineation of a wide range of cultural

2. Clark in his foreword to Settlers and Convicts.

3. W.S. Ramson, 'The Emigrant Family' in The Australian Experience, ed. Ramson (Canberra: Australian National UP, 1974) 1.

conditions in these two books make them of particular interest because it does seem that fiction up to the mid-century and beyond was directed principally to the middle-classes and may be said to mirror their aspirations, interests, and preoccupations.

Yet, for a number of reasons, the huts and the men who occupied them do receive some prominence in this body of work. It should be mentioned that there are several narratives in which the existence of labouring men serves merely a moral purpose. Most often a portrayal of the working hands is related to the presence of a homestead, the yard providing the background for dramatic confrontation, or for cheerful co-existence there. Additionally, the subject matter we are examining could be developed to contrast hut life with that of the homestead, or to focus on differing mores or customs. Humour may issue from such comparisons; it may also arise from scenes of low life and the rendering of the vernacular and idiom of the working hands. Finally, and of special relevance, the publication of information related to overseas colonies was endemic during the nineteenth century, and the appearance of works classed as emigrant manuals or guidebooks quite clearly derives from such a phenomenon. Material related to the labouring force must therefore be seen as partly providing such factual matter, whatever other function it may have played. When we regard The Emigrant Family it is plain that all the points to which I have been alluding come into play in varying degrees here. That is indeed rare in the books dating from this early period and would suggest strengths outweighing the failings of Harris's romance. There is another special quality. It has been noted by Green that this work is 'the first novel that shows any real traces of Australianism'.[4] In the course of my thesis I have been able to demonstrate aspects of such a factor.

Ramson's statement concerning The Emigrant Family highlights the diffi-

4. Green 97.

culties inherent in providing a factual account for intending emigrants while at the same time taking up a fictional stance. Such difficulties are apparent in a number of early works. Rowcroft, as we have seen, interrupts the flow of his Tales to describe the mode of construction of a bush hut. Besides providing a romantic image, the passage conveys the kind of information appropriate to the handbook genre. However, Rowcroft pays scant attention to those individuals for whom a hut is a home. Consequently, the huts on Thornley's property remain shadowy places in a narrative which concentrates on the exploits of Thornley himself, his achievements in a new land, and on the building of dwellings fit for himself and his family. The fundamental point here is that those occupying Thornley's huts were of convict class. The writer, in fact, devotes considerable thought to the disturbing question of convict labourers and their relationship with free settlers. Yet the men themselves, except for those turned bushranger, have little part to play in Rowcroft's novel. Rowcroft addressed his work to intending emigrants. Clearly, good reasons exist for avoiding subject matter related to the men and their huts, and for emphasizing the successful ventures of free settlers in Van Diemen's Land.

The ongoing popularity of Tales of the Colonies of 1843 and its timing in relation to emigration must have strongly influenced other writers of the mid-century. The ideas just outlined provide the background and may help suggest both the motive and the explanation behind the focus on the main homestead and the ensuing pattern in which the labouring men's dwellings are seen less distinctly than those of their masters. The earliest records, journals and diaries point to the deeply divided society which had become established in Australia. That social division is no less apparent in the first narratives. In fact one may see it as emphasized because of the bias of these works, with their stress on those high ideals to which Rowcroft himself, amongst others, drew attention. The prejudice

against that section of society which was convict, or had been so, can be found in almost every one of the works of this early period. Sometimes covert, but generally more openly expressed, it stems from the notion of respectability, which can be seen as all-important to settlers who were free. Even the narratives written by those convicted and sentenced to transportation, and I refer especially to Vaux, Savery, and Cozens, demonstrate an attempt to distance the writer from others carrying the convict tag. Tucker's Ralph Rashleigh is an exception here for Ralph, as has been observed, 'accepts as it were the fact of being a convict'.[5] This work, in addition, differs from the former in that it did not exist in print to influence others.

The men's huts in McCombie's Arabin — another book soon reprinted a number of times — provide a revealing example of some aspects of the colonial mentality. In Ch.III, after traversing the great plain and before coming to the Butlers' station, Arabin seeks shelter at squalid huts where former convicts eke out a miserable existence as shepherds. The level of comfort in these places in wretched; even so, it is something not questioned by Arabin, or by his creator. McCombie, fearing that standards could be eroded in the new colony, expresses himself strongly on the home as a symbol of civilized values and of domestic virtues (Ch.XIV). He upholds refinement and respectability. Such ideals receive a setback in the course of the story. As Wilkes has suggested, McCombie's novel is one of a group which 'do not suppress the uglier aspects of colonial experience',[6] this work being unusual in that discord is seen to be associated with the homestead as well as the huts. However, the living conditions of the lower classes, as depicted in Arabin, raise little comment in the fiction of the period. In these narratives the social gulf which divides master and men is made

5. The Oxford History of Australian Literature 43.
6. Wilkes 23.

apparent in their standard of living, and the contrast of such conditions is regularly equated with a matching dualism in ethical values.

A heavy-handed insistence on Christian virtues may be seen in two works for young people. Alfred Dudley is designed to amuse and instruct, the instruction on a moral plane being integrated with factual information concerning this 'far distant land'. Alfred Dudley and his father with 'stout hearts and firm resolutions' build accommodation on their property with the help of assigned convicts. And when the house is completed and the 'outbuildings requisite for an extensive farming establishment' (p.91) are screened off by trees, the hut and the lives connected with it are similarly hidden away. I see in details such as these more than a physical separation from the realities arising from the first phase of colonial settlement. There is here an expression of those high ideals with which the fictional homestead was for many years invested. With changing social and economic conditions Bowman, almost thirty years later, is able to imagine a settlement of free labourers, similar to the one finally envisaged in Alfred Dudley. In The Kangaroo Hunters the stigma of convictism is absent, the workers of 'Daisy Grange' living in 'neat snug huts' (p.431) appropriate to their station in life. Their idyllic existence is described in fulsome terms at the book's conclusion. In both works, therefore, the final tableau represents the servant class as hard-working and content under the benign and paternalistic regime of a rural gentry.

Confidence in a clearly-defined social hierarchy, the firm expression of moral rectitude, the strong belief that human fulfilment was possible in the new colony: these are the prevailing modes of thought in Australian fiction in the first half of the nineteenth century. With such a background in mind, one can turn to Tales for the Bush. Directed to the servant class, the book comprises numerous tales for their edification. What defines the overall quality of the stories is their insistence upon Christian

virtues; however, an acceptance of a rigid social stratification is also quite apparent. Unusual in that the stories do not accord with the pattern of emphasis proposed at the beginning of this chapter, the settings are a range of small bush dwellings and homestead huts. Something of the existence of the inhabitants, often married couples, is captured, as is occasionally the evocation of the loneliness of bush life, and some of its pleasures. The lines heading this chapter help to provide the background of one of the stories, enough information generally being conveyed for settings that are adequate. Although humourless and heavily didactic, the tales are unusual at the time for their depiction of domestic life in a section of society where conditions are uncomfortable and circumscribed. One recalls the detail of the heat and glare from the late afternoon sun coming through a western window, or the information that the temperature within causes the family to take their evening meal out to the shady side of the hut — both in 'The Good Sister Amy'. The selection of detail gives a particularly Australian flavour to the stories, I believe, and on that point I am disagreeing with certain well-known critics.[7]

A homiletic strain governs a number of the colonial novels and often detracts from their literary worth. Symptomatic of the Victorian age in the mother country, these views are most marked in the books just examined. I cite also Atkinson's Gertrude. The firm moral stance and the strong belief in social meliorism are attractive and positive features, and yet such beliefs are frequently tinged with paternalism, often being seen in the attitude within the homestead towards the huts. That attitude appears to be held, to take one example, at 'Yandilla House' in The Cabramatta Store. It is also seen in Geoffry Hamlyn.

Kingsley, perhaps drawing on first-hand experience, allows himself to see such things in less clear-cut terms. There is an element of fun in the

7. See Green 91 and Miller and Macartney 474.

scene where the visiting Dean, Frank Maberly, discusses the welfare of the men, many of them former convicts, in the huts at 'Baroona'. In the absence of a clergyman Mrs. Buckley 'sticks' the men 'full of religious tracts'.

> "Do you find they read your tracts, Mrs. Buckley?" asked Frank.
> "No," said Mrs. Buckley, "with the exception, perhaps, of 'Black Giles the Poacher,' which always comes home very dirty. Narrative tracts they will read when there is nothing more lively at hand; but such treatises as 'Are You Ready?' and 'The Sinner's Friend,' fall dead. One copy lasts for years."
> "One copy of either of them," said Frank, "would last me some time. Then these fellows, Major, are entirely godless, I suppose?" (p.206)

The previous incumbent having served 'as a standing joke to the hands for a year or more', the Dean decides to 'invade' some of these godless dwellings. The humour in Kingsley's romance is rarely observed and one senses that Argyle, for example, has quite failed to note it in his comments on this incident.[8]

Humour, as I have remarked, may derive from a contrast of the lives and the expectations of different strata of society and that is exemplified when Maberly makes his unexpected visit to an outlying hut (Ch.XXVI). Here the occupants 'were scarcely less rude than the hut itself'. In this cameo of low life the contrast of speech rhythms and idiom is splendidly caught. Nor is low life ridiculed, for the clergyman's expectations concerning the men, former convicts, seem quite unrealistic, and the author has tongue in cheek when he describes the Dean's sermon, the text of which is 'Servants, obey your masters', as 'homely, plain, sensible and interesting' (p.215). Humour of this quietly subversive kind is lacking in early Australian narratives, although the quality of 'cheerful insubordination' which has been seen in the first half of <u>Ralph Rashleigh</u>[9] is similar. These passages from <u>Geoffry</u>

8. Argyle 92.
9. <u>The Oxford History of Australian Literature</u> 42.

Hamlyn, their humour perhaps owing something to Dickens, reveal a less serious side of the author.

However, attention is drawn to that underside of colonial society which Kingsley, along with most other writers before him, associates with the huts and with a work force of convict background. It is an element of society which is possibly corrupt. Therefore Major Buckley of 'Baroona' is troubled that his son Sam should grow up 'here among these convict servants' (p.161), whereas at 'Toonarbin' 'no such precautions as these were taken with regard to Charles [Hawker] ... so that he was continually in the men's huts...' (p.180).[10] Hamlyn's moral concerns underline the recollections. This attitude towards assigned workers is typical of the times, the idea persisting beyond the mid-century. Edward Curr, in his own Recollections, recalls his hands as 'an average lot of ruffians'.[11]

In Tallangetta the appearance of a married couple, servants who are in no way connected with the convict system, marks a development in Australian literature. Abner and Peggy Wilks, the faithful retainers of the Fitzpatricks, are provided with 'a comfortable slab hut' as a home. The hut and its peaceful surroundings are depicted in Vol.I,Ch.II. Here, a large woolshed and information relating to its use attracts attention, reminding the reader of today of factors, other than literary ones, which preoccupied these writers. The physical distance between the Wilks's hut and the main house, however, seems to reflect that necessary social distinction between the two places of habitation.

Like Kingsley and Howitt, the majority of authors, both men and women, are known to have drawn upon their own background in writing their prose

10. This point has been made by Messer 50.
11. Curr 437.

narratives; yet it seems clear that difficulties must have been experienced in rendering certain aspects of colonial existence, some of which must be considered as unique. One imagines, for example, women writers to have been at a disadvantage in depicting the existence of a male work-force. (A similar reticence to be observed in male writers concerning women servants is a question I will consider in my next chapter.) So it is interesting to recall that women writers tend to use the environment of the yard as a locale rather than scenes within the huts. Ramsey, Leakey, and Clacy simple avoid such subject matter.

Spence describes a station to the north of Adelaide in Tender and True, and catalogues the woolsheds, cattleyards and three cottages (Ch.XXX). In contrast to the main dwelling — the attractive home-station — there are 'inferior huts' which are provided with 'doors, and one pane of glass' (p.159). Spence is aware of the organized hierarchy in this small community, and this is borne out in setting and dialogue, and in the details of the plot. She renders some aspects of the lives of station hands at the mid-century through conversation within the homestead rather than through action out of doors, or in the huts. One can detect in Gertrude Atkinson's attempt to disseminate information in each of the short episodes which comprises her narrative. For example, a scene in one of the huts serves to comment on the method of making damper (p.53). Much sound factual detail is however presented by these means. Interestingly, Atkinson succeeds in conveying some aspects of a community which, although sharply divided in social terms, must work cohesively for a pastoral venture to flourish. In Cowanda the rough conditions on an inland station are described, and there is dramatic force in the presence of a young man who must share hut-life with men of a different social and moral background.

Vidal's Bengala, appearing fifteen years after Tales for the Bush, demonstrates a more developed literary technique and wider social concerns.

Her use of material naturally varies from, say, Harris; even so, her rendering of many aspects of homestead life carries conviction. In Bengala the juxtaposition of well-conveyed settings of homestead and huts at 'Langville' sets up polarities of some cogency. An example is contained in the chapter entitled 'From a Lady's Boudoir to a Convict's Hut' (Vol.I,Ch.VII), and it brings a quiet strength to the narrative. For life as envisaged in that 'very pleasant room' termed a 'work-room' or 'morning-room' and the desultory conversation concerning marriage is in marked contrast to the situation in the men's huts and the yard where the evils connected with convict labour are revealed, and where the criminal Venn is put in charge of the men for simple reasons of expediency. Here the festering underside of the social structure is variously portrayed and attention is therefore drawn to the huts and the yard at 'Langville'. Effective is an evening scene outside the huts where the men are involved in 'the common routine of cooking, mending and smoking...' (Vol.I,p.270). Vidal is implying that customs and rituals have evolved there in the course of time. We see men bound together, whatever their enmities, by the contingencies of daily life, and by their shared background.

Similar circumstances are pictured at a remote station in The Cabramatta Store where the scene is conveyed by means of small details and disparate elements (p.109). There are sounds of men and animals in the distance; nearby movement is indicated in the flickering of campfires, in the mention of men going about their task of meal-making. Hungry dogs are mentioned. Above all, there is the notion of work being completed for the day and hence there is a smell of tobacco, 'the stockmen's evening solace'. In the same book evening in the yard of 'Yandilla House' is described thus:

> The sun had gone down; the labouring-men about the place were either chopping wood outside their huts, or boiling their tea and preparing their damper within. Snatches of songs, a loud whistle, and jokes answered by loud laughter, reached Anne, as she sat at work.
> (p.93)

Along with the housemaid, Anne Moore, the reader sees or rather hears, these events. Her solitude, contrasted with the yard's conviviality, adds a further dimension to this out-of-doors existence. Vidal's two novels are enhanced with a rendering of lives associated with the huts. But, exemplifying my earlier remarks, her craft is to displace the focus of interest from the huts to action in the yard and employing the settings I have drawn attention to she offers concise though vivid fictional representations of such an existence.

The rituals described by Vidal and others, notably Harris and Kingsley, are sharply differentiated from the niceties of the homestead parlour. For one thing, a woman's touch — and its softening influence — is absent here. It was a question of some importance in the Victorian era, as will be discussed much later. Yet while refinement or sophistication, or the means (or need) to procure such qualities in this social ambit were lacking, there are parallelisms in these contrasted modes of existence. I am thinking of the informality and congeniality authors liked to attach to all colonial social proceedings. Too, hospitality is offered at the huts as it is within the homestead. The evolving rituals of the huts and yard may best be expressed in connection with the working man's idiom but unlike Harris or Kingsley, Vidal was unable to achieve this in her prose, and perhaps that is not unconnected with those questions of gender which I initially raised.

Finally, in considering such material, one recalls more particularly The Emigrant Family, Geoffry Hamlyn, and Bengala. I believe this to be due, in part, to the artistic expression of the supposed confrontation between two value systems: between the huts and the homestead. That factor adds either tension or dramatic force to the narratives. In proposing this I am not suggesting that these three writers saw matters in clear-cut moral terms. For example, in Bengala, Vidal exploits the tensions connected with Lynch's increasing resentment at being unable to better his lot.

There is a keen relevance in his flight from 'Langville' and his subsequent death. In this respect Vidal stands unique at the mid-century. Moreover, each of the writers thinks to record that divided loyalties may be present in the outbuildings; that convict ties may weaken and give way to a fresh perspective. While the interests of Harris, Kingsley and Vidal centre on the rural gentry, their choice of a broad canvas allows material relating to the work force — the men and their dwellings — to play a not insignificant part in their works.

Store, shed and yard

All these areas, pictured in descriptive passages or alluded to in more sustained fashion, receive scant attention in the narratives if one considers the background and the often vivid recreation of contemporary circumstances. So that necessities around the homestead, basic to the lives there and the occupations followed, receive much less acknowledgement than their fundamental importance would warrant. Some narratives written by men who have drawn on common knowledge or colonial experience reveal closely-observed facts of rural and pastoral life. Accordingly, the store and yard and work with stock play a part in their plots or settings. This is, of course, to generalize, but I refer here chiefly to Harris, and also to Rowcroft, Howitt, and Kingsley. There are some vivid scenes in Sidney's Gallops and Gossips and brief evocations of work with animals, such as shearing, branding, and horsebreaking in Cooper's Wild Adventures.

I will first mention Ralph Rashleigh. Whether in accord with Tucker's experience or not it is now almost impossible to know.[12] Ever alert to the possibilities of narrative effect, the author projects his hero forward to a number of rural dwellings, this compositional device leading to

12. See Roderick's foreword to the 1952 edition of Ralph Rashleigh.

a recreation of events in and around each of these locales. The description of the Arlacks' house (included above, p. 87), is matched by those of its filthy interior and wretched environs (Ch.XVII). In the latter a hut and a fowlyard become the setting for the ill-treated and starved Rashleigh's raiding of the poultry, the incident leading to a denouement in the tale at this location. Here the forcefulness of the exterior scenes arises from the rich integration of background, character, and event.

The antithesis of this property and a similar one belonging to Irish settlers, is the Marshalls' dwelling depicted in Ch.XVI. The cottage, garden, and the well-fenced yard with its sheds, pens, and stockyard lead Rashleigh to recognize that 'all the arrangements bespoke as much care out of doors as the aspect of their domestic management proved to reign within the walls of their humble home' (p.130). The exterior as well as the interior of the homestead here provides the orderliness of background which adds strength to Tucker's conviction: that persistent endeavour leads to well-being and independence. In this respect, some would say that the juxtaposition and rigid handling of these homestead sites is heavy-handed.[13] However, one must generally agree with the statement by Barnes that Tucker 'shows more awareness of the literary possibilities of his material than the popular authors like Rowcroft and Harris who were his contemporaries'.[14]

Settlers and Convicts, assumed to contain much autobiographical material, is a lively account of pastoral life. Sinnett saw this writer as 'certainly more at home in dealing with fact than with fiction'.[15] Harris was a worker and traveller, an observer and critic of inland settlement and

13. See, for example, Laurie Hergenhan, 'A Convict Dream: James Tucker's Ralph Rashleigh' in his Unnatural Lives 16-30.

14. Dutton, ed., The Literature of Australia 159.

15. Barnes, ed., The Writer in Australia 26.

its social structure. And The Emigrant Family succeeds best when Harris depicts the raw events of pioneering. In the description of Kable's bush cottage and its environs the events that would normally take place there, as the herding and slaughtering of cattle, are outlined to enable urban readers to comprehend the practicalities of a pastoral existence.

> There was a rough bark-roofed barn behind one corner of the house, at the very edge of the standing timber, and behind the other, a couple of the common huts for working hands; and nearly at the extreme of the top line again, by the creek edge, so as to flank cattle by it in driving them in, was the stockyard, with its calf-pens, and a little yoking-yard; and inside the large yard the usual gallows, of some twelve or thirteen feet high, with a block and hook attached for hauling up a slaughtered bullock, during that process which is familiarly termed "taking his jacket off". (p.76)

With the use of the word 'usual', the phrase 'that process', and finally the colloquialism, something of the habitual nature of the event is recalled, and not only at this property but at others which are similar.

More unusually, in a vigorous sequence concerning cattle branding at 'the Rocky Springs' the noise and the smell of the stockyard help place the scene (Vol.I,Ch.12). One of this author's key strategies is his use of precise detail. The description of the 'Coolarama Creek' stockyard and the explanation for the need of strong fencing, becomes suddenly more vivid with the information that new round saplings have been used to replace 'grey and old' decayed rails (p.64). Such a fact provides the clue that, despite its 'solitary and desolate' appearance, the yard could accommodate cattle. It is important in a plot involving rascally station hands and the theft of stock in the pioneering days of New South Wales. Moreover, the inclusion of such detail lends the passage a chronological perspective.

Expressed in the novel are concerns which Harris has mooted in Settlers and Convicts. There, for example, Harris tells of the irritation of the 'Emigrant Mechanic' and his fellow workers at the shortage of stores in an isolated region (p.42). That is an employee's point of view, and

seldom voiced with authority in the narratives with which we are dealing, although plainly heard in <u>Ralph Rashleigh</u>. These narratives owe allegiance to a rural gentry. So while an observer like Harris and numerous other writers and diarists of the period may mention lack of provisions or commodities, such mundane realities play almost no part in contemporary literature. Even so, in <u>The Emigrant Family</u>, a shortage of supplies does lead to discontent and the suggestion of rebellion by the station hands (Vol.II,Ch.6). It is interesting to speculate that such a notion — the shortage or lack of stores, to take this one example — could quite naturally have provided a point of some value or crucial concern in novels set against outlying regions.

Again, perhaps drawing from his own experiences, Harris stresses Lieutenant Bracton's mismanagement of 'the Rocky Springs'. More often in these romances station-owners are without fault. That fact says as much about class loyalty and the unwillingness to touch on contentious issues as it does about the emphasis on exaggerated ideals and patriotic pride in contemporary prose fiction. However, in <u>The Emigrant Family</u>, Bracton's inexperience enables Harris to describe the physical features of the station and to refer to its management. Such a strategy is in evidence in one incident in which the station hands take advantage of the gentlemanly owner of the property. He is a 'new chum', or newcomer to Australia, and is unable to control his workforce. In this early morning scene the men, instead of working, are described as being 'busily engaged at "pitch and hustle" at the old spot...'. The store here secures them from view (pp.274-5).[16] One would infer that the activity is not an uncommon one; therefore the site in both its physical and social dimensions becomes more firmly established. Human foibles depicted in this manner do not easily find their way into other modes of colonial writing, except perhaps in the case of private correspondence; as

16. A footnote, omitted here, describes the game.

a result, a fresh understanding is gained of this imagined setting. I would agree with Wilkes when he argues that a study of a range of Australian writing will furnish evidence of the country's cultural development.[17] A scene like this offers such evidence, providing insight into one facet of rural existence.

Closely observed details of colonial life also characterize the works of Rowcroft, Sidney, Howitt and Kingsley. Rowcroft's Tales of the Colonies does not altogether ignore the possibilities of the homestead environment; in fact it has been called 'a disguised instruction manual'.[18] However, apart from domestic concerns and information about life in Van Diemen's Land, this work is more to be recalled for the exploits of its protagonist. A little later Sidney briefly recreates outback realities in what purports to be an autobiographical tale, Gallops and Gossips in the Bush of Australia. Innovative at this time is the chase and yarding of a wild horse in Ch.III, and there are stockyard scenes of branding in Ch.V.

Howitt's two novels of the fifties reveal the extent to which his knowledge of the bush and the Australian interior has been employed by the author. Much of interest is found in that rambling narrative entitled A Boy's Adventures in the Wilds of Australia. Scenes here — as a remote bush homestead with wooden outbuildings, the area littered with drays and heaps of wood and with sheep skins on a rail fence (p.177) — seem more plausible than those in Tallangetta. In the later novel one feels that, except for the homestead at 'Bullarook', things have been made orderly. No rough shed or unsightly yards disfigure 'Tallangetta'; in fact, huts, stockyard and woolshed are 'at some miles distance'. Even a horse and carriage has its rightful place: at the house there is shelter where they could

17. Wilkes 1 and passim.
18. The Oxford History of Australian Literature 35.

'stand occasionally', although 'the true place for such things was down at the huts' (Vol.I,p.33).

In the depiction of events outside and around Kingsley's attractive principal sites those given emphasis take place in the comfort of the verandah. In Geoffry Hamlyn, what defines the overall appearance of the station locations is their bright orderliness, a quality which strains one's belief today. In his Introduction to this work Mellick draws attention to contemporary constraints. He writes of Kingsley:

> Undoubtedly he knew more of the harsher aspects of colonial life than has been acknowledged, and more than he introduced into his fiction. This resulted from Victorian taboos, perhaps, rather than from personal preference. (p.xiii)

Thus, Kingsley typically uses an incident relating to wild cattle in order to test the calibre of the scions of the Brentwood and Buckley homesteads (Ch.XXIX). And additionally: to provide an incident that will reveal the love of Alice Brentwood for Sam Buckley. There is a correspondence with the generality of life here but the text stands above it.

The store receives prominence in several novels of the period and the fact that provisions are handed out to employees regularly is recorded in a number of works. The store may simply be itemized; or again, it may become a location of significance. In Atkinson's Gertrude stores are given out once a week, and she is one of the first writers to grant the importance of the occasion. Information of this kind provides local colour yet its effect is to focus attention on the special conditions of the region: conditions shown to give rise to a way of life which, in turn, evolves its own customs and rituals.

Although the depiction of the event in Ch.VIII is sparing, something of its movement and conviviality is caught and the gathering of men, women, and children is likened to a 'general muster'. In her shaping of the sub-

ject matter Atkinson renders a particular aspect of Australian pastoral life; however the information works additionally to give an idea of the property's extent and the nature of its workforce. Such an event enlivens the narrative as, in fact, in the story it brightens the existence of employees coming for stores and those who reside at the homestead. With Atkinson's heroine we share the social significance of this ritual of rural life — an existence which has already been revealed as 'monotonous' (p.16). Recalling the author's upbringing Roderick has commented that 'it is natural that her two novels should have the solid factual background of station life'.[19] Simply-recorded scenes of men washing and shearing sheep (pp.66-8) and one of tumbledown slab huts, broken fences and weeds around a neglected homestead in Cowanda (Ch.III) confirm such a view. Otherwise perceptive, the young Atkinson allows sentimentality into the former pastoral scene when she describes the sheep as 'wanton gambollers'. Here Atkinson reveals how easy it was for authors describing Australian circumstances to employ outmoded literary clichés, those unsuited to new conditions and a new country.

Vidal's interest in such conditions means that a storeroom, to take this one example, can be used to convey different aspects of the homestead's wider domestic milieu. The weekly handing out of provisions is recorded in The Cabramatta Store (p.89): at 'Yandilla' Mrs. Parker distributes the week's rations before leaving for Sydney. However, on another social plane, Lester, a hired hand, voices what may have been a common complaint: he is paid 'any thing but money' (p.53). Obliged to accept wages partly in goods, he must, like other labourers, 'take it out' in stores. That is a point of some significance in the narrative, since he needs cash to open a business in the nearby township. Led into a life of crime, he never achieves his ambition. The economic power of the large property owners is alluded

19. Roderick 11.

to by Vidal who has Lester complain: '"There's none save the gentry's private stores for many a mile..."' (p.54). These references to the landowner's monopoly of goods — although an opposing point of view is also put forward — are of interest. They do suggest some questioning of the social hierarchy, although as I have suggested earlier and as is apparent in Tales for the Bush, Vidal is essentially conservative. Another aspect of pioneering is raised in The Cabramatta Store. A station-owner prefers to ignore the activities of bushrangers because he fears his supplies will be interfered with if he voices a complaint (p.59). It is clear from these examples that, although not described in a physical sense, 'the store' in real terms has a presence in the story. As often, Vidal's observations of the contingencies of colonial life are simply achieved, yet they lend her narratives a coherence lacking in others of the period.

Such a point of view is reinforced with a reading of Bengala. In a descriptive passage concerning 'Warratah Brush', the accumulation of detail is enough to allow the cottage as a setting to become established. The outbuildings are listed: a barn, stockyard, and a fowl-house, while behind the home there is the kitchen and the washhouse (Vol.I,p.25). With 'Langville', a more complex strategy becomes apparent and the dwelling's environment and outbuildings become important in a number of ways. I believe it to be one of the most fully realized dwellings in the narratives of the period Not only is the interior carefully rendered, but the dwelling's road, garden, yards, and outbuildings become integral to the setting, as I have already established.

The account of the substantial home is initially brief and appears in Ch.III. The estate is later viewed panoramically by Mr. Lang and his daughter Isabel, the reader gaining an idea of its extent and its significance to these two leading characters (Vol.I,Ch.III). Later, in the yard, there is a revealing scene between Mr. Lang and his workers (Vol.I,

Ch.XIX). As already noted, the assigned convict labourers and their way of life form the basis of one of the two main strands of the novel. In this incident Vidal has managed to capture the uneasy truce which exists at 'Langville', and it is highlighted in a confrontation between the irrascible owner of the property, Mr. Lang, pictured in 'his suit of white linen and small Manilla hat', and one of his assigned men. The clash occurs on a personal level but in a wider sense exists between Lang, a representative of the gentry, and former convicts, who are scarred physically and mentally by the bitter events of the past. Hence, the yard in this and several other novels provides an appropriate background for the interaction between these two levels of the colonial social hierarchy. There are, accordingly, scenes of co-operation here or, more dramatically, those of confrontation. Similarly, both were utilized by Harris in The Emigrant Family.

However, in returning to that establishing paragraph, I will examine one sentence. It demonstrates the suggestiveness of which Vidal is often capable. What is interesting is that in the initial depiction of the home there is mention of a former one: 'The original dwelling was still left standing, half buried in creepers, and was now used for a school-room and spare bedrooms'. Here the passage of time is implied, something which is achieved quite deftly in this work. Features of the everyday life of the place are caught with the mention of the use to which the building is put. Such information works to establish in the reader's mind what we will later learn about 'Langville': the number of children in the family and the propensity for generous hospitality. There is, additionally, a romantic touch about the old building in the yard. It recalls Chevalier's celebrated picture of a similar subject, The Old and New Home Stations, of 1870.[20] In a variety of ways, and with attention to detail, Vidal has

20. Reproduced in Dutton, The Squatters 55.

achieved the same painterly effect in her depiction of the 'Langville' estate.

Consideration will be given to one other setting here: that of the Jolly's farm (Vol.I,Ch.X). Here a brief event gains strength when carefully observed incidents are rendered with a certain literary flair. The Jollys are caught by surprise with the early arrival of their friends from 'Langville'. Mr. Jolly is busy with his men packing salted meat, and a gumtree branch is used to keep the flies away. His wife, who by her own admission is no stranger to the kitchen, has her hair still in curl-papers. However, a further aspect of this rural existence is conveyed through the observations of the fashionable Mrs. Vesey, who is newly-arrived in New South Wales: '"I admire the colonial taste so much, Mrs. Jolly, in always having the entrance to their houses at the back. No show off, but so primitive and simple-minded of them"'. This tart comment at once establishes the character of Mrs. Vesey and while making a valid comment on colonial custom, her words draw attention to conditions which establish the scene firmly in its setting. The yard and its way of life and the dwelling-house are inextricably linked, and this is revealed not only in a small architectural detail but in the rendering of affairs there.

More simply, the catalogue technique may be adopted, as it is, for example, in Ramsey's slight story of blighted love in an outback setting, <u>A Romance of the Bush</u>. At Mr. Brentnall's station rough-looking huts are mentioned and 'a more commodious though still wooden-built cottage, with its outbuildings, garden, and paddock fences...' (p.2). Here, outbuildings are taken into account although having no part to play in the events of the narrative. Similarly limited is Clacy's usual mode of description. In her Preface the author states that her tales are 'founded upon facts'; she claims 'the merit of Truth'. However, the highly-coloured romances, which include adventures with Aborigines and bushrangers, dangers from bushfire

and flood, and other less florid and more common events in the bush, are not principally concerned with daily life around the homestead. In 'An Old Maid's Story' a comfortable station in the Illawarra district consists of 'a large substantially built dwelling-house, stockyards, and innumerable outbuildings...' (Vol.I,p.186). While the Preface to the latter work and the Dedication to the former imply that these novelists have drawn from their own experience and knowledge, and even though Clacy has made some telling observations in her short stories, pragmatic concerns are neglected.

Although not generally using outbuildings or yards as locations, Kingsley does mention them in the formal and establishing descriptive passages of his favoured sites in Geoffry Hamlyn. One example is the panoramic view of 'Garoopna' where Hamlyn recollects 'woolsheds, sheepyards, stockyards, men's huts, &c.' (p.221). 'Toonarbin' is recalled: 'a charming house, covered with green creepers, and backed by huts, sheepyards, a woolshed, and the usual concomitants of a flourishing Australian sheep-station' (p.175). While these accounts are brief and the action in each homestead's environs are limited, the community of people are a source of interest there. Paradoxically, although little work appears to be done by the major characters, one is always aware of these homestead locations as 'flourishing' Australian sheep-stations. Perhaps this stems from the fact that despite such catalogue descriptions and the exploitation of a romance formula it is always apparent that Kingsley was conscious of the larger social structure which had evolved at pastoral properties. This he succeeded in portraying in the relationships between those at the homestead and those in the huts, rather than with outbuilding locations and events.

With a formal descriptive passage physical conditions can be rendered. The mention of a slip-rail, as I pointed out in Ch.V, may help locate a scene. In The Cabramatta Store it is clear that a slip-rail marks the

division between the domestic garden and the road or bushland beyond (pp.15,124). Consequently, a simple passage may carry more weight than would at first appear to be the case. Similarly, with the inclusion of the 'usual concomitants' of a station property, even although they are merely itemized, comes an additional perspective: that of the homestead's extent. This is evident in the initial paragraph concerning 'Daisy Grange' in The Kangaroo Hunters (p.435). The station's size impresses the newcomers as, on another level, the information works to impress the reader, especially one not acquainted with the conditions. As with the accent on the country's vastness, there is sometimes a similar stress on the extent of the agglomeration of buildings comprising a property. That occurs in the establishing scenes of 'Garoopna' and 'Toonarbin' in Geoffry Hamlyn. In each case, having previously employed the notion of the long ride undertaken to reach the homestead — a motif not uncommon in the colonial novel — the writer is able to draw attention to its isolation. The use of a vista or panoramic view then strengthens the impact. And yet, as is frequently the case, one feels that the outbuildings mentioned have no intrinsic significance; they exist, as they invariably do, as a part of the homestead complex with the emphasis falling elsewhere.

Outbuildings described as part of the homestead complex appear in The Emigrant and in Colonial Pen-Scratchings. Both works pertain to South Australia whose beginnings are noted for the proliferation of small settlers and for the absence of convict labour. Using the catalogue approach Leigh can describe 'Mimosa Station' as 'the improved station, together with outbuildings, homestead, &c., &c.' (p.221). While this is apt because the text replicates a bill of sale and the reference here is to the property's purchase, the words scarcely add to one's knowledge of the outbuildings, or the activities carried on there. Yet the avoidance of such issues in this case cannot be connected with my earlier premise, that is to say, the wish to evade issues relating to convict labour. It seems clear that

Leigh, like many others, wished to concentrate on domestic events and on those in the wider environment. As will be seen later, the most spirited section of the narrative concerns the incident in which Blair, owner of 'Mimosa Station', becomes lost in the bush.

Over a decade later, in 1860, cottage homesteads as well as larger establishments are the major locations in Colonial Pen-Scratchings. The approach differs markedly from earlier works, although a number of settings recall similar humble bush dwellings which are, however, more comprehensively described in Atkinson's Gertrude. While outbuildings are not given prominence, the work there is alluded to. What is noticeable is that the householders themselves, men, women and children, are necessarily involved in such activities. Rural labourers also have a part to play, the main location in 'Charlie the Shepherd' being a dilapidated hut. In 'Letty May', which contrasts a life of frivolity in Adelaide with rural conditions at 'Bungaloo', farming and gardening chores and work in the dairy and with stock are all mentioned. In Ch.II I have quoted a descriptive passage from 'Emigrating'. I draw attention now to the comment: 'there was a stockyard full of cows waiting to be milked...'. The reference is pointed and is an example of the willingness to recognize rural observances and the rhythms of daily life by a writer of minor talent.

A more balanced presentation of the homestead is contrived with the inclusion of an intermediate locale, not narrowly domestic as is the garden, yet still separated from the bush. While these works focus on the concept of civilization in the wilderness and upon the representatives of civilization who reside there, the depiction of huts and yard is a further strategy which permits interesting contrasts and parallels between two modes of European culture — that of the chief setting with its ordered middle-class existence and that of the workaday world — and the tensions which

may exist between them. Three further and significant aspects of such material remain to be examined. They concern these narratives and their correlation with contemporary reality, the depiction of class structure and relationships, and the value of the language and social mores of the labouring classes to the creative writer.

However much the genre of romance imposed its own limitations and constraints, aspects of social reality were understandably incorporated into the earlier colonial novel by authors whose stated aims were to instruct and to entertain. They were, however, somewhat diffident in recording the totality of the existence we are concerned with here. The most memorable passages relating to the yard and outbuildings are those which catch the elements of a rural existence differing from that of the homeland, as when, for example, events of ritual significance or a seasonal nature are enacted. Thus Rowcroft's accounts of bush dwellings are generalized and disappointingly brief. The author of Frank Kennedy offers the following passage:

> For two days after my arrival I contented myself with moving about the farm, endeavouring to obtain an insight into the proceedings of the different people at work, in which task I was most ably assisted by Mr. Morrison, the manager of the estate. (p.9)

The brevity and formality with which this narrative event is recounted ensures its ineffectiveness in terms of social history and in literary terms. That is equally apparent in numbers of works.

On the other hand, much of the liveliness of The Emigrant Family derives from sustained passages relating to the workforce at 'the Rocky Springs'. Kingsley devised similar incidents in Geoffry Hamlyn. Atkinson and Vidal attempted to incorporate such factual matters into their narratives, the latter being the more successful. Scenes of sheep-washing in Gertrude reveal that the robust sense of occasion and the language associated with that event is altogether lacking here (p.67). Even so, in Gertrude, and in

The Cabramatta Store and Bengala, these two women writers achieve a more balanced perspective because they picture a range of activities about the yard and, therefore, the community of people naturally connected with the area.

With regard to appearances, the fictionality of these works seems sometimes only too apparent. The homestead's environs are too orderly to be credible. One senses the groundplan to have been dreamed up with well-intentioned assumptions rather than with critical intelligence and a sharp observation of contemporary realities. Very early photographs (and these more than paintings which are based upon a quite different set of assumptions and expectations) present scenes which are far from attractive or harmonious. And another point of view is frankly expressed by Meredith in her Notes and Sketches:

> Proceeding, then, along the avenue towards the house, a stranger might be apt to fancy he had entered at a wrong gate, for he would find himself led into the midst of all the farm-buildings; stock-yards, cow-sheds, barn, stable and piggeries ranging on his left hand, whilst huts for the farm servants lay on his right; and in front, commanding a full view of all these ornamental edifices, the hall door of the house! Such being the almost universal arrangement in the Colony; and, as compared with many other settlers' houses, this was rather aristocratic. Why the approach to a farm-house here should be so much more dirty, unpleasant, and intrusive than in England, I know not; but certain it is that in visiting a colonist you are generally obliged to inspect every other portion of the establishment before you can reach the apartments of the family. (p.130)

Not only is this site somewhat different from those 'tidy homesteads' so often fixed on but, in addition, a pattern of emphasis is proposed which is remarkably at variance with that so unhesitatingly propounded in creative writing. Moreover, the observer includes references to outbuildings such as cowsheds, stable and piggeries, which are almost completely ignored by the writers of fiction, this word sometimes taking on additional connotations when one is attempting to separate fiction and fact. Missing from the description above is the fowl-yard, a locale also regarded

with disfavour by writers, although the scene of one of Rashleigh's exploits. Even allowing for exaggeration in Meredith's remarks — for she enjoys a nice turn of phrase — her word-picture is a revealing one.

It would seem that however instructive these texts tend to be, certain information has been withheld. This is an intrinsic factor in the homestead's depiction; and as I have argued here and will subsequently pursue, it is scarcely surprising that such a pattern should be repeated in relation to its close surrounds. Novelists were apt to reassure the public, so while they acknowledged the intimidating nature of the bush what they stressed were the country's more pleasing and rewarding aspects. The countervailing culture of the yard, along with its material and social realities, were unlikely to attract authors at this stage in the country's development.

I mentioned earlier that the rigours of existence endured by the workforce are most often avoided in the colonial novel. Accordingly, facts relating to hard manual labour around the homestead, if not omitted altogether, are blurred over in simplification or generalization. This we have observed in connection with the garden. Likewise, but with the exception of horses and dogs, close association with animals, such as the milking of cows, does not comprise material considered appropriate for these narratives. Issues that could have provided subject matter of dramatic concern, have been disregarded. There are the difficulties I mentioned earlier; one thinks too of the breakdown of essential equipment or indeed its introduction into the yard, or again, the shortage of water or of stores — vital in an existence which is isolated. Again, there is scant information about the trades plied in the outlying settlements. Accident or injury in the yard seldom mar these imagined sites. Finally, there is no mention of the winter's mud; and only rare affirmation of the unrelenting glare of the yard in summer.

Insofar as a number of writers moved beyond the circumscribed world of the homestead dwelling and did provide a credible account of this particular aspect of colonial society, one further point should be raised. Some, more particularly Russel Ward in The Australian Legend, would see within the ambit of the yard in the first half of the nineteenth century the formulation of an ethos which came to be regarded as typically Australian. And so fundamental is such a locale to the pioneering enterprise and so essentially bound to rural conditions, that if there is a distinctive mode of life and thought manifested against such a background in these works then it is of substantial interest in terms of social history; as indeed I have argued for this body of fiction as a whole.

However, the ethos of the yard, as opposed to the dwelling at its centre, is that of a masculine domain; the particularity of this existence draws attention to itself as much in terms of contemporary reality as does its imaginative treatment in the prose fiction of the day. In this limited orientation and perspective, and in the absence of women and offspring, such a locale could not be said to give rise to a spirit which could be considered typically Australian whatever characteristics one might see illustrated there, and which may be deemed Australian. On the other hand, nor could this be claimed of the culture housed within the homestead itself, since it would seem to be alienated from the inherent processes of a rural existence. Following Wilkes's argument in The Stockyard and the Croquet Lawn — that 'there is no single tradition, and no one set of opposed traditions, that can encompass Australian cultural development' (p.145) — it could be stated that the yard and its occupants are simply representative of one aspect of the country's rural life and it gives rise to elements which must be considered as Australian. Passages describing conviviality around the campfire in the yard offer a telling example. At the same time, the fictional recreation of the household taking advantage of the homestead verandah provides further and additional evidence of a spirit which is palpably Australian.

In an era when Australians are looking to their origins with increasing interest it would be unwise to disregard material located in this body of work as a faithful recreation of aspects of contemporary reality. To restate those issues I raised in my preliminary Note: there are problems associated with the use of literature as evidence of social history. To Laslett's argument, that the creative writer will 'colour up' and 'tone down', that literary texts provide the reader with an author's reflections upon society rather than with a 'mirror-like reflectiveness' of society itself, one can look to Watson for reply. For this historian fictionalized accounts may respond to a great demand for knowledge, and in early Victorian times in particular prose fiction was presumed to provide factual information.

Touching on this subject matter and the accompanying social milieu, these narratives are a valuable addition to the few primary sources available. Such a fact is more obviously correct of the bush workforce in general since the vast majority were unable to record their own experience. Folksongs and ballads of the day obviously provide another source of information; unfortunately authors considered such material unsuited to their texts.[21] Brought to mind here is a distinctive feature of the romance: what Frye has termed the 'pervasive social snobbery' which governs the genre.[22] One further point should be considered. Rare photographs, like those reproduced in Ward's The Australian Legend or in Squatters and Settlers by Stone and Garden, are revealing of the homestead's working environment, but because contemporary observers so seldom detailed this primitive existence the word-pictures contained in these fictionalized accounts considerably enhance our knowledge of that sector

21. But see The Emigrant Family 65. Of interest also is Gallops and Gossips 33-4.

22. Frye, The Secular Scripture 161.

of nineteenth century society.

Questions of class loom large in these texts. Such an issue has its wellsprings in the hierarchical social structure of the home country and was likely to be of continuing import in the new land. More fundamentally, of course, circumstances surrounding first settlement were to provide the reasons for a cleavage in society: that between bond and free. And yet numbers of works, those set in later years and those relating to South Australia, although delineating the parameters of a clearly-defined social structure, also portray a class of small landholders — settlers who work their own properties. Authors soon fixed upon subject matter of special interest to their readers: the success of those of middling class. In such works the homestead's close environs can therefore be envisaged in a different light. There is a world of difference, say, between the social milieu of the freehold farms in 'Little Jacob''s 'Letty May' and 'Emigrating' and that depicted in Vidal's 'Ruth Walsh'.

In spite of the emphasis on social stratification, in many narratives the main dwelling with its yard and outbuildings is the hub around which a small, united, often isolated and largely self-sufficient community congregates. In alluding to the feudal nature of these settlements, and to the fact that family life was depicted at the chief properties in the major novels, Messer observes that 'quite early the big house became the centre of a small community that extended out to the farthest shepherd'.[23] It was an image, one assumes, that must have had contemporary appeal. Drawn upon here is the well-established ethos relating to the country-house in the homeland.

The two sides of the problematical question of convict or assigned

23. Messer 163.

labour are set out in careful debate in Rowcroft's Tales of the Colonies (Vol.II, Chs.XXXIff.). Against Rowcroft's sober reporting or the recognition of the problem by Cozens in Adventures of a Guardsman one would prefer the more exacting account in Settlers and Convicts. A later novel which refers to the evils inherent in transportation is the anonymous Rebel Convicts.

In The Emigrant Family, however, the question is dealt with imaginatively. An incident in the story deals with the ill-treatment of such a worker: cruelty which is all the more insidious because it is masked by power, privilege, and politeness. In Vol.II, Ch.5, we travel with a magistrate, Hurley, to Dr. Mercer's secluded homestead, that property remarkable for its rural opulence and extent. It is here where the magistrate is greeted and put at ease by the lady of the house and her children on the verandah. Made vivid and apparent is a strongly hierarchical social framework, feudal in nature. Yet the yard takes on a sinister aspect with information concerning the power of the owner of this 'domain' over his assigned labourers. Harris demonstrates how one's insight into the assignment system may be confused by the surrounding circumstances. As the visiting magistrate discovers, the extent and the civilized nature of this remote home 'irresistibly awakened surprise and complacency' and, inside, social mores only serve to reinforce such feelings. A disturbing side of settlement has been exposed. Given the conditions and in recognition of the possibility of such eventualities, the Legislative Council of New South Wales passed an Act concerning the obligations of Master and Servant in 1828.[24] Hence, in both local or colonial terms, and in a wider or universal sense, the sequence of events I have been

24. See Clark III:183.

examining unfolds with telling effect. The reporting of such a circumstance is no literary stock-in-trade. The homestead and its environs are here seen in a disturbing light, but it is not a question on which Harris wishes to dwell inordinately in his romance of pioneering. Nor were many other authors to focus upon the subject.

For the more pernicious effects of this particular social hierarchy — and I refer here to the inhumanities and injustices against assigned labour as is documented in Vol.III of Clark's A History of Australia, or is noted, for example, by a contemporary writer of some authority, Sidney, in A Voice from the Far Interior of Australia of 1847 and recorded in detail in Settlers and Convicts of the same year — tend to be denied in contemporary fiction. This must certainly be due to the wish to avoid an unpleasant subject, but is perhaps related to class loyalty and notions of patriotism. It should be recalled at this point that the transportation of convicts had ceased both to Tasmania and the eastern states just after the mid-century.

And although the vicissitudes possible in the operation of such a system have been avoided, there must have been an awareness of them. This is suggested, I believe, in the fact that Isaacs can treat the subject satirically in The Queen of the South in 1858. McGrab, the owner of 'Currumbumbula' station and an 'intelligent and liberal-minded squatter', reveals his numerous shortcomings in relation to the treatment of his men. And in a complaint about the shortage of labour in the gold-rush era he looks with nostalgia to the past:

> "Who is to herd my flocks, shear my sheep, tend my dairy, gather my crops? ....Oh for the rare old times, where there were none but jolly settlers and ticket-of-leave men in the colony, and a stout heart, with whip and rifle, could always keep both whites and blacks in hand". (pp.11-12)

What imparts a special force to the passage is a hiatus of such material in the literature up to this period. That it has been shunned almost com-

pletely tells us much of the spirit of the times, and much concerning the fiction. Vidal drew on her observations of the system in Bengala of 1860. Her treatment is powerful, although muted. The difficulty in dealing with the subject matter is possibly revealed in the fact that the book was written well after the novelist's return to England.

Questions of convictism aside, however, the rough accommodation of the working hands who lived without the domestic comforts women might have provided was not a question which greatly concerned contemporary authors. For example, McCombie's interests are directed towards the 'respectable looking cottage' to which Arabin eventually repairs. It should be acknowledged, however, that right at the end of the period we are discussing 'Little Jacob' specifically contrasts the comfortable existence of a landholder with that of his shepherd. In this tale, 'Charlie the Shepherd', the young man dies as a result of his living conditions in the bush. For the most part writers seemed to accept those social divisions governing nineteenth century Australian society. Three classes of dwellings are pictured in the epigraph above and Vidal concentrates on those lowest in the social scale in the Tales. Influential writers like Harris and Kingsley similarly devised scenes which showed the men at home in the rude accommodation provided them.

Rather than dealing with the ill-treatment of assigned convicts or rural workers, novelists were more likely to furnish plots with examples of their dubious moral standing — a concept which may well have fulfilled public expectations. Harris draws on first-hand knowledge to depict all sides of the master-servant relationship in Settlers and Convicts and in The Emigrant Family he portrays servants both loyal and disloyal. The stealing of stock, a common crime, however, has a key part to play in the plot of his romance. In fact, rascally hands became commonplace figures in the Australian colonial novel.

To whatever extent fact and fiction may be interwoven, and however much questions of class may have influenced the contemporary writer, in any evaluation of the literary qualities of these novels one must ask what function material relating to the homestead's close environment was to play. In recognizing that some authors were alert to the possibilities provided by the subject matter one must look to their aims and purposes and attempt to gauge its effect in their works. Much of this we have already examined. My focus at this point is upon those many works with the initial colony of New South Wales as background. It has become evident that ambivalence towards colonial circumstances is registered in the most competent works and a few which are minor. One site of such conflicting attitudes was in the homestead's working environment. Hinted at in a subtle or in more direct terms, made plain in the attitude of characters or in authorial comment, and plotted in scenes of confrontation or co-operation, the most sustained and revealing depictions of this social milieu are located in works by Harris, Tucker, Vidal, Atkinson, and Kingsley.

I have claimed that the imaginative response to the material available was limited in its orientation. That is true concerning the yard and its inhabitants. Hence the standards assigned to the huts are seen in sharp contrast to the morally sound world of the central location — a strategy whereby the latter is necessarily enhanced. Observed in the early Alfred Dudley, it is in evidence almost thirty years later in Kingsley's novel. An ironic reversal of such a theme can be recalled in the incidents at the Arlacks' farm in Ralph Rashleigh; even so, this is only one aspect of a literary mode likewise broadly moralistic. Generally speaking, then, images of stability and moral rectitude are seen against those of disruption and deception and there is dramatic value in this comparison, or clash, of cultures. Opposed to this notion, to some degree, is the expression of egalitarianism which is more in evidence as the nineteenth century progressed. Accordingly, in several works a common bond is

envisaged between all at the homestead site. There is evidence of this at 'Yandilla House' in The Cabramatta Store and at 'Tallangetta' in Howitt's book, to take two examples. Such a bond would seem to have its origins in common endeavour. Elsewhere, diverse characters are seen united against prevailing dangers. Pictured, too, is the mutual desire for material prosperity — a pleasing notion because it expresses solidarity.

The final point to be considered concerns the developing customs and traditions of the huts and the yard and its vernacular. The main dwelling is normally characterized by domestic refinement (remembering that lesser refinements are often envisaged at humbler homes, like those so ably depicted in Gertrude and in Colonial Pen-Scratchings). Given the preoccupation with family life, all these dwellings provide the background for the survival of a culture that is in essence traditional, if tempered by conditions peculiar to Australia. For example, the offering of tea had become one of the rituals of hospitality in the Australian bush. This occurred in all echelons of society, and as demonstrated in the course of my study the creative writer utilized this friendly observance as an appealing set-piece. In Frank Kennedy, however, 'Yarra-Guinea' imagines the antithesis of the idealized occupant of the homestead parlour in having an old crone welcome newcomers at the hut of 'Kangaroo Ned'. Although not offering traditional hospitality she cools her own tea by pouring it from pannikin to pannikin as she sits before the rough hearth (p.14).

A striking contrast, then, may be provided in the social milieu of the lower classes and several writers recreated circumstances located within the ambit of the yard. Sometimes — as in those descriptions of men smoking and yarning, and cooking and eating together — it becomes apparent that activities like these have taken on ritual significance. Then the pastoral rhythms shaping the life of the bush worker come to mind. Brief scenes contrived by Vidal function well in this respect. In taking into

account the absence of womenfolk in many areas, writers highlighted masculine friendship, or mateship: a bond which appears the stronger because it is based on communal living and shared commitments and on a close connection with the land and evolving processes there. Here Geoffry Hamlyn is recalled. Vivid, of course, in literary terms, all these passages bring to light the customs, both diurnal and seasonal, which have their roots in such an existence. How that varies from rural life in the motherland the more astute writer thinks to reveal. Thus Harris offers that entertaining word-picture of the station hands' preparations for Christmas Day, an event which may conjointly, in the Antipodes, celebrate the 'harvest home'.

The evocation of the working environment is well-maintained in The Emigrant Family, and Christmas Day finds the men going about their personal affairs and attending to this communal and traditional ritual which at 'the Rocky Springs' marks the completion of shearing and harvesting (Vol.I, Ch.9). The time of the day and the atmosphere of the place is established with reference to the movement of the men and their early morning activities and the sound of milking. Employing the present tense here the author conveys the immediacy of events which more particularly are related to the making of a very large pudding. What appears to be an Australian vernacular is nicely caught, the humour seeming to arise from precisely such an incident. For these reasons the passage stands out in early Australian fiction. It is worthwhile noting that Harris does not attempt to describe celebrations within the Bractons' homestead, although he does emphasize their seasonal generosity. Instead, he pictures an aspect of existence characteristic of the huts and, interestingly, its idiom. That is one of the strengths of the work since opposed to this vivid representation is much that is the stereotype of romance — as, for example, the colonists who reside at the main dwelling here. And, in line with what was becoming a convention in these colonial romances, Harris contrasts the sobriety

at the homestead with the lower orders' intemperate habits. In all, it would appear that Harris's experience has enabled him — or has impelled him — to question the structural pattern commonly formulated and to turn to account subject matter with which he was familiar.

I have intimated that a handful of creative writers reproduced the vernacular of the colonial workforce. Besides the value of this aspect of the earlier colonial novel in terms of social history, in a literary sense such dialogues provide an evocation of place and, occasionally, an element of humour. A carefully detailed background and an imaginatively drawn social milieu do much to render the ethos of a particular setting; however, the sense of place becomes the firmer with the documentation of a spoken language connected with it. I have already drawn attention to Atkinson's presentation of the rituals of the yard in Gertrude. Several very brief sequences register the vernacular of that locale, as when the stores are given out in Ch.VIII. There is clearly an attempt here to catch contemporary idiom, and given the young author's rural upbringing and her competent reflections upon homestead life, there is every likelihood that this reported speech closely approximates to that with which she was acquainted. The emigrant writer Spence, on the contrary, has been unable to establish a similarly convincing dialogue at Davanent's station in Tender and True.

Even allowing for the fact that some humour relating to the colonial Zeitgeist must be lost to us, that element is not characteristic of the earlier colonial narrative. Yet humour may arise from the depiction of mores and patterns of speech differing from that generally accepted by the reader, as Harris, say, has shown in The Emigrant Family. The vernacular of the working men has a freshness and vitality which, as Sinnett and Green both noted, quite outweighs the stilted dialogue of those of higher

social status here.[25] What is of special interest is that the humour in the pudding-making episode (as when one of the hands complains: '"Tell us something we don't know"') is of a kind many would consider Australian.

A similar laconic vein is rendered in the scene where Arabin attempts to make contact with the somewhat casual occupants of the shepherds' out-station in McCombie's narrative. At the second hut the conversation is revealing of the shepherds' roguery and lack of education. Less studied than the speech assigned to the labourers at 'Murrumbowrie', the quality of laconic humour rendered here demonstrates that 'irrepressible variety of the spoken language'[26] which McCombie has managed to convey. Needless to say, the workaday idiom captured by McCombie and others is sharply differentiated from the well-modulated voices at their principal dwellings. Butler, a 'cove' to his hands, asks his wife to receive Arabin in these terms: '"My dear, this is a gentleman who has lost his way, and who has taken refuge at our station. Give him a kind welcome"' (p.37). A passage which concedes such a distinction has been nicely contrived by Kingsley in Ch.XXXIII of Geoffry Hamlyn and here the author brings a 'currency lad' into the 'Baroona' drawing-room. Kingsley is another who would seem to be utilizing a knowledge of the hinterland, as is suggested in his command of the idiom of the huts throughout.

These few instances go far in meeting Sinnett's criticism that Australian dialogue has not been 'artistically reported', and that 'genius can report it so as to be interesting' and yet still identifiable as that of certain speakers.[27] Sinnett appears to have been unduly pessimistic in his judgement concerning the reporting of Australian vernacular, I

25. Barnes, ed., The Writer in Australia 27 and Green 94-7.
26. R. Quirk in his foreword to Turner, The Australian Language viii.
27. Barnes, ed., The Writer in Australia 11.

believe. And whether such speech can be presented 'artistically' is a question which interests us less today, perhaps, than the fact that its rhythms, patterns, and colloquialisms would seem to have been recorded in a handful of novels. It is fortunate that writers have recreated contemporary idiom and in the circumstances in which it might have been employed because, as has been observed in relation to the colloquialism: 'It has its existence in familiar speech rather than in the language of the printed page...'.[28]

Although it has been possible to explore them only briefly a range of contemporary issues have been raised in this chapter. These authors' avoidance of certain political, social and economic questions would argue a worthwhile line of study in itself. Exclusion of such matters works to preclude a balanced perspective of colonial conditions and, in consequence, insight into the lives of bush workers who were responding to fresh experience after their own fashion. At this point the notion of fiction as history reveals its shortcomings. Because of its rarity, therefore, such evidence affirms its essential value in terms of cultural evidence of the period. I have demonstrated that the ethos of the homestead's working environment receives limited appraisal. Occasionally a developing sense of identity with the land is revealed. Notions of mateship and signs of egalitarianism are recorded. Although it has received little recognition, there is also insight into the working relationship between Europeans and Aborigines. Elsewhere, one gains an understanding of the problems connected with the assignment system of convict labour, and because this is contained within an imaginative framework, the reader is

28. G.A. Wilkes, in his introduction to A Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms (Sydney: Sydney UP, 1978) vi.

granted several points of view. Interestingly, in his Recollections the squatter Curr affirms the skill of contemporary authors in portraying the convict workforce.[29] In all, subject matter included to educate nineteenth century readers is instructive in other ways today.

The genre of romance allows the inclusion of much that is diverse and it will now have become evident that the colonial novel was beginning to take on certain unique characteristics. One would conjecture that some matters might have been thought too radical to be incorporated into the fiction of the day. However, changing social attitudes and, above all, a wider reading public in the homeland, as documented by Altick, Watson, and Young,[30] for example, predicated an altered perspective. Anxieties connected with the founding of the initial colonies must to some degree have waned by the mid-century; for instance, the actual presence of free emigrant workers must have proposed a reconsideration. Besides, the possibility of including this subject matter and an enlarged social background (as was so successfully utilized in England by Dickens) surely tempted those writing imaginatively about Australia. If initially a lacuna is apparent, evolving interest and dramatic need propose the deployment of material relating to the huts and the yard. Accordingly, a literary convention begins to take shape. Later in the century the mode of romance was to be challenged by the more forceful connotations generated by this subject matter.

Despite a convention which relegated working men and their labours to the periphery of these texts and often associated their way of life

29. Curr 437.

30. G.M. Young, Victorian Essays and Victorian England: Portrait of an Age, 2nd ed., rev.(Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977).

with moral turpitude, literary interests began to gain priority over moral concerns. The theme of civilization in the wilderness recurs and widens with reference to the countervailing culture of the yard. In overall design the play of social differences between the main dwelling and its working environment emerges as a dramatic element in a number of works. My finding is that in the absence of skilled handling of such material emphasis may merely fall on the stereotypical or the descriptive. However, if there are tensions within the European community then the yard is an area where such issues may conveniently be addressed; my emphasis at this point lies in character and plot. Polarities of existence may then be turned to account. For example, the notion of an enclosed domestic world where the influence of women is foremost is contrasted with that of a more rigorous, outdoor, and predominantly masculine domain. Other issues are involved and these will be examined in my final chapter. Again, in the most competent works the inclusion of material relating to huts and yard works towards establishing a location in its entirety. Sense of place is at issue here and this is strengthened when numerous aspects of a locale are brought into focus. Sometimes the foregrounding of such material serves only to point up the comforting notion of community. Finally, it must be said that the outbuildings and the yard are more closely representative of the workaday world of the homestead and crucial pastoral concerns; and the displacement of interest away from this area is only one aspect of a larger issue: reluctance to imagine the totality of human experience in the Australian hinterland.

What is of interest is that with regard characterization, set-pieces, plot structure, and subject matter the polarities of this rural existence have on occasion been energetically presented. As a result readers are forced to take a more comprehensive view of the diverse nature of pioneering in the bush. However, I believe I have shown that, in according

significance either explicitly or less directly to the working environment of domestic settlement, the creative writer tended to utilize such material only to enhance the dwelling at its centre.

CH. VII
HOMESTEAD AS HOUSEHOLD

> Yarra offered a particularly favourable specimen of bush residence; and the cultivated tastes of Mr. Hall and his wife threw over it an air of superiority. From the position of the station they were much removed from the world, but their own circle was large, and they had those mental resources which ought in a great measure to fill up the blank which the want of society occasions.
> (A Romance of the Bush, p.41)

While such a stance has its limitations, it has been necessary and useful to approach this body of literature in chronological terms. In the present chapter such a methodology is both pertinent and revealing. Although already established, what will now be more clearly outlined is the significant development in the colonial novel over three decades and — aspects of which are hereby represented — the gradual expansion of the pioneering culture. In addition, one would infer that mirrored here is the optimism and belief in human progress that many have seen as a characteristic of the mid-century in the homeland.[1] What is being represented in these narratives is the success of domestic enterprise. Of interest above all, and the focus of attention in this chapter, is the emphasis on homestead as household. Included in the later works are a range of household activities and events: some of a universal nature, some of a ritual significance, some simply everyday observances but of interest in that they take place in the Antipodes. Sometimes they are shown to be modified accordingly, and this is something that, by 1856, the percipient critic Sinnett argued was vital to the evolving colonial novel.

Present, therefore, are two different yet closely interwoven lines of development, those referred to in my preliminary Note. The first is political, historical, and sociological and related to contemporary affairs;

1. See, for example, Houghton *passim* and Reed 486-92.

the other is literary, colonial subject matter being shaped to artistic purpose. The latter reflects upon the former, but concerning day to day life the later novelists were in an enhanced position: they were able to report upon a somewhat more secure, settled and confident population. They were able to survey the progress which had taken place in the bush; to chart the growth of a people who had become assimilated and whose culture was evolving. What is axiomatic is that writers were, generally speaking, then in a position to contemplate an extended range of activities. Above all, and more fundamentally, however, there was a burgeoning literary heritage on which to draw. More than fifty years after first settlement there was time to take stock, to reflect upon the totality of existence — or rather upon aspects of existence which creative writers perceived to be appealing and of interest to their readers.

If authors had a partiality for the domestic setting then this is surely indicative of one of the overriding preoccupations of the era. Mention has already been made that the main living areas were fixed upon by the creative writer and, furthermore, what this might reveal of the period. That concept will be developed both here and in Ch.X. I have shown how such areas were the imaginative centre of these imagined dwellings and, overwhelmingly, of the narratives themselves. It will be argued now that the social and communal aspect of domestic life tends to predominate in these texts, and this over and above that which was individual and private. Outdoor events, those relating to pioneering and to the exoticism of the Antipodes, figure to a great extent here. But rather than an enlarged vision — one attuned to the vastness of the landscape and appropriate to the circumstances — the manifestation of the domestic is what is stressed. Thus the sanctity of the home or, simply, the homely aspect of accommodation in the hinterland — these qualities are uppermost.

Occupations of a day to day nature, and connected with a rural exist-

ence and the family unit, provide subject matter valuable for its warmth and sentimentality. Novelists recognized too that common pursuits would be of interest. In this respect creative writes valorized the role played by women in outlying regions. Both chores and pleasures are recorded but chiefly, and especially in the later works, the latter so that, as I have already made plain, correlative areas of the dwelling are foregrounded. It must be assumed that writers freely ignored certain matters, and today's reader must be aware of the Victorian notions of conservatism and decorum which shaped these works. Authors and readers would seem to be locked into the 'severe canons of propriety' peculiar to the age.[2] Pastimes and pleasures were bound to have appeal and those fixed upon include entertaining and conversing and story-telling. Even so, all activities might have interested readers if placed in colonial context, and must be assumed to have provided material of special relevance, and not only for their human associations, links and affinities in a new land but because these activities may be shown to have taken on a colonial flavour. Such an impulse is connected with that stress on the social and the communal to which I have alluded throughout.

Domestic circumstances in the novels up to the mid-forties are rarely adumbrated in other than the most limited terms. Authors seemed to rely on generalizations, and they valued material relating to exploit and adventure over the sustained presentation of interior scenes. Rowcroft did reveal what the situation entailed but it was not until McCombie's Arabin that readers were provided with the kind of information enabling them to picture fully a settler's home; or to comprehend the kind of existence led there. McCombie's observations are confined to the parlour, but as I made clear in Ch.III, the author at once enlightens us regarding the gender, status

2. Altick, Victorian People 191.

and preoccupations, as well as the owners' hopes and fears. McCombie then moves beyond Arabin's first glimpse of the room to expand upon his relationship with the occupants. The latter's attitudes, style of life, and generosity are revealed. Moreover, the contrast of the domestic realm with that of dishonest servants and, on another level, with the intractable environment, further emphasizes the commendable attitudes found there. The writer's approach is modelled upon a popular colonial literary convention: that is to say, upon the impressions of a newcomer. Yet his sustained and well-crafted presentation must have set a precedent for others to follow. This is Arabin's initial view of the homestead; but all that we subsequently learn about the location only serves to enhance our incipient admiration for the establishment and its occupants.

No balanced picture of the daily life of the rural household would emerge in imaginative writing until around the mid-century, and The Emigrant Family was perhaps the first to provide one.[3] Rather than dealing with certain bleak realities — the countless dilemmas peculiar to colonization — authors much preferred the sense of well-being expressed in the domestic set-piece. Not yet ready to move on to the verandah (Harris is an exception here) they turned instead to the parlour. It was a positive image and encapsulated the twin qualities of cosiness and enclosure, as I demonstrated in Ch.III. Quite early novelists had conjured up the theme of hospitality. They drew on the strengths of its ritual and celebratory overtones. Besides, scenes like this had the advantage that, even though settlers were seen to relax they were, co-incidentally, fulfilling civic obligations.

3. The difficulties and hazards, the mundanities and the pleasures of colonial life, as they are recounted in a range of contemporary letters, are recorded in some detail in Dear Fanny: Women's Letters to and from New South Wales, 1788-1857. Chosen and introduced by Helen Heney (Canberra: Australian National UP, 1985).

Even Tucker, seemingly free from many contemporary restraints, still employed themes contemporaneously popular and I refer here, in particular, to the life-enhancing benefits which accrued to the hypothetical industrious settler. But he invested these themes with resonances unequalled in these three decades, and in the dwellings observed the proliferation of detail in the interior scenes enables the reader to envisage precisely the kind of existence represented there. Thus, the bravura account of the Irishman's household brings to light the routine of the house and the inhabitants' customs, activities, and pleasures. This is brought about by means of powerful visual images and, concerning the family unit, achieved through the rendering of their dialect and their sturdy independence. Tucker manages, too, disparate patterns of cultural continuity at those other stopping-places visited by Rashleigh.

To move to the novels of the 1850s is to perceive the striking literary development that occurred in a decade. Interesting for my purposes at this point is a factor to which I referred much earlier: that the progress of which I am speaking is marked by the delineation of a rural existence rather than a depiction of urban life. It is my contention that the success of these works, variable though it may be, hinges around this deliberate choice of subject matter.

It is to the women writers I will now turn since the best of them were alert to the nuances of daily life; to the repercussions of the larger domestic event. They responded to this kind of existence with greater imaginative understanding than their male counterparts. The naturalism of the domestic scenes in books by Vidal, Spence, Atkinson, Franc and, if I am correct, 'Little Jacob', is fundamental to these novels. Kingsley, of course, is a significant exception here. What lay behind this mode of presentation was a different perception of what the founding of a settled society entailed. Women saw that process not as an epic event but in terms

of an ongoing decision to maintain standards, both in a physical and a moral sense, within each dwelling established in the bush. Such a perspective and fictional strategy had this advantage: that pioneering in the wilderness was envisaged on a domestic scale. And these images were immediately pleasing and comprehensible.

In a story entitled 'The Bush Fire' Clacy recounts how a young man welcomes his sister from England to his property where she becomes 'housekeeper to a squatter's establishment in the colonies'. We learn that she goes about 'in a gingham dress superintending butter-making, mutton-pickling and innumerable other bush amusements' (p.168). Indeed, Julia 'exerted all her energies to impart to her brother's home that air of comfort which a true Englishwoman disseminates wherever she goes' (p.173). The colonial ways pictured here are very agreeable and Julia enjoys the wild flowers, and also books obtained from Melbourne. Fortunate enough to be saved from a bushfire, Julia falls in love with her rescuer and true to the spirit, and to the plot, of a host of colonial narratives she makes her home in the bush.

She is, accordingly, the ideal colonial housewife and can be identified with one aspect of the Victorian heroine. 'Presenting the good woman as a domestic saint was a favourite stylization in Victorian literature', Reed comments.[4] It is worth quoting a further consideration:

> Home was the shrine of the Goddess of the Hearth, the gentle, good woman who was soft where the outside world was hard, kind where it was cruel, comforting where it was bitter, comfortable where it was bruising. She was the counterpoise to the vigorous and vulgar, material and masculine world. She was the civilising and humanising influence in a society which was all too inclined to run to masculine seed.[5]

Given the colonial situation the value of such a concept is quite clearly

4. Reed 37.

5. Phillips and Phillips 98.

apparent. It is a point I enlarge upon in discussing what was perceived to be the plight of the bachelor.

Yet, in Clacy's work, we gain no real understanding of the attributes Julia brings to housekeeping. We learn very little about the household, the chief setting here. And we have no idea how Julia adapts to bush life so quickly or the stages through which she passes to reach this end. There are many claims in Clacy's book and little attempt to explain or validate them. One of a number of women writers of the fifties, Clacy is unable to encapsulate the social realities of a colonial household, although she does make use of common themes and narrative structures. It would seem that in undertaking the collection Clacy has been constrained by romance conventions; A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings of Australia[6] is a less contrived affair. The cursory word-pictures in her short stories, however, cannot match those so well conceived by 'Little Jacob'.

Colonial Pen-Scratchings, and the author's style, make a fruitful comparison to the work mentioned above. 'Little Cary's Experiences as a "New Chum"' also concerns an emigrant's arrival and her assimilation into bush culture. This young woman has few skills to fit her for housekeeping, but she becomes 'more colonized and bushified', and is finally found making bread in the kitchen at 'Tangaroo', a brood of children at her backdoor. More so than in Clacy's work there are hints of the young woman's capabilities here. Adding a further dimension to the text there is a real sense of continuity since Cary herself came from England almost a child. Now a buxom countrywoman, she is seen to be mistress of a fine homestead and a

6. [Ellen] Clacy, A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings of Australia, in 1852-53 (London, 1853).

flourishing garden. In the second place, each of the locales is clearly, if briefly, drawn. As I demonstrated earlier, the manner in which domestic ambience is pictured is one of the book's signal achievements. The third point of comparison revolves around the young emigrant's assimilation into bush culture. This is doubly conveyed. There is first the contrast of town life and that of the bush, these dialectically opposed modes of existence being a notable feature of the book. Then there are the three stages through which the girl passes in order to become a colonial housewife: first at a house in North Adelaide; then a small bush dwelling; finally 'Tangaroo' station, 'somewhere up the Murray'.

Along with the theme of assimilation, matrimonial and domestic matters form the basis of this sketch. What strengths it has are to be found in the fact that the author has contrived to show how Cary becomes, like Clacy's Julia, 'housekeeper to a squatter's establishment in the colonies' and, even if only in a limited way, by what means this has been achieved. 'Little Jacob' too is a minor writer and like Clacy draws as much upon the genre of romance as on aspects of colonial realism. But with a greater flair in recreating domestic milieu the former contrives an interesting work out of what had become conventional subject matter. Even so, it is not possible to consider 'Little Jacob' in the same category as the more technically sophisticated figures, Vidal, Spence, and Atkinson, who are among the most competent of the period.

The creative endeavour of these three writers centred around the concept of the homestead as a symbol of civilized values. It seems to have been a lively challenge; and one all three took up with fixity of purpose. Domestic episodes proliferate in books which are recalled for intimate scenes and for the depiction of the sociability of the bush. One of their particular achievements was the animated rendering of direct speech. An undisputed component of their success, I would contend, is their sure sense of

place and more significantly, despite its pointed symbolism, their persuasive treatment of the homestead as household. We can say that there is a happy juxtaposition of the material available. These women venture to mention homely chores, if not to elaborate upon them, and they balance such material with accounts of pleasurable pursuits. Added to this again are the conventional requisites of the romance, and the portrayal of suitable heroines. And with the latter there _is_ a sense in which personal concerns are given priority. Yet even here, such interests are subsumed into those of larger moment and which relate to the prevailing ideals which govern these texts. I have paid ample consideration to Vidal, Spence, and Atkinson throughout; my remarks here will be brief.

There are hints in _Tales for the Bush_ that domestic setting and domestic event were to form those aspects of colonialism which Vidal would handle most competently. I have referred to passages in _The Cabramatta Store_ which demonstrate her emerging confidence in exploring such factors thematically and structurally. Noteworthy is the way in which the contrasting modes of life at the Lesters' and the Parkers' are parallelled. In the establishing chapters this is nicely contrived and of interest since each household is, after its own fashion, palpably Australian.

In _Bengala_ Vidal employs the same methods but extends her domestic set-pieces across the establishments of the colonial gentry and, again, through the colonial social hierarchy. It is a literary ploy which offers useful polarities and resonances, these being exploited in a number of ways. Family relationships at 'Langville' are important in the plot and Vidal often brings family members together either involved in their chores or other activities both inside and outside the house. Here the processes of daily life have been aptly caught. As is likewise evident in the creation of 'Yandilla House', the dwelling's groundplan is well-conceived and allows the reader to visualize the place with ease. 'Langville' is a physical and domestic

entity with a homely atmosphere and the impression is strengthened when Vidal brings friends and neighbours there. She deals confidently with a variety of characters and sometimes sees them with a dry wit. Conversations, which Green has described as 'easy and natural'[7] are employed in order to develop these characters and to point up the differences between this household and others like it. The following passage, which occurs in Vol.I of Bengala, draws attention to the attributes which Vidal saw as needful for homemaking in the Antipodes. A fashionable newcomer airs her concerns about the besetting difficulties of colonialism for a woman. As Mrs. Vesey says:

> "...now don't you think a Bush life dreadful; so lowering, all the little elegances of life gone, and one's manners growing rusty and colonial. I am sure I shall soon find myself covered in wool, and making butter, and scolding convicts, a regular bush woman...".

Vidal strengthens her argument by having the staunch Mr. Herbert respond. The ideal, in his estimation, are

> "women who, not being slaves to the many absurd conventional customs of English society, are not ashamed of their household duties, and exercise hospitality and goodness without fashion or show".
> (Vol.I,p.111)

Such a precept, one notes, foregrounds the social and communal aspect of a woman's role. However, overwhelmingly in this body of work, women are shown to have acquired such attributes. Interestingly, in both comments are intimations that, given the conditions, customs are undergoing a transformation.

Like Vidal, Spence built complexity and depth into her novels through a portrayal of social relationships. And like other women writers, and

7. Green 92.

some of the men, she touched on the question of gentility in the bush. Indeed, reading this body of work one gains the impression that the maintaining of such standards was imperative if civilization were to survive. Bringing these two factors together to advantage Spence is able to invest the episode of taking tea in the parlour at 'The Barn' in Clara Morison with an air of social refinement; with the substantiality and the complaisance of a similar drawing-room observance in the mother country. All manner of customs were developing however and this work,though centred on urban life, is of value for such revelations. Household routine at 'The Barn' is to be observed in the following incident. No tea having appeared at the meal table Mr. Beaufort is made to complain: '"Did you ever hear of a house in the country, where the teapot was not brought in regularly with dinner?"' But the cook is to assert that it is '"a deal of trouble...on a washing-day"' (p.349). Humour here is made to hinge upon colonial expectations and colonial realities. This exchange is one of a number placing the household within the context of a rural, or even a wider, social framework. Spence has attempted social relationships of some complexity at 'The Barn' and interesting for my purposes is the manner in which these have been employed to convey something about the style of life that was evolving there. Her final image, however, is one relating to domestic content at the station called 'Taringa'.

Like the other two novelists but especially Vidal, Atkinson makes intelligent use of the spatial design of the major location in Gertrude. Characters are therefore imagined in various parts of the house as well as on the verandah or in the close environment. This provides the advantage of a changing background; but equally it conveys an impression of what it is like to inhabit a rural dwelling and how such an establishment might be maintained. With regard to the latter the occupants are quite busy and the author allows Mrs. Doherty the wry observation that: '"A Bloomer dress leaves as much as ever to do"' (p.101). A feminist insight, the comment has a nice edge and

is revealing of one aspect of contemporary thought. In a more conventional mode Atkinson highlights the central role played by women in the bush. And this key concept — that of the competent homemaker — is vigorously formulated by both men and women writers of the earlier colonial novel.

Geoffry Hamlyn is the only other work I wish to discuss at this stage. Kingsley fixed on the conviviality and warmth of the domestic setting as a foil for epic subject matter. His manner of dealing with the former material permits interesting comparisons with the women writers mentioned above. The quality attached to their prose is one of earnest endeavour. That which I would connect with Kingsley's set-pieces, however, and matched by his narrative style, is one of carefree affability. This has been demonstrated in a number of sequences; above all, those located on the verandah. Commenting on Kingsley's first stay at 'Langi Willi' station in Western Victoria where a portion of the book was written, Mellick makes the observation that Kingsley rejected 'the daily routine of sheep tending and station work' when there in 1854.[8] If true, such an attitude may go some way in explaining why the author preferred to associate his fictional homesteads with culture, tradition, and comfort rather than with mundane rural affairs or with hard work.

Although engaged in only the lightest of chores, Mrs. Buckley personifies the ideal homemaker. Kingsley has her bring to 'Baroona' those attributes imagined by Clacy, and a host of others, to be characteristic of an Englishwoman in the colonies. 'Baroona' moreover is at the moral centre of the Australian section of the narrative. Geoffry Hamlyn is not merely being snobbish when he denigrates those at the Donovans' station (p.172).

8. Mellick, in his introduction to Geoffry Hamlyn x. See also Mellick, The Passing Guest Ch.10.

Through the medium of the plot, Kingsley shows how the judgement is based on the code of behaviour said to prevail there. Yet however idealized 'Baroona' might be, passages concerning the household carry conviction and, although I have alluded to other factors, this is in part because of the way in which the Buckley family are connected with the locale over a long period of time. The introductory chapter sees Major and Mrs. Buckley thoroughly at home in their surroundings. The elderly woman is initially portrayed as though framed, 'in a long vista of trellised vines'; in fact, visual imagery associated with growing things is employed to advantage at 'Baroona'. Moving forward in terms of plot, and back in time, one recalls amongst other scenes, Mrs. Buckley contentedly preparing for Christmas in her new surroundings (p.149); and some years later this colonial housewife with her youngster Sam watering the garden of the new and more comfortable homestead (p.160). In Ch.XXVII, much later, the contented couple wait to welcome their son on the verandah. Nearby, Dr. Mulhaus is inspecting a creeper which is 'bursting into life'. Dogs 'dash forward, barking joyfully'. A 'ready groom' handles the horse; a housekeeper, 'all smiles', goes to arrange the meal. All the elements in this descriptive passage reinforce our ideas concerning 'Baroona'; its sterling qualities are beyond dispute. What is more, it is efficiently run.

What emerges here is a family home; one shown to epitomize all that Kingsley thought commendable in Australian society. Further, the writer has shown how, as the years elapse, adjustment to colonial circumstances can take place. With regards its close surrounds, its architecture, and its inhabitants, the homestead is imbued with qualities considered ideal, and yet the overall effect is pleasing rather than overtly didactic. It is not difficult to comprehend why, in a novel celebrated for epic adventure, one tends to recall the domestic set-piece. Kingsley has mythologized these colonists and their way of life.

The great majority of narratives over these three decades unfold against regions of earliest settlement. This being so, and many texts relating to the period of transportation, a number of writers as a result broached a matter which had the value of novelty and which raised, moreover, interesting if disturbing moral and social issues. I am referring to the problem occasioned by the presence of assigned convicts, both men and women, at the homes of free settlers. I have referred to this question previously but approach it now from another perspective. Such women servants received even less attention than their male counterparts, and surely because they were considered the antithesis of colonial womanhood. Within the homestead, their presence gave rise to anxiety.

If, as White contends, Australia had become 'a dumping ground for those who had gone against the established social order',[9] then novelists were to exercise caution in introducing these less than respectable individuals into their narratives. The likely grounds for the small part played by such female characters derive surely from the understanding which prevailed: that such women were morally corrupt; in White's words they were 'universally stereotyped as "damned whores"'.[10] If this were so then the subject must have proved difficult for the creative writer, and it is noticeable that only the most competent treated the theme satisfactorily or with imagination. It would appear that women writers, and perhaps with greater intuitive understanding of the situation, felt more at ease with the material. Most notably, Vidal fleshes out the tragedy surrounding the blighted love of two assigned servants to form the powerful subplot in Bengala.

Elsewhere, Vidal focusses briefly upon the inebriation of such a woman

9. White 16.

10. White 23. Here White is drawing on the study of women convicts by Anne Summers in Ch.8 of Damned Whores and God's Police (Ringwood: Penguin, 1975).

at the Parkers' residence in The Cabramatta Store (Ch.XIV); and Atkinson upon the criminality of another at 'Murrumbowrie' in Gertrude (Ch.XI). The effect that convict servants had upon the household and the children there is raised in The Broad Arrow (Ch.XII) and contemporary anxiety is reflected in the discussion and events taking place. The convict-heroine of this novel is a notable exception to that generalization made above and the small part played by such characters would seem to be bound up with notions of propriety, an issue which looms large in the works studied, as it appears to have done in actuality. Murray, whose The Guardian was published in Sydney in 1838, is assuredly satirizing the more affluent and conservative members of colonial society with her reference in the work to an advertisement stating that 'a respectable servant was required in a respectable family, residing in a respectable neighbourhood, a respectable distance from the town of Parramatta...'(p.217). Yet Victorian notions of probity and decorum were bound to be emphasized in a far colony, and especially when one takes into account the conditions of original settlement.[11] It is no surprise that these concerns find their way into narratives with such a background.

Novel situations, however, may well give rise to an outcome which is novel. Circumstances of this kind could generate unforeseen relationships. Harris was one of the few authors to develop the notion seriously when he took the figure of a convict-nurse, a woman of much integrity, and developed her into an interesting character in The Emigrant Family. So that Margaret was not treated as an assigned servant in the Kable household but 'rather like some friend and old associate' (p.148). Hence, in one of those quiet domestic scenes which pattern the narrative and add warmth to it, Mary Kable and the older woman are pictured at their work on the verandah at the

11. Meredith makes interesting observations about assigned servants. See her Notes and Sketches 128, 162-3 and My Home in Tasmania passim.

Kables' cottage (p.402). Harris expresses the opinion that those who dwell in the Australian colonies will recall numerous instances of such friendships (p.148). If this is so then the creative writers amongst them preferred to ignore bonds of a kind which would link women seemingly divided not only by class but, more fundamentally, by moral standards.

At a slightly later period servants who were free settlers were seen to perform essential tasks, and now anxiety concerning the underside of society is replaced by the conventional literary tradition relating to the domestic servant. The tendency is to portray such characters as low-life figures, of value to the creative writer for their dialect, their mannerisms, or colourful ways. Interestingly, they may be made to perceive life in terms other than that of their employers; or alternatively, are of value to echo the sentiments held by their betters. Such servants are variously to be found in The Cabramatta Store, Clara Morison, Tallangetta, Gertrude, Geoffry Hamlyn and Bengala.

In yet a further example, and one which brings to light the equivocal nature of the colonial social framework, authors could propose a familiarity between the lady of the homestead and a servant. This depiction of the breaking down of social barriers affords a fresh perspective on a setting's isolation, and on the resulting need for close human relationships. Clacy makes this valid point in 'Lilian': 'Flung together often for companionship in a wild country, miles away from other human beings, masters and mistresses are often glad to make friends as well as servants of their household' (Vol.I,p.279). Atkinson has drawn on precisely this idea in Gertrude. The young emigrant's innocence and constancy naturally endear her to her employer and, as is the author's intention, to the reader. In further emphasizing Gertrude's attributes, Atkinson brings into the household her antithesis, the former convict woman cited above. At 'The Barn' likewise, Clara Morison, in becoming a companion rather than a servant grows

in moral stature and demonstrates her worthiness to become the wife of a neighbouring squatter. Of course, a colonial household may have been fortunate enough to acquire such paragons, or Vidal's Anne Moore or that obliging and comic couple, the Wilks, who are employed at 'Tallangetta'. In the main, the pleasing notion is sustained that all runs smoothly at an Englishman's home in the Antipodes.

I come next to the idea that domestic servants were of value in that, paradoxically, they could be made passive characters who, notwithstanding, actively endorsed the colonial social structure. This could be achieved quite simply and realistically in terms of the notion of their employment by the colonial gentry; however, the idea could also be expressed by means of their attitude or demeanour. All this is overwhelmingly apparent in Tales for the Bush. One can only endorse Green's opinion, that the Tales are 'insistent upon duty, religious, moral and social: the duty to cultivate the humbler virtues, to attend church regularly, not to step out of the station in which God has placed us, and so on'.[12] Likewise, when bushrangers raid 'Langville' in Bengala a woman servant there deplores this attack on the settled social order (Vol.II,p.20).

As literary historians have observed, it was the middle classes who comprised the bulk of the reading public, those whose 'interests and tastes' determined the 'tone and content' of the literature of the period.[13] Accordingly, the orthodox characterizes this body of work and conservatism the colonial society it sought to portray. The works are largely shaped by ideals we term Victorian and such predilictions we might expect to encounter here. 'The word "Victorian"', as has been argued, 'tends to summon up a

12. Green 90-1.
13. Altick, Victorian People 59.

middle-class image'. And this may arise because 'working-class people left comparatively few traces of their doings, especially outside working hours'.[14] Such a process is in evidence in this body of work. More generally the world of servants allowed the introduction of a countervailing culture and with the most competent writers we see a credible interaction between the two classes. Still, as I demonstrated in Ch.VI, very little is learnt of the lowest echelons of society and that is not to be wondered at given the colouring these narratives, the very nature of which proclaims the workings of a middle-class hegemony.

With regard the portrayal of female servants in the household, then, texts met the expectations of the reading public on matters relating both to morality and to class. One detects a note of moral superiority at times and it may derive from a negative attitude in general towards the lower classes. If transportation has obtained then this attitude, understandably perhaps, seems to arise from the link which is assumed to exist between those at the lower end of the social scale and the criminal and immoral element in society. But if the social framework conditioned the thought here, the encompassing environment, in a more general sense, influenced contemporary perceptions. Once more I draw attention to the doubly isolated nature of the bush homestead. I would contend that these factors combined to advocate the real advantages perceived in a firmly established social hierarchy. The continuity of social, domestic and cultural institutions is affirmed in these texts, and the appropriation of such material by the creative writer constituted an appeal to readers on both sides of the world. It was an appeal predicated upon firm moral and patriotic grounds. Therefore, with the beliefs and opinions of the audience to consider, the majority of authors appeared overtly concerned with questions of class.

14. Phillips and Phillips 11.

All this tends to confirm the observations of Wilkes who argues in The Stockyard and the Croquet Lawn that 'the social structures of the bush were largely hierarchical' (p.36), that 'egalitarianism recedes before the evidence of the caste system and racism of the outback' (p.143). In his debate with Russel Ward, Wilkes draws upon the available literary evidence and this represents bush society as stratified to a considerable degree. (The question of racism is one I have discussed elsewhere.) To help demonstrate his contention Wilkes points to the depiction of etiquette that involved 'quite agonizing decisions' when a newcomer arrived expecting hospitality at a homestead (p.37). He draws on Furphy's Such in Life for his purposes. And yet he could have made use of much earlier works. Rowcroft foreshadows such an incident when referring to the difficulties imposed by class in exactly these circumstances in Tales of the Colonies (p.74). Thornley comes to comprehend the falsity of differences imposed by rank compared with that proposed by colonial experience and expertise. In A Boy's Adventures Howitt asserts that each visitor knew his place on a station. The observation is made that: 'The common class of fellows all instinctively took themselves off to the huts in the yard, and joined the roystering crew already there' (p.215). The notion is repeated in Tallangetta (Vol.II, p.66). Even so, factors other than class may serve to perpetuate such distinctions, and Howitt may have educed the guiding principle when he refers in the latter book to ties both of rank 'and education' which tended to link settlers in the bush (Vol.II,p.23). There are some exceptions, but such an intimation seems to have been recognized by the creative writer as providing on the whole a necessary basis for compatibility in the given conditions.

Any number of writers were to draw attention to social distinctions within the bush community they set out to recreate; and in the convict era matters inasmuch were clear-cut. Butler, 'a settler of respectability', points out to Arabin in McCombie's work that, in actuality, squatting life

consisted of 'scabby sheep, and old convicts for servants' (p.42). But whereas these concerns relate to convict servants, the same prejudices could apply to the households of those with convict backgrounds. To take one example: in Cowanda Atkinson stresses the fact that although the settler Rylston had greatly prospered, and was hospitable to all who came his way, his wife was not accepted into 'refined society' (p.4). Yet like Rowcroft, the author recognizes that prejudices of this kind may not be appropriate to colonial circumstances. Rylston's daughters, though not 'genteel' are said to excel at station occupations (p.33).

For all this, as I pointed out in Ch.VI, not every writer wanted to accentuate those divisions which could be seen as defining colonial society. As was fitting in a country which had moved beyond the ugliness of its beginnings, some portrayed colonial folk as small, independent settlers committed to the work ethic and to domesticity. Authors variously envisaged them labouring to build a new life, for themselves and their families, in the land of opportunity. This is the kind of household pictured by Sidney and is to be observed, to take one instance, in that incident when the women of the house stop their work to greet the newcomer, Alfred Barnard. Writing in England, Sidney was no doubt directing his pleasing Gallops and Gossips to those who might be considering emigration.

Saved the taint of transportation South Australia seemed to offer boundless possibilities to newcomers of this kind. And 'Little Jacob' drew on the theme of their modest prosperity with some shrewdness. Households forming the major settings in the Sketches are shown to be comfortable but unpretentious. Here settlers pictured in and around their bush homes espouse Rowcroft's ideals. Thus, when a visitor enters the kitchen at 'Tangaroo' station the housewife there exemplifies the colonist typical of the period. Leigh was another who wrote about the fortunes of the settler with modest means in South Australia, a colony where one could imagine 'a race of indepen-

dent country men building up their neat little verandahed cottages' (The Emigrant, p.178). Franc seems intent on depicting circumstances within a rather more affluent home in the bush, as does Spence. The latter makes the most of a well-defined social hierarchy in her plots and in Clara Morison can even propose a satiric passage which throws light on colonists' aspirations to gentility (Ch.VII). It must not be thought that questions of class were ignored in the narratives with a South Australian background. What is noticeable, however, is the absence of subject matter relating to transportation and reference to the bitterness, perturbation and anxiety that could be evoked on this account. Wanting, then, in literary terms, is the dramatic tension thus created.

To sum up at this point: whether picturing rural habitation within a single social bracket or across a broad social spectrum, earlier colonial authors were united in their presentation of a positive image of the colonial household. While it might be said that questions of class were important, over and above this factor was a pronounced emphasis on a dominant system of values and beliefs and ideals. The dwelling in the bush was seen evaluatively. The ramifications of such an ideal are to be observed, again and again, across a wide range of works — those as diverse, say, as Ralph Rashleigh, Gertrude, or Wolfingham.

When in Ch.III I outlined both precisely and in more tentative fashion the kind of subject matter which the creative writer tended to avoid I stated that these considerations would be addressed subsequently. It is now time to do so. In Ch.III I explained how, in terms of their physical delineation, particular spatial areas were variously omitted from these imaginary groundplans. The spotlight seldom falls on the kitchen and its occupants. Bedrooms, for different reasons, are not commonly featured. But questions of

gender are relevant here. Women writers were more willing to incorporate both these living areas into their narratives and it signifies their attempt to deal with associated issues; that is to say, with subject matter related to the practicalities of domesticity, and, in the case of the bedroom, with personal isolation, sickness, and, less often, with death. The approach, too, is revealing of Victorian attitudes; and exposes, above all, the novelist's circumspection with regard to sexuality.

Moreover, neither men nor women writers felt free to address further delicate domestic matters in their fictional representation of a colonial household. We do not look to find the out-house referred to and many decades would pass before it became part of the rural myth. Although an existence with limited facilities in rough conditions or climatic extremes must have been irksome authors do not draw attention to such domestic stresses or dilemmas despite any tendency of the colonial romance to realism. The menial, too, is an element which was suppressed. The presence of a wash-house, for example, is seldom confirmed. Although undoubtedly onerous and unpleasant tasks could not have been avoided they were not likely to provide subject matter for prose fiction. Such matters are determined culturally. That is the deciding factor, rather than matters related to narratology or relative literary worth.

Of equal interest are further circumstances which writers were unwilling to picture. For example, illness and subsequent death is not a subject which looms large, however much it may have done in English novels of the period. Given the environment and the conditions an evasion of the truth seems obvious and this is a matter I will consider from a different point of view in my next chapter. Characters may be killed — and they are — in dramatic and fanciful events which are well suited to romance, but seldom in circumstances which would seem most likely. I cite here simple accident, snake-bite, drowning, or a fall from a horse; and, within the

home, sickness in isolated regions far removed from medical aid, such as it was during these times. I should add that novelists had little place for ailments, for emotional misfits or for failures within the main location, although such unhappiness may be glimpsed occasionally at the homes of the unfortunate: minor characters whose less substantial dwellings are assigned peripheral status in these narratives.

If death in less than heroic terms tends to be denied, then so is the event of child-birth, and this is strange given the optimistic mood of these narratives and the growing acknowledgement of the salubrious environment. Pregnancy is the source of some fun in Tales of the Colonies. Here, Mrs. Thornley coyly announces her news (p.95). Even so, the subject is to be avoided, although the sweep of Geoffry Hamlyn permits such an event to constitute part of the plot (p.344). It should be repeated that the family saga does not make an early appearance in Australian literature, though the books by Rowcroft and Kingsley just mentioned do contain certain elements of this fictional mode. As I have said, it is the genre of romance which attracts the creative writer; it highlights the themes of adventure, romantic attachment and marriage. Procreation, then, is foreshadowed even if it does not figure in these narratives, and is well-suited to the whole idea of colonial advancement. So despite the dramatic events of the conventional works a strangely static community is to be observed, with the natural events of child-birth and death within the domestic circle impinging little on those who dwell there.

Another factor which will have become evident is that writers, warming to the concept of the ideal colonial housewife, were unwilling in the main to picture domestic tension. In the popular and influential Tales Thornley, taking stock of his happy circumstances some time after his arrival in the bush, writes:

> I looked at my kind and patient wife, the companion of my toils, my helpmate and my consolation in troubles of mind and difficulties of fortune. (p.96)

Writers were to continue to imagine such paragons, or to create heroines with such attributes. This applies to the womenfolk at 'Baroona' and 'Garoopna' and Kingsley's stance would surely have served to reinforce such a convention. Conflict or dissatisfaction within the domestic sphere are rare occurrences and marital difficulties are almost unknown, although the authors of Cowanda, and of Clara Morison and Tender and True, both women, are not prevented from tackling these matters. Most often, however, the family unit is indulgently viewed. And conflict between the generations is a factor scarcely considered. In consequence, a number of authors refer to the plight, in both social terms and in conditions of comfort, of the bachelor, and in the highly-coloured incidents of McCombie's Arabin such a situation is seen to have led to alcoholism, derangement and death.

The problem is forcefully drawn in Gallops and Gossips:

> A bachelor's station in the Bush, or even a bachelor's farm, is generally a wretched place. Founded to make money and nothing else, decency and comfort are little cultivated. A rude bark-covered hut for the overseer or master; another, still ruder, for the servants; the ground barebeaten with the feet of cattle; not a vestige of garden, although the soil be ever so fertile; a stockyard, ankle deep in dust; such are the usual characteristics; the head of the stations being a young man, who may often be found dirty, barefooted, in his shirt sleeves, sitting alone, in melancholy state, on an old tea-chest, with a mess of salt meat and tea without milk before him, longing for a visit from a neighbour or traveller, without books or newspapers, obliged, — if he would keep up his authority, to hold very little communication with his men. (p.95)

Such habitation is far removed from that conventionally proposed; in fact, circumstances of this kind are seldom mentioned at all. Interestingly, the author stresses the observance of rank and the difficulties that this might impose. From a number of points of view the young bachelor is in an unenviable situation. Sidney is presenting a strong case for the presence of women in the bush. Typically, there is the expression of a firm reliance

upon women for their home-making qualities, and in this instance, it would seem they are to be depended upon for 'decency and comfort', for the making of a garden, and above all for domestic well-being. Some years earlier Harris had shown how rapidly his two young heroines could make a hut into a home and although the work entailed is left to the reader's imagination, in the course of the plot their home becomes an attractive site with a garden.

Spence imagines a bachelor's establishment in Clara Morison, but it is represented less fancifully than the example above. For all this, succeeding references help the reader to visualize the 'melancholy state' experienced by Mr. Reginald at 'Taringa' (pp.31,36,150,361,376,390). And alone in his parlour Mr. Reginald is pictured dreaming 'how bright his dwelling would look if Clara stood on the threshold, and welcomed him to their home' (p.334). As we have seen, the potent image of welcome is a popular one; here the additional concept of the tender solicitude which is characteristic of marriage is a heightening device simple in its appeal. Clacy observes of a young settler in 'Emmeline' that he had 'no wife or family to stimulate him to make a comfortable home' (Vol.I,p.100). When, however, a young woman of a dubious background finds her way to the bush dwelling the young man, a magistrate, is made most anxious, this providing a rare and much needed element of humour in Clacy's narrative. This final example serves to formulate one aspect of the pioneering ethos, that is to say, that while the need for womenfolk in the bush was pressing, propriety had to be observed at all costs.

In The Homestead Freeman quotes a contemporary source which contrasts a family homestead with that of the bachelor, and which points to 'the civilizing influences of a woman in the bush'. 'It was', he states, 'the squatter's wife or mistress who made the head station a "home station"' (p.60). Of one thing we can be sure: that in the novels of this period the woman's position was de jure almost always, but inevitably so in the home-

steads with which the story was principally concerned. Certainly, matrimony is consistent with the romance convention, and it is considered the ideal by the numerous colonial writers who structured their works around romantic relationships and betrothal. So much so in one story, The Emigrant Family, that Sinnett can jest: 'It is perfectly delightful to find that, in so small a circle, not merely has the adjustment in the number of the sexes been so complete, but that the matrimonial requirements as to age, disposition, &c., of everybody are all supplied to a nicety, and nothing over'.[15]

It would seem that notwithstanding the inventiveness manifest in this body of fiction the households likely to be brought to our attention are those in which the occupants lead contented lives; in which hardship and privation are seldom imagined. Discomfort from the less temperate conditions of the hinterland is not often described, although the petty annoyances of rural life are sometimes mentioned by women writers who seem better able, or more willing, to render the palpable actuality of bush existence. For example, the irritation caused by heat, dust, glare and insects is a subject occasionally referred to by the women, although Kingsley is an exception here. The circumstances pictured are scarcely seen to be precarious. By common consent, one imagines, poverty, despair, and extreme loneliness are not to be countenanced in 'the land of opportunity'. In this fictional schema the notion would be unpatriotic. Good taste and good sense were the guiding principles. And with regard to numbers of works Mitchell's observation concerning Geoffry Hamlyn holds true, that: 'The landholdings are vast, the fortunes immense, yet life is relatively effortless'.[16]

These novels are indeed revealing of the mid-century ethos, that is to say, of Victorian society and the Victorian frame of mind. Referring to

15. Barnes, ed. The Writer in Australia 27.
16. The Oxford History of Australian Literature 49.

the habit of evasion Houghton has offered this comment: 'We mean a process of deliberately avoiding whatever was unpleasant, and pretending it did not exist; which led in turn to the further insincerity of pretending that a happy view of things was the whole truth'.[17] In Houghton's opinion: 'Conformity, moral pretension, and evasion — those are the hallmarks of Victorian hypocrisy'.[18] However, Houghton has shown how such characteristics may have their wellsprings in the coeval and optimistic faith in human progress. As becomes increasingly apparent, that is so in prose fiction with an Australian setting.

In all, these fictional country-dwellers, as appropriate to pastoral romance, are seen to lead far from demanding lives. The earliest writers tended to avoid portraying their main characters indulging in pastimes and amusements and one would infer that such activities were deemed inappropriate to the spirit of the times, given its insistence upon industry, endeavour, and singlemindedness of purpose. This I conjectured when examining the use made of the verandah within these narratives. When the creative writer was ready to depict more than merely a rudimentary existence those within the homestead were shown to enjoy diversions now esteemed to be the reward of colonists who had laboured to achieve domestic attainments, and under exacting conditions. In just the same fashion, and at the conclusion of single narratives, the chief characters are seen to be free to relax. As examples I cite <u>Tales of the Colonies</u> and Haydon's <u>The Australian Emigrant</u>.

I have demonstrated that within their dwellings colonists gathered together in the main living room. Rather later, they were found relaxing on their verandahs. They often entertained newcomers, whether strangers or friends. 'Hospitality is one of the household virtues of an Australian home-

17. Houghton 413.
18. Houghton 395.

stead', Franc explains in Marian (p.27). When the men are absent the women are seen engaged in some light chores, or conversing with others of their kind. Sometimes they are pictured in their gardens. Music-making would seem to have been enjoyed, and householders are on occasion depicted reading or playing chess. Yet according to the novelist, one of the most popular pastimes appears to have been the recounting of experiences or the telling of stories and yarns. It was to become a useful motif.

My contention is that fundamental to this body of fiction are a series of memorable domestic images. From the earliest works I draw attention to that peaceful interior setting in which a mother tells stories to her children. I allude to Charlotte Barton's work and will be returning to it presently. I pass now from that genteely domestic scene to its polar opposite: the Irishman's dwelling in Ralph Rashleigh. In effect, Tucker needed a balance to his own setting of quiet domesticity, namely, that evening at the Marshalls' when those present gather round the fireside. The scene appears to be representative of the colonial ideal, with its connotations of comfort and cleanliness, security and goodwill; but Tucker is too intelligent a writer to propose that the Irish family's accommodation is simply its antithesis. Despite the squalid conditions, there is an infectious gaiety about the evening's rumbustious pleasures. The ideal has been modified and one suspects that the author is enjoying the literary possibilities the incident affords.

Turning to the works of the fifties I would only wish to refer to a few passages already evoked. I recall them now to demonstrate how the more proficient writer employs imagery of this kind both structurally and thematically, the set-pieces acquiring a resonance thereby and the incidents a firm sense of time and place.

Of some substance in that earnest narrative of Atkinson's are those

scenes in which Gertrude is pictured visiting the homes of small settlers where she shares tea and conversation. There is time to enjoy such moments of leisure. These homely scenes, the not inconsiderable achievement of the work, are employed once more in Cowanda. For example, quiet moments of relaxation at 'Cowanda' are a testimony to the close bonds which exist within the family circle there. Atkinson reinforces this idea when Gilbert Calder, enjoying a bivouac in the bush, is made to recall with nostalgia the 'home circle' and the comfort to be derived from home and hearth (p.73). Not only are Atkinson's settings firmly drawn, as I have already indicated, but her characters are shown to identify with the homestead and the comfortable style of life revealed to have evolved there. This is made clear in that scene in Ch.X where the house and its effects, including a piano, are put up for sale.

Vidal too is adept at recreating the circumstances surrounding a colonial household both in concrete terms and with careful attention to detail, and with a particular feeling for social milieu. So that the establishments in Bengala, for example, take on metaphorical richness in their variety. That scene in which the Langs are seen walking in their garden is suggestive of the leisure-time activities enjoyed by the colonial gentry. However, since Vidal has chosen to contrast these moments with a disturbance connected with the assigned labourers the garden sequence takes on ambivalent colouring. As Vidal explained, hers is a 'homelier and greyer tinted sketch' than other contemporary works. Accordingly, events at 'Langville' tend to be clouded by the rift between the Langs and one of their work-force, Lynch. Within the house this dialectic can be forgotten, especially in those light-hearted scenes in the drawing-room where, consonant with the Langs' name for generosity, the family entertain friends and neighbours. Entering into the spirit of complacency characteristic of the family and which prevails in Vol.I, the reader experiences disquiet when, as in Cowanda, dramatic events force the family to quit the property and relinquish the comfortable living

there. These affairs are doubly unsettling, since the movement is opposed to the gratifying chain of improved circumstances which, in this body of fiction, is carefully calculated to demonstrate that material rewards stem from human endeavour.

One of Kingsley's strengths is his ability to evoke vivid scenes of an informal nature and the gathering on the 'Garoopna' verandah in Ch.XXXVI is a happy example. The group of friends being entertained there at first think an approaching figure on horseback is a 'distinguished stranger' but when it turns out to be Hamlyn they greet him warmly. Hamlyn — and Kingsley — are exhibiting a facetiousness here and it gives rise to some humour, a stylistic element in Kingsley's prose sometimes subtly achieved. Reference to the characters present allows several aspects of the plot to be recapitulated, this being important when its strands are finally and dramatically coming together. It is an animated passage and when later recalled it gains in intensity because it is the last of such gatherings before tragedy overwhelms some of those present and touches them all. As if foreshadowing that narrative development a sudden earthquake startles the group. On yet another level it reminds one that Kingsley tends to draw on formal literary devices. Their ancient and inherent strengths become revivified given the setting. As it is, tensions only hinted at here are to erupt shortly. To offset this, perhaps, a humorous note has been struck with the comparison between the self-control of the group on the verandah and the hysterical response to the tremor of the cook in the kitchen. The alert reader will not be unprepared for the former's praiseworthy qualities, however.

While such an episode seems merely to picture the colonial gentry at their leisure it actually allows us to widen our knowledge of this body of people and to comprehend their social milieu. His general ease of presentation and facility with colloquial speech links Kingsley's scene with those by Atkinson and Vidal cited above. It is fitting to mention Spence

here, and I allude to passages with the parlour as the setting for informal activities at 'The Barn' in Clara Morison. All this tends to reinforce my previous assertion: that of the decade these four authors are the most competent.

Authors would have music-making a popular pastime amongst the colonists around the mid-century. Howison made use of such a sequence in One False Step and conjured up a European heritage in the Australian hinterland. But McCombie was the first to utilize the idea. Moving beyond the period of the pressing needs of initial settlement he pictures an appealing episode in the Butlers' home in Arabin. Further reference will be made to this incident because it is greatly revealing of what writers were attempting to demonstrate of bush culture at the time. As Arabin listens, the two ladies 'played on the piano, and sang their favourite songs' (p.102). This illustration of household pleasures is seminal in Australian prose fiction. While providing an appealing image it highlights a distinctive aspect of bush culture. Against a background of extreme isolation the comfortable room, the civilized inhabitants, and the ties which link them to the motherland, are all social factors that creative writers delighted in presenting.

The acquisition of a piano was a significant event in the bush. And in these narratives musical instruments are suggestive of those 'refinements of polished life' which Captain Spencer is lucky enough to encounter at a homestead he visits in Lee's book (p.327). For Mrs. Burton in Marian a piano made the difference between 'refinement and the coarse vulgarity' of colonial life (p.66), and despite her limitations as a novelist Franc has this household taking keen pleasure in music-making. For although a number of authors chose to mention the piano few gave imaginative embodiment to the idea.[19] There is a piano at 'Garoopna' in Geoffry Hamlyn and more than a

19. See also Clara Morison 325, Tender and True II:295, Gertrude 156, Cowanda 66, and Rebel Convicts 168.

hint that it is played by the lady of the house (p.222). And at 'Langville' in Bengala the young governess is pleased to receive music books brought for her there (Vol.I,Ch.XXV). Earlier, in a well-conceived musical set-piece she demonstrates her accomplishments and the local clergyman joins her to sing an aria from Handel (Ch.III). We have seen that the neighbouring 'Vine Lodge' is representative of the mercenary side of colonial society and at the Veseys' house a harp is part of the meretricious charm there (Vol.I,p.61).

I will concentrate on only one other text: 'Music a Terror', one of Lang's robust True Tales. He recounts how a piano is taken by cart far into 'that Australian wilderness' to a pioneering family, and describes its greatly different effect on Europeans and Aborigines there. Lang has modelled his story on the movement which structures numerous works; here cultural development is seen literally to follow in the tracks of the settlers. Thematically, these circumstances, along with those contrived by McCombie, Franc and by Vidal in Bengala, succeed best in conveying the pleasure to be gained from music given the conditions. But all examples must be seen as an exposition of what the continuity of a popular and cultural tradition meant to the bush dweller. In figuring forth civilization in the wilderness by such a means the creative writer effectively testified how well established the bush home had become.

But however interesting all these examples might be, little creative energy seems to have been expended in picturing colonists' pastimes or pleasures. The question seems to have been conservatively treated by writers as a whole. It is noticeable that very few of these imagined settlers are shown to write or read, although from what we know of the period reading and the writing of letters, diaries and journals were popular pursuits. Turning to these narratives we find that Gertrude reads on the verandah and studies the Scriptures in the garden. That other irreproachable heroine, Clara, writes letters and composes and reads sermons at 'The

Barn'. Drawing upon an aspect of contemporary mores Kingsley has a work by Scott read at the Mayford's station (p.361) and one by Dickens cause laughter on the verandah at 'Baroona' (p.398); while Clacy imagines one of her heroines enjoying Scott (Vol.II,p.92). More unusually, a collection of classical works are to be found at 'Bullarook' station far inland in Tallangetta (Vol.II,p.19). These references to reading matter point in the direction of Webby's findings.

As regards such pastimes it is a minor writer, Lee, who hazards a guess as to why the entertaining of newcomers and listening to their exploits might constitute a more interesting occupation. She has the housewife at one of the homesteads visited by Captain Spencer explain: '"We have read our books so often, that we are tired of them; but we should never weary of listening to you"' (p.317). In terms of plot Lee is providing a situation where her untiring protagonist could recall his remarkable journey, and it is therefore easy to see why such a gambit proved of value. Moreover, the statement serves as a reminder that, when isolated, the pleasures of reading cannot measure up to the satisfaction derived from the spoken word; that individuals are, in essence, social beings. And it is this social, civic, and communal aspect of colonial settlement which ultimately caught novelists' imagination. The inclusion of spoken accounts, of stories and yarns, could add immeasurably to these works because the material facilitated an extension of the main subject matter, introducing additional themes and new characters, settings and situations. This literary strategy allowed the representation of a rural mythology. It also permitted the development of the theme of exile. Authors were responding to the co-existence of these two major topics; to the problematic dichotomy between them. I have referred to the telling of yarns around the camp-fire; in a community where few amusements were to hand story-telling had a place at the homestead, too. The creative writer associated this activity with the verandah, or located it within the homestead, and often around the hearth.

As I have explained, narrative strategy structured some works around the recounting of a story. Barton's A Mother's Offering to Her Children comprises a number of tales. The setting is the security of domestic surroundings from which the children are able to consider the unique quality of the land they inhabit. A Boy's Adventures in the Wilds of Australia, a yarn-like story, is based upon the recounting of exploits and adventures, and Geoffry Hamlyn similarly upon the unfolding of a more complex plot, the sweep of which allows the inclusion of a number of interpolated tales. However, story-telling was a motif which appealed to a host of writers, both for the reasons mentioned above and one imagines, because it was a form of recreation, a shared pastime, which predominated in colonial society.

'The evening passed sociably away' when the activity formed the evening's entertainment at the Marshalls' home in Ralph Rashleigh (p.134). The importance of the sequence later becomes apparent: it is one of few such congenial evenings the hapless man is to spend during this period of his life. The pastime is given prominence in Gallops and Gossips, notably in a chapter entitled 'Stories Round a Bush Hearth' (Ch.IX). In an earlier sequence, that on the verandah in Ch.III, the stories exchanged incorporate the theme of exile. However, the matter will be dealt with in my final chapter where it will assume particular significance. Yet is is appropriate to record at this point that while the notion of exile is foregrounded Sidney puts the greater emphasis here on the assimilation of Barnard into bush society. Mythic tales about livestock are also beginning to make an appearance in the Australian novel around the mid-century, and are apposite given the rural background.

Material pertaining to the relationship between the newcomers and the land and which, from initial settlement, began to assume mythic importance, is also the subject of stories and yarns. These may relate to successful colonization, although more dramatic subject matter tends to prevail. Often

the homestead is seen to be threatened, and the significance of such an event is central to my thesis. A visitor to 'Tallangetta' recalls the danger to life, property, and stock from bushfire in Howitt's book (Vol.I,Ch.5). Besides being a heightening device, this deliberate reference to the horror caused by fire reminds one that the stated aim of the colonial novelist was to instruct and to entertain. This work is one in which interpolated tales abound. The proliferation of additional material may well have interested the nineteenth century reader; from our own standpoint it scarcely enhances the work and could be said to add inordinately to its length. The highly-coloured nature of some of these tales contrasts with the somewhat bland pace of *Tallangetta* but colonial writers made good use of the contrast of the secure domestic setting with stories of high adventure in the bush beyond. The subject matter might reflect upon the dangers arising from human agency, or relate to environmental hazards.[20] Yet whatever the causes one senses that the well-being of the household where the story is narrated is in such a fashion both accentuated and enhanced.

The few examples cited must stand for many. When one compares the domestic ambience with the subject matter of the stories told, then story-telling adds a piquant note to the narratives. One detects a compensatory and almost ritual element in the pastime and it arises surely from the activity's communal aspect in the context of the sparsely inhabited land. And this is also true of gatherings in the yard, or again, out in the bush. Story-telling allows those of the hinterland to make known their fears and aspirations — a useful device for the creative writer. By these means authors were able to highlight material of their choice, whether it related to bonds existing between the newcomers and their former culture or secondly, and more fundamentally, whether it concerned the developing culture. As to the latter it suited the novelist to disclose that at a variety of locations

20. See, for example, *Arabin* 207 and *Gertrude* 46.

across the social spectrum tales of a folkloric or mythic nature were being recounted.

As I postulated in Ch.III ritual, pictured within the limited parameters of bush life, was a feature of pioneering which novelists were pleased to emphasize. Ritual is the form of rites or ceremonies and the attendant social behaviour accompanying a particular occasion or activity, and it will be convenient for me to envisage the term here in its broadest meaning. Presently, other observances will be considered but, as already apparent, the formality of welcome and the sharing of food with fellow colonists was the image which was to predominate. Such conventions give rise to a sense of well-being and goodwill; inherent are basic assumptions which the participants share. As with all ritualized behaviour abstract principles are given form and focus, the participants acquiring a sense of cultural identity thereby. In this affirmation of communal beliefs and shared ideals the concept of unity and order are paramount. Such ideas were invaluable for authors working against an antipodean background.

Of special interest today is the depiction of household observances and rituals which would appear to be uniquely Australian. Attention has earlier been drawn to the rituals of the yard as seen in The Emigrant Family, The Cabramatta Store, Gertrude, Geoffry Hamlyn, and Bengala. In the main one would infer that novelists were taking time to adjust to colonial subject matter. They were tardy to reflect upon aspects of a pioneering existence which due to human nature and force of circumstances gave rise to domestic observances that were novel. At least initially a certain uneasiness seems to have been apparent in the recording of such matters; but this is scarcely surprising in strongly conventional narratives.

The Bushranger is a novel concerning emigration and eventual settlement, and to conclude a plot notable for its violence, confusion, and dislocation,

the story ends with an accent on harmony and accord. As is likewise evident in Tales of the Colonies, the beginnings of ritual connected with welcome and hospitality form a sequence in the later work. Communal ideals are seen to attach to the marriage of two of the main characters and the subsequent celebrations at their property: the one with the landmark of the Blue Gum Tree. At this gathering the wish is formally expressed that the marriage be fruitful and the colony prosper. Ritual thus highlights the desire for settled order. Some information is divulged regarding the arrival of guests in bullock-carts and the 'barbecue' that follows, but Rowcroft's high rhetorical style here tends to obscure subject matter of interest. More disappointing is McCombie's brief reference to the 'regular bush party' held at the Butlers' station in Arabin.

In so many ways Gertrude exemplifies that factor which has become self-evident in the course of these chapters: the considerable development to be observed in the novels of the 1850s. If the activities and rituals of the yard here have an Australian touch, then so has the taking of tea on the 'Murrumbowrie' verandah. However, an incident of special interest and one shown to impinge upon the community at the imagined setting demonstrates once again how a ritual having domestic significance can take on a special quality in the Australian hinterland. Wedding celebrations, a description of the decorations, and mention of the dancers and their predelictions (not forgetting the 'sly-grog'), form a lively sequence in Ch.IX. Understandably, this is the subject of a wood-cut (p.33). 'We rather suspect a dance in a woolshed, or barn, is more enjoyable than the most recherché ball among the élite', is the author's comment (p.50). But the working of a social hierarchy is thrown into relief here — Mrs. Doherty and Gertrude do not appear to join in the entertainments. Atkinson's attempt to recreate the event is of note in a body of fiction slow to incorporate such features.

It is worthwhile turning to Kingsley and Vidal for evidence of local customs and, of greater interest for my purposes, for indications of the

employment of such material to enhance the text. I have already established the unique nature of the verandah scenes in Geoffry Hamlyn; they seem to characterize the domestic environment the author had set out to convey. The formalities of welcome and farewell, the ritual of shared drinks, the communal aspect of relaxation and, above all, the manifestation of an underlying and shared ideology; all these are to the fore in a locale which appears to have interesting and distinctly Australian qualities. The rituals of the verandah are one instance of Kingsley's ability to enrich the cultural dimension of a location — in this instance the homes of the colonial gentry — and hence to differentiate them from sites given less prominence: the social milieu of the fraternity of bush workers where, of course, other observances were beginning to evolve.

The domestic observances of both classes, although with the same disparity in emphasis, are also found in Bengala, and even in Vidal's earlier works there is evidence of her interest in customary proceedings. In The Cabramatta Store she records the essential differences between the homely rituals at both the comfortable homestead and the houses of the less affluent. I have had reason to refer to one of the Tales, 'The Good Sister Amy', before; I allude now to the presence of material and conventions of a typically Australian nature. Amongst those other matters already noted of this location a branch of gum-leaves is used to swat flies, and wattle blossom is found on the dresser. Such homely observances may well have eventuated across the entire social spectrum; yet, if so, few writers thought to record them.

Vidal takes household events and turns them into occurrences of some moment in her third book. The picnic which forms the action of Ch.X in the first volume is a specific example. She is following the plot of Geoffry Hamlyn (Ch.XXXVI), perhaps, when she has local families collect and on horse and by carriage make for the picnic site. This incident is a well-sustained passage, even although it may seem to owe a debt to Jane Austen's Emma, due

to Vidal's similar use of social conflict and unease to produce an element of tension in the proceedings. But whereas in Geoffry Hamlyn the set-piece provides the occasion for Dr. Mulhaus to wax eloquent over the country's geological past and to express humanitarian concern for its future, the author of Bengala is more interested in the relationships of her assorted band of picnickers. While such an event is useful for portraying the social observances of these families when at leisure, it also allows Vidal to comment on the civic duties of the pioneering people. What is of greater consequence is that both Kingsley and Vidal have revealed their characters to be at home in the bush. The ritual of the picnic is one adopted by those who have become assimilated into the surroundings and are finally at ease there. And in a similar fashion, it is in the nature of these fiction fields that some time elapsed before creative writers felt free to register an activity of this kind. Thus it is that by the decade of the sixties an unknown author fixed upon the motif of the picnic in order to string together a variety of prose pieces and poems.[21]

A further example illustrates Vidal's innovation in dealing with the subject matter available, and the passage, in a chapter entitled 'The Burning Off', occurs in Vol.I of Bengala. In Gertrude a family is shown to participate in the clearing of farmland (Ch.XXIII), but Vidal's successful amplification of such an event is a measure of her greater craft. Pictured here are the celebrations of the Lang family, their retainers, and some neighbours, following the final clearance of land at 'Langville'. Vidal shapes the material so that we follow the party to the colourful and informal festivities in the bush, then return to more sedate proceedings at the house. The atmosphere of the lively set-piece in the open is conveyed in imagery associated with the description of the fires by night — 'a striking and a peculiar sight' — and in the evocative manner in which the exultant mood of

21. New Year's Day on the Mountain : A Tasmanian Christmas Book (Hobart Town, [186-]).

the colonists has been caught. The episode also appears to be employed to aid in the portrayal of the social relationships of the gentry, and between the Langs and their assigned men. Later events in the drawing-room allow an intimate set-piece; supper, music, and talk conclude the evening in this colonial household. The Langs' generosity and the fact that the house has an 'indian-rubber' quality — an interesting piece of colonial colouring — enables visitors to remain as house-guests. By these means, another of the customs of the hinterland has been highlighted.

This two-fold celebration is a reminder of the confrontation between the Europeans and the environment. As we have seen, Vidal has Isabel ponder over an area 'redeemed from the wilderness by her father'. Here, such an event is enacted. The burning-off, as well as being a pleasing recreation of a pastoral occurrence, becomes a symbolic episode which records one aspect of the relationship between the newcomers and the land. It signifies their relentless incursion into the wilderness, and their need, in this case, to grow crops. Although Atkinson had depicted land-clearing by less substantial settlers, the connotations are substantially the same. However, at the Wedlakes' farm in Gertrude, Atkinson has well depicted how hardship shaped the lives and opinions of the labouring class. In each of these episodes human — and colonial — aspirations are formulated.

In detailing these events in the bush authors were enabled to record the pioneering spirit. Whether such proceedings take place within the domestic sphere or beyond such confines, they generate interest in the imagined colonists. On one hand there is a sense in which typically European practices are being transformed in the southern hemisphere. Hence, the clearing of the land and the element of urgency which accompanies it has an inherently colonial and domestic aspect. The latter is also a richly symbolic event, and when coupled with celebratory overtones, foregrounds singularly appropriate subject matter.

A simple observance — that of the sharing of tea — was bound to receive attention given the popularity of the practice in nineteenth century Europe and the resultant tableau in contemporary literature. Writers of colonial fiction focussed on the notion that in the bush mateship was extended over tea and yarns in a bivouac setting. Similarly, at the homestead, tea helped create a bond of friendship amongst established settlers and their visitors. Besides, tea was an acceptable beverage in narratives in which sobriety was extolled. A host of writers were to picture the custom, here a visual embodiment of homely comfort. For readers in Europe it offered a new perspective on settlement at the extreme end of the earth. But the simple ceremony of the sharing of tea can be said to have developed into a ritual. It was imagined with most success by two women writers, Atkinson and Spence.

I referred earlier to that sequence on the verandah at 'Murrumbowrie' when the chief characters, joined by the local doctor, are seen taking tea. Ritual proceeds, paradoxically, in an informal manner. And this is so at those humble parlours where Gertrude is offered hospitality. Atkinson seems to be acknowledging that the ceremony connected with such a custom is modified in the bush. Even so, a more formal observance is enacted in the parlour at 'Cowanda' in the opening chapter of the book of that name. As is appropriate, the older woman of the household presides over the teaboard (p.6). The fireside scene, a European literary convention, could well place the room in the homeland, but in an extract examined earlier (quoted here, p.162) I demonstrated how the details given readily place it as colonial.

Spence also is recalled for her depiction of homely observances, and tea is given prominence at social gatherings at 'The Barn' in Clara Morison. Here, simple domestic ceremony and the visual image of the well-kept parlour afford an agreeable contrast to the disturbing nature of affairs at the home. One unusual setting is that of the bedroom, tea being served there because

Mrs. Beaufort is ill. After tea, the men play back-gammon and Clara nurses the baby (Ch.XVII). Soon after this incident Mrs. Beaufort is to die, and it might seem that the reader has not been adequately prepared for such a crisis. Yet it is possible that in placing events of a public nature in the bedroom instead of the parlour, Spence has warned the contemporary reader of a serious situation within the household. The fact that tea was important in a colonial home, in this author's eyes, was made plain in the exchange to which I referred earlier.

While such observances offer little in the way of dramatic possibilities these two writers, along with others, found that episodes like this allowed for moments of contemplation or, with the appearance of newcomers, the chance of providing additional information about colonial life. Just as important, perhaps, is that such narrative action permitted heroines to be seen in a domesticated and appealing light. But at another level, and gratifying to both metropolitan and colonial readers, is the fact that homely customs of the kind we have been examining are seen to be enacted in a colonial context. Continuities like this affirm that traditional mores are not abandoned even though they might be modified in the Antipodes.

The rituals of the Christian church were occasionally gainfully employed to predicate the kind of society that the creative writer was endeavouring to portray as evolving in the bush. This was doubtless pleasing to readers and one would surmise that as such observances took on new colouring, circumstances became more credible and worthy of interest. Lang is therefore conveying something of the unique quality of colonial domesticity when he describes how Sunday services were held on the homestead verandah of an 'extensive grantee' in New South Wales during the period of assigned labour. I have explained why the verandah is a half-way point of interest; here, physically and metaphorically, it provides a convenient meeting-place for both the inhabitants and their employees. This occurs in 'Giles! As I

Live!', one of Lang's True Tales, and although Lang was drawing on aspects of past colonial life, creative writers were wary of bringing convict labourers into the homestead's close proximity, as we have seen. Yet at a time when employers were charged with the moral and spiritual well-being of their servants, readers must have read with approval that 'seventy or eighty' workers were expected to attend the service as 'clean and neat as possible' (p.53).

Marriage, almost obligatory to conclude the romance, becomes inherently interesting in other than terms of plot when Australian customs are seen to attach to this religious and domestic observance. Thus the brief passage which ends The Bushranger and the rejoicings depicted in Gertrude reveal modes in which writers could address such events. Tucker's description of the christening celebrations in Ch.XVIII of Ralph Rashleigh likewise comes to mind. In the latter the party in the barn bears witness to the desire for continuities and the need for communal festivities. Tension is introduced when the gathering is violently interrupted by bushrangers because above and beyond the panic they create the notion is sustained that cherished ideals are being placed under threat.

Death within the foremost homesteads, I have intimated, was avoided in the main. Rather, authors tended to place such eventualities to the margins of their texts. When the theme of death was incorporated into the plot, it was generally made to occur at dwellings of less importance, and writers often saved such a contingency for exploits in the wilds. Both factors obtain in an incident at a far-distant station in The Cabramatta Store. Into this location Vidal introduces the character of a travelling clergyman whose task it is to perform whatever observances are necessary. Here, the burial of the Lesters' son and the mother's lonely grief evoke a mood and add a dimension rare in these three decades. Consecrated ground, close by the Carpenters' station, becomes the site for the community's religious observances —

marriage, baptism, and burial — in the absence of a church. Something of the menace of the region was conveyed when the Lesters move into the area. This is confirmed when their son is injured during the burning-off of scrub-land, the antithesis of the happy occasion that Vidal was to devise in Bengala. The episode is one of very few in this body of fiction in which the bush is seen to take the young of those who would venture there. In The Cabramatta Store religion is seen to offer some consolation. Overall, in this body of work, the irrelevance of religion in the bush would seem to be postulated, this being a point raised and developed in a more general sense by Russel Ward.[22]

Referred to subsequently, the passage dealing with Miss Thornton's death, although different in tone, provides a comparable sombre episode in Geoffry Hamlyn (Ch.XXIII). Here Kingsley proposes no special rites, but the patch of ground where 'the good old lady' was buried does become a hallowed place at 'Toonarbin'. Since writers did not attempt comprehensive family chronicles there is therefore an absence of the natural cycle of birth, marriage, and death and its associated observances. To sum up, it is fair to say that although Christian ritual is occasionally to be observed with reference to readings or prayers; much more apparent is an overt religiosity and the fact that these texts, in the main, are moralistic in tone. They have the stamp of the Victorian epoch.

I would want to direct attention to only one other observance and to propose that the lack of reference to this much loved and sentimentalized Christian festival may have resulted from a sense of disappointment in Christmas celebrations in colonial Australia. My impression is reinforced by the remarks of Inglis who hypothesizes that the surroundings, the temper-

22. Ward 119-24.

ature, and the conditions all served to create such ambivalence. 'It was paradoxical to be celebrating so domestic a festival so far from home', he writes, and continues: 'For an emigrant who felt himself an exile in Australia, Christmas could bring on the most intense yearning for the old land and the loved ones'.[23] For these reasons perhaps a complaint forms the opening paragraph of '"The Compliments of the Season"' in Peter 'Possum's Portfolio. 'What an impotent, impudent sham — what a dreary humbug — an Australian Christmas is!' Rowe disclaims (p.117). For Louisa Meredith the celebrations are 'a very bright and pleasant parody'.[24] Clarifying a point also made by Inglis, Clacy observes in a tale entitled 'A Christmas Eve at the Antipodes' that gum leaves must take the place of holly (Vol.II, p.286). But the tone is, however, one of acceptance rather than complaint. Although a minor writer, Clacy can be mindful of evolving customs. In this instance, as in that which follows, old customs are seen to take on new guises.

It is worthwhile now to turn to Kingsley who is the only writer to have caught a happy blend of the rich tradition of a European Christmas and the informality possible in colonial circumstances. This he pictures in Chs.XX-XXI of Geoffry Hamlyn. An indication of the subject matter is provided in a chapter heading: 'A Warm Christmas Day'. It is a nice irony, as will be seen. It is also likely that in the title Kingsley sought to convey the kind of laconic understatement that was becoming a bush tradition. Hamlyn recalls how the litany was read under the trees on Christmas Day and how the gentlemen of the house later go swimming. In an animated scene, which also provides some humour, the Europeans share the pleasures of the river with Aborigines camped nearby. Kingsley takes care to show that mutual co-operation could exist between the two peoples. Yet despite its

23. Inglis 106 and Ch.7 passim.
24. Meredith, My Home in Tasmania I:100.

antipodean flavour, the 'old sacred good wishes of the season' are still extended. These might be said to take on a novel aspect when the temperature stands at 'One hundred and nine in the shade' at 'Baroona' (p.149). Although newcomers, the Buckleys exhibit a calm disregard for such matters. Their assimilation seems almost complete.

These and other elements differentiate such celebrations in the Antipodes. But Kingsley sometimes reveals a fine craft: as in that subtle reference to 'the empty fire-place' during the festivities (p.155). It is a visual image which would not have gone unremarked by the contemporary reader, especially as the author has placed the gathering around the hearth to hear a story imbued with the theme of exile. Kingsley is a writer who makes use of the hearth's symbolic warmth; here its omission is all the more noteworthy. Although Christmas in the southern hemisphere is shown to be transformed, it passes joyfully enough and the author has achieved a modest success with his imaginative recreation of events at the Buckleys' household. It is interesting to speculate that, on returning to England and assessing the immense popularity of the 'Christmas' prose by Dickens in the 1850s,[25] Kingsley decided to incorporate such material into the texture of his own work.

In importance, Kingsley's sequence should be considered in the same terms as Harris's spirited account of Christmas Day at the huts of 'the Rocky Springs' in The Emigrant Family. That highlights activities at the other end of the social scale. Atkinson, in Gertrude, refers briefly to Christmas at 'Murrumbowrie' and mentions the traditional 'roses and lilies' (p.76); however, one would infer that the two former writers were endeavouring to show how previous customs, transposed to the southern land, were becoming transformed into those with an Australian flavour. That a variety

25. See Wilson passim.

of observances were pictured as being enacted throughout the community adds support to the statement made by Wilkes: that 'there is no single tradition, and no one set of opposed traditions, that can encompass Australian cultural development'.

In this chapter I have been examining in further detail a range of issues outlined earlier; and more especially the rural dwelling as domestic institution and as private precinct. Most significant is the emphasis placed on family life and, commensurately, on developing colonial mores. All these ideas are given weight in the domestic set-piece. Pioneering families — men, women, and children, the latter sometimes youngsters but more often ripe for romantic attachment — are those portrayed. Although it is commonly encountered,[26] in the moral climate which governs these works idealism surrounds the whole concept of colonial womanhood and throws light on the supremacy of the woman's role as nurturer and homemaker. It is no surprise to find that she is often the moral custodian of her servants. Social milieu has been well caught by the most accomplished authors and occasionally by those who are minor. However, in the formal cadence of the lines selected as epigraph above we gain an idea of what creative writers were attempting to convey of their principal locations.

Although images both rudimentary and refined are gathered together civilization is largely shown to replicate that which prevailed, or preexisted, in the metropolitan homeland. A need to assert the normality of domesticity in the bush is represented here. As in the home culture itself

26. See, for example, Samuel Mossman and Thomas Banister, Australia Visited and Revisited... (London, 1853; Sydney: Ure Smith in assn. with The National Trust of Australia, New South Wales, 1974) and Howitt, Land, Labour and Gold passim.

the persistent image of the hearth, a communal setting, would seem to sum up such concepts. What has been termed 'the veneration of the fireside'[27] understandably became a factor of some cogency in the developing narrative tradition relating to Australia. With regard the material utilized these novels are eminently revealing of period and audience and author. One recalls Reed's observation: that the conventional novel employs 'a large number of literary conventions'. The popularity of these books contributes to the solidifying of such conventions.[28] Eco, I have intimated, makes precisely the same point.

I have referred once more to the material excluded from these works. Most simply and surprisingly, a range of domestic activities go unremarked. Of greater significance, I would contend, is the fact that very few writers managed to convey, in a psychological or spiritual sense, what it might be like to lead a colonial life — perhaps to inhabit rudimentary habitation — if one's background were British and middle-class. But much more apparent now is the fact that alienation, anxiety and fatigue are in the main disregarded; the public-spirited is championed. A narrow cone of vision is observable here and with the main locations there is a refusal to countenance other than the socially desirable or the morally acceptable. From what was available, edifying material and themes were selected. However, even here it is noticeable that writers were slow to come to terms with the subject matter. For example, activities like picnics and walks in the bush took some time to appear in this fictional account of homestead life. These novels have their origins in an evolving culture and it seems clear that the creative writer was taking time to adjust to the incongruity of familiar activities placed in the context of unfamiliar surrounds. And in comparing nineteenth

27. Altick, _Victorian People_ 7.
28. Reed 11.

century Australian authors with their European counterparts, Kirk has concluded that the former were 'less ready to experiment'.[29]

Here I have demonstrated the strategies adopted in order to picture the homestead as a household. One must assume that this mode of approach — and this homely image rather than matters more complex and abstruse — was recognised as facilitating a greater understanding of pioneering. There was little room for subtlety and nuance; all is at once readily comprehensible and immediately appealing. The subject matter examined above articulates the fundamental belief that despite inconvenience, discord, and danger, what is commonly connected with the rural dwelling in the Antipodes is the sense of well-being engendered there. The customs, observances, and myths associated with the homestead and formulated in these novels go some way in communicating that ideal.

These works celebrate the transplantation and assimilation of those who settled in Australia. A known culture is therefore depicted against a setting of foreign exoticism and the resonances arising from this juxtaposition abound. Underpinning these narratives, however, is the concept that a vital social institution prevails and can expand even in a wilderness. The tension accompanying progress of this kind is difficult to imagine today; yet perhaps the stress placed on such matters is indicative of its extent. As the colonial novel developed and the story-telling technique evolved it would seem that an array of facts and myths incorporating domestic life was employed to give substance to the concept that progress in the Australian hinterland had wide social, cultural and spiritual ramifications.

29. Pauline Kirk, 'Some Aspects of the Development of the Australian Novel before 1900', diss., Monash University, 1969, 90.

CH. VIII
OUTSIDERS

> ...and as it was growing dark I left the trail and galloped to the homestead, claiming their hospitality for the night.
>
> (Wild Adventures in Australia, p.126)

So wrote Frederic de Brébant Cooper in his small volume of 1857, and contemporary readers may well have been acquainted with the fact that, given without hesitation, hospitality was the sine qua non of life in the Australian bush. Their knowledge could be attributed to the accounts of innumerable travellers, and to novelists themselves who ultimately saw thematic advantage in that aspect of colonial culture. As the full title explains, Cooper's autobigraphical narrative is set 'beyond the boundaries', to the 'far North' of New South Wales, and deals with his purported exploits in a region then extremely isolated. Matters briefly dealt with are cattle-droving and sheep shearing, and the life of working men on pastoral properties.

As Cooper sees it, two chief difficulties are experienced in 'bush life beyond the verge of civilization' (p.92). The nature of the area means that the relationship between Europeans and Aborigines is crucial, and this work mentions the ferocity of local tribes. Given the equally ruthless determination of the settlers to resist, sporadic and violent hostilities seem inevitable. Cooper is aware that such events become the subject of communal mythology, and he records how Aboriginal attacks and the bravery of white men form the subject matter of yarns around the camp-fire. Sheer remoteness is shown to be the other determinant in an existence of this kind. For example, 'a marked tree-line' may on occasion be the sole method of finding one's way through the bush. Given these two factors, of which the inland's remoteness proved to be the most appealing to the creative writer, the offering of hospitality by colonists to each

other is not only understandable and morally binding but, communally speaking, it was imperative. So it is that the horseman of the epigraph can be shown to have no doubt as to his reception. Cooper, likewise, is undoubtedly aware of the attractiveness of the theme. It had become an influential and popular one in Australian novels by this time.

If newcomers were to be accorded such hospitable treatment, then who were those outsiders who, by literary convention, came into contact with the homestead of the Australian bush country? The scope of these books might lead one to infer that a host of interesting personnages could be introduced as newcomers or outsiders; in a limited sense this is so. To begin with, there were those who came from far afield; from metropolitan England or from centres of population in Australia. There were travellers or adventurers. More commonly, outsiders making for the homestead were friends or people who were newly employed. Others, too, can appropriately pass through the imagined landscape — those of the bush community: squatters, stockmen and shearers and, less often, doctors, clergymen, and perhaps a travelling salesman. Opposing forces are to be observed in the bush constabulary and the bushranger, both coming for provisions but with different motives and in differing circumstances. Forming another group and a countervailing culture were the indigenous people themselves. In one way or another all such characters were employed to define additional aspects of colonial culture.

Some of these characters, however, were to draw attention to the theme of hospitality: one which would point up the dichotomy between the attitudes of the city and the bush. In bringing to light this agreeable colonial custom novelists provided the occasion for scenes of conviviality and goodwill. Writers made much of the situation and, as mentioned earlier, were in a position to utilize already-established conventions: those which had become the set-pieces in literature relating to older colonies. Moreover,

we have seen that the impressions of newcomers and outsiders constituted an extremely practical way of making known the living conditions of the hinterland. And in the most lively scenes encountered one notes the adoption of both subjective and objective reactions.

In An Emigrant in Search of a Colony Rowcroft has his would-be settler eventually gain happiness in Australia. The extract quoted in my opening chapter, even though set in New Zealand, relates how the traveller in the wilderness of a newly-founded colony yearns for the familiar, more especially, for the sight of European habitation, is moved at its appearance, and is never disappointed at the reception there. Popular, for instance, in Fenimore Cooper's novels, the idea gains topicality with reference to a more recent colony. If observers were newly-arrived in the Antipodes then their reactions could be read with enjoyment. To follow the accounts of travellers and settlers of these early times is to be aware of a range of human reactions both from newcomers and those who received them into their homes.[1] Yet given the patriotism and positivism surrounding colonization it is scarcely surprising that characters in the earlier colonial novel expressed little save pleasure.

This being said, it is a fact that the goodwill experienced in the bush is repeatedly commented upon. The custom soon developed into a bush tradition and was recognized as such by the mid-century.[2] Journeying through sheep-farming country Gerstaecker writes with animation of his reception at the stations he comes across: 'I really believe there is no country in the world

1. See, for example, Howitt, Land, Labour and Gold passim, Mossman and Banister passim, and Watts, Family Life in South Australia passim.

2. See, for example, Adventures of a Guardsman 144, Meredith, Notes and Sketches 90, W.H. Leigh, Travels and Adventures in South Australia ... 1836-1838 (1839; facs.rpt. Milson's Point, N.S.W.: Currawong, 1982) 61, and Mossman and Banister passim.

where hospitality is carried to a greater extent than Australia'.[3] The traveller points out that such kindness exists not only at the homestead, but at the dwellings of poor shepherds in the bush. Innumerable examples would suit my purposes here, but the German writer's observations must represent them all.

The benevolence extended to travellers was singled out as a subject highly appropriate to the colonial narrative. Certainly, it provided a pleasing local element; more fundamentally, however, ethical concerns and Christian principles are given prominence. With the offering of shelter and the ritual sharing of food and drink, common ideals and beliefs can be implied or affirmed. In actuality, of course, but especially in a romanticized representation of colonial society, such mores might be expected. Yet mention of these customs could be made to ease somewhat the harshness possible in this pastoral setting. Such sentiments are of consequence in a locale shown to be doubly isolated — far from the motherland and remote in a colonial context — a factor already observed to be basic to the texts from the beginnings. So while the formalities connected with welcome may to some degree be dispensed with in a less formal colonial society such customs are, nevertheless, integral to age-old guest laws and have special relevance in strange surroundings.

To turn to Tales of the Colonies is to become aware of an extended recreation of an incident of the type that was to become of key importance — that of a stranger or outsider being hospitably received by the occupants of a bush dwelling. Rowcroft expands upon the newcomer's reactions and as I outlined in Ch.III the set-piece gains weight and purpose with his mode of presentation. Some indication of the primitive nature of the New Norfolk homestead is given; however this is mitigated by the friendship generated at the hearth and the warm reception extended to Thornley and his companion,

3. Gerstaecker III:5.

Crab. In this happy picture the soil's productivity is matched by the fecundity within: children, 'a tiny swarm' of them, add a naturalistic and sentimental note to the domestic scene. An air of realism is maintained, Rowcroft referring to the skillion kitchen and the chores carried out there. The woman of the house in fact performs a significant task: a 'pyramid of mutton-chops' constitutes the centre-piece of the table by the hearth. The fat of the land is thus offered and is ritually shared by all present. Eucharistic overtones are present here, and the fitting connotations of gratefulness and joy.

All this throws a happy light on colonial ways, and on evolving customs. When sufficient time had passed (and in placing this corresponding episode at the beginning of the second volume the author brings to our notice how well established the new settler had become) Thornley in his turn is ready to help others. His achievements are summarized in this simple act. He is thus following in the train of goodwill and sense of common purpose encountered amongst the pioneers. Writing in his journal about the arrival of the new-comers from the old country Thornley observes that

> in Van Diemen's Land the stranger is always made welcome, and I could not help a feeling of exultation as I contemplated the difference of my position here and in England. (p.296)

Similar episodes and the precepts they embody were the precursors of innumerable others within the Australian narrative tradition. Some will be examined in this chapter; reference to others will be found elsewhere.

However, a further element should now be considered, and it will be convenient to refer again to that scene in <u>An Emigrant in Search of a Colony</u>: the one in which George Mayford is welcomed at a colonial homestead. Here the concepts to which I am referring are set forth in a lively fashion and the facts are succinctly drawn. In peaceful pastoral surroundings a settler can reassure his guest: '"Oh! don't say you have taken any liberty; all trav-

ellers are welcome. Heaven be praised! we don't care now who knocks at the door!"' (p.366). Recalling his stay with the family Mayford describes the ritual sharing of food: 'The scene was a picture of plenty; and all was joyousness and hilarity. It was cut and come again, and no fear that there would not be enough for the morrow' (p.369).

Again, when moving through New South Wales Mayford is made aware of the prosperity and abundance there. Observing the wholesale slaughter of surplus stock the young man comes to realize that the theories of Thomas Malthus are confounded; that there is food for all in this land of 'rich pastures' and 'unbounded plains' (p.397). As it relates to these dual circumstances — the concept that great abundance was available in general and, attributable to it, that bounteous hospitality was possible given the individual's improved situation — the theme under discussion takes on an inherent richness and relevance. Especially is this so given the philosophical reflections of Malthus, who maintained that populations would outgrow their means of subsistence, and the fact that 'An Essay on the Principle of Population' 'aroused a storm of controversy and exerted a powerful influence on social thought' in Europe of the nineteenth century.[4]

A study of the novels of these three decades reveals that authors were much preoccupied with the theme of hospitality. Carefully formulated, or to be frank, formulated in any way at all, it had the advantage that readers were persuaded to look favourably at bush culture. That this might differ from that of the urban centres is a commonplace in the pastoral genre. Such a point is made in The Emigrant Family: Lieutenant Bracton, moving inland, comes in contact with the 'more hospitable habits of the interior' (p.34).

4. The Oxford Companion to English Literature 509. See also Altick, Victorian People passim and Young, Victorian England passim.

In Harris's work it is possible to explore different aspects of this generosity of spirit. Atkinson's Gertrude, to take another example, has not the same sweep, yet the numerous cameo scenes she favours serve likewise to illustrate the friendliness of the rural population. What links these scenes is that it is Gertrude who is welcomed into the bush homes; what makes them of interest is that they occur over a wide social spectrum. Hospitality is 'universal' (p.172), we are told, but it is through Gertrude's perception that we become aware of the 'frank cordial welcome of the settler' in Australia.

Different though the hearth is, the welcome is equally sincere and generous at the 'hospitable mansion' — that outlandish dwelling in The Australian Emigrant. Here Dodge entertains newcomers with what provisions he can muster in his remote hideaway. Different again are the more sophisticated set-pieces of those substantial novels of the 1850s: Clara Morison, Tallangetta, Geoffry Hamlyn, and Bengala. Here the parlour — or, suggestive of a more imposing residence, the dining-room — forms the background for scenes of conviviality. The keynote of colonial life is informality, but it is noticeable that creative writers made use of ritual to establish that traditional mores are retained when settlers become established. A cross-country ride brings the local squatters to meet that interesting newcomer, Clara, at 'The Barn' in Ch.XV of Clara Morison. When he becomes lost, a young squatter is welcomed to 'Bongubine' station in Tallangetta (Vol.I,Ch.VII). In both locations tea is served formally as it would have been in the motherland. This also occurs in Ch.I of Cowanda. More characteristically Australian, one tends to think, are those happy scenes on the verandah to which visitors are made welcome in Geoffry Hamlyn. And it tells us much about these two establishments that 'Politeness to strangers was one of the first articles of faith in the Buckley and Brentwood families' (p.239). The same kind of liberality is stressed in Bengala where it is likewise communicated to the reader by means of the plot or with pointed annotation. Colonial circumstances favoured largesse of hand and spirit and

this was only fitting in a country known as 'the land of promise'.

It would not be possible to record all the outsiders who crossed this imagined landscape and made their way to welcoming dwelling-places dreamed up in the Australian hinterland. Yet one remembers certain of them and tribute is thereby paid these early authors, some of whom are merely minor but who have in this instance caught the tenor of the times and projected figures of some substance into a fictional schema. Having brought these individuals to centres of civilization few writers recorded differences of class or paid rigorous heed to the social hierarchy established there. Most writers dealt with middle-class characters whom middle-class readers would have recognized as people like themselves, but who were caught up in the complexities of settlement.

Newcomers from the homeland provided the interest of fresh insights and observations, and so were invaluable to the creative writer. Even those from urban Australia could give voice to worthwhile impressions since their lives could not have differed substantially from town-dwellers elsewhere. Most often, newcomers are employed to offer a variety of perspectives on colonial affairs. In _Alfred Dudley_, we recall the arrival of the women-folk and the resumption of family life in Australia; of advantage too are the newcomers' expressions of pleasure at their new home. The displacement of the urban dweller to the hinterland can be a source of humour, either at the expense of the outsider or the colonist; sometimes more serious matters are considered. Atkinson brings Mr. Batally to 'Murrumbowrie' in _Gertrude_ and catches a degree of tension in both parties (Ch.XIII). The overbearing young man, a 'new chum', reveals a superiority which could be seen to mask inner uncertainty. At the homestead the colonials, with whom Gertrude soon becomes numbered, evince a loyalty to the new country and Atkinson's mode of approach allows

readers to side with the latter.

The habits and customs of the settlers could shock newcomers, and here a competent writer may manage to catch the attitudes of both the newcomer and those who have become inured to conditions. Referred to earlier, the parlour scene in Vidal's The Cabramatta Store provides a good example. Sharing breakfast with his Australian friends, Mr. Alison is horrified at the flies swarming on the food at the table. '" It is nothing, when you are used to it, Mr. Alison", said his host; "you will get accustomed to them in time"' (p.49). Vidal is at her best in her small pastiches of a developing culture. Successful, too, are passages of a similar nature in Bengala. Mrs. Vesey, a newcomer, is shown to be mocking of colonial society. In an incident already referred to, her jest is at the expense of the local settlers because of the general use of the homestead's back door and its proximity to the workaday world of the yard (Vol.I,p.124). Here the reader is able to appreciate a dual point of view: both the newcomer's condescension and the colonists' ingenuousness. It is a nicely-judged passage.

On the other hand, however, emigrants who become settlers soon find themselves exposed to colonial ways. To take one example: in the exchange of social visits in a newly-emergent society attempts are made to continue, in the new country, those customs and patterns of behaviour established in the old. All this is material of interest to the creative writer. Besides the more obvious advantage of advancing the plot or allowing information to be exchanged, evidence of an evolving society might be brought forward. At the same time the situation could be used to throw light on the differences between the mother culture and its offspring. As an established literary ploy, thematically and stylistically, it allowed the dichotomy between the two to be explored, sometimes for a more serious reason or, as is possible, for purposes both ironic or satiric.

The first such episode of any substance can be found in The Emigrant

Family. 'The arrival of the family in this solitary part of the country had not been altogether unhailed by neighbours' (p.45), and so it is that the initial visitor, appropriately on horseback, arrives at the Bractons' homestead. Although Mrs. Smart of 'Smartville' is cordially received into the home and is offered lunch, her brash manners set her apart from the gentility of the ladies there. Harris's satire affords some amusement at this point, but it would seem that the incident is also employed to give an indication of the developing social structure in the region. A number of levels in the colonial social hierarchy are in evidence, but it is clear that the Bracton family feel themselves to be at its apex. That there is a less rigid approach to such matters in those colonially-born is apparent at the household of the Kables. As to Mrs. Smart, to one's disappointment, her creator does not find it necessary to bring her back into the narrative again.

Scenes of a social nature were an aspect of colonial culture for which creative writers had shown a preference from the beginning. So the little comedies of manners played out in the three works just mentioned could have been reproduced in a host of narratives. Yet ironic reflection on the new society was rare and the prevailing mood, though optimistic, was essentially conservative. That approach might account for the settings for the many scenes of conviviality. Although the style of life might have proposed the verandah as the appropriate place for these social events or, one could speculate, the bushland as the locale for a picnic, curiously enough the strongly visual image of the parlour containing a small gathering predominates. That scene harks back to the homeland and the social mores there at one level; at another, such a scene can be located in innumerable literary works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries — and in the novel above all. On the face of it, the colonial novelist is adopting old and established set-pieces in preference to those which are distinctly antipodean.

To pass to another group: travellers and adventurers are figures to be

expected in these lively narratives. They are useful to the author since their experiences might seem to lend weight to the opinions they express, and hence by extension to the characters themselves. We have seen, for example, that an outsider's conclusions might subserve to elevate a given location. In The Kangaroo Hunters the admiration of adventurers when they see 'Daisy Grange' is not to be wondered at; and in point of fact Bowman does picture a home of immense appeal. Captain Spencer, in Adventures in Australia, is another who has made such a journey. His impressions are both pleasurable — at the spectacle of the Onslows' comfortable house (p.324); and saddened — at the sight of ill-kept slab huts surrounded by rubbish (p.319). The latter are described in harshly realistic tones unusual for these early novels. Naturally, such interesting outsiders are welcomed with alacrity at the homes they visit and the ritual of the shared meal to celebrate the occasion makes for set-pieces typical of the genre.

A number of women writers were to introduce the notion of a journey of a young woman to a place of employment far into the bush. To bring such newcomers into the homestead locale was to make use of those accruing advantages mentioned above. In addition, pertaining to plot, a story could be structured in this way. A degree of suspense could be conveyed in the newcomer's apprehension, first in regard to the bush in general, then in a more restricted sense, to the place of employment. The feelings of those within the homestead could be portrayed too, as Franc was to demonstrate in Marian (Ch.IV). Besides Franc, Atkinson in Gertrude and Spence in Clara Morison ushered young emigrants into the hinterland by such means. In one of Vidal's Tales, 'Ruth Walsh', the heroine is introduced to less salubrious accommodation at Manley's run, as we have already seen. 'Little Jacob''s 'Emigrating' and 'Little Carrie's Adventures as a "New Chum"' concern such a journey inland. This is clearly a physical and a mental journeying; the arrival is both an end and a beginning.

In one convention, the place of employment becomes a home and the degree

of isolation experienced in a remote locale sustains the reader's interest. However, these newcomers are most often received with warmth into the dwelling, that pleasing factor revealing as much about the outsider as it does about the inhabitants. The setting forms the first stage of admission into rural society and in making such figures young, vulnerable and appealing, their creators have sought to enforce our partisanship. With the rite of passage concluded — and this will require particular qualities — these emigrants most often achieve a happy marriage and a comfortable home. So despite the formulaic resolution of plot, and indeed because of it, the characters gain stature in our eyes. At the same time, of course, the kindly acceptance of the newcomers is to be commended. In every way, it is clear, the domestic institution as an ideal is becoming entrenched. Young men also are received into this imagined bush culture, these 'new chums' having a major role to play. Fulfilling romance conventions, they could not be made to appear as vulnerable as the newcomers mentioned above.

It is perhaps the index of these narratives, romances in the main, that very seldom is there an attempt to render day to day life, or to depict work of a routine nature; but to turn to Gertrude is to recognize the writer's willingness to express something of this cyclic existence. Atkinson's self-imposed task is to convey what it might be like to live on a pastoral property in New South Wales at the mid-century, and the arrival of the shearers is one of the episodes chosen to this end (Ch.XI). These men are outsiders but it is in the nature of their employment that their links with the location are strong. Mention is made of their nomadic existence, yet there is a shape to it, bringing them to 'Murrumbowrie' 'regularly as the seasons' (p.68). Here is an imaginative embodiment of the 'nomad tribe of pastoral labourers'[5] referred to later by Trollope, who remarked upon matters

5. Anthony Trollope, Australia and New Zealand, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London, 1873) 105.

already noted by Atkinson. In view of the fact that Russel Ward and others have drawn attention to the importance of this labouring force it is regrettable that so little notice has been paid to Atkinson. Her observations, though briefly set down, are apposite.

The return of the shearers is part of the movement shaping their lives; at the same time it marks a stage in the homestead's year. In what is shown to be an annual ritual the chief shearer is hospitably welcomed to the property. With their departure the fair-mindedness at 'Murrumbowrie' is extolled. Outsiders' comments are always useful. Here, amongst other things, Atkinson uses the shearers' point of view to reinforce opinions the reader might already have held. The entire episode colours the text persuasively, the rural setting taking on an identifiably Australian aspect. Yet, however interesting such an eventuality might be, it does not further the plot. Even so, there is a degree to which it proposes forward movement: all this informs us about the rhythm of existence at 'Murrumbowrie'. That is something the more skilled Kingsley has maintained throughout, mention of the shearers in Geoffry Hamlyn being only one of the means by which it has been achieved (pp.147,397).

Cyclical occurrences, inherent in a rural setting, are not necessarily connected with the seasons, and Atkinson has taken stock of this in Cowanda. She has conjured up the figure of a type, though not uncommon in the bush, rarely found in this body of fiction. In bringing Hyram, a vendor of goods who travels with a donkey, to the homestead of the title, she makes it clear that his coming is part of a recurring pattern of events (Ch.IV). This she conveys by means of the household's reaction to the visit. When on his return we learn that he was 'as usual, full of news and witticisms', we come to understand that he is in addition the carrier of news in the region; we are therefore prepared for the fact that the information he brings might be crucial to the plot (Ch.X).

A similar literary device has been employed in Geoffry Hamlyn. Word

of the bushrangers' incursions into the district is passed on to 'Toonarbin', a property described, aptly in this instance, as being so isolated it is considered 'the worst station for news in the country' (p.389). The tragic denouement of the novel, connected with 'Toonarbin', and which will shortly be mentioned, forms a further item of news that will be relayed around the region. The cattle dealer Burnside, although struck by the horror of events, explains how he

> saw himself a welcome visitor at every station, even up to furthest lonely Condamine, retailing the news of these occurrences with all the authenticity of an eye witness, improving his narrative by each repetition. Here was the basis of a new tale, Ode, Epic, Saga, or what you may please to call it, which he Burnside, the bard, should sing at each fireside throughout the land. (p.389)

The author achieves some psychological subtlety here and the character an individuality more robust than the chief shearer mentioned above. In addition, and in a way also proposed in Gertrude, Kingsley moves the cattle dealer beyond the story frame, the narrative gaining depth thereby. And although drawing on the force of an ancient literary tradition Kingsley invests it with spontaneity. Proposed, too, is the means by which an event of this kind — the incursions of bushrangers — will develop into one of the myths of the inland. All this allows the setting in both social and geographical terms, to gain solidity. Here a sense of community is registered, its members being linked by one man and, more fundamentally, by the story he has to tell. However, it is noteworthy that the author has chosen the fireside — a domestic setting, whether an interior scene or in the open — for the recounting of news which while of epic proportions has strongly domestic overtones. My contention is that while there is room for epic or heroic events in this body of fiction the point of view is essentially parochial.

The only other group of outsiders I wish to comment upon in this section is that comprising doctors and clergymen. Embodying a stable, civilized

element in colonial society they are associated with healing, both of the body and the soul. One would suppose their numbers in the Australian hinterland to have been small in actuality. Perhaps this is the reason why they figure seldom in the books overall. Yet now an additional factor should be considered. Because of the qualities assigned to the rural population few were willing to envisage the settler in need of aid: such is the ethos behind these novels. And this does lock into that positive and patriotic representation of colonial life which underscores the texts. A few writers were realist enough to introduce the medico and the churchman and as a result a number of incidents and several characters of note spring to mind. With regard the bringing of medical help to an outlying locale, I mention a number of such occurrences in Ch.IX and for the reason that the subject is invariably linked to the notion of the long ride on horseback across country — a popular motif in the colonial novel.

Dr. Bower, who is a character of some importance at the country home of Mrs. Doherty in Gertrude, emerges as a well-rounded figure. In a wholly convincing passage in Ch.XII he comes to share tea on the verandah at 'Murrumbowrie' before making his calls in the cool of the evening. This is one of the many episodes which takes on a colonial flavour. But the doctor's presence signifies to the heroine, and to the reader, that an area seen as remote is in reality inhabited by a community of people and has the trappings of communal enterprise. To turn to a more sophisticated work: the sweep of Geoffry Hamlyn allows both the old to die and infants to be born, and medical assistance is shown to be forthcoming despite the scattered nature of the population. While these happenings are useful to Kingsley in terms of plot, as I point out elsewhere, matters of further consequence are raised.

If those at chief locations are in little need of medical aid, their want of spiritual comfort appears to have been even less. Ostensibly, it says much for the spirit which permeates these narratives that the character

of the clergyman has so small a place in them. But in the 1850s — and maybe this is a reflection on colonial circumstances as much as a need to find new formulas and new characters for the colonial novel — the clergyman does make his appearance. One could conclude that, with some of the difficulties of pioneering overcome, matters of a spiritual nature could now be addressed; although, to be sure, this is only in evidence in a handful of works. We learn something of the absence of Christian observance in the bush from Atkinson and from Vidal.

Atkinson's Gertrude is shocked at the lack of a church in the district where she has come to reside (Ch.IV). The author's persuasive rhetoric on this point recurs and widens in another work of the same year: Tallangetta. Howitt uses an interpolated tale, 'The Apostle of the Wilderness', to record and explain the slow advent of religious institutions in the bush. In Vol.II,Ch.XIX, he employs Parson Docker to voice this criticism:

> Men eager for possession of new lands, for securing ample and noble homesteads while the choice is easy, rush out and spread themselves with avidity over wide and remote spaces. Their souls are intent on seizing the advantages of a fresh life, and they leave the cause of a future world to a future day. (p.250)

Such striving after material gain is contrasted with the selfless life of the colonial clergyman who 'rides on through the bush from station to station, finding everywhere a home and a cordial welcome'. The didactic note struck suggests that Howitt's aims are other than literary here; at the same time, however, the tale does convey an aspect of colonial society seldom dealt with.

In Bengala and Geoffry Hamlyn, on the other hand, it can be observed how the more competent writer is able to employ such a character to impinge upon the setting and on the plot. Vidal brings the Rev. Farrant to 'Langville' where he fits into the comfortable surroundings admirably, makes platitudinous observations, and becomes secretly engaged to the young governess there.

(It is at such a time when one has the feeling that Vidal enjoys ringing the changes on Jane Austen's plots.) A more lively yet more tortured soul makes his way to the Langs' home in the person of Dr. Mornay and Vidal pictures him deep in conversation with Isabel Lang in the garden (Vol.I,p.278). This attractive vignette is one of a number which helps towards establishing their friendship. A Catholic priest, his character contrasts well with the Rev. Farrant, while his relationship with Isabel Lang and eventual spiritual struggle give rise to a dramatic and tragic episode. Kingsley introduces a more conventional character, the Rev. Frank Maberly, to 'Baroona' in that winning set-piece in Ch.XXV. A winter evening brings the new colonial Dean, formerly a close friend in England, into the comfort and warmth of the Buckleys' dining-room — to their surprise, and that of the reader. The Dean's presence allows the theme of exile, and that relating to colonial progress, to form the subject of the conversation which follows. As I indicated earlier, Kingsley introduces some gentle satire at the expense of this worthy newcomer and his notion of bringing Christianity to the station hands at 'Baroona' (Ch.XXVI). But the latter does have an important pastoral role to play when, after the coming of the bushrangers, he visits 'Toonarbin'.

If spiritual matters are not treated in any profound way, then it is surely because material progress is the overriding preoccupation. The epic journey which takes emigrants to the southern hemisphere is one connected with mundane concerns rather than spiritual progress. And so high ideals are associated by the creative writer with settlement in the wilderness; but practical Christianity is the central tenet of these works. It is exemplified in the welcome generally given outsiders.

Bushrangers

There is another way in which one can be persuaded to look favourably on the domestic setting, and that is to expose it to threatening or sub-

versive forces. Dangers are already manifest in the whole concept of the country's vastness and in its climatic extremes. There is a sense of menace in its disconcerting strangeness. And personifying the country's hazards the Aboriginal can be shown to pose a threat to European settlement. But first I will make some observations about a disruptive element within the European social framework itself.

I am referring to those outlaws who in Australia came to be known as bushrangers. As linguistic studies have shown, the connotations of the term imply an ability to move with impunity through diverse terrains. Moreover, as has been argued, the term proposed those skills and attributes which enabled bushrangers to prosper despite the illegality of their activities.[6] The bushranger's mode of existence — free-ranging, uncertain, disordered and embittered — was in essence the antithesis of that centred on the homestead. However, creative writers were quick to grasp that fitting antagonists were needed for their settlers and they fixed on such qualities as the horsemanship, bush skills, and endurance of the outlaws. They recognized, too, the dramatic possibilities inherent in the notion of a divided culture. To be true, this was apparent in the assignment system, but convict labour was firmly controlled. Equestrian marauders, on the other hand, posed a threat of some magnitude. It was easy to entertain the notion of an endangered feudal society on the edge of sparsely populated wastelands, and a literary model was available in the popular novels of Scott. And as I have said, Fenimore Cooper provided a current literary influence with his tales of the American backwoods.

In many respects, though, the writers of the colonial novels were drawing directly on Australian subject matter. As early as 1819, in the

6. See Edward E. Morris, A Dictionary of Austral English (1898; Sydney: Sydney UP, 1973) 71-2 and Jean Fielding and W.S. Ramson, 'Further Evidence on the Early Use of "Bushranger"', ALS 5.3 (1972):316-21.

first prose narrative in English with a substantial Australian setting, Vaux' Memoirs, there is a brief account of a clash between 'bush-rangers' and 'armed persons', and in which one of the latter, a settler, is killed (pp. 214-5). Ten years later Howison was devising a series of tales, each set in a different colony. In that relating to Australia, One False Step, bush-rangers have a substantial part to play. It is one which both forwards the plot and projects a particular aspect of social conditions in New South Wales — its lawlessness. Howison is the first novelist to use such depredations to provide dramatic action and to portray the irreconcilable conflict between the homestead and lawless outsiders. Having quarrelled with his master, Howison's protagonist for a time joins these desperadoes, but feels compelled to warn his master of their plans to raid the farm. Partly due to his connection with these criminals Hermsdill is later taken into custody and in attempting to make an escape he ultimately meets his death. Due to a twist in the plot the personable young man had by this time received a pardon and, ironically, was in a position to take up a life of rural domesticity in the country he had come to understand.

It is a matter of interest that this narrative is told from the point of view of a felon. Much more common are prose narratives concerned with free settlers, their material success and domestic attainments. Even so, while taking up the latter standpoint authors were willing to examine the lives of those excluded from such a community. This added human interest to a plot and a bracing counter to the major subject matter. Besides, it provided for that interest in crime and punishment, and in the criminal mind, which many have seen as emerging in nineteenth century Europe. Certainly, the theme dominated many of its greatest novels. Nevertheless, although his story may be recounted, the bushranger in the novels studied here is not permitted to prosper. Hermsdill is not a bushranger, but had been transported for an impetuous crime in his youth, had left his place of employment in the colony, and had consorted with such a gang of ruffians.

Howison plays with the notion of redemption but then subverts the idea by means of his plot. One False Step can immediately be identified as a moral tale, and it gives some indication of the emphasis placed on the success of colonial settlement at the time.

Another decade passes and Rowcroft, compiling Thornley's memoirs in Tales of the Colonies, must have become aware of the advantages offered by such material. In fleshing out an episode of the clash between settlers and bushrangers to present a sustained and dramatic sequence within his narrative Rowcroft set the scene for a host of novelists to follow. In 1846 Rowcroft was to publish The Bushranger, also set in Van Diemen's Land, and taken up with a somewhat tedious concatenation of melodramatic events involving settlers, Aborigines and bushrangers; but the sequence of events in the Tales, albeit highly-coloured, is rather more credible and more competently handled. In both works the threat posed by bushrangers is simply one of the hazards of the bush. In The Bushranger Silliman, after all his adventures, still determines to settle in the colony, contriving 'to build a good house, and establish a well-stocked farm...' (p.224). In Tales of the Colonies the author has colonists display the same mettle.

After seven years of pioneering Thornley is pleased to welcome neighbours to the region. Misfortune in England has driven the Moss family to become colonists and Rowcroft, whom Green has dubbed an 'immigration agent',[7] even manages to enlighten readers concerning the modest financial commitment necessary for such a project. In all, the information given regarding the family is indicative of their suitability for the venture, and because Thornley is himself well-experienced, his judgement is calculated to convince one on that point. Thornley recalls that 'we

7. Green 84.

agreed that it would not be kind or manly to abandon our neighbours in their distress and difficulty' (p.111) when it is revealed that their 'homely dwelling' has been attacked. Thus, positive feelings for them are augmented. The reader has been prepared for an eventuality of this kind. To begin with, Crab's dwelling has been similarly raided (p.38) and such an attack comes to be accounted as one of the dangers feared by Thornley in undertaking that 'vast task, to establish a home in the wilderness'. Additional reports of bushrangers are noted. Finally, with the arrival of a horseman at the Thornley homestead and with sounds of distress from nearby, the nineteenth century reader's forebodings are realized.

The messenger's action, Thornley's resolve, and the decisive steps taken by a body of colonists to pursue the bushrangers: all exemplify the sense of community ascribed to the remote settlement. In this elemental conflict between good and evil, common to the romance, the homestead inevitably becomes a centre of order and stability and accepted social norms. Bushrangers represent the antithesis of such values. In describing the attack through the perception of Mrs. Moss in Ch.XII Rowcroft has achieved a more dramatic rendering of events; and he has been able to convey the woman's physical and emotional vulnerability. In actuality, all this might have led to a reaction against pioneering life; however, some dangers had to be spelt out in a lively narrative. Rowcroft includes no end of hazardous incidents. Yet, in focussing upon an attack in which the victims evince their fortitude and survive, and the raiders attract opprobrium and death, the writer is manipulating his material to the best advantage. Argyle has labelled these Australian outlaws as a 'happy band of roadside heroes',[8] but the appellation scarcely obtains in this body of work.

Inglis has styled the bushrangers 'the most persistent disturbers of

8. Argyle 8.

the peace in Australia'.[9] Not surprisingly, creative writers of the 1840s and 1850s recognized the value of the subject; too, these decades coincide with a time when bushranging was rife.[10] It is notable that after Tales of the Colonies a host of writers alluded to bushrangers either in brief reference; or in a more sustained fashion and by bringing such characters from the margins to the centre of their narratives. In the 1840s two whose works appear to be largely autobiographical provide us with information in this regard. Cozens, whose occupation as one of the mounted police brought him in touch with rural conditions, is able to laud station-owners for their hospitality in his Adventures of a Guardsman. For all that, he is aware that the harsh treatment meted out to some assigned servants has led to their escape, and to their becoming bushrangers (Ch.IV). There is, in consequence, a strong bond between the two. He reports, for example, that when a homestead has been 'bailed up' the outlaws can persuade shepherds to aid them by driving sheep over their tracks (p.155). Several creative writers were to make use of the close relationship which existed between those of the lower echelons of colonial society. In reality, of course, the bond gave rise to the mythologizing of the bushranger in the popular ballads of the day.

But to turn to Settlers and Convicts by Harris, 'a wonderfully sharp observer of the world he knew',[11] is to come to a greater understanding of various levels of society in the same period in New South Wales. In Ch.IV and elsewhere he deals with bushranging life and the circumstances surrounding it. The notion of the prevalence of this menace is refuted, Harris

9. Inglis 168.

10. Inglis Ch.11 and passim, Clark vols.III,IV, Ward Ch.6. A reliable early study is Charles White, History of Australian Bushranging, 2 vols. (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1900-3).

11. Clark in his introduction to Settlers and Convicts p.xviii.

stating that one of his aims is to 'correct the erroneous statements that are abroad, not to add to them' (p.32).

Is Harris alluding to Rowcroft when he advises that Ch.IV will not depict 'some dismal record of a night of horrors' (p.32)? Mrs. Moss, one recalls, wonders if she will 'ever recover the horrors of this dreadful night?' (p.120). The 'Emigrant Mechanic' has been little troubled by such individuals; even so he does record an incident when he is brought into close contact with them. In this account the men raid a homestead for stores. Whether the happening is actual or imagined what gives it immediacy is the writer's recognition of the bushrangers' real need for provisions and, envisaged in this instance, the simple desire for new shoes. In fine prose style, interesting in both the smaller detail and the larger event as this incident well illustrates, Harris acquaints the reader with his appraisal of bush culture. In particular, he explains how ties of necessity or common humanity help link isolated people in unpredictable ways. Further on, he is to write: 'I must confess that, during my whole sojourn in the colony, it had seemed to me impossible to deny the starving outlaw a bit of bread' (p.241). It becomes apparent that a colonist's attitude may be ambivalent and may depend, amongst other things, on social background.

Given its audience, there is little room for such ambivalence in the context of this body of fiction; certainly, there is none for vacillation, in moral terms, in Harris's own romance. In Settlers and Convicts, as in the work by Cozens, the author attempts to clarify the colonial situation by seeking out the reasons behind a number of issues. Directly related to bushranging, in Harris's opinion, are the vindictive masters of assigned convicts and the extreme cruelty perpetrated on the chain-gangs by their overseers. Men have been driven to escape and have been forced to take to the bush, and in their need to turn to lawlessness. But Harris is

enough of a realist to know that such matters are not clear-cut; further issues may be involved. His attempt at the motivational factors in human behaviour could be seen as one of the strengths of The Emigrant Family. Overall though, convict-bushrangers, often termed 'bolters', are those generally referred to in the narratives with which I am concerned.

In his romance Harris has bushrangers, and Aborigines too, comprise those forces antagonistic to the settlers, their domestic concerns and pastoral interests. Harris appears to be on more certain ground than most in depicting Aborigines, while in the person of Martin Beck, the Negro overseer turned bushranger, he has created a rounded character who sustains our interest. While such outlaws can menace the community in general Harris, like Rowcroft, focusses for dramatic effect upon that location central to the colonial social fabric and, as is my contention, to the creative writer's imagination: the family home. The risks involved when lawless forces are at hand are given shape with reference to the main locations, 'the Rocky Springs' station and the Kables' establishment at Broken Bay. Above all, Harris is conscious of the womenfolk's vulnerability when the men are absent. Questions relating to bushrangers are raised early in the narrative when the magistrate Hurley concludes that there is no existing danger to the Bractons' homestead from bushrangers or wild Aborigines because of a police presence in the area (p.49). Such information prepares one for future events; at the same time, it is reasonable to suppose that it builds up the reader's expectations. In fact, Harris posits eventualities in the long romance which prove the magistrate wrong.

In one set-piece Aborigines, incited by Beck, raid and rob the Bracton's home (Vol.II,Ch.10). Those who come to the rescue are Hurley and his troopers and Reuban Kable and a work-mate. Indeed, the fact that the latter, native-born Australians, have the necessary skills to ride through the bush rather than go by road enables the occupants to be saved. Through-

out, Harris, like Rowcroft before him, sets store on the bushcraft he recognizes as necessary in pioneering life. It is the lack of such skills at 'the Rocky Springs' which puts the family at a disadvantage, if not in jeopardy. Due to the contingencies of the plot, not altogether convincing, Beck's gang does not raid the Bractons' home. It is Kable's house which is entered and this is shocking since much has been made of the owners' integrity and the goodwill there. Once more, help does arrive in time. All this is an aspect of the narrative design, one which is marked by numerous parallelisms and correspondencies. By means of the synchronic approach Harris puts to good use the juxtaposition of these two establishments. The fact that each is endangered enhances the dwellings in the eyes of the reader who sets store on the ultimate happiness of the families there. It is in keeping with the story's framework, then, that Harris ties up such ends satisfactorily at the narrative's close.

In sombre contrast is the bushrangers' lot. Though readers can admire their bushcraft that quality is not enough to assist them. Before the events which lead to his death at Kable's cottage Beck is pictured riding through the bush alone at night:

> Whilst his mind was occupied with the business of the day, he had forgotten everything beside; but when he came to encounter the hours of darkness — sleep flying from his eyes; the hard cold earth beneath him; the bright, stern stars above; the empty bush around, yielding neither home nor help, nor so much as matter for the creation of a hope:... — it seemed to him that he had a right to exact a commensurate retribution. (pp.379-80)

The entire passage reveals the extent of Beck's bitterness and social isolation, and what is most apparent is the difference between his circumstances and that of the leading characters.

Perhaps it is a result of the spirit of the times as much as the need to find dramatic material for his narrative that in Ralph Rashleigh Tucker fixes upon the same subject matter, going so far as to have his adventurer

for a time the enforced member of a bushranging gang. Here, also, the bushrangers retain their freedom because they are thoroughly conversant with the bush; but to survive, the need to obtain provisions is critical. Sometimes their intentions are more murderous. Forming one of the violent encounters in Ch.XVIII is the attack on a house which the reader, along with Rashleigh, is shocked to find is the 'neat little abode' of the Marshall family. That it is a party or 'sheevo' to celebrate a christening which is interrupted only makes more unpleasant this callous affair. The emotional context of the homely celebration must elicit sympathy, and nothing could be more calculated to place the settlers in an attractive light or, simultaneously, the intruders in an unfavourable one. Civilized values and all that is dear in a domestic sense are mocked by the bushrangers' presence. The raid's failure sends the gang in search of provisions elsewhere, and a further and more cruel outrage is later committed.

While moral considerations are uppermost in this body of literature, one would agree with Argyle's observation that there is an unpredictability in Tucker's prose, and that it is characterized by that quality of 'negative capability' which, Argyle asserts, 'has been taken as one of the marks of the great novelist'.[12] Therefore although he is aware of the social stability of the dwellings the gang has entered, Tucker at the same time emphasizes the bushrangers' will to survive and their compelling need for stores. Interesting, however, for my purposes, is the way in which the latter's position is adroitly contrasted with that of the settlers who in Tucker's novel, and in so many others, are seen to be contentedly self-sufficient. As if in proof of this they are constantly ready to share their board with newcomers and outsiders. (The Arlacks' establishment, of course, is nicely contrived to give literary embodiment to an opposed set of values.) No other writer of the decade was willing to depict to the same extent the

12. Argyle 64.

depraved nature of bushranging exploits. For in additon to plunder, Tucker deals with rape and torture and murder in a particularly vivid way. Other writers were to be more carefully selective, and they wrote from a different perspective.

In Arabin, McCombie expressed the colonists' fear of marauders through the attitude of the Butlers. Their station is well-prepared for newcomers of this kind because its remoteness makes its situation extremely vulnerable. In consequence, among the ornaments in the parlour McCombie imagines that 'a formidable array of weapons were arranged about, which showed that the Australian settler is occasionally visited by Bushrangers' (p.36). Thus, at the very centre of family life firearms act as a cogent reminder of the threat to the household, despite the colonists' desire for a settled existence.

One further author could be recalled at this point and if only to show how popular such literary conventions had become by the mid-century. Unquestioning hospitality is extended to a stranger who appears on the verandah at 'Kurryjong' in Lucy Marline. It is clear that the American author is opening his narrative with a set-piece notable for a number of devices now regarded as having Australian colouring. As a fanciful thought, Lucy pauses to wonder if the newcomer could be a bushranger; and piquancy is added to the situation when it is ultimately revealed that this is indeed the case. In a complex plot in which assumed identities play a large part the author draws on a further convention by having such men as villains — those who will finally be vanquished by the settlers.

With the decade of the fifties the majority of authors whose works were set in New South Wales and Victoria chose to deal with the subject. (The first book by the commonsense Atkinson a notable exception.) South Australia was little troubled by such hazards and that is reflected in the absence of bushrangers in the novels set there. The stress on the symbolic

nature of the conflict immediately draws attention to the social background of this body of work. Such an element sets prose fiction apart from the growing number of popular ballads which identified the bushranger with the lower orders. But if a subversive element colours the oral tradition, ideas of this kind are not entertained by writers of prose fiction.[13] Only in these ballads does this figure achieve an elevated status; he becomes a folk hero, thus illustrating what has been termed a 'brazen partiality' for such individuals.[14] Russel Ward, to take one influential historian, considers these songs and the underlying folk tradition as symbolizing the spirit of those lowest in the colonial social hierarchy.[15] Novelists of the mid-century, like their earlier counterparts, tended to identify the interests of their leading characters with those of their readers.

Hall's Floss — or that portion of it set in New South Wales and taken up with bushranging exploits — is the single example in these early works that lacks credibility almost entirely. It is interesting merely as a literary curiosity. Hall's Australia is peopled with the brigands of melodrama or the Gothic horror novel and so he assigns them names which at least have the advantage of appropriateness. 'An immense wool estate' belongs to Leonardo; there is a heroine called Zuletta; the bushranger's chieftain is Don Gonselmo. It is into such a setting that Floss is unfortunate enough to stray. His end is a terrible one since the protagonist's fellow bandits are even more treacherous than Floss himself and, moreover, the bush is the lair of both hyenas and vultures. Here, too, the author imagines a homestead siege; once again, the tranquillity of the Australian scrub is violated

13. An article of some length on the subject of the 'Bushranger in Australian Literature' is in The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature 131-3. Here there is reference to three plays which incorporate the theme.

14. R.B. Walker, 'The Bushranger in Fact and Legend', Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand 2. 42 (1964):220.

15. Ward Ch.6.

with the sound of gunfire. It is readily apparent that the writer was astute enough to give the picaresque narrative topicality by drawing upon subject matter which had become well-established and to be expected in the Australian colonial novel.

In their 'Address' Hall's publishers state that the book is one of a series 'instructive in character'. It is, it seems, a moral tale, and thus it has a parallel in Wolfingham. Both authors, it is clear, propose moral improvement through the lives of their main characters. Yet — and while this may be spelt out only too obviously in the anonymous Wolfingham — the text of the later work is animated with biblical symbolism and, one senses, a conviction honestly held. What is more, events are pictured against a background in all its essentials distinctly Australian.

Of the many others who variously employed the theme all chose to posit events which made the most of contemporary circumstances and served to reinforce opinion against the bushranger. All this they pictured against the background of the bush or, in line with the seminal Tales of the Colonies, they brought the bushranger to the homestead itself. However, that the subject was a commonplace in the 1850s can be gauged by the fact that even in the slight work by Laplastrier, The Travels and Adventures of Mr. Newchamp, being attacked by such ruffians is one of the ordeals suffered by the hero on his travels. In more dramatic terms, although depicted in an indifferent prose style, an affray with bushrangers leads to tragedy in Ramsey's A Romance of the Bush.

In their selection of a setting authors are often aware of the need to provide a background of symbolic significance: one relevant to the theme that is to predominate. So a more compelling account might bring the bushranger into the precincts of a dwelling and to the homestead hearth itself. Such a set-piece did in fact become a convention of the

1850s and followed on from Rowcroft and Harris (and the unpublished Tucker), all of whom pictured the turmoil, both the physical upheaval and the emotional upset, when a dwelling was forcibly entered. Vidal was one who employed the convention, both in Bengala and earlier, in The Cabramatta Store.

Green has been one of the few to note Vidal's capabilities as a novelist. In support of his belief that she was 'among the few writers of her day who were capable of catching the keynote of a piece of Australian scenery'[16] he quotes the opening paragraph of the earlier work:

> It was one of the hottest days of an unusually hot and dry Australian summer. No breeze stirred the thin, spare foliage of the gum-trees, or moved the thick grove of wattles which grew at the back of a rough log hut. A large dog lay under the shade of a heap of fire-wood, and a few fowls picked about for insects in the dry brown grass. The forest or bush was somewhat cleared round the hut, and a rough fence of "stringy-bark" separated it from the small, neat new brick church. All was still, save the incessant sharp noise of the locusts, and the shrill chirp of the countless grasshoppers; even the children, who were playing by the fence, seemed silent and overpowered by the heat....

Into this Australian pastoral setting Vidal brings the bushranger, Jackey Jackey. He enters the small dwelling, takes what valuables and food are available, once more threatens the occupants — a woman and her children — and then quickly passes into the bush and is gone.

As I established in Ch.III the spare refinements of the interior have been engagingly established by Vidal, and by concentrating on the unexceptional domesticity within she is able to shock the reader with the thought that the place could be pillaged. Furthermore, its location — close to the church although in an isolated community — might seem to preclude the idea of danger. This is reinforced in the balmy pastoral

16. Green 92. See also Roderick 12-13.

setting. It is an undeniably antipodean pastoral, and an oppressive note is caught in the thick crowding of the bush around the yard. The heat appears overwhelming and could in effect impose a sense of oppression; instead, perhaps, it lulls one into a feeling of complacency. The noise of insects, for example, is suggestive of a quiet continuity. As a setting into which to introduce a bushranger this lyrical passage works well.

In Bengala two bushrangers enter that imposing residence 'Langville'. Interestingly, Vidal makes use of a detail of vernacular domestic architecture here. This allows the main dwelling to be raided unbeknown to those nearby, so although the house is surrounded by a community of retainers it is sufficiently separate for such an outrage to occur. Mrs. Lang and Kate are 'bailed-up': they are threatened with a gun and forced to hand over money and valuables. The sense of security, which the novelist has taken care to project, is by an event like this ironically undermined. One has been given an idea of the importance attached to the establishment in the tonal quality of the initial description. 'Langville' symbolizes the family's domestic attainments and solid prosperity. And just before this outrage Isabel Lang is portrayed contemplating the home. She sees 'the evidences of comfort and wealth; the place redeemed from the wilderness by her father ' (Vol.II,p.14). Afterwards, with some discernment, Vidal places a moral precept redolent of Victorian thought in the mouth of the Rev. Farrant. He voices the opinion that the bushrangers are 'the breakers of all home peace and home ties' (p.23). Those reading the book might have concurred. Vidal is thinking of the latter, perhaps, when she has the Langs' nurse complain of the upsetting of social order when the 'lawful missis of the place' has been treated with such indignity (p.20). Placed at the beginning of the second volume this crisis seems to herald the processes of change which mark the last half of the work. A series of unfortunate events overtakes the Lang family and puts to an end forever the domestic happiness which has been shown to characterize family affairs,

if not the circumstances relating to the wider community at this locale.

In both books, and consonant with actuality, the speed of the unwanted intrusion has been caught. In both, too, the aftermath is drawn to our attention, although a more competent handling of the situation is apparent in the later work. Told from the point of view of the victims both narratives reveal what it might be like to experience such an attack. In Bengala mounted police pursue the bushrangers while the Langs regain their composure in the comfort of their home. In The Cabramatta Store, as is likely in this social setting, Grace Lester becomes more determined than ever to move into the safety of the nearby township. In the working out of the plot her wish remains unfulfilled since the lawlessness which has intruded into this emigrant woman's life now touches her more closely. Her husband becomes involved in crime himself and the family's financial situation changes. Similarly, in the later novel, economic circumstances bring about a more pinched existence in different surroundings. Plot structure along these lines suits Vidal since, as implied, she is adept at realizing social milieu. While the advent of the bushrangers has not been a causal factor in these changes in status, such a factor, as a literary device, can work to herald them. More specifically, such events do point up the uncompromising and disturbed nature of the relationships which are possible in a society that is both divided and scattered.

That convenient detail of local architecture, used in Bengala, has also been employed by the author of Rebel Convicts. I am turning to this little known work now because it is likewise of the type which focussed on the confrontation between two modes of life in the bush. Again, bushrangers are brought right into the family circle and this the writer has chosen to illustrate with an attractive parlour. I have referred to 'Rarindoorta' earlier; it was 'one of the finest sheep-runs in the colony of New South Wales' (p.167). However, and paradoxically perhaps for the

English reader, the dwelling is no grand establishment. It is a 'weatherboard cottage'. Despite that, it is enhanced with all those admirable features, both concrete and cultural, that one has come to expect of a colonial homestead. Into this parlour bushrangers are made to intrude (Ch.XXI). Although the incident concludes with the householders firmly in control it serves, as elsewhere, to heighten regard for law-abiding colonists and, above all, their attempt to reproduce in a far colony the quality of life esteemed in the homeland.

So far, we have seen these outsiders variously depicted. In a number of works of the 1850s they appear as stock figures about whom we learn very little, other than that they are robbers and their requirements may simply be stores and provisions. Influenced by Rowcroft and Harris perhaps, a few authors allowed such individuals to speak for themselves, building up more substantial figures in so doing. In Geoffry Hamlyn, however, the theme recurs and widens to become a well-devised and dramatic series of events which are integral to the plot as it unfolds first in England; then in Australia. Here the bushranger Touan, formerly George Hawker, threatens the region inhabited by the chief characters, but his relationship to them is of particular significance. He is the husband of the owner of 'Toonarbin' station, Mary Hawker, and the father of her son. Because of the close bond between the settlers in the area, events involving Touan's gang impinge upon them all, but in the fullness of time, ultimately upon Hamlyn himself, since his is the task of recording the tale of the emigrants who came to the colony and settled there together.

In Kingsley's book the outlaws are seen first to menace the whole region, and as the owner of one outlying property is to complain: '"And what could a lonely squatter do against half-a-dozen of 'em"' (p.314). Then Kingsley brings them to the foreground and in having them raid 'Garoopna' addresses such problems. Since this is a romance Alice Brentwood has been

rescued by Sam Buckley, but the defencelessness of colonial womanhood is a matter broached by this novelist. Carefully articulated, Alice's vulnerability is suggested by a number of means and the notion is developed when the abandoned homestead is later found to be ravaged:

> All her pretty little womanly ornaments overturned and broken, her piano battered to pieces, and, worst of all, her poor kangaroo shot dead, lying in the verandah. (p.369)

Such events go to show the bushrangers' violence and callousness, and subtly hinted at is the possible fate of the girl. The 'old order', that which carries the weight of social and traditional values, has been temporarily overturned. Domestic ideals have been threatened, and the incident works to point up the sanctity of the home and all that it represents. This has been briefly pictured but in a way that adds poignancy to the situation.

A later event is the clash of settlers and troopers with the outlaws and the capture of their leader. In these circumstances Touan kills his son, thereby bringing tragedy to 'Toonarbin' homestead. A further outrage has taken place at a station nearby. Cecil Mayford, in attempting to resist the intruders, has been shot inside his own home. The parlour forms the background to the murder and the choice of setting does imply that Kingsley was aware of the room's heightened potential.

It follows that the main locations, persistently linked in the narrative structure, are now even more closely connected. Care has been taken with this fictional landscape so that these happenings are both believable, and possible. It is also noteworthy, and from what has been seen of this body of fiction not to be wondered at, that Kingsley has avoided associating tragedy with the two dwellings at the narrative's centre. Because of the way in which the strands of the plot are drawn together one's interest is well sustained, and in a body of work in which stock situations and characters abound, Kingsley's story of the man who became Touan is most com-

petently handled. Employing traditional material, and what was developing into the conventional in colonial literature, the author moves beyond it to create a sprawling novel typical of the nineteenth century.

Here is a body of fiction which upholds the concept of material and emotional well-being. And the placing of the family home under threat only serves to highlight the concept. Such an eventuality makes more pleasing an outcome in which material and other rewards are studiously conveyed. The subject matter we have been examining can be seen to lend stature to the settler. Moreover, it is by means of this positive presentation that the sense of place in the colonial novel is much enhanced and augmented. As a result, and in connection with the dialectic under discussion, it becomes clear that a pointed parallel exists between the major locations and the bushranger's haunt which, in that symmetrical design that marks these narratives, is well recessed. The discomfort of the bushranger's existence is only too apparent in his dwelling-place; it is conspicuous for the absence of womenfolk and family life, for its lack of convenience and congenial surrounds. Such a locale, in fact, is seldom seen to exist at all, let alone as socially and economically viable. In short, this site is beyond the pale in the social framework shown to have developed in the bush.

In _Tales of the Colonies_, for instance, the outlaw's life is at odds with the colonist's increasingly settled existence. In more specific terms, Beck and his gang are pictured constantly on the move and sometimes, as is evocatively realized in Ch.11 of Vol.III of _The Emigrant Family_, the journeying sees them sorely pressed. Such movement is the antithesis of the secure accommodation of the main locations which include, additionally, that of family retainers and station hands. In _Wolfingham_ the dichotomy is more marked. Wolfingham's hut has none of the comforts, either physical or spiritual, of the two pretty cottages with which the protagonist here has a strong affiliation. Rather more unusually, Lang describes a bushranger's lair in _The Forger's Wife_, although the home of the settler Major Grimes is

less closely observed. In a comic reversal of roles, however, Lang has the outlaws dress as mounted police in order to appropriate the homestead's stores. Even so, this action can only assist the bushrangers temporarily, and with due consideration for prescribed literary paradigms, they soon receive retribution. These examples are amongst a number available.

Since the bushranger's presence exemplifies a defiance and contempt of settled domestic order then the circumstances surrounding his death might often seem apt, and in the working out of these plots the concept may be given visual form. In Lang's book the bushranger is killed and left exposed to physical conditions and natural predators on a remote hillside. In his short story 'Baron Wald' the marauders suffer similar exposure. The men are executed near the home they have robbed and their bodies are left hanging from trees as a warning to others. Yet most often bushrangers die gamely fighting in the bush as they did in Tales of the Colonies.

To take a better known example: at the conclusion of Geoffry Hamlyn the bushrangers are killed or along with Touan himself, are executed in a Sydney gaol. With such a death one might contrast the dignified passing away of old Miss Thornton and recall her quiet place of rest under a 'little square white railing on the sheoak knoll' in a place much frequented by her at 'Toonarbin' and evocatively pictured by the author (p.178). As the oldest member of the acquaintances who emigrated to Australia Miss Thornton personifies womanly courage and homely virtues, and her character and the manner of her passing is of use to Kingsley for the lessons that it conveys. Rowcroft has employed the quiet demise of Crab similarly. At the opposite extreme are those enemies of homestead life, almost all of whom are shown to meet violent deaths at the hands of settlers or the mounted police.

Troopers

Following literally in the tracks of the bushrangers are other outsiders: the troopers or mounted police. They are colourful figures of

authority on horseback and of value in texts where the clash of opposed forces provides symbolic action of a dramatic kind. Such episodes articulate one of the main themes in these works: the provision of law and order and the maintenance of stability on the border-lands of civilization. Indeed, the presence of troopers, the embodiment of such a concept, highlights the urgency of ridding the bush of elements antagonistic to those who would settle there. To the creative writer the issues are clear-cut. As intimated above, a police force was a necessity in those communities whose beginnings were connected with the system of transportation. More fundamentally, it was obligatory in the prevailing conditions of enforced labour, the possible ugliness and evil of which a number of writers were willing to admit gave rise to embittered outlaws.

As mentioned, it is from Adventures of a Guardsman that we learn much about the troopers. The kind of life Cozens is describing and responding to pertains to outlying regions; he was one of the 'mounted border police, designed for the protection of those squatters situated in remote and dangerous districts...' (p.122). The narrator alludes to the despotism of landowners and authorities. In Settlers and Convicts the more outspoken Harris offers trenchant criticism of many aspects of law-enforcement and of the attitudes of police and settlers towards enforced labour. But to these accounts we are indebted for small details concerning the troopers' life in the bush. Harris tells how they would arrive at a homestead at noon so as to take advantage of the meal there (p.121). The information is used effectively in The Emigrant Family. 'A great clatter of horses' hoofs was heard coming rapidly down the hill through the bush' and the police magistrate Hurley arrives unexpectedly at 'the Rocky Springs' at that hour. In an episode which is revealing of the colonial social structure he is invited into the home while his men are entertained at the huts (Vol.I, Ch.5). Permitting the meeting of Hurley and the two young women of the house, the incident generates interest in character, and in romance. Additionally,

it gives embodiment to the alliance of the law and the landowner, although in more pleasing fashion than the author asserted in Settlers and Convicts was often the case.

Even though Harris strongly denounces the arbitrary behaviour of various troopers and free settlers in his autobiographical narrative, it was necessary to treat such libellous matter with caution in a romantic novel. Thus he follows Rowcroft who, while referring to ill-treatment of assigned convicts in Tales of the Colonies, is careful not to connect culpable behaviour with chief locations or the characters there. But Harris fleshes out the subject and for a time brings to the centre of attention a locale which is at the story's periphery. In The Emigrant Family, the treatment of the men at 'the Rocky Springs' is beyond reproach; however, the situation at Mercer's establishment forms the telling incident already referred to. When he hears a captured bushranger's account of his treatment at the outlying property Hurley and his men ride there to investigate. All the magistrate can do is to convey a warning. Clearly, subject matter which interests him is turned to good use in Harris's novel, but here he touches on a question which cannot easily be answered. Who is to police civilized society when its more dubious representatives have become established at civilization's outskirts? It is a radical perception but a matter which authors chose to ignore.

What is more likely is that the creative writer metaphorically unites troopers and settlers who ride out to rid the land of outsiders who are antagonistic to a settled way of life. Disturbing today are Crab's recollections concerning 'sweeping expeditions' against 'the natives' in Tales of the Colonies (p.531). Yet, given the context of the times, the alliance of the two forces to combat danger must have been considered a positive factor in Rowcroft's work, and in a number which followed. In such an episode, for example, Kingsley had colonists and troopers mount an expedition-

ary force to rout Touan and his gang. It is evident that action of this kind forms one of those exploits with which these narratives abound; it is material counterposed to the domestic concerns which typically colour them. Thus, romance elements are foregrounded: confusion and discord ultimately giving way to stability and peace.

I come next to the idea that, with a few exceptions, authors did not see fit to round out the characters of the troopers or to make them central to their texts. One notable exception is George Flower, the crafty chief of police in The Forger's Wife. Lang has him chide settlers in the region of Bathurst: '"You can club up to get rid of the blacks when they spear your cattle, or steal your sheep. Why can't you capture your own bush-rangers?"' (p.113). Then there is Captain Desborough in Geoffry Hamlyn. He is a character of some substance and an outsider who is welcomed at the major locations here. My contention is that in this relatively unsophisticated body of fiction the novelist chose the simplest ploy, that of depicting, on one hand, the settlers and on the other, their foremost antagonists — bushrangers. It is intelligible that a stronger portrayal of any interposed figure would have detracted from the dialectic inherent in that straight-forward design.

Aborigines

The bushranger could take the role of stock villain in these colonial novels; but the attempt to portray the indigenes involved more complex issues — those examined in Ch.I. One could speculate that except by report few could have had insight into the Aborigines' appearance, dress, customs, or language and it is perhaps for this reason that it was easier to picture these people as elusive figures — a point which, to a large extent, may have been close to the truth. For many novelists, however, Aborigines posed danger by their very presence. This provided subject matter of interest and dramatic value; it was a source of suspense. In numerous works, therefore, the Aboriginal attacked shepherds and stole

stock. More specifically, and closer to the subject of this chapter, in The Emigrant Family, Lights and Shadows, The Australian Emigrant, Tallangetta, Wild Adventures in Australia, The Captive of Gipps Land and in Geoffry Hamlyn Aborigines were introduced as marauders who attacked settlers' dwellings and sometimes killed the occupants. Such an incident could become a lively prose passage as in Clacy's 'Mikka', or it could be related as an interpolated tale, as in the story of the Donovans' station in Geoffry Hamlyn.

Certainly, the majority saw the native people as alien to the homestead and the homestead way of life, and the counterpointing of the two cultures was integral to many works. Perhaps Tales of the Colonies with its fierce tribesmen served to perpetuate the idea, although, as Argyle has observed, Rowcroft's 'range of sympathies is greater than that of his main characters'.[17] Whatever the reasons — and one surmises that they may relate both to contemporary realities as well as to textual and dramatic needs — the Aboriginal embodied one aspect of the hazardous nature of frontier life. They were romantic, colourful, and often savage beings whom British culture could only hope, given time, to civilize.

With care, though, Aborigines could be brought into the domestic sphere and, most appropriately, in the artless figure of a child. Porter recognized this and along with ethical concerns which allowed for the moral education of Mickie, provided humour and pathos in the boy's language and quaint ways. Mickie could be entrusted with numerous tasks (although the fastidious author draws a line in this respect) and his loyalty to the Dudley family is never in doubt. Eminently suited to a juvenile audience, such an attitude throws a benign light over the circumstances of establishing the Empire. Also, it generates sympathy for Mickie and for his benefactors at 'Dudley Park'. Above all, the story proposes the peaceful co-operation

17. Argyle 37.

possible between the two peoples. Today's viewpoint would castigate Porter for portraying Mickie as a figure of fun and it must be admitted that condescension towards indigenous people — characteristic of the period and present here — is observable in numerous other works.

Typical of the convention described above is the child adopted into white society in The Kangaroo Hunters. The aim is to turn the child into 'a little English girl in all but complexion' by educating her at the 'Daisy Grange' settlement (p.440). As early as 1841 Barton, in A Mother's Offering to Her Children, refers to the attempt to take a half-caste child into a European home (pp.197-294). A similar attempt is made in Clacy's tale 'Mikka', and with a tragic outcome.

Clacy's establishing scene is an appealing one: 'Mr. Allingford's newly built station nestled snugly among the bush and trees. It was a pretty building, though very simple...' (Vol.II,p.1). To cut short this pastoral felicity Aborigines appear; they menace the woman of the house and her little daughter and are driven off only when the menfolk return. A further and more violent attack occurs. Clacy expresses the opinion that the tribesmen are 'revengeful, cunning, treacherous, and cruel' (p.15). However, when an Aboriginal baby is found Mrs. Allingford decides to raise the child as her own. Many years later the tribe kidnaps the girl, Mikka, and she is eventually killed when attempting to save a young settler to whom she is attracted. He, too, perishes and the two are buried side by side in the bush where English flowers are grown on one grave, native ones on the other. The reader is not permitted to forget the disparity in the relationship and although the symbolic use of flowers is pleasing here, readers could not have been unaware of the exalted status given European species in this body of fiction and, it seems clear, in actuality.

Several of the conventions favoured by contemporary writers are formulated here and among them are the image of the pretty, secluded homestead

in the bush, the vulnerability of the occupants, above all, the women, and the attack by ruthless outsiders. Much more rare is the allusion to the possibility of miscegenation and, interestingly, the use of a fictional formula which subverts the notion by means of the story's denouement. Thus a social problem, almost unthinkable in this period, is contemplated for a while, then is simply solved in terms of plot. But considerable attention is given textually to the relationship between the two races, and more particularly in Ch.II where Clacy simply moves aside from her narrative. Like a number of other creative writers she alludes to the grievances and excesses on both sides; as with a small minority she refers to the less than civilized behaviour of certain settlers. A major theme here is the question of a closer relationship between Aborigines and Europeans. It is embodied in the person of Mikka. Yet the folly of such an idea seems to be proposed in the story frame since attempts at integration cannot be supported at the cost of domestic happiness and stability. In this regard it is notable that the Allingford's daughter, Sophie, also abducted by the tribe, survives the ordeal and, to conclude the romantic tale, marries a young English emigrant, one who has proved his manhood and is ready to become a colonist. They settle on a nearby station and raise a family.

Harris had been the first to effect an imaginative but realistic portrayal of an Aboriginal who is closely associated with a European dwelling and shares its ways. That Harris was well aware of the problems of both races in their vexed relationship is apparent in Settlers and Convicts, especially in Chs.XIX-XXI, but the material is treated with discretion in his romance. In The Emigrant Family Tommy is relied upon as a stockman and attendant on this notion is the recognition of the bond existing between the two races in the pioneering of the land. Tommy, like the Aboriginal lad in Ch.XL of Geoffry Hamlyn, plays an important role as a messenger in the working out of the plot. Atkinson, similarly, illustrates racial cooperation in Gertrude where she portrays a trusted stockman. Dorothy Jones

has made the point that the 'theme of the faithful native servant' was to become frequently employed in the Australian novel.[18] There is the inherent possibility in such a convention, however, that a patronizing attitude will be adopted by both author and reader.

It is Atkinson who delineates this collaboration as an inherent aspect of station life most successfully, and she achieves it in a two-fold fashion. Like Porter, Harris and Clacy, she responds to the subject by focussing on the general situation, and on a given character. Harris had depicted the wild tribesmen who attacked 'the Rocky Springs' and also those accustomed to European ways. But in Gertrude Aboriginal camps are shown to exist alongside homestead locations and in terms of peaceful co-operation. Such a concept had been proposed in the idealized conclusions of Alfred Dudley and The Kangaroo Hunters, but Atkinson can imagine it as an extant and viable affair. She proposes that a level of responsibility is attainable at both the homestead and the campsite and demonstrates how the two peoples have adapted to their new social environment. (At a settlement far inland in her later work, Cowanda, the author pictures the converse of this happy situation.) As will be recounted in Ch.IX, the degree of trust which can be established is communicated to us through the incident of the lost child at 'Markarld Park'. By degrees a new culture is shown to evolve and as pictured in Gertrude it is identifiably Australian. The subject was slow to emerge in iconography and one of the few to illustrate the domestic bond between the two races was Robert Dowling who completed several paintings on the subject in the 1850s.[19]

18. Jones 38.

19. For a well-researched article on Dowling and his paintings see John Jones, 'Robert Dowling's Visit to the Western District of Victoria in 1856', Art and Australia 25.2 (1987): 202-5. See also Bonyhady passim. Dowling's picture Minjah in the Old Time (1856) is reproduced (incorrectly dated) in Smith, Place, Taste and Tradition 71. For a further article on the subject see Ron Radford, 'Australia's Forgotten Painters: South Australian Colonial Painting 1836-1880'. Part Two, 1850-1880, Art and Australia 25.1 (1987): 92-9.

More specifically, Atkinson focusses upon the spirit of collaboration through particular examples. In bringing Aboriginal people to 'Murrumbowrie' the author is able to show that Gertrude overcomes her initial fear of them; moreover, the subject matter is interesting material against which to project the heroine's enquiring mind and sense of compassion. Later, a native woman, Nanny, is introduced into the station homestead not as an outsider, but as a cook. The author is no doubt aware of the elusive nature of the Aborigines because after a while 'Nanny returned to the camp, quite tired of civilization, and conventionalities for the time' (p.76). Even so, it is typical of this writer's overall design that members of the household should have comprised representative womenfolk of the period. There is Mrs. Doherty, an emancipist, Gertrude, an emigrant, Kitty, a native-born Australian, and the Aboriginal woman. With regard to Nanny, there is little attempt to enter into her consciousness. However, her people are endowed with dignity, briefly, but in a manner seldom achieved in this body of fiction. That being said, Aborigines are at the base of the social hierarchy of the homestead and even Atkinson is not without a shade of condescension in her attitude towards them.

But here an additional point should be made. Although Atkinson gives voice to dissenting opinions, a general acceptance of the indigenous people is apparent at her homestead locations, and such a factor is suggestive of the integration of colonists into their surroundings. In Ch.VII of Gertrude, notice is drawn to the strong 'tie of nationality' which exists between native-born Australians and Aborigines. The author is one of the former and in reading her book one is aware that the text is redolent of such a bond.

In his Introduction to Literature and the Aborigine in Australia Healy states: 'The subject of this book deals with the efforts of white Australian writers to come to grips with the Aborigine'. One can only

wonder why this important study ignores the work of Atkinson. In Gertrude we recall a symbolic co-operation of the two races and, when compared with any other novel in this period, the more benign depiction of this aspect of bush culture. Atkinson's achievement should not be over-estimated, but one is bemused by Healy's argument regarding early Australian prose fiction and his superficial judgement that 'the whole output was void of seriousness' (p.26). That Atkinson is accepting of Aborigines is a measure of her acknowledgement of the possibilities of social cohesion and her complete acceptance of the indigenous people. In Gertrude is caught the mental attitude of an observer who is not an expatriate, and for this reason the work deserves earnest consideration.

As characters in these narratives the Aborigines' role is minimal; they are seldom associated with a European dwelling. However — and for reasons outlined in Ch.II — there is another and more pertinent sense in which a strong relationship is shown to exist: it is found in the nomenclature of these homesteads. So, while the indigenous people remain at the margins of these texts, it is paradoxically true that native names proliferate. One senses that the vexed question of the Aborigines, alien to the imaginative centre of these novels, was one to which creative writers did not wholly address themselves. Certainly, the worst aspects of European racism have been evaded here.

The function of this chapter has been to concentrate on those characters I have termed outsiders. It has become evident that their presence could draw attention to one of the most pleasing elements of colonial life. An appealing colonial custom had been appropriated to become an appealing literary theme. Hospitality was an inherent component of rural existence. It was as if the country itself — in both its singularity and its abundance — was conducive to such a spirit.

Often an alternative strategy was adopted. Outsiders' threats and hostility served to point up the domestic dwelling's vulnerability. This provides impetus to the plot in the form of a countertheme: one which posits drama, suspense and, even occasionally, tragedy. With the introduction of such hazards, likely in a colonial setting and an inherent component of the romance, a sense of balance is maintained. But if the theme of hospitality added status to a dwelling and stature to its inhabitants then this countertheme works to the same end because in the face of danger these imagined householders display resourcefulness and courage. Both, therefore, serve to enhance the homestead and the values for which it stood. Rowcroft's Tales of the Colonies was influential in foreshadowing the lawless convict-bushranger and the savage tribesman, and both these figures were taken up with enthusiasm. Because both were a potential threat to settled existence, the bushranger and the Aboriginal are linked: an outward and visible sign of a disruptive element in the land. That was a more easily discerned and vigorous manifestation of danger than the problematical nature of the environment itself.

Bushrangers draw attention to a cleavage in society. Their presence threatens not only the homestead but civilization itself, since bushranging is one aspect of the 'barbarism' which Clark has seen as prevailing in the hinterland of New South Wales until beyond the mid-century.[20] Nowhere is disruption so flagrant — or the code of hospitality so violated — than when a dwelling is forcibly entered and its homely rituals cut short. This was abhorrent and bushrangers became the stock villains of these narratives. And for practical, dramatic and ethical reasons they cannot triumph. The earnestness with which this is conveyed is revealing of contemporary assumptions and expectations. In the contrast and comparison of these two modes of existence novelists stressed the close connection between the land-

20. Clark III: 170 and passim.

owner and the law. Enlightened self-interest coupled with civic responsibility, concepts popular in the Victorian epoch, underscore these texts.

The fact that Aborigines as characters are largely absent is also a telling comment about these books and their background. However, absence as much as presence facilitates the emergence of an element both mysterious and unknown — a feature which by convention forms an aspect of the romance. There was some attempt to propose integration of the two peoples. However, because they drew on actual conflict and because they saw the indigenous people as alien to European culture, creative writers tended to envisage them as a threat to civilized settlement. In their alterity Aborigines are most frequently seen as outsiders in every sense.

With the introduction of a range of newcomers the concepts underlying these narratives are redefined; and in consequence re-emphasized. Theme and countertheme referred to here are enlisted to advance readers' perceptions of bush life and work to generate sympathy for the settlers by demonstrating their special attributes. Again, whereas all this tends to add to the notion of the homestead as isolated, that factor is countered by a powerful sense of community. One manifestation of this to emerge and having strong mythic connotations relates to the social ethos of the hinterland: in hospitality civic awareness is shown to take form in action. Finally, it has become apparent that in the working of theme and countertheme domestic concerns and those of an epic or heroic nature are consistently linked. That the latter are ultimately subordinated to the former is indicative of a particular attitude of mind. To give weight to all these interests and concerns authors fixed on the character of the outsider. It would seem that the theme of journeying was employed similarly.

CH. IX

JOURNEYING

> ...and the hurried journey was performed with all of the despatch which the rough roads in the interior admitted of. Some days had, however, passed before he hung his horse's bridle upon the post in front of Mr. Osman's residence....
>
> (Cowanda, p.18)

The immensity of the great tract of land that was the hinterland of Australia could be asserted in a number of ways. It was the pervasive theme behind a host of narratives and served to throw especial emphasis on the community of settlers established there. Given the repeated and sustained belief that the country was a wilderness the impulse towards the communal must have been overwhelming, and this is intimated in the fact that the novelist chose to demonstrate in a forceful fashion a collective spirit of this kind. Inevitably, the notion of a community envisages bonds of a social, cultural, economic, and political order; it posits links and ties which go well beyond immediate surroundings and circumstances. Given the terrain and the conditions, there is the likelihood that the self-sufficiency proposed in the idea of the homestead, using the term now in its widest sense, was to be expected. Yet if this were possible it was surely not to be desired. The wish of those in the bush, whether in a smaller or a larger establishment, to communicate with others of their kind must have been very strong. That contention assumes lines of communication: between homestead and homestead; between such a site and rural or coastal settlements or towns; and ultimately again between the homestead and the distant motherland.

Movement is proposed here, that is to say, journeying, and in the hinterland this meant either by foot or on horseback, or by means of a suitable conveyance. Thus in large measure, and especially with regard to the initial period under consideration here, travelling in the southern hemisphere differed little from travel in Europe. But if the mode of journeying did not greatly differ from that in the homeland, then the distances

and the circumstances were altogether more extreme. Communication in the Antipodes, writers impressed upon their readers, was an altogether more hazardous affair. It might involve situations unimagined in civilized lands. Of considerable importance to the creative writer was the fact that by such means questions relating to civilization and wilderness could be addressed more searchingly. At this stage, therefore, I wish to consider the pattern of movement to be discerned in these texts and to examine how such material has been seized upon to project and reinforce the theme of the vastness of the land and, a fitting corollary, the European impulse towards a pastoral livelihood and domestic concerns. Here the conjunction of civilization and the wilderness, the confrontation being envisaged in this instance at close quarters, is given a strongly visual form.

In Ch.I, I stated that the writers under consideration here attached importance to travelling or journeying in their fictions. It was with good reason. Naturally, it added momentum, giving a forward thrust to the work, but above all, it enabled the writer to define the changing landscape in terms of European consciousness. Of marked interest for my study are references to the wilderness and to the wilds — the two words most commonly employed in descriptions of the Australian countryside. But there exist, in addition, numerous allusions to the 'untrodden' nature of the terrain and to its 'tracklessness'. The great majority of Europeans at this time did not regard the Aborigines in the same way as their fellow Europeans, as I have demonstrated. And in one particular respect this was understandable. The dwellings of the Aboriginal were not permanent; they could not be envisaged as habitation in the same sense as that of the settlers. Again, the country's indigenes needed no roadways and left no apparent indication — at least to the Europeans — of having moved through the land. And since to the European mind, the house was a symbol of civilized existence, then roads or pathways too were representative structures — a part of the sustaining framework of a civilized community. Paradox-

ically, then, the absence of the latter was an outward, visible sign that the country was a wilderness. The lack of agriculture was viewed similarly, as I explained much earlier.

In Tales of the Colonies, Thornley becomes lost in the 'wild and untrodden bush' (p.191). McCombie has Arabin come to accept 'the wild, lonely grandeur of the untrodden wilderness' (p.205). Others later wrote in the same vein.[1] Purported exploits shape Adventures of a Guardsman, and here fear is expressed, not so much of the Aborigines, but of 'losing your way in such trackless regions, where the features of the surrounding countryside bear such a similitude' (p.162). Again, the 'immense trackless forests and hills' are part of that great vista which forms the background to A Boy's Adventures (p.262).[2] The few quotations chosen are simply representative; they catch the spirit of the age.

Expressions of this kind are suggestive to me of more than mere examples of hackneyed mid-century thought in regard to the little-known land. That they may be, yet it is almost impossible today to know the depth of perception from which such comment derives. At the same time these phases do reflect beyond doubt considerable apprehension regarding the environment. Such a factor, I have maintained, can be widely observed in the literature of the period. Employing this mode of expression, creative writers moved a range of characters through the 'untrodden wilderness' or the 'trackless wilds' to take up land in the Australian back country, the pattern providing narrative structure even if only initially. Stated quite briefly, or in greater detail, it can be seen in Alfred Dudley, Tales of the Colonies, The Emigrant Family, The Emigrant, The Australian Emigrant, Geoffry Hamlyn, A Boy's Adventures, and Tallangetta. Some of the shorter stories also are based upon such a form.

1. See, for example, Lights and Shadows II:44, The Forger's Wife 83, Botany Bay 76, Tallangetta I:50, and The Kangaroo Hunters 37, 230.
2. See, too, The Australian Emigrant 78, The Queen of the South 14, The Captive of Gipps Land 70, Cowanda 31, and Wolfingham 51.

Conventionally, a journey may serve to chart an individual's progress towards a particular end in both a physical and a spiritual sense. It is an ancient and celebrated literary metaphor. Less beholden to the metaphysical, however, and more taken up with communal rather than individual concerns, the author of the colonial novel adopted a pragmatic approach, this being more closely relevant to contemporary circumstances, one would assume. The journey served to order material and structure plot; it gave works vitality, made them interesting and readable. It could simply become a framework for innumerable adventures, as in the picaresque mode. In the Antipodes the journey was especially useful for making known a character's perceptions regarding the landscape, and it was a means by which the society of the times could be surveyed or assessed. Tapping into the contemporary preoccupation with colonization and emigration, authors were able to provide a strongly positive element in this way. As an ancient literary theme the journey was often associated with the notion of the quest. Here the quest might be for property, for a livelihood and for happiness in the 'land of opportunity', as Australia came to be called. In this body of literature journey and quest took on aspects both local and universal, and the theme was revivified in its new context. My interest now lies in the idea of journeying and the use novelists made of such movement within their narratives.

Further on the motif of the long ride will be examined. It is one variously employed and acknowledges the land's extent while at the same time touching upon aspects of the relationship between colonists and their environment. Such ideas in turn give rise to a larger and more weighty theme, that of being lost in the bush. It is encountered increasingly. While the notion of the long ride celebrates the European's triumph over pioneering contingencies, the theme of being lost adds dramatic tension and occasionally tragedy to these prose narratives.

It has become evident that colonial writers felt the need to address

themselves to the problem of distance. Of all the conditions it was this, arguably, which so differentiated existence in Australia — or more particularly the hinterland — from that of the mother country. The subject gave rise to thematic concerns; it made for interesting local colour. As we saw in Ch.I, the vastness and apparent boundlessness of great tracts of land struck the newcomers forcibly. In addition, the sombreness and seeming monotony of the vegetation produced a sense of desolation and made for feelings of melancholy. Of what immense significance then was the appearance of a road or a track or a pathway. The novelist unerringly recognized the value of this manifestation of a European presence in landscape so imagined. Along with habitation of European appearance, mention of this evidence of human movement through the bushland gives focus to the dialectic of civilization and wilderness.

'Confined as we now are to a developed road system, we find it difficult to visualize the first travellers' freedom — within their purpose and logic — to go where they wished'. So writes Denholm in a chapter entitled 'People Travelling' in The Colonial Australians (p.93). He continues: 'Subject to local problems of mountain and swamp, to wish was to go'. Such statements are later modified, however, with the observation that 'men and animals must drink, or die' (p.96). This truism aside, the extent of the setting and the mobility possible within it must have been of great appeal to the creative writer. Besides those works set within the framework of the trek to take up land, there are innumerable instances of journeying in the earlier colonial novel.

The final part of Quintus Servinton is set in Sydney. Although they are not carried out, orders are received for the 'removal' of the chief character 'into the interior' (p.354). One can argue that there is something ominous in these words. If so, it surely arises from the apprehension with which isolated settlements were then regarded and the extreme

difficulty of returning from them unless a free settler. Dating from the same time, One False Step sees its protagonist 'sent into the interior of the country' (p.89). In fact, Hermsdill, as I earlier noted, is bound for — and bound to — the farm of Mr. Bronde and he must travel on foot. In a scene already examined, we share with the newcomer the welcome appearance of habitation, situated as it is, in the middle of an immense plain.

Denholm has rightly pointed out that at first only the more privileged travelled by horse; lesser individuals were forced to cover long distances on foot in the main. It is perhaps unnecessary to make the observation that the characters around which the colonial novel centred were most often those with the privileges of the former class. One exception is another traveller also assigned to a farm — Ralph Rashleigh. On foot too is the convict Lynch, the main character of the subplot in Bengala. Denied his ticket-of-leave, Lynch quits 'Langville', his place of employment, and strikes out across the country alone. His position is in sharp contrast to that of the foremost characters, rural gentry, who are shown to enjoy fine horses and carriages, making the difference between these people and their servants a telling one. Avoiding settled areas and passing through wild country Lynch is 'forced to look about him, and not lose sight of fences or other marks of civilization' (Vol.II,p.108). But in these circumstances civilization is shown to be divided, so that the network of communication which is taken for granted by landowners is parallelled by that devised by the lower orders. Thus Lynch follows signs, such as a white rag on a bush, part of a system less obvious to those in the upper echelons of society but recognized with ease by their servants.

This desperate movement on foot through bushland, avoiding the settled, domestic and law-abiding world of the homestead, is seen in Wolfingham, which also depicts two sides of colonial society. Having escaped in the Shoalhaven district, Wolfingham moves 'further and further into the interior of

the country' (p.40). Cut off from civilization in the 'trackless bush', the convict finds himself alone 'in the wild, vast solitude, helpless, starving, and lost' (p.46). Being lost, in physical terms, had by now become a popular feature of the colonial novel; more uncommonly for the period Wolfingham has lost his way in a spiritual sense. Later, the darkness by night is compared with the man's'bitter darkness of spirit' (p.60). Civilization eventually comes to his aid at a 'rough little farm'. Located in this incident is the Christian charity which with much earnestness the author promotes but which for some years, in this tale, his creator has Wolfingham eschew. He takes up bushranging, moving through the country on horseback now and avoiding ways frequented by colonists except when he wishes to rob them. It is only on his deathbed that the convict-settler sees the heavenly path before him. He dies a believer. Employing Christian imagery, the unknown author has contrived a work rich in symbolism, and while didactic aims are only too apparent, some aspects of a colonial existence have been well caught. One of these is the intimidating nature of the bush and in consequence the plight of those who may have no known way to follow. Without a horse their plight is desperate.

In colonial times a number of people passed through the country on horseback, but in the period with which I am concerned they were in a minority.[3] And it tells us much about these texts that, in the landscapes they created, authors overwhelmingly preferred their heroes and heroines mounted. Above all, it saved placing them in such close proximity to the bush, as was the situation with those characters referred to above. This might mean admitting the real power of the land, with its climatic and environmental variations and extremes, as well as the vulnerability, both physical and mental, of those who traversed it. This was possible upon occasion, as

3. See the interesting argument put forward by Denholm Ch.6.

will soon become evident, but such matters did not need to be over-emphasized.

Thus, in rendering the confrontation which is so marked in the works — that between Europeans and the wilderness — the former's insecurity and vulnerability can be mitigated by placing them on horseback. This is convenient and credible and helps to speed up events in the narrative; moreover, it provides a popular element of the romance. For Frye, such a factor helps 'form a ritualized action expressing the ascendancy of a horse-riding aristocracy'.[4] The chief characters in these works, then, belong to an exclusive minority, generally speaking, although it must be admitted that others, and in particular bushrangers, are also placed on horseback. Such circumstances, beyond doubt, mirror contemporary reality. Here, however, another fictional formula is seen to emerge. As representatives of a dominant and seemingly culturally superior race it is fitting that major characters, and minor ones also, should be so elevated. Equality of race is not to be countenanced in the prose fiction dating from this era and one of a number of solutions to any such question is to fix upon an image that impinges upon the consciousness of the reader both at a textual level, and subliminally speaking. The symbolic figure of horse and rider, like the symbol of the European dwelling-place, has particular significance in these novels. Aborigines seldom appear on horseback.

To sum up at this point: just as the leading characters are provided with seemingly substantial homesteads within the framework of these narratives, so are they equipped for their innumerable journeys through the bush. They are, after all, of the class of the landed gentry. Yet here an interesting fact emerges. If we take Denholm's figures as accurate, then the percentage of settlers who travelled on horseback was small. In actuality a large majority, one suspects, not only walked or later used a public con-

4. Frye, The Secular Scripture 57.

veyance but, it is probable, did not move far from their places of habitation at all. Facts of this kind had to be ignored; instead, in the forefront are colonists advantaged in a number of ways, and all these pleasing to readers and to would-be emigrants. Indeed, a fictional formula of the type I have been alluding to allows the creative writer to move characters freely along colonial roads or through the configurations of the Australian landscape. Let me consider now the roads themselves; then those who travelled on them, remembering (and this will be dealt with presently) that while some journeyed along roads, others were to journey in between them. Elsewhere the remoteness of certain regions is revealed in the fact that no such communicating links existed at all.

The actual state of roads engaged the thoughts of numerous contemporary writers.[5] But I will be drawing attention to the creative writer's point of view. It is plain that roads did not pass far inland and the resulting isolation of diverse areas was a matter that aroused curiosity. One to mention the subject was Vaux in his _Memoirs_, published in 1819. He travels as one of a group from Parramatta to Hawkesbury because the roads are threatened by 'natives' (p.99). In this instance the outlandish and savage nature of the country where Vaux is employed is stressed. Again, a journey inland by coach from Sydney in the 1840s is described by the storyteller and chief character of _Frank Kennedy_. The conditions deteriorate as the coach progresses: 'I had travelled on many roads before, but I had never witnessed anything equal to what I now encountered' (p.5). Besides humour at the wayfarer's expense, the passage serves to inform the reader of colonial conditions. An incident with a bushranger completes the episode after which as Kennedy explains:

> I obtained a horse, and after riding about ten miles through a beautiful country, I arrived at my destination, where I was most hospitably received. (p.9)

5. Amongst those who recounted their travels at this time are Baxter, Cozens, Gerstaecker (vols.II,III), Leigh, Meredith, Mossman and Banister, and Rowe.

Travelling in the Antipodes is shown to have its compensations, and the example above is representative of many.

Nor was it always necessary to travel by road, as two of the earliest novelists chose to demonstrate. In A Love Story the English messenger must go along the Hunter's River by steamboat before making his way inland. Accordingly, the nature of the journey and its length help establish the secluded nature of Delmé's home. This was also the route chosen by Porter who has the Dudley family travel to their land by waterway. Christie, however, has had the advantage of living in New South Wales and his descriptive passages at this stage are interesting. He has the imagination, too, to suggest that the surroundings form a 'rich and novel landscape' to the newcomer. Christie moves him 'through cleared lands, studded with rich farms, waving with luxuriant crops of wheat and rye; and again, through regions where the axe had never resounded...' (Vol.II,p.238). Here, we are at the furthermost reaches of settlement; marginal lands are being depicted. At this point civilization gives way to the wilderness, and there is still far to go to reach Delmé's habitation. Clearly no roads are present, and one is reminded in the final words of a factor raised in Ch.I: the tacit recognition of the noise and violence entailed in the European expansion into the country's quiet interior.

As he was widely travelled in New South Wales, Harris's observations in Settlers and Convicts on both roads and bush tracks and the incidents along them make for interesting reading. In the next decade the author of Rebel Convicts follows literary convention in having one of his characters journey into the interior. The latter is associated with 'the first pathway' here, so that in following it 'thousands might reach with safety a new home' (p.88). Such phrases are scarcely memorable today, although the intent is plain. This is a wishfulfilment world, rather than one observed with attention to detail. How pleasing it is to turn to the former writer's

recollections of the cutting made through timbered regions of New South Wales in preparation for roadmaking (p.179). His description of the 'vast avenues' running through a great forest is one that is drawn upon for the more obviously fictive world of The Emigrant Family.

The pace of that celebrated ride by Reuban Kable to 'the Rocky Springs' is caught in the following passage:

> For many miles of the first stages, the roads were sound and good, and the Australian's pace was rapid. Liverpool was speedily reached — the Cow-pasture River crossed — huge Razorback Mountain climbed and descended — Stonequarry passed — and those great far-stretching level avenues that axe and fire have carried through the dense and lonely wildernesses of Bargo, onward to the neat road-side inn, were traversed right up to its well-known door. Here Reuben got a hurried snack, a light of the pipe, and a fresh horse: for only sixty miles were yet travelled. (p.367)

Here, too, attention is drawn to the needs of the European and to the disturbance that this occasions. Violence of movement is located in the presence of horse and rider; in the speed of the journey. Other movement is taking place simultaneously in this chapter since Beck's gang are also riding through the bush. However, the difference is that they must avoid roads and civilized settlements, although their aim also is to reach the home station of the Bractons. As Harris explains: 'Their motives were diametrically opposite, and their movements correspondently different'. It is a notable feature of works having to do with these outlaws, as The Bushranger, Ralph Rashleigh, Floss, The Forger's Wife and Wolfingham, that attention is drawn to this antithetical, and apt, mode of travel. Thus actually and figuratively speaking, the ways of these two factions are shown to be at variance. In the catalogue of names above, Harris at this point re-emphasizes with some economy the immensity of the country; in the feat of horsemanship he puts stress on the largeness of spirit of a representative colonist — one who is native-born. Here roads are present and the rider is able to avail himself of them, but his creator structures the work throughout to show that Kable is well able to find his way through

the bushland whatever the circumstances.

It does seem apparent, in fact, that creative writers found that greater possibilities existed in setting events against a landscape devoid of such signs of communication. Two of these, described as 'stay-at-home Englishwomen' by Brenda Niall, chose to depict European newcomers as enterprising in the extreme. The 'powers of endurance, observation and adaptability' take Lee's Captain John Spencer from west to east right across the continent, as Niall has observed of Adventures in Australia.[6] Having achieved a similar feat Bowman's party of travellers in The Kangaroo Hunters are welcomed at 'Daisy Grange'.

The terrain chosen by the less prolix is correspondingly more modest yet it still served to provide situations which tested the capabilities of those journeying. This could be done in a number of different ways. A broad sweep of country in south-eastern Australia forms the background to the works of Howitt, and at the moment I would like to consider A Boy's Adventures. In one instance two young stockmen who are searching for a missing bullock lose their way in the bush. Coming to an old dray track they rightly discern the direction which will take them to habitation. What can be perceived here is that unlike those characters favoured with all the attributes necessary for existence in the bush (a number of whom are to be seen in the celebrated and substantial romances Geoffry Hamlyn and Tallangetta) the two young settlers to Howitt's unpretentious tale manage well through commonsense, perseverance and good fortune.

I come next to the idea that despite one's capabilities or bushcraft one may still need a guide when distanced from homestead or town. Such a figure could act as a foil for the central character; again, a situation

6. Niall 28-9.

of this kind could be fixed on to divulge certain information or provide a different point of view. In all these respects, and with the addition of humour, fine use was made of Crab in Tales of the Colonies. Although a less sophisticated response is in evidence, Alfred Dudley was provided with a faithful guide in the person of Mickie when away from 'Dudley Park'. In order to reach an outlying station Arabin in McCombie's book follows initially an 'old cart track' (p.16). But given the conditions the traveller has not the skill to complete the journey unaided and so must rely on guidance from the convict underside of colonial society. The strategies adopted by these authors demonstrate the value of this compositional device.

The converse of such incidents is found in Cowanda. What mainly differentiates this episode from the ones above is that the journey is undertaken by those accustomed to the physical conditions and accepting of their surroundings. Gilbert Calder, a young man making for a 'far-off cattle station' where he is to work, is pictured riding across open country in central New South Wales:

> Vast and almost treeless on every side spread the plains, dotted over by herds of cattle, and here and there broken by slight elevations. A vapour, crimsoned by the setting sun, engirdled the prospect, and, like a mirage, assumed forms perplexing to the eyes of the travellers. By the deep creek communicating with the river grew pine and myall trees. An emu with rapid strides passing them, or a kangaroo bounding along in the distance, stirred up the Nimrod propensities of the youth, but, like his steed, he was weary. (p.9)

As with that ride which is the subject of the epigraph above, this also is concluded in safety. On the long trek, however, Calder is sensibly provided with a guide; many such characters are attributed with skills which enable them to pass over vast distances unaided. It is part of Atkinson's common-sense approach too that riders may become weary in such circumstances. Much of the appeal of Atkinson's prose lies in her short descriptive passages. Here she does not avoid common-place antipodean colouring; but on the other hand nor does she find it necessary to have her travellers lost along the way.

A surprise ending here illustrates the dichotomy between the comfort and civilized values which Atkinson attaches to 'Cowanda' and those shown to exist further inland, on the extreme edges of settlement. There, isolation has given rise to rough living conditions, danger and mental tension. With youthful dreams Calder has looked forward to an 'unfettered station life' but in events which depict enmity between the Aborigines and Europeans the author briefly explores the difference between the kind of liberty envisaged by Calder and that which has degenerated into licence.

By different means these examples help formulate for the reader the attributes needed in people who have left the security of settled areas. All such situations hold one's interest and are plainly devised to give point to the traveller's courage, persistence, or bushcraft; or to make conspicuous the unfortunate absence of those qualities. Aspects of the romance tradition are in evidence here. Yet for the reader familiar with its European manifestations and conventional imagery there must have been novelty in the setting, and in events which foregrounded specific aspects of colonial life. From a literary viewpoint the customary threat was from Aborigines, bushrangers, or bushfire. Yet hazards arising from the nature of the country itself engaged the mind of the contemporary writer above all. We can say that the isolation of dwellings in what was consistently perceived to be a wilderness was an issue that caught the imagination from the beginning. Something of this I conveyed in Ch.I. Isolation forms a <u>leit-motif</u> in these narratives if only because authors overwhelmingly resisted urban settings for their novels. From the number of examples already advanced it is clear that there was a predeliction for word-pictures which stressed the sheer remoteness of the dwelling-place in the hinterland. How was such an idea conveyed, and what was its potential?

I have made the observation earlier that a plot structured around travelling and journeying allowed the changing perspective to be defined in terms of European consciousness. Firstly, by means of passages depicting scenery

and conditions, information about an area could be communicated. Its contours, both physical and metaphysical, could be conveyed. This subject matter was of significance in works set in a country unknown to the mass of readers. At the same time, descriptive passages concerning the destination's social milieu allowed it to be viewed more intelligibly. A few examples now must serve for many.

In Marian, a work whose structure depends much upon journeying, good use is made of roads in the South Australian countryside. To take one instance: we can both picture and ponder upon the nature of a dwelling which is reached along a 'beaten road' (p.18). Here a newcomer, Marian, is pictured riding through the bush between homesteads:

> Their way led them round the road; but the road was little more than a dray-track, on one side of which a continuation of hilly ranges abruptly rose, and on the other, scrub and wattles, and massive gums falling back from the wheel tracks for many a weary mile. (p.50)

What is brought to mind at this point is the revelation of the initial process of pioneering in such an area. The young people seen here are merely following in the pioneering tradition; in physical terms, too, they follow a path that has already been forced through bush country. Time may have elapsed but the area still appears isolated. In addition, Franc has managed to convey the impact of the apparent uniformity of the environment and the resulting tedium and sense of claustrophobia to which it gives rise. More importantly, perhaps, Franc gives voice to the differing perceptions between a newcomer and a colonist regarding distances (p.25).

Before proceeding, I must admit at this stage to choosing an example in which the concept of remoteness and inaccessibility differs markedly from that of today; in fact, more extreme illustrations of outlying regions are easily found elsewhere. 'Bullarook' in Tallangetta is one such example. This, however, is to anticipate a point to be made presently: that consid-

erations of remoteness must vary in degree from age to age.

I come next to the idea that habitation could be set in a symbolic landscape and endowed with mythic qualities; such is caught in the chief location in A Romance of the Bush. Ramsey asserts that Mr. Brentnall's station was 'far to the north ... in one of the remotest districts of the interior'. 'On one side stretched a vast plain, so broad that the eye could not measure its extent; and, on the other, immense forests...' (p.3). The fabulous and the wondrous are represented here: it is the landscape of romance tradition and a commonplace of the fairy tale. Such borrowings lend an element of mystery to the text, but cannot propose an antipodean landscape.

While that scene is isolated in a vague geographical sense, more clearly defined is 'Toonarbin' in Geoffry Hamlyn. Kingsley's well-crafted work allows him to state that the station

> lay so far back from the river, and so entirely on the road to nowhere, that Tom used to remark, that he would back it for being the worst station for news in the country. (p.389)

Though romance is inherent here, there is not the mystery registered in the example above; rather, like Kingsley's other stations, it has been located carefully and with attention to dramatic need. Moreover, its inaccessibility is viewed through the owner's eyes and is expressed colloquially so that as a location it gains credence in our own. Clearly, a symbolic landscape is not intended here. For all this, mythic qualities are attached to such notions of isolation and it becomes apparent that a romance tradition with Australian colouring is beginning to evolve.

In addition, such a quality may be assigned by drawing attention to a location's distance from civilization itself. In Tucker's work Rashleigh meets his death at the hands of Aborigines while working on a property far

to the north of Sydney. At this, his companion 'galloped off to the nearest station and returned as quickly as possible to the spot; but, the unhappy Ralph had long been dead...' (p.303). He is buried 'on the banks of the Barwon, far from his native land'. With this reference to the homeland the notion of distance takes on a richer and more complex dimension. One is reminded here of the kind of isolation which finds focus in a region's name — it is, in this instance, called New England.

Foremost in all the examples above is a sense of place. However, the remoteness of the principal setting may also be conveyed in temporal terms, and here we become immersed in colonial practicalities. To take a case in point: travelling on a 'lumbering bullock dray miles and miles up into the bush' two young emigrants and their guide take three days to reach Stanleys' Farm, their destination. This brief recreation of events forms part of 'Little Jacob''s 'Emigrating'. In addition, by means of a journey to take up land some indication of the inaccessibility of a region may be given. The matter may serve initially to structure the narrative. As shown earlier this is evident in the depiction of the trek inland devised by Rowcroft in his Tales. Progress is slow and the country a challenge to new settlers. Rowcroft has the narrator describe the difficulty of moving through the bush, sometimes following 'the faint track', sometimes 'guided by the notched trees' (p.62). The event is couched in terms which lay stress on the time taken in travelling.

Similarly, in The Cabramatta Store, Ch.XII, the Lesters are seen proceeding to a distant settlement: 'The bullocks crept along the road heavily and lazily; the sun was very hot, and the sharp grating "saw" of the locusts made Grace's head ache'. These circumstances and the evocation of the woman's thoughts over 'many a weary, unhappy day' generate in our minds some appreciation of the conditions and her attitude to them, and to her destination. Soon after this and with due regard to the story's overall structure

and balance, Vidal has the well-to-do Parker family leave 'Yandilla House' by carriage for Sydney, a journey contrasted to the former one in every way. Then Grace Lester is forced to make a further journey, this time to the Carpenters' station to seek burial for her son, whose death has been brought about by the exigencies of these outlying regions. The circumscribed world of this station homestead has been caught by means of some attention to detail here and its isolation thrown into sharper perspective because of the varied movements which shape the work.

Concepts of remoteness are inevitably relative, and so I must reiterate now a remark made initially. In the period with which I am dealing the idea of remoteness may pertain to areas which are not far removed from settlement from the vantage point of today. It being so then one of the consequences is that most of the settlement inland was deemed to be remote. In fact, this has become quite obvious in the course of my study. The means by which the novelist chose to illustrate the idea was not necessarily clear-cut as the example above, for instance, serves to show. A combination of strategies adds a richness to some of these novels and not necessarily, I maintain, the most celebrated. So far, I have been considering a location's remoteness in terms of space and time. And one would judge that these fulfilled the nineteenth century reader's expectations and assumptions relating to the subject matter. Over and above this, however, the effect could be created by other means.

The mechanics of plot, and inherent here the movement or the manipulation of characters, can be utilized to delineate the particular features of a locale that the author wishes to clarify or convey. At this stage it is only possible to focus upon selected examples for my argument, although others given elsewhere may well come to mind. At the outset are the books classed as 'emigrant novels' and from these interesting examples emerge. By moving the major characters to take up land light is thrown upon their forttude and at the same time on the distance of outlying regions from centres

of population. The two concepts are linked in these texts, the one serving to highlight the other. A host of examples could be cited, but memorable amongst them, for my purposes here, are the circumstances surrounding the presence of Dodge in the purlieus of Westernport in Haydon's The Emigrant. The realization of this character is one of the novel's strengths. He revels in the seclusion of his outlandish dwelling, which is of note in itself; but what emerges here is that the author has employed the setting, and its distance from civilization, to enable the intrepid settler to escape his creditors. Here the writer has availed himself of such a locale to shape plot structure.

The remote setting acquires significance in story frames other than the emigrant novel. The Antipodes provides a refuge for Delmé, that conventional wanderer of Victorian fiction, in A Love Story and allows him to forget his sorrows. A measure of his alienation from his fellows is revealed in the fact that Delmé has only Aborigines as companions. Again, pastoral seclusion in south-eastern Australia allows Dr. Mulhaus respite from political upheaval in Europe in Geoffry Hamlyn. Also cut off from the world, is the convict-settler, Wolfingham. The solitude of the bush provides the background for his crude homestead and his sullen estrangement from society.

It is possible for events to be devised around that special kind of social isolation inherent in any domestic situation far inland. Other examples may be seen elsewhere in this chapter but of the few who have contrived such plots Spence has done so effectively in Tender and True. Here Mr. Davanent holds the mother of his illegitimate child at a property well to the north of Adelaide. Thus remoteness can be seen to be of advantage to station-owners; and to novelists — Spence had made use of the notion of social isolation in Clara Morison similarly. In bolder fashion, Kingsley has caught the precarious position of Alice Brentwood at 'Garoopna' when bushrangers threaten. In such instances the reader does, for a time, experience a sharpened sense of place and is made aware of the kind of physical

conditions which make possible such eventualities.

I have singled out the various ways in which matters relating to distance could be conveyed and, more particularly, how this issue related to the creative writer's impressions about living in the Australian hinterland. Whether this was referred to directly or by more oblique means, and whether these concerns had a close bearing upon the plot or otherwise, the notion of remoteness was bound to generate interest and sympathy, or empathy, in the reading public. More fundamentally, though, the subject matter places great emphasis on the whole concept of settlement and on the European dwelling in particular, and in a way that ensures that readers were aware of the tenuous patterns of communication then existing. I move next to the motif of the long ride and the theme of being lost in the bush, both more closely relevant to journeying, and both by their nature bound to reinforce ideas already touched on here.

The Long Ride

It is clear that although the plots which structure this body of fiction were contrived with romance conventions in mind, they needed to be appropriate to the circumstances and they had to satisfy readers' expectations concerning colonial affairs. One of the earliest works meets these requirements despite its shortcomings. In Alfred Dudley, that small book which initially provided so many of the themes and motifs of Australian colonial prose fiction, one of the first of the epic rides is encountered. Having established themselves in New South Wales the Dudleys befriend a family on a neighbouring property; and when Mrs. Pelham becomes ill Alfred decides to go for medical assistance. Alfred 'flew to the stable for a horse, and immediately galloped off himself in search of that aid which might bring relief to his suffering friend'. We learn that he 'urged his horse immoderately, reached Newcastle in a very short time, and sought out Mr. Roberts, the surgeon...'. His task accomplished, the boy makes for home.

This simple event, described in Ch.VI, is to be the precursor of many undertaken on humanitarian grounds. In this instance the reader is made aware of the dangers connected with pioneering, and yet at the same time the incident exemplifies colonial solidarity and fortitude. In particular, the long ride gives visual form to the capabilities of young Alfred, a model emigrant, and celebrates his achievement in an emergency. It is a stage in his initiation into bush life. Now, such an event fulfils the needs of the romance since the boy's journey is an exciting exploit. But an image which is strongly associated with the ride is that of the homestead. From this setting Alfred departs, and to it returns when his mission is completed. The domestic, as has become manifestly apparent, emerges as a major aesthetic in these novels and that it is closely tied to the motif under discussion will become evident in the illustrations which follow. In short, epic and domestic are firmly conjoined in the bulk of these works.

In a much later example from Geoffry Hamlyn Dr. Mulhaus is called out from 'Baroona' to attend a woman in labour; however, the birth has already taken place by the time the doctor arrives at the hut. This is neatly contrived since although it adds textual colour it allows Kingsley to evade the event almost entirely and, it would seem, to fulfil those requirements of the Victorian parlour which helped shape the fiction of the period. Returning to 'Baroona' alone, Mulhaus becomes lost because

> coming to a fork in the track, he disregarded the advice of his horse, and, instead of taking the right hand, as he should have done, he held straight on, and, about two o'clock in the morning, found that not only had he lost his road, but that the track had died out altogether, and that he was completely abroad in the bush. (p.344)

The morning finds the doctor still riding:

> The road crossed gully after gully, each one like the other. The timber was heavy stringy-bark, and, in the lower part of the shallow gullies, the tall white stems of the blue gums stood up in the mist like ghosts. All nature was dripping and dull, and he was chilled and wretched. (p.345)

Becoming lost was a popular convention and one which the writer employs well here. Attractive passages convey the bushland's beauty and mystery, and one is reminded of both Harris and Tucker who likewise drew upon this aspect of the physical environment. But in terms of plot the long ride allows Mulhaus to come to a seemingly deserted hut, to discover a murder there and to become acquainted with information which leads to the narrative's denouement. The doctor does eventually find his way to a homestead, not to 'Baroona' but, ironically, to 'Toonarbin', one which has strong connections with the events at the hut in the bush. Anxiety had earlier been expressed that Mulhaus was passing through border country and yet the indigenous people are not to be feared at this point; rather it is an unlawful element within the European community which will lead to tragedy at one of the homesteads of the region and to great distress at another.

From Geoffry Hamlyn we pass to a minor work. Another incident — an accident at an isolated location — has a young emigrant, Minna, undertake a ride in order to bring help to her employer. It occurs in 'Little Jacob''s sketch, 'Emigrating'. First the girl becomes lost, and then comes upon the sick woman's husband. He, as it happens, is travelling with the local doctor, and all three return rapidly home. This is one of a number of coincidences shamelessly contrived by an author who feels impelled to model the 'Pen-Scratchings' around themes and motifs popular at the mid-century. Lacking overall is the skill necessary to make such events seem credible. In this instance, Minna's mistress dies and that allows the melodramatic romance an outcome more favourable than would at first seem to have been the case. We learn that: 'In less than two years Minna was Mrs. Stanley the second, and the mistress of that large flourishing homestead' (p.130). With these three examples one is reminded again of Kingsley's greater literary finesse.

Humanitarian reasons, as we have seen, also take Captain Dell from 'Cowanda' across country to 'The Ranges' where an old friend is on his death-

bed. As the lines heading this chapter reveal, Atkinson makes no attempt to picture the scenery along the way. She makes it plain that the trip is arduous and one feels that in the absence of detail something of the tension of the event is signified. A more vivid fictional representation of such a journey is found elsewhere in Cowanda, and attention has already been drawn to it. Both incidents meet the requirements of the text and are indicative of the fact that careful crafting is often to be observed in Atkinson's novels.

Pushing inland to find new grazing land, rather than exploration per se was an aspect of pioneering that appealed to several novelists. They were able to confer stature on those who so journeyed. In Gertrude Tudor rides far inland on such a quest and it is not without incident, but Atkinson wisely spends little time on this excursion for, as has become evident, her most successful writing is closely related to familiar subject matter. It is convenient, then, to bring Tudor back to the homestead and this is done by means of the news of Gertrude's sickness:

> During his rapid return, he only paused when it was necessary to rest and bait his horse; for the time he neither seemed to require food nor sleep; only pity for his faithful horse delayed him.... Once more the outward limits of Murrumbowrie met his eyes, once more he sped along that road.... (p.58)

Though a hackneyed response to this imagined event, the passage does convey the special sense of urgency that carries Tudor to 'Murrumbowrie'. Also, of course, it demonstrates his feelings for the young woman there. But conveyed, besides, is the familiarity of the location to its returning superintendent.

While such material offers dramatic possibilities and, furthermore, is suggestive of an accurate representation of the whole gamut of colonial experience, sequences of the kind we have been regarding do propose the settlers' extreme vulnerability. Is this material, too, a reminder of human weakness and frailty? These are ideas not generally expatiated upon by col-

onial novelists, however in accordance with her sharper focus on everyday matters it is typical of Atkinson that her plots allow the presence of sickness. Aligned with her in this regard are other women writers, Porter, Spence, Vidal, and Franc. Its introduction is a reminder that death is a necessary eventuality in domestic affairs; and in terms of plot, tension is added to romance. The author can play with assumptions and expectations in this respect and then resolve everything satisfactorily by denying the possibility of death. Thus, such contingencies may be admitted, but the issue is finally evaded. This tells us much concerning the author and the reading public and is indicative of a world of wishfulfilment rather than one which was to mirror all aspects of contemporary reality. For the moment, however, it must be conceded that the events we have been considering are carefully calculated to throw an attractive light on colonists who are shown to be sturdy, plucky and most often less than vulnerable. They deserve their success. When this comes, in a fictional context, it is not unexpected. As employed in these works, the motif under discussion helps to reinforce such ideals.

One may deduce, however, that although such issues were addressed in order to highlight the fortitude and sense of solidarity amongst the newcomers — not to mention their seeming invincibility — these concerns had less appeal than more colourful incidents. After all, innumerable pressing reasons may exist for journeying far across country on horseback; there was no need for circumstances too distressing or, indeed, for such a convention to be treated stereotypically. On the whole, though, humanitarian concerns tend to underline this special motif.

A major exception to my generalization is the passage recounting Alfred Barnard's impulsive ride through the scrub after a wild horse in Gallops and Gossips (Ch.III). Energetic writing marks this incident and one forgets that the author has simply fabricated his tale from the detailed information

supplied by others. Since this is the case it is of interest to find that Sidney, perhaps drawing on contemporary North American novels, accords the motif a new and amplified direction given Australian conditions. Discernible here is the spontaneous exuberance of the chase. The quarry is well deserved by Barnard, and it is finally made secure in the stockyard of that property referred to earlier. Here the greeting exemplifies friendly hospitality, while the well-kept homestead bears witness to the comfortable social circumstances and contented family life possible in the bush. The incident marks a turning point in the novel and in Barnard's life since the ride is a rite of passage ushering him into bush society. Sidney has him recall that the event 'rubbed off all the remains of my new chummery: from that time I was received as a "Bushman", and, not long afterwards, I became myself partner in a cattle station' (p.57). Barnard's confrontation with the physical environment is rewarded: on one level with a dwelling in the bush and on another, with the spiritual well-being engendered in the acquisition. The lively incident demonstrates what can be made of a literary convention of this kind. As in other narratives, though, the motif is adopted to illustrate, on one hand, the concept of distance and on the other, as I have shown already, the sound social values that the creative writer saw as enhancing the life of the bush community.

This pleasing and more imaginative example aside, the long ride is used in the main to give significance to human and domestic concerns. And in the nineteenth century these take on a particular relevance when one considers that the society depicted is not only emergent but, more compellingly, established over vast and inhospitable regions. The latter statement is an exaggeration, it is clear, but hyperbole appealed to the creative writer to whom far-journeying horsemen offered such scope.

These factors, and a twist in the plot, combine to form one of the more dramatic sequences in Tallangetta, a work in which journeying is not uncommon.

'Bullarook' is 'the last station in the habitable country, and actually in the unsettled wilds itself' (Vol.I,p.306). A mythic quality and some mystique are attached to a dwelling so far removed from other places of habitation. The novelist anticipates the dangers which will be encountered when one needs travel 'through the fearful Mallee scrub, and into a dry, parched desert of sand...'. The trek under way, the author charts the landscape's changing pattern as the two riders move away from the settled areas into the more uncompromising. The 'melancholy wastes' of the region are matched by a homestead which is discovered by surprised newcomers to be a wooden hut 'rudely roofed with sheets of stringy-bark kept in their places by stones slung across it by ropes of cow-hide' (Vol.II,p.6). Yet if appearances are disappointing or alarming and the initial greeting contrived to add suspense to the situation, then the welcome is revealed to be all it should be in the Australian hinterland. Certainly, standards here are as civilized as at 'Lahni Mill' station, the lush riverside property from which, by contrast, the riders departed and to which to conclude the incident on a happy note, Howitt eventually returns us. However, in few places in the colonial novel up to 1860 is civilization shown to be so firmly established in a remote region as in this setting in the Mallee scrublands.

It must be explained that two other subjects — bushrangers and bushfires — are accorded attention in relation to this literary motif. The material lends an inherently Australian touch to a narrative and serves to sum up the type of danger which occasions rapid movement on horseback. Here, too, and an aspect of the romance formula, the fictional long ride highlights the ways in which households may face distressing or threatening circumstances. With regard to bushrangers, the most celebrated example occurs in Geoffry Hamlyn (Ch.XLI) when Sam Buckley rides from 'Baroona' to 'Garoopna' to save Alice Brentwood from the bushrangers who are about to raid the home.

With some craft Kingsley has anticipated the affair. Since these are

recollections it is fitting that in the establishing chapter there should be reference to the horse 'Widderin' and to that 'certain famous ride'. The speakers recall the event feelingly and it is obvious that it is to be a notable one within the narrative. Later, Kingsley makes a point of describing the lie of the land with regard the three major stations so, among other reasons, it can be understood how his protagonist can reach 'Garoopna' homestead before the bushrangers. Speed is the main consideration here, and unfortunately the author strains to convey that aspect of the ride. For all this, an interesting pastoral image contrasts a lonely shepherd's incomprehension with that feeling which almost overwhelms the passing rider; and caught, too, are metaphysical concerns: human turmoil set against the immensity of the landscape. At this point Alice is found 'white-robed in the verandah, feeding her birds' (p.365). As I have proposed, inherent in the image is the idea of the girl's integration into colonial surroundings; and yet in these circumstances the precariousness of her position is only too evident. But, taken up on the horse, she is carried off to the safety of nearby hills.

A scene already noted in 'Emmeline' is that in which a horseman gallops to warn those at the Mortimers' homestead of the imminent arrival of bushrangers. Clacy does not picture the long ride; instead, a pleasing aspect of colonial life is set forth. As they relax on the verandah, therefore, the inhabitants hear the sound of the approaching rider. They quickly learn that such an existence is threatened; that their lives are in danger. In this tale tension is released in the clash of the opposing forces and the eventual — but scarcely unexpected — defeat of the disruptive and subversive.

A few years earlier Harris made use of such a convention in <u>The Emigrant Family</u> when he has Reuban Kable arrive at 'the Rocky Springs' after a ride of some days' duration to aid the womenfolk there (Vol.III,Ch.10). Although Kable's ride is a considerable feat and given prominence, it is matched by

that of the Aboriginal, Tommy, who has ridden with news of the bushrangers' plans to Kable's homestead at Broken Bay. Other movement, too, helps structure the chapter: there is that of Beck's gang through the dense scrubland of the region; there is the long journey by night of a loyal shepherd with a warning to 'the Rocky Springs'; and there is the slower journey of the older Lieutenant Bracton whom Kable overtakes on his more rapid progress to the home station. All of this is linked in some way with 'the Rocky Springs', and thus throws additional emphasis on that locale and on the plight of its inhabitants. Here, as in Geoffry Hamlyn, the hasty journey is one element in the speeding up of events which hurries both works to their conclusion.

But even earlier again in Tales of the Colonies and in a scene which prefigures the later examples, Rowcroft has a solitary rider approach the Thornleys' homestead by night with news concerning the attack on the neighbouring property (Ch.X). Yet, although newcomers, they are shown to reveal an attractive aspect of the developing social mores in the colony: those at the homestead provide sustenance for the messenger before demanding his news. As a result, the exploit is accorded due approbation. Structurally, of course, the incident allows a lull in the narrative and a moment of suspense. Just prior to this, Rowcroft provides an image which may have influenced later novelists. Depicted is a scene which casts an appealing light on the homestead's occupants, so any such threat must be viewed as the more deplorable. It is revealing of what the novelist was attempting to convey about colonial settlement that a peaceful fireside setting was chosen to represent it here.

So far, I have been concerned with dangers facing the homestead from fellow colonists. Yet a major preoccupation was the relationship between the newcomers and the land they had occupied; arising from this were questions related to the environment. Hence the bushfire comes to be associated with the motif of the long ride. This is another of the risks inherent in

settlement and one which Rowcroft in The Bushranger names as 'the most dreadful of all the perils of the bush' (p.338). Readers are reminded of factors over which one had no control — factors which helped create a haphazard rural existence. Again, the focus is on the need for decisive action. Such an eventuality will then serve to demonstrate the co-operation that occurs in the face of peril. Stressed, too, are the new-found skills of bushcraft; for example, the long ride often becomes a test of courage. The pointed symbolism of fire is well-suited to the intimidating nature of the Australian hinterland: by such a means European civilization and its major material asset — the homestead — could be swept away. Nevertheless, even without such dire events, expressive and colourful images and of an elemental kind could be brought into the narrative. By these means, the richness of its archetypal associations and the bushfire's uniquely threatening nature in Australia could be addressed.

In the establishing paragraph of Geoffry Hamlyn attention is drawn to the hazards of the antipodean summer: to heat, drought, and bushfire. Hamlyn recollects burning heat and 'bushfires raging like volcanoes on the ranges'. Here the author's skill lies in prefiguring an aspect of Australian conditions that he will utilize in the novel. A dramatic occurrence, set in the height of summer, involves a serious bushfire in the neighbourhood of Hamlyn's station, 'the Durnongs'. A firebreak has been burnt, but the house is still endangered due to the extreme conditions. With little to be done, Hamlyn, as is his habit, sits drinking on his verandah. Although remembered chiefly as an observer and chronicler, Hamlyn proves himself a man of action when the safety of one of his men must be ascertained. Then he sets off on horseback without delay. Kingsley has the horseman almost trapped by flames and, on his return, deeply concerned about his home. In melodramatic terms Hamlyn apostrophises on the fate of his station, and the following lines demonstrate this writer's tendency to employ the present tense to bring immediacy to a passage:

> So the station is burnt, then? No! For as I top the ridge, there it is before me, standing as of old — a bright oasis in the desert of burnt country round. Ay! the very hay-stack is safe! And the paddocks? — all right! — glory be to God! (pp.185-6)

After an evocative and highly-coloured description of events these simple observations are offered as a release from tension. The fact that the dwelling has survived enhances it in the eyes of the reader who is more able to comprehend what a home must mean to its owner in the light of such a situation.

In a later episode Hamlyn can afford to look back with some nonchalance to a bushfire which 'came right up to the garden rails, and was beaten out with great difficulty...' (p.419). It is clear that the danger has been extreme, the threat posed being envisaged on a physical as well as a symbolic level since the garden fence, as I concluded in Ch.V, was used to denote the furthermost edge of European habitation by writers of the period. And yet, whatever the approach, the colonists' vulnerability is implied in all such incidents. One way to offset this is to provide an attractive foil for such a disquieting thought; to fix on an image that is startling. As has become evident, Kingsley was only one of a number who thought of the dwelling in the Australian bush in terms of an oasis. The bushfire had become a stock feature of the colonial novel by this time but stylistically and with regard to theme Kingsley treats it with panache.

Howitt is another who connects such imagery with his homestead locales. While connotations of isolation are therefore proposed, and not inappropriately, formulated in addition is the notion of a sanctuary or haven. When linked with the idea of the bush as a wilderness the metaphor is apposite and appealing. One of the many interpolated tales in Tallangetta recounts imagined events in one area of Victoria on 'Black Thursday' (Vol.I,pp.95-127). A large-scale painting, Black Thursday, 6th February, 1851, by William Strutt

recalls the same natural disaster in graphic detail.[7] By fixing upon a happening of such note Howitt triggers interest in his story; at the same time he was able to appease the extreme concern that the holocaust must everywhere have aroused.

In this recreation of the circumstances a young squatter is almost caught by the flames while moving cattle. The work's scope allows a more extended descriptive passage concerning the ride through the burning countryside than in Geoffry Hamlyn. However, the melodramatic, which plays so large a part in Howitt's novel, unfortunately permits him lines like the following: 'But onward flew the intrepid Sorcerer, onward stretched his rider, thinking lightening-winged thoughts of home, and of his helpless, paralysed mother there' (p.105). These events are recalled by another; Hamlyn has had the advantage of telling his own story. But like Kingsley after him, Howitt has his rider approach his home with trepidation. 'He darted over the brow of a hill — there it lay safe!' (p.108) but, in this case, the young man is surprised, and gratified, to find numerous families and their animals camped in the 'bare circle' which, with foresight, he had cleared around the dwelling. The idea of an oasis is conjured up easily in such a depiction, the antipodean inversion here adding a piquant note to the passage. Further exploits follow but the episode, both the hasty journey and the reason behind it, besides providing information in guidebook style, acts as a strategy to introduce a bushfire which, in the main narrative, now threatens the neighbourhood of 'Tallangetta'.

A popular feature in Victorian fiction is that of the child involved in heroic endeavours; other examples have been noted elsewhere. The convention finds its place in A Boy's Adventures. Here Howitt has a young girl, Mary Macdonald, a stockman's daughter, ride through the night to warn the prop-

7. Reproduced in James Gleeson, Colonial Painters 1788-1880 (Melbourne: Lansdowne, 1971) 77.

erty's owner of the threat of fire (pp.144-7). The capabilities of the stockman and his family in the ordeal make for a turning point in their lives. In this instance, the event is shown to be an initiation into bush life, the family going on to acquire a property of their own, and to become assimilated into the back country. From humble beginnings in a slab hut, fittingly envisaged as a Highland hut, Macdonald is finally seen as the owner of 'Murragong' station. Heroic deeds and material rewards are part of the pattern which came to be imposed on the colonial romance.

On Being Lost

I have proposed that Alfred Dudley is of importance in Australian fiction because, paradoxically, in this minor work are prefigured so many of the themes which were later to be treated in greater depth and complexity. In Ch.V Alfred becomes lost as he returns to 'Dudley Park' after befriending Aborigines whose camp is nearby. Alfred 'quickly found he had overrated his knowledge of the road, as the obscurity began to deepen into entire darkness; he became perplexed and knew not which way to proceed...'. With confidence in his bushcraft undermined the boy becomes disorientated and confused; his thoughts turn to home, to his father's anxiety at his absence. However, Porter cannot afford to lose her young hero in such a fashion — and the bush can provide assistance for the lost boy. It comes in the form of Mickie, who personifies the intuitive knowledge of the Aboriginal and is the forerunner of numerous like characters. Given the situation, Alfred

> was indeed relieved at thus having a friend raised up to him in the wilderness, and gladly resigned himself to the guidance of the young native, who speedily led him through many windings, and brought him into the open country at no great distance from his own habitation....
> (p.52)

Providentially aided, Alfred reaches home as a search party is about to be mounted, and the exploit's happy conclusion is just one of a number encountered in the narrative. In this instance danger lies in the bushland, the

open country providing in the dwelling-house a landmark of European origin and appearance. Though cursorily dealt with here, the theme of being lost was taken up with alacrity by the nineteenth century novelists who wrote about Australia.

The earliest to employ such material and shape it into a dramatic and imaginative whole was Rowcroft in Tales of the Colonies. Having constructed his 'tidy homestead' and become established, Thornley can afford to move beyond immediate and personal concerns. He soon becomes involved in colonial affairs. A chase after bushrangers takes him some thirty miles from home, to which he must unexpectedly return alone on hearing of its destruction by fire. Foreshadowing the events to follow but, in addition, giving the reader an indication of new-found assurance, Rowcroft has his protagonist write in his journal: 'I never doubted but I should be able to find my way to the Clyde by some way or other, for the thought of being lost in the bush, and on horseback too, never occurred to me' (p.181).

Thornley commences his ride across rough, inhospitable country and suspense builds when it becomes apparent that he is lost 'in the desolate wild of the dismal bush' (p.190). Thornley charts the following days and nights spent in the isolated region. More importantly, Rowcroft has him record his state of mind: from the initial 'uneasy sensation' to real fear, then the disorientation which develops into distrust in his own judgement. Feelings of loneliness and desolation give rise to 'doubt, and confusion, and indecision of mind'. In this case, the land provides no assistance: Thornley is attacked first by eagles; then by Aborigines. But he does make his way homeward. These more spirited episodes aside, Rowcroft has caught in the major event the disturbing revelation of the European's vulnerability in the face of such an environment. It also serves to illustrate the attributes needed by the successful colonist. However, besides images of the landscape itself, strongly connected with the theme is that of

the homestead, for the lost man's thoughts naturally turn to home and family. Moreover, he is welcomed there finally by his wife and children. Now in this case the house has been destroyed but Thornley simply resolves to re-build. Thus exploit makes way for domestic attainment. With its action, imagery and scope, Rowcroft's work provided a dynamic model for others to follow.

A few years later McCombie, following this convention in Arabin, has his main character undertake a long journey to aid a sick settler at an outlying station (Ch.III). But the needs of the homestead are temporarily forgotten at this point since the author wishes to focus on the danger of traversing unknown country. In addition, tension is added because the circumstances are significantly altered from previous models. The doctor's way is made over a vast plain; further, not only does the ride take place by night but McCombie introduces an additional element — a violent storm — to aggravate the traveller's situation. As I have said, the country's vastness both impressed and appalled newcomers, but here another aspect of the land is educed. It is a disturbing fact that distances are deceptive: they are greater than they initially appear. The physical and psychological implications inherent in such a situation are obvious. Arabin soon becomes disorientated, bewildered, and afraid. As McCombie explains:

> To those in Europe who glance at these pages, the terror of Arabin must appear childish; but perhaps, having never been more than a few miles from the abodes of men, they have but an imperfect conception of the utter desolation of the boundless plains of Australia. The solitude is too awful for a creature formed for social intercourse to bear; his littleness and his feebleness become apparent. (pp.19-20)

Yet metaphysical questions must be put aside. Arabin turns his thoughts to practical concerns and soliloquizes: '"...would to Heaven I could obtain the shelter of some friendly roof!"' His wish, as it turns out, is initially to have ironic implications. While there are faults of repetitiveness (more particularly, in the choice of adjectives relating to the plain)

McCombie's story does hold our attention. Besides, the author has made a special plea for his protagonist. But tension is allowed to slacken and, above all, when events are interrupted with details of the mineral deposits on the plain — and then of Australia in general.

Yet Arabin is eventually restored to civilization — first to the out-station where he is treated with no great ceremony by the shepherds; later, to the ritual of welcome and hospitality at Butler's station. Here the comforts are more than merely of a material kind. At the earlier locale, as previously indicated, there is humour after the anxiety of the narrative events. In addition, the state of the shepherds' accommodation makes more welcome the presence of the 'respectable looking cottage' and its homely qualities. It must be said that the station is both realistically and imaginatively positioned and its remoteness is emphasized by means of this protracted ride. When morning comes Arabin is more appreciative of the qualities of the physical environment; a rite of passage has been accomplished here and a pietistic note is introduced. McCombie evokes Arabin's responsiveness to the country and his deeper understanding of it. When next he visits the Butlers' station 'the beautiful day formed a strange contrast with the stormy night he had so lately passed on the same plain; but the change in the features of nature was not more striking than that in his own feelings' (p.94). The effect of these events has been heightened by the use of an ancient literary device — the linking of human emotions with the natural universe. But the writer, too, has undergone some change, as is revealed to the more perceptive. The 'boundless plains' insisted upon in Ch.III have become 'almost boundless plains' in Ch.VIII.

Leigh's The Emigrant was published in 1847. The author must have been aware of the much published Tales of the Colonies and it seems likely he was acquainted with Arabin since its advertisement is to be found on the end papers of Leigh's work. So one does sense that the latter has drawn on an already established literary convention when he incorporates the theme of

being lost into his own tale. Here, a reference to 'boundless plains' and the 'antipodeal wilderness' appears long before the newcomers reach South Australia, where the coast is seen as an 'uninviting, barren, bleak, and desolate land' (p.171). One family, the Blairs, passing through landscape noted for its 'desolation' and 'melancholy', make their way to a pastoral area and establish themselves there.

For Leigh's protagonist and for the reader all is carefree as Blair, out riding, becomes more accepting of his new surroundings (Ch.XXXII). He contemplates the country's beauty, the healthy life possible there, and the freedom to follow a pastoral existence in 'these unpeopled wastes'. In high-flown prose the author has Blair soliloquize on his good fortune. Then, in the midst of such rural musings, the settler is attacked and wounded by Aborigines who occupy the 'unpeopled wastes' — the very land that Blair has so easily acquired. The juxtaposition of events, though not subtle, is nicely conceived by Leigh and has, of course, implications that are deeply ironic on a number of levels. In his efforts to escape Blair loses his way. His vulnerability and personal sense of isolation when exposed in this open country are well conveyed. It seems that the land itself is doubly hostile since the only trees — gums — provide no lower branches on which to climb and reconnoitre. Because his horse is injured the settler is entirely cut off from help.

Blair's thoughts naturally turn to 'Mimosa Station', and to his wife and children there. As time passes his hopeless position overwhelms him; he succumbs to tears. 'Let any one who has not felt the utter loneliness of the heart caused by the dread solitude of the unpeopled wilderness, forbear to marvel that a husband, a father, could weep when he found himself totally lost...' (p.203). Here the author appeals to the reader to share in the lost man's predicament, and this he evokes with reference to the inhospitable nature of the environment. It is noticeable that the country's appearance, described in such detail by Rowcroft and McCombie, is here overshadowed by a

recognition of the deepest of human emotions, these being strained to breaking point as days and nights pass.

Being lost in an unknown land is seen to give rise to heightened responses, ones in which the topography is interiorized. It becomes, little by little, a landscape of the mind. And not a landscape, but as Leigh has it, a labyrinth. The author pictures Blair's position:

> Unable to proceed, not knowing what to do, he sat down once more in despair at the foot of a tree. All around was silent — not even the rustle of a leaf disturbed the solitude; one vast forest of the same sombre-looking and similar trees spread out on all sides — a monotonous scene, such as imagination were almost unable to picture. It appeared almost a struggle of nature how alike each tree might be to its fellow; not a bush was allowed to appear on either side — all was one immense regularly-planted plain, and nothing was around that solitary man but gum-tree after gum-tree — an eternal labyrinth. (p.204)

The prose in this work is of uneven quality, ranging from the use of cliché and those clusters of words well-known to us now to, for example, the strength of the final sentence in the passage above. The allusion to the implacable force of nature works, as it does in Arabin, to make man seem the smaller. Interesting here is the evidence of European thought in response to the landscape; there is dismay at its enormity, at its apparent uniformity. In this imaginative conception of events, as in the earlier works, the desire to return to the known and the familiar is wholly credible and appealing.

Blair is finally rescued by shepherds and is restored to his family. Yet in the reworking of such material, which is both a surprise development in the colonial narrative and a turning point in this work, tragedy is the outcome. Blair's wife, in 'a delicate state', dies as a result of the shock occasioned by her husband's disappearance. The pathos of events is deepened when it is revealed that fires were lit at the homestead to attract the lost man's attention, but considering them to be signs of an Aboriginal encampment, Blair did not approach. The widower eventually sells 'Mimosa Station' and leaves the colony. Unusually for the colonial novel the work ends on

a pensive note.

Each of these three writers has developed the theme of being lost with some competence. The locale is imaginatively conceived and has a dramatic quality appropriate to the circumstances, at least to nineteenth century perceptions. But set against it is the larger drama of human vulnerability and fallibility, qualities which are intensified because the narratives are set against inland rather than urban topography. Thus physical progress becomes a mental journeying and one which may take the traveller to the edge of disaster and the limits of fear. In one sense there is a recognition that the European is unskilled in bushcraft and maladapted to environmental conditions — a point which seems to have inspired Lang's 'Tracks in the Bush'. This is an idea which undercuts the generally held belief, that of a colonist ready for all contingencies; and so one is not surprised to find that it remains undeveloped in literary terms. But it does not go unremarked, as the theme of being lost reveals. In these three cases we have seen that the lost man reaches his goal — the safety of European habitation.

What is noticeable also is that in each work the events which take the protagonist over bush terrain arise from the needs of everyday life: they derive from the domestic rather than from the larger or epic event. For example, these journeys cannot be ascribed to the desire to explore unknown regions. As outlined initially, subject matter relating to exploration is avoided by novelists who tended to be conservative in their choice of material and to dwell on domestic issues rather than larger spatial or temporal concerns. Correspondingly, plots are formulaic, as we have seen, rather than remarkable. Moreover, authors did not generally take their protagonists too far from the domestic sphere, despite the sweep of the land with which they were dealing. Or if they did, they brought them home again, or took them instead to locations that were similarly congenial. Far from an adventurousness of spirit, possible in such alien surroundings, we are observing its

antithesis. My contention is that with so much that was exceptional about the Antipodes novelists were not ready to undertake larger themes; tragedy had a greater part in the country's pioneering than the writer of the colonial romance was prepared to admit.

Besides these early examples other references are found to the fear of losing one's way; or again, to the possibility of being lost. Harris chooses to end Vol.I of The Emigrant Family sombrely with the story of a man who becomes overtaken by snow while mustering cattle. The tale illustrates Harris's story-telling craft, which here admits a full measure of pathos. More unusually, the episode is described from the point of view of those who have been searching for the missing man, one who is 'quite a new hand' on the property:

> Several weeks elapsed, each day wearing slowly out the melancholy impression; but yet that impression was frequently renewed for a time, as chance visitants from other stations inquired, over the evening fire, whether they had heard anything yet of their hut-keeper, and speculated upon his fate. (p.142)

Men from other properties having been engaged in the search, the event takes on communal colouring. One senses that it will begin to assume mythic qualities. It is already a matter which has come to be the subject of enquiry around the fireside. The novel's romantic elements are often justly criticized; however, in context as well as in concept, the greater richness lies in the visual embodiment of an incident of this kind.

That such a theme becomes popular in the 1850s is confirmed by its occurrence in numerous works, sometimes in well-devised incidents, sometimes as a literary cliché. Certainly, not all works can sustain equal attention here, and as an example of the latter I cite the episode of the lost man in Cawthorne's The Islanders to which I referred in Ch.I. In 'Mikka' from Lights and Shadows such circumstances give rise to the observation: 'How pleasing to the eyes of the bush-lost traveller is the sight of the curling

smoke in the distance, which speaks of the neighbourhood of his fellow creatures!' (Vol.II,p.61). Despite the stilted nature of Clacy's prose such a comment does ring true and the image appeals even if a time-worn idea. Here again, however, one must allow for the compassion of the British for their folk in the colonies; further, since there was a divided readership, the curiosity of urban Australians regarding conditions from which they were safeguarded. One would surmise, therefore, that nineteenth century readers responded to this subject matter in a positive fashion.

The story of an individual lost elicits an immediate response; however, when these circumstances concern a child, the event assumes greater significance. The sense of foreboding is sharpened. The pity is the greater for the innocence that is threatened. A consummate story-teller, Kingsley has exploited the value of such material in Ch.XXX of Geoffry Hamlyn where a little child, enticed by the mystery of the bushland, wanders away to die far from home. Kingsley employs this occurrence to further his narrative and the relationship of the two men who find the child almost overshadows the poignant affair. Yet, such criticism aside, the way in which the tragedy becomes a part of the consciousness of the bush community has been well rendered. Wilkes has observed in general that particular events become an aspect of the 'rhythm of existence' and emerge accordingly as one of the means by which, in social terms, time comes to be measured.[8] There is evidence in this work of the story of the lost child being told in a household many years after the occurrence: it happened 'in the year that the bushrangers came down' (p.264). Kingsley is adding to the folklore of the society he is portraying, but in terms of plot he has foreshadowed one of the major episodes that is to shape his romance.

Geoffry Hamlyn has been credited by some to be a seminal work. The

8. Wilkes, The Stockyard and the Croquet Lawn 7-8.

incident of the lost child, for example, is seen to support such a claim.[9] Yet subject matter relating to station-life, including lost children, is present in earlier works although it must be admitted that the authors concerned do not possess Kingsley's story-telling flair. Moreover, as in Alfred Dudley, in these accounts those missing do not perish. Two girls stray from home in Clacy's 'The Tasmanian Belle', but there is no striving after dramatic effect and this is one brief sequence in a tedious tale. In Gertrude a child is missing from 'Markarld Park'. There is, likewise, no attempt to build up suspense here and a suggestion that Aborigines might have taken the child is at once scotched, and in a manner revealing of a contemporary perception. An Australian-born woman affirms the local Aborigines' integrity: '"Our blacks never do such things"' (p.186).[10] As it happens, the novelist has the infant trapped underneath a building on the property. As already mentioned, Atkinson drew largely on the commonplace and although use is made of romantic conventions, there is, as here, much of a homely nature in her writing. Atkinson could be accused of avoiding dramatic possibilities but one senses that she simply wishes at this stage to give point to her heroine's good sense and initiative. So it is not necessary for the child to have strayed into the bush which, in any case, Atkinson regards with greater understanding than the majority of contemporary authors.

For all that she *is* aware of its hazards, as is made plain when a skeleton, presumed to be that of a lost man, is found by Tudor and some stockmen while riding through a remote area. Later, around the camp-fire

> the travellers passed the greater part of the night in conversation, recounting their own perils, or the loss of those they had known, or heard of.... (p.55)

9. See, for example, Mellick's introduction to The Portable Henry Kingsley and Scheckter's statement that in Geoffry Hamlyn the lost child makes its 'international debut' (p.61). The theme gains in popularity and 1866 sees the appearance of The Australian Babes in the Wood (London).
10. Kingsley makes the same point in Geoffry Hamlyn 257.

The mythic and folkloric quality of the event is brought to our notice here and in a way that is reminiscent of Harris and Kingsley. In addition, Atkinson thinks to record the eponymous aspect of the incident: the area becomes known as 'Dead man's run'.

The rural background and the country's extent hypothesize that the question of communication would figure strongly in these works, and from the beginning novelists addressed themselves to spatial concerns and questions of distance. They seemed to recognize that in such material lay the possibility of illustrating the transformation of emigrant into colonist. I indicated earlier that three salient lines of communication may be discerned in these works. It has now become apparent that connections between the homesteads of a far-flung community attracted the greatest response; in consequence, less store was set on movement between rural locations and urban centres. Remaining to be examined in my final chapter are links with the motherland.

Those fiction fields alluded to by Sinnett had become crisscrossed by roads and tracks and innumerable travellers by 1860, and some idea of the developing social framework that writers were in a position to reflect upon may be gauged from the following. In several of the earlier works reference is made to iron-gangs: chained convicts who constructed roads in the colony.[11] By contrast, in Bengala, Vidal can imagine the problem of where to place a bridge as a topic of conversation among the settlers of the area; again, two of the main characters are shown to enjoy a standing joke about the state of a road leading to the chief location.

The theme of journeying and aspects of wayfaring, apt in concept and

11. See Alfred Dudley 29, Ralph Rashleigh passim, Settlers and Convicts 10, 78, 198.

context, are strongly relevant to these narratives. It follows that whatever their literary merit may be — and it varies considerably — such a strategy makes for vigorous, entertaining works. Besides, they are lively in another aspect since they go far in revealing contemporary preoccupations. Hence journeying, with its attendant pleasures or misfortunes, allows the author to move beyond a merely domestic and ostensibly circumscribed world to the possibilities inherent in the open country beyond. Then the domestic — the world dominated by women — gives way to more animated events and the journey, generally speaking, is undertaken by men on horseback.

For all this, movement is more often circular than linear; it exists between homestead and homestead but most often returns those travelling to the dwelling from which they set out. I have insisted that these are earnest works. It follows that those who travel do so, not promiscuously, but with good reason. Personal quest is subsumed in the service of others. Moreover, the landscape crossed is a physical, not a metaphysical, terrain. That is why on only very few occasions are characters shown to comprehend their surroundings in a metaphysical sense or see themselves journeying for other than material or practical concerns, although the smallness of man and the omnipotence of nature is sometimes attested. However, as I have earlier contended and have chosen to reaffirm in anticipation of my final chapter, the homestead is a key image and the importance of place a cogent one in works that, to a greater or lesser degree, are characterized by movement, and purposive journeying plays a major shaping and structuring role.

Serving an aim that was utilitarian, firstly, the motif of the long ride soon became a popular convention in the earlier colonial novel. It should be said that the pattern of events can become so obvious that a discerning reader is able to recognize the event in advance: however the motif is no less enjoyable for being anticipated, as is the car-chase in film today. A spatial metaphor with a long literary tradition, it was particularly suited to the place and the time and quickly took on colonial

characteristics. In the circumstances which give rise to such an event, the oppositions within the text confront each other in heightened terms; on one hand settlement with its human needs and on the other the wilderness and its elemental power. Tension is thus sustained, only to diminish when the long ride is satisfactorily concluded and European habitation reached.

Two major registers are associated with the motif and it is noteworthy that the lengthy journey could, in addition, take on epic proportions. The mythic and the heroic are celebrated here; folkloric elements are also in evidence. It is appropriate to record that although horse and rider figure largely in these literary terrains, very few writers paid tribute to the animal that gave the white man such mobility and supremacy.[12] What is made manifest is the primacy of ordeal over idyll. Moreover, while such adventures are singularly appropriate to the genre of romance and to the nature of the landscape, the motif demonstrates above all the idealized colonial ethos of altruism and humanitarian concern. An abstract principle is at work here and it facilitates the expression of such values within a fictional framework. In these circumstances human kind is consistently set against the physical environment; perhaps against the elements themselves. In this epic stand civilization is measured against the wilderness, and is seldom found wanting. The motif is employed hermeneutically. Further, it celebrates the belief that the colonists had control over events and over their lives in the Australian hinterland.

But if one set of expectations are appeased by these means, counter-thematically such notions are overturned in the theme of being lost. Since writers insisted upon the threatening nature of the bush this was an underlying thematic with vicarious appeal: a dramatic and symbolic means of

12. See Tales of the Colonies 108, Botany Bay 81, Tallangetta I:99, Geoffry Hamlyn passim.

portraying European vulnerability. Whether a depiction of such an occurrence sustains our interest today or whether it may seem a lifeless and mechanical compositional device, that is not to say that the nineteenth century reader was not moved. Certainly, the theme evoked a master metaphor, a summation of one of mankind's deepest fears: to be separated from one's fellows, to be abandoned and to be exposed in both a physical and a psychological sense, and to be threatened with death far from home. It is the theme of exile much magnified and in terms of plot personal drama is set against the larger drama of a vast terrain. As I explained initially, this is one aspect of the darker side of antipodean pastoral.

The fact that the lost are most often found tells us a great deal about the underlying anxieties of the period. These same tensions have given rise to the romance instead of, say, the depth and complexity of tragedy although, as remarked much earlier, this does not mean that the latter element is lacking in these works. It is, however, diffuse and scattered and perfunctorily achieved. Writers had to conflate the need for pathos and dramatic action with the desire for a novel's happy ending. Tension followed by reassurance and events in which the outcome is anticipated — these allow for the readers' gratification and are amongst the hallmarks of the romance and of popular writing. It forms the basis of their success. Encapsulated also is the writer's responsibility to equate the narrative with colonial actualities. While much is made of the subject matter — to put it bluntly — the issue is evaded. Those who die in the bush when lost are at the periphery of these fictions, and the imaginative possibilities to be derived from the given situation are lacking in the main. For all that, a strategy of this kind works to throw a heroic light on the main characters and, as a result, on the colonists in general. It proclaims their stature and because it blends the actual and the ideal, adds to the mythic and folkloric aspect of early colonial prose fiction. Here is a celebration of triumph over adversity; seldom celebrated is a greater

percipience of bushland or environment. What is honoured by those who withdraw to the homestead is a way of life — the domestic life of the hinterland.

Above all, these literary strategies allow the country's immensity to be confirmed. Yet two additional elements should now be taken into consideration. The further one is distanced from civilization the more attractive is the sight of the appurtenances of civilized settlement. That could be signalled by the presence of a road or a track, fencing or other constructions, but it is figured forth above all in habitation along European lines. Given the circumstances, writers readily turned to such a trope. In the second place, journeying allowed reference to social organization. Here was an established community, however separated its members might be. I am suggesting that these inherent tensions are eased when exploit and adventure give way to the domestic setting, one that is part of a communal attempt to civilize the wilderness. Accordingly, the homestead is the focal point in the sparse network of communication in the bush. It is fittingly and not uncommonly envisaged as an oasis.

In books in which communal concerns are addressed in preference to those of the individual, very few novelists chose to convey the loneliness possible in outlying regions, perhaps at the road's end or in the more extreme case where no roads existed at all. The ramifications of that kind of social isolation is an aspect of colonial existence largely avoided since, one must assume, it might have undermined the notion, so widely proclaimed and so profusely illustrated in these fictions, of civilized attainments and accomplishments in Australia.

CH. X.
HOME AND HEARTH

> The moral amendment of Australia lies in hearths and homes. And these must be founded in the wilderness.
>
> A Voice from the Far Interior of Australia (p.31)

Samuel Sidney's recommendation succinctly registers the contradictory nature of the society which creative writers were attempting to represent in the period up to 1860. Referred to here are the possibilities that a pastoral existence offered those prepared to venture into the hinterland. In addition, Sidney is drawing attention to the polarities inherent in the social framework: to that great division which existed between bond and free. At this time the country could still be branded as a convict colony and yet for those free settlers emigrating from the mother country it was a promised land. Perhaps the Romantic and appealing belief in the possibility of rehabilitation and renewal (and which Therese Huber had made use of as early as 1801) was one factor which linked the two opposed and paradoxical notions of settlement in Australia. For Rowcroft, writing in the same decade as Sidney, Australia was a 'new world' where a 'new life' was possible. For that proposition to triumph, however, the ugly image of transportation needed to be erased in favour of one which encompassed a pastoral myth and endowed the country with a perspective that was Romantic. For a time, as many have observed, these interconnected themes — Australia as a prison and as a paradise — were to co-exist, and yet the pleasing concept of domestic well-being was ultimately to prevail. It informed the collective thought of the writers under consideration here and sustained their narratives. Why this idea came to prevail and, equally, how it was incorporated into these works, is the subject of this chapter.

The slow emergence of these novels is clearly related to specific historical processes. Added to the problems raised by those social divisions already mentioned, the upheaval involved in pioneering must be considered.

For example, the lack of leisure time to set down one's experiences was mentioned as being a problem by Louisa Meredith in My Home in Tasmania (pp.v-vi). Years had to elapse before emigrants could become established, let alone feel at ease in their surroundings or have time to reflect upon their own position or the situation of those around them. The creative writer had to evaluate and formulate and gain confidence in the subject matter. As noted initially, these novels did not appear until innumerable diaries, reports and journals had been written; similarly, the topographical in painting gave way to a more relaxed representation of circumstances. Themes had to emerge therefore which would exemplify the times. One writer of this century was to hypothesize in general that 'there is no romance in monotony and mutton fat'.[1]

Most who have studied these early texts have regarded them as a minor and inchoate form of prose fiction. Barnes's statement might stand for many when he affirms:

> An account of prose fiction in Australia from the beginnings to 1920 inevitably becomes an account of fumbling attempts to discover the artistic possibilities of Australian subject-matter.[2]

And yet I cannot agree with Barnes that: 'The Australian consciousness had eluded those who had attempted to create literature in the isolated and uncongenial surroundings of colonial life'.[3] A careful reading and a more tolerant and inclusive critical approach allows one to be receptive to fresh, penetrating or unexpected elements at times apparent in these narratives.

Kramer mentions some of the problems connected with the beginnings of

1. Stephen H. Roberts, The Squatting Age in Australia : 1835-1847 (1935; Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1964) 284.
2. Dutton, ed., The Literature of Australia 149.
3. Barnes in his introduction to The Writer in Australia xiii.

Australian prose fiction in the following:

> The chronological accident which brought Australian settlement into existence in the dying years of one literary tradition and on the eve of another might have contributed to the uncertainty and tentativeness of its early attempts at literary expression. Yet the formal traditions inherited by writers and artists provided a means of ordering new experiences.[4]

I have demonstrated that in narrative prose it was the romance, with its felicities and limitations, which these writers found most serviceable. Referring to the difference between the romance and the novel — a distinction to which I drew particular attention in Ch.I — Beer has observed that the romance 'concentrates on ideal possibilities; the novel on actual possibilities'.[5] 'Romance', Eco remarks acutely, 'is the story of an elsewhere'.[6] Here was the potential to transcend the untoward and disturbing aspects of colonialism. In these works the resourceful, who are also morally upright, win their way through to success in the Antipodes. It is just such a plot structure which has provoked some to refer to these as 'formula' narratives; and so it is worth recalling a comment made by Frye at this juncture. To be discerned in popular fiction is not 'a good plot but the good plot'.[7] The novels examined here point up the notion of virtue rewarded, that being both an element of romance and a popular nineteenth century literary convention.

If settlers were contending with the difficulties imposed by pioneering and, moreover, those peculiar to the Antipodes, writers too were grappling with the material arising from such conditions. Authors determined that readers would be best served by the romance, with its reassur-

4. Kramer in her introduction to The Oxford History of Australian Literature 3-4.
5. Beer 53.
6. Eco, Reflections 18.
7. Frye, The Secular Scripture 102.

ing themes concerning the triumph of good over evil and order over disorder, rather than any closer assessment of factual reality. There is accordingly a conflation of the real and the ideal, the everyday and the high-minded. Yet it can be said of this body of work that it pretended to contemporary realism without being constrained by it. One senses that these creative writers tended to compensate for what was disappointing or unseemly in their eyes. The great majority, it must be remembered, were extrapolating from first-hand experience. Their choice of subject matter must be described as judicious.

To begin with, the conventional pastoral topos permits the evasion of the social, political and economic problems seemingly inherent in the nineteenth century city, some elements of which were being replicated in Australia. Larger concerns — those associated with transportation, or its cessation in the relevant colonies, with colonial politics or official corruption, with land grants and a serious questioning of the position of the indigenous people — were, with few exceptions, set aside. Such things were openly alluded to in other walks of life. In these books criticism of the new society was kept well within bounds; later in the century novelists began to expatiate on such matters. What is damaging about this body of work is the lack of radical enquiry into the many perplexing questions relating to colonization and settlement at all levels of society.

More seriously, human and individual perceptions are blunted, and any assessment of the social and psychological issues peculiar to an isolated existence is limited in scope. The scenes imagined here are modified to suit a thesis — that of happy domesticity and refined sociability in remote circumstances. It is congenial imagery and was surely a reaction against, and a compensation for, the given situation. Yet the country's vastness is not matched by a corresponding mental set; imaginative vision is limited and circumscribed. It is evident that while pioneering is seen to propose

a Romantic perspective, in this particular respect creative writers were rarely prepared to accept the full implications of a commitment to Romanticism.

It is interesting at this point, therefore, to turn to Argyle who has argued that two major and interconnecting themes in early Australian fiction are those embodying cruelty and isolation.[8] However, it is my contention that such themes are not made explicit in the novels under consideration here. I have demonstrated that the whole concept of isolation is given weight by the continued references to the intimidating nature of the landscape and to its sparse population, and by the connotations that the word wilderness then conveyed. Yet the social disruption caused by emigration and settlement inland goes largely unrecorded in these narratives, as is the loneliness experienced by bush dwellers I have termed doubly exiled. The inability to cope with the frustrations and uncertainties which must have dogged domestic life — a factor which could have been utilized to determine narrative structure — is overlooked and in its place are domestic felicity or more colourfully dramatic events.

In reality, simple misery must have blighted many lives and significantly, it is the women novelists who, if only in brief terms, did reflect on the despair to which emigrants were prone. In _Tales for the Bush_ and _The Cabramatta Store_, Vidal has delineated more clearly than most what it might be like to live out one's life in the back country, even if having access to some of the social amenities which might have helped overcome despair. At the end of the century Lawson and Baynton were to fix on the subject, but the lonely people they portray do have a literary ancestry in _Tales for the Bush_ of the mid-forties. Vidal is remembered for the didactic nature of this, her earliest work, with its somewhat laboured homely wisdom; yet what

8. Argyle 4.

is noteworthy is that the author has caught the social and psychological ambience, even if fleetingly, of small bush dwellings, those without the sense of community enjoyed at a larger establishment. In 'Susan's Dream' the Fletchers and their eight children inhabit a slab hut in a remote settlement and attention is called to the poverty endured in this insignificant rural dwelling. Vidal mentions the heat and wind and glare on the nearby road. In the following passage the charged implications of the conditional clause used twice over gives some idea of the overwhelming sense of isolation experienced by the emigrant in such a setting:

> The hut faced the road; indeed they had placed it near the road on purpose, that they might see any drays that might chance to pass — they thought it was more cheerful. (p.111)

Seldom has this prevailing mood been caught so cogently as in the brief, understated lines above.

In all it might be stated, as Mitchell has of Tales of the Colonies, that there is a stress on 'the sensationalism of adventure and the recital of triumph over adversity'; rather than as this critic observes 'the human experience' of such circumstances.[9] Human experience tends, on one hand, to be made subservient to the principles of romance, and, on the other, to what is public-spirited. Howitt provides a telling example in A Boy's Adventures. Testifying to the feelings experienced in the Australian back country, he describes how 'the small community which is grouped together at the homestead, passes weeks, and even months, without communication or intelligence with the rest of the world'. But, patriotic reporter that he is, Howitt sums up the situation thus:

> Yet this perhaps only renders the intercourse of these ten-mile neighbours the more lively when they do meet, and we know that there

9. The Oxford History of Australian Literature 36.

> are neighbourhoods where a number of intelligent families make up a delightful circle, enjoying at each other's houses, books, music, and other refined pleasures of social existence. (p.235)

This same situation is envisaged in numbers of works.

Having its origins in the concept of isolation the theme of exile, as will be demonstrated, is countered by that pioneering resolve to establish and resume a domestic existence, generally on family lines, and to maintain the social mores of the mother culture, its rituals and traditions, in the bush. This emphasis, in fact, works to compensate for — and turn attention from — the absence of women within the rural community in reality. For that is a major feature of the cruelty that Argyle associates with this bush culture or, more particularly, its lowest echelons. Images of isolation are contrasted, I would argue, by a similarly powerful image: the fair prospect of European habitation and the prosperity and goodwill called forth there. By these means authors linked concepts of wilderness and pastoral and employed a trope to reconcile the two.

Such gratifying subject matter works to direct scrutiny away from the cruelty and brutality connected with settlement in Australia. And if cruelty and isolation are linked as Argyle would contend, then fear imposed by isolation may give rise to cruel practices and, furthermore, remoteness made such cruelty possible. It was this ugly underside of colonial society which these writers suppressed. The cruelty Argyle is referring to was inflicted on those lowest in the social scale: the Aborigines and the convicts. For reasons I outlined in Ch.I, the majority of writers thought that colonization was justified, and this surely reflected public opinion. They also believed that Aborigines had to be subdued for white occupation to succeed. So that cruelty in such a context was assumed to be necessary, or else tacitly recorded. Occasionally the creative writer made pointed reference to these things and acknowledged a failure in dealings with the

Aboriginal; however, the question of race relationships could not easily be incorporated into plot structure except in a superficial fashion at this stage. For reasons behind that omission one must look to the overwhelming and ongoing need for the remote colony to prosper. The creative writer tended to exploit these issues rather than to explore them.

The novelist who employed the background of the earliest colonies could scarcely have avoided matters concerning transportation, since assigned labour seemed fundamental to settlement and survival. Few, however, were willing to castigate their fellow countrymen by proposing ill-treatment of such labour, except in those narratives where the protagonist was seen in the guise of convict-hero. In The Emigrant Family such material is developed into a dramatic episode. This allows the author to air discomforting questions relating to the necessity of maintaining one's moral integrity at the furthest reaches of civilization. Bengala is notable for the way in which the topic is imaginatively employed; it leads to dramatic tension and tragedy. Nevertheless the dichotomy between the powerful and the powerless, especially when it exposed a deep rift within European society, could scarcely have been a pleasing topic on which to dwell; and if the country were not to belie its title of a land of promise then, in terms of colonial fiction, the excesses and brutalities of the convict era were best left unexplored. Such material could not remain unexamined for long; it was addressed in Clarke's His Natural Life in the 1870s.

There is another aspect of transportation which has received little attention in connection with the earlier colonial novel and it is now worthwhile pursuing it for the bearing it may have on this body of work and, more especially, on the topic of home and hearth. Argyle has drawn attention to the homosexual impulse amongst this predominantly male sector of society, and thus initially the colonial workforce.[10] Russel Ward, referring to New

10. Argyle 5.

South Wales, has remarked upon this subject and one associated — the scarcity of women in the bush up until and beyond the mid-century.[11] Ward states: 'This deprivation of female companionship had very important effects on the behaviour and outlook of bush-workers'.[12] He mentions, too, the sexual relationships of European men and Aboriginal women. However, as both Ward and Robert Hughes point out, the great majority of observers were silent on the matters of homosexuality and miscegenation and such issues were largely suppressed. Drawing from contemporary evidence relating to homosexuality Hughes conjectures that it was common amongst convicts. Expanding on the topic, he posits that such information must generally have been known in colonial Australia and contributed, therefore, 'to the atmosphere of nameless evil, of unutterable degradation, that surrounded the idea of convictry in the ears of its respectable citizens'.[13] 'Homosexuality', writes Hughes, 'was one of the mute, stark, subliminal elements in the "convict stain" whose removal, from 1840 onwards, so preoccupied Australian nationalists'.[14] Referring to the next decade and to developing social codes, this author explains that 'as the Victorian animus against homosexuals grew even stronger in Australia after 1850, so did the belief that most convicts were sexually tainted'.[15] Hughes declares that much documentary evidence on the subject is apparent after 1830 and coincidentally, that this decade saw the movement against transportation gain momentum.[16]

The same decade saw the course of Australian prose fiction firmly established and we might therefore expect to find an expression of these tensions

11. Ward Ch.IV.
12. Ward 125.
13. Hughes 272 and *passim*.
14. Hughes 272.
15. Hughes 593.
16. Hughes 265.

and concerns. However, due to the working of contemporary sanctions, these matters are not openly alluded to, and it is unlikely that such material would find its way into novels largely Victorian in bias. Yet it is safe to assume that these issues might be addressed in other ways. To take only one example, in Alfred Dudley, one of the earliest of the Australian narratives, great emphasis is placed on the separation of the assigned servants from the Dudley household, as I explained much earlier.

Unlike contemporary fiction Sidney's document concerning Australia addresses such problems more openly. In my final epigraph, taken from Sidney's book, the stress is upon the need for domestic continuity. In the same work, Sidney feels free to explain that: 'Vice, of the most frightful and demoralizing character, is created and fostered by the want of female population' (p.30). Sidney would appear to be referring to miscegenation at this point although there is room for a wider interpretation, perhaps, when he proclaims the great need for women in the bush:

> But it is not only the suppression of crimes, which can be but darkly alluded to, that would be brought about by enabling our bushmen to marry, — female influence, especially among woods and fields, produces on the rudest of mankind a softening, civilizing influence. (p.30)

The 'moral amendment' of the country, as the influential Sidney perceived it, lay 'in hearths and homes'.

Finally, one further point should be considered. It is Ward's contention that mateship and the accompanying concepts of independence and egalitarianism, often considered to be a dominant element in the national self-image, have their origins in the close personal ties existing amongst the convicts and amongst the pastoral proletariat, 'most of whom before 1850 were convicts or ex-convicts or the native-born offspring of convict parents'.[17] This class of men and their perceived code of ethics received

17. Ward 10-11 and passim.

little imaginative treatment in the novels under consideration for reasons of genre and those relating to contemporary concerns. One needs to look beyond Russel Ward therefore in considering these texts, and Ferrier makes the interesting observation that, in the twentieth century, 'conservative interests in family and property' would seem to characterize the more dominant national self-image.[18] The latter image is already uppermost in these early works. The middle-class reader may not have been expected to sympathize with men of a dubious social and moral background — those so far removed from the cultural milieu of the chief settings. So, with few exceptions, a blinkered vision prevails with regard this section of the community: a situation to be deplored because the pioneering efforts of these men would have furnished subject matter going well beyond the surface of events that was conventionally drawn.

Richard White has proposed, in connection with the outlandish nature of the continent itself and the stain of convictism and the social ills that were seen to be linked with it, that these 'macabre analogies meant that Australia remained, for a time, a mine of extravagant conceits for the cultured elite'.[19] But in some respects the image was to change. 'Between 1830 and 1850, Hell was turned into Paradise', explains White, who describes the social, cultural and economic reasons behind the altered perspective.[20] At this point, While also recalls the 'undercurrent of admiration for the new country' which had always been present. Certainly, that is in evidence in the novels; for although innumerable references exist to the intimidating nature of the wilderness, illustrated throughout is the

18. Ferrier 44.
19. White 16.
20. White 29ff.

opportunity to gain a comfortable livelihood.

It would seem that before the mid-century there arose a pressing need for attention to be directed towards the antithesis of what was disturbing and distressing in colonial Australia. Nowhere could this be more winningly sustained than in a countervailing presentation: that of the free settler and his family, and his dwelling place in the countryside. There too, as several authors thought to portray them, emancipists, their crimes redeemed, could be similarly placed. Here are connotations of conservatism and conformity — precisely those qualities that the creative writer assigned to the homestead in the bush.

Most plots conclude with a focus upon courtship and marriage. These social observances are consistent with the structure and requisites of romance; further, they conform to that ideal proposed in colonial settlement. Marriage and its social ramifications; the concept is germane to the body of thought giving rise to colonial prose fiction in this era. It met the social expectations of the middle-classes and fulfilled national assumptions both in the home country and in the new. The prevailing mood is caught in Kingston's panegyric to the settler: 'His children call the land of his adoption their own dear home; and he looks with pride and satisfaction on the rich fields, the orchards and gardens which his industry and perseverance have planted in the wilderness ...'.[21]

Social expectations and national assumptions are addressed and fulfilled in manifold ways in these texts. For example, it became apparent in Ch.IX that writers countered the more disturbing aspects of a rural existence with an unambiguous image which symbolized European settlement: and, further, that lines of movement which served a crucial function within

21. Kingston 71.

these narratives centred upon this location and placed a particular emphasis on it. Because of its positive connotations, the image of the bush dwelling also provided a salubrious balance and an effective antithesis to the country's best-forgotten and shameful origins.

Although, as in Vidal's Bengala, there are times when a consciously Australian nationalism is expressed, the mood of this discourse is patriotic to a marked degree. The importance of the home culture is paramount and the fact that the word 'emigrant', rather than 'immigrant' is consistently employed illustrates the viewpoint precisely. I explained in Ch.IX that movement within these narratives, setting aside the initial journey to Australia and ultimately inland, comprises that between homesteads, between homestead and urban centre, and between this dwelling and the mother country. My intention now is to focus on the links connecting the homestead and the motherland. In those references I have made to the subject it has become evident that this nexus was more often a spiritual link: a line of influence rather than one of communication. That would suggest that the cluster of ideas connected with it could be utilized extensively.

It is within the framework of an emotional bias towards the motherland that the notion of exile, in all its aspects, becomes a pervasive theme. It is commonly seen in an expression of nostalgia for what is in general termed 'home', an expression which appears early and is widely employed. To a considerable degree these imagined people, transported to Australia willingly or unwillingly, look to Europe and the idealized country of their birth, a return in thought mirroring that physical journey referred to presently. In Settlers and Convicts Harris describes the subject of 'home' as 'an ever ready theme' amongst the colonists (p.70). 'Many an association gathers round the word' writes Atkinson in a long passage on the notion in Gertrude (p.119).

Again, memories and recollections may be figured forth, these giving

rise to a yearning for the native land. Also in evidence are thoughts evoking a particular dwelling and, more often than not, the parlour and the hearth and the domestic circle there, as when the author of The Emigrant's Daughter recalls the neat cottage and 'snug fireside' of 'our home in England' (p.4). In his Confessions of a Loafer Turner provides another example: 'With a stereoscopic distinctness that pained while it pleased, I saw the quiet little parlour, so many thousand miles away, with its three beloved occupants' (p.67). Nostalgic reflections are given positive shaping in numbers of works.

When referring to the movement which animates these narratives I intimated that one convention of the European novel of the nineteenth century allowed the favoured protagonist to return to the homeland after long years and numerous exploits abroad. Such a return is part of the structure of romance. The theme became immensely popular in literature; it was also a commonplace in the iconography of the period. In prose fiction misgivings concerning exile are thereby resolved and the narrative concludes on a buoyant note. Christie utilized such a plot in A Love Story, one of the earliest of the Australian novels. Howitt and Kingsley in their full-blown romances, Tallangetta and Geoffry Hamlyn, are two others who likewise visualize their leading characters homeward bound after a colourful life in the Antipodes. To some extent another convention is fulfilled here since one aspect of pastoral is that, having benefited spiritually from a pastoral sojourn, the protagonist returns at last to metropolitan circumstances with renewed understanding. Kingsley, one of the writers most aware of his material's potential, employs the convention in Geoffry Hamlyn. He explains how those characters who finally return, do so 'with new thoughts and associations, as strangers to a strange land' (p.134). Drawing attention to the courage needed in individuals who, out of necessity, are separated from their native country, he refers to the emotional cost of such an undertaking. In fact, however, those who sojourn in the Antipodes in this body of work are

not seen to suffer too greatly; besides, ensuing prosperity may permit their freedom of choice in this respect.

Seldom in reality does an individual inherit a fortune and journey home to prosperity and rank. The author of The Rebel Convicts was one of several who devised such a conclusion. In The Queen of the South, Frank Maynard voyages to England, his colonial adventures behind him, after unexpectedly inheriting an estate. It should be said that not as much is made of these literary devices as later in the century — a time when the colonial novel as a genre flourished.

While such a return may furnish a novel's denouement, this in general is not the case; and the extent to which the home in the bush becomes a permanent dwelling-place is a marked feature of these works. In A Boy's Adventures Howitt makes the point that having visited 'home' squatters will most often 'return with joy to their old woods and wilds' (p.235). Then Australia becomes home, and one of the earliest of such references in the Australian novel is found in Arabin (p.201). One year earlier, in 1844, when Geoghegan's The Currency Lass was first performed in Sydney, characters affectionately allude to Australia as their 'native land'.[22] The sign of an emerging mentality is registered here. Similar impulses in the earlier colonial novel will on occasion surprise and reward the attentive reader today.

Even when the colonists considered Australia as their homeland, nevertheless the lingering sense of exile and yearning for the motherland commonly gives rise, as we have already seen, to the desire to base one's surroundings upon a former way of life. Crab spends his last days at 'Cherry-tree

22. Edward Geoghegan, The Currency Lass Or My Native Girl. A Musical Play in Two Acts, ed., Roger Covell (Sydney: Currency; London: Eyre Methuen, 1976) 10.

Bottom', the very model of an English farm. Charles Reade imagines something similar in It Is Never Too Late to Mend. In the Australian section of the work there occurs a description of a bush home which the occupants have carefully rendered English in all its attributes and, by excluding native plants, in its close environment. This is indeed a call for sympathetic understanding and the author intensifies the mood by picturing a caged lark whose song catches at the emotions of passers-by (pp.359-60). In a further ploy, emphasis may be placed on a former dwelling, as formulated, for example, in Alfred Dudley, A Love Story, Gertrude, Geoffry Hamlyn and Wolfingham.

Whatever the surroundings or conditions, domestic commonplaces tend to be replicated at times of uncertainty. Indeed, the comfortably familiar takes on a deep appeal and a more elevated status in the context of rude surroundings. It is not surprising, then, that in contemporary diaries and journals, reference to everyday events and the arrangements surrounding them proliferate. Savery's The Hermit of Van Diemen's Land, which contains both real and imagined incidents, offers a fine example. In a novel such scenes could be fleshed out imaginatively. The depiction of familiar activities and rituals was an important factor because it added credibility to the reporting of the lives of British folk who had emigrated overseas. Moreover, by such means colonists were shown in a favourable light. In the contrast and comparision, both explicit and implied, of such activities on each side of the world the writer was employing appealing imagery. As will now be shown, settings could be appreciated on a number of different levels and, cumulatively, they impart to this body of fiction its characteristic flavour.

Arabin, in McCombie's novel, is an emigrant who is shown to take some while to become reconciled to Australian conditions. Arabin 'wished to love the beautiful wilderness' but he missed the 'high civilisation of Britain'

(pp.73-4). As so often in these texts, a domestic incident is enacted to summon up the cultural legacy from which the young settler is physically separated. When he is entertained at the Butlers' bush homestead all such recollections return to Arabin as, one night: 'The ladies played on the piano, and sang their favourite songs' (p.102). McCombie explains: 'It is a strange contrast to listen to the voice of an accomplished woman in a Bush cottage'. As one contemplates the scene 'the comforts of England rush to the mind, oceans all but interminable are traversed at a thought'. The brief scene is steeped in the sentimentality we have come to associate with the Victorian era. Given the circumstances, corresponding scenes from the other side of the world come instantly to mind. For a moment, strength may be derived from the richness of the experience although, as the author stresses, beyond such confines 'the wilderness of Australia, or rather "the Bush", dissipates such flights of imagination'.

The passage is a telling one and of interest today for the Romantic thought underlying it. The sustaining power of the domestic image and the evocation of a song give rise a flight of fancy, and figured forth is a deep sense of the emigrant's loss. Seldom has this been conveyed so imaginatively, although Franc has attempted something similar in <u>Marian</u> (Ch.XII). There is a heart-searching here since a country endowed with historic and traditional strengths is compared with the spiritual emptiness that may overwhelm one in alien surroundings. In a more positive sense, however, movement within these narratives proposing spiritual links will convey reassurance; negative factors may thus be given positive connotations.

Typically, yearning for the parent culture involves such comparisons. It therefore seems appropriate to consider the domestic ethos of the age and the concepts of home and hearth in the motherland and, more particularly, how these may have impinged upon society and literary works originating in that society. This will of course include many of the books considered

here. I would argue that these were directed to an audience in the homeland. However, that the books published in Australia are similar in outlook would suggest that contemporary ideals had soon become incorporated into the mode of thought of the Australian middle-classes.

By the mid-nineteenth century the growth and extent of the British Empire was incontestable. Divine providence, it would seem, had raised up the British people. Their indomitable qualities were legion. There ensued a belief in the natural superiority of a nation that had conquered so much of the globe and established colonies there. The temper of the age is clearly in evidence in the fiction studied here; more particularly in the innumerable references to the concept of civilization in the wilderness, to which I alluded in Ch.I. Self-righteousness and a sense of pride in antipodean achievement obviously and invariably underscores these texts.

In Ch.I I explained how Georgian principles, gradually modified by Romantic concepts, helped shape early settlement and society, and how both may be discerned in the earlier colonial novel. Moreover, those values which it suits historians to call Victorian are exemplified in these texts as well. It is now time to examine such complex matters more closely.

Much will be gained in turning to a couple of works for children, given Niall's conviction that, because of the vigilance surrounding literature for children, these books 'may reflect their society's values with special clarity'. For example, though Georgian influences are variously illustrated in Alfred Dudley and the book in fact dates from this era, the homely attributes and the stress on family relationships, the emphasis on moral rectitude, respectability, perseverance and conservatism are strongly suggestive of a slightly later cultural ethos — namely, that generally described as Victorian — as is the sentimentality lavished on this emigrant family. Appearing at the beginning of Victoria's reign, which commenced in 1837, is

A Mother's Offering to Her Children. However one may judge this work today, it was likewise intended to be strongly edifying and many of the same elements are present. In the conceptual framework of these books are modes of thought which strengthened and coalesced in the course of the nineteenth century; for example, the setting of the domestic circle and the idea that prose fiction should be educational and morally improving as well as entertaining.

Most who have studied this century and the Victorian age in particular will admit the difficulty of generalizing about the times and about contemporary attitudes and social mores in what was a diverse and rapidly changing social situation. Even so, it is possible to make some valid conclusions about particular periods within Victoria's reign. Our interest here lies in the earlier Victorian era and centres on the educated classes. Observers of the times see the preoccupations of this strata of society as becoming pre-eminent.

Altick regards the decade of the thirties as one of transition in literature. He contends:

> In literary history these years are sometimes called the interregnum, a fallow interval following the exhaustion of the romantic age's energies and awaiting the fresh invigoration that would soon come as new, identifiably "Victorian" voices were heard.[23]

Altick proposes that although some attributes of the Romantic period had been absorbed, others had been rejected. Prose fiction with an Australian setting was only just becoming established in the thirties and so while it is difficult to define literature in the mother culture around this time, equally all kinds of problems arise when attempting generalizations about the colonial novel.

23. Altick, Victorian People 2.

In Ch.I I agreed in principle that Romanticism may not have reached the Australian bush until the 1830s, although such impulses may be seen to colour the whole concept of journeying to an exotic land, travelling into the hinterland, making one's home there, and coming to some understanding of the surrounding environment. For all this, Romanticism seems to have been modified, if not undercut, by the extreme sense of alienation which gathered around circumstances in the Australian hinterland. McCombie, for example, gives weight to these considerations in Arabin: his protagonist, we remember, wanted to love 'the beautiful wilderness' but he missed his former more civilized existence. Romantic patterns of thought may well have prevailed on a personal or on a communal level; but our interest lies in the consciousness of the creative writer as each fixed upon the subject of a small community of settlers, a single family, or an individual colonist in the southern hemisphere.

Whilst, as Altick observed, 'the early Victorians were the heirs of the romantics', he asserts that the Romantic ethos was subordinated to the Age of Reason in the century's first quarter. To conclude his findings — that the 'intellectual outlook of the Age of Reason' flourished in these decades — Altick reasons that 'the Victorian mind had its roots deep in eighteenth-century, not romantic, soil'.[24] With regard Australia, Dixon in The Course of the Empire has drawn attention to the many facets of colonial life which he has seen as distinctly Georgian in colouring. Turning to literature Dixon has observed that numbers of authors 'used the country-house landscape as a central image of the frontier'; it 'offered the colonial novelists a perfect symbol of the frontier, because its principal function was to express a relationship between civilization and wilderness, between art and nature, between the works of man and the works of God'.[25] It could be said that

24. Altick, Victorian People 8.
25. Dixon 157 and passim.

this whole concept of civilization and the mentality which figured it forth dates from the eighteenth century. One might infer, then, as Dixon does, that Georgian consciousness would persist for some considerable time into the following century.

As to the spirit of the times, 'the sobriety and self-conscious rectitude' which Altick sees as gaining credence against the excesses of the Regency period 'now came to constitute the dominant ethos of Victorian society'.[26] 'The tastes and taboos' which have been attributed to the Victorian age, and foremost among them, 'prudery' and 'respectability', likewise had their beginnings in Georgian times.[27] If these values were to the fore at the beginning of Victoria's reign then they became more firmly entrenched as the century progressed.

The figure of the queen herself, 'a virtuous and domestic Sovereign',[28] lent weight to the ethos of conservatism and social stability which characterized the new reign. Her early marriage in 1840 had a marked influence on the growing significance attached to family life and the domestic ethos within the middle-classes. The cult surrounding the young queen and her consort strengthened in the years 1840-1853 with the births of a succession of royal children. Middle-class morality became firmly anchored in the institution of the family which in consequence assumed further prestige. 'Middle-class ideals set the standard for the nation', says Briggs, adding that 'the Queen and the Prince Consort were providing a golden model of respectable and happy family life'.[29] Such a view is supported by Young.[30] The queen herself

26. Altick, Victorian People 10.
27. Altick, Victorian People 8.
28. Young, Victorian England 70.
29. Briggs 28.
30. Young, Victorian England 97 and passim.

can be quoted:

> They say no Sovereign was ever more loved than I am (I am bold enough to say), & this because of our domestic home, the good example it presents.[31]

Marina Warner explains:

> Queen Victoria mirrored her times' discovery of the family as the fountainhead of happiness and the microcosm of a happy society, she reflected its concern with material comforts and prosperity as the reward of virtue and endeavour.[32]

'In early Victorian society at large, romantic emotionalism manifested itself in numerous ways', declares Altick, and amongst those interesting for my purposes he details 'the sentimentality which governed domestic relations, the conduct of courtship, the veneration of the fireside'.[33] Because it 'emphasized the maintenance of those values which held society together' the family was one of those institutions which Briggs considers helped condition 'the national mood'. 'Belief in a common moral code, based on duty and self-restraint' was, in Briggs's opinion, another powerful factor.[34] Young finds that the 'impulse to say the right, the improving thing, is more characteristic of the Victorian temper'.[35] Hence, most commonly remarked upon is the notion of respectability, which would appear to have become firmly rooted in the early Victorian period, and especially agreeable to the middle-classes. Here is Altick's explanation of such a concept:

> Respectability was not subject to private definition; its attributes represented a consensus. They included sobriety, thrift, cleanliness of person and tidiness of home, good manners, respect for the law,

31. Quoted in Marina Warner, Queen Victoria's Sketchbook (London: Macmillan, 1979) 134.
32. Warner 134.
33. Altick, Victorian People 7.
34. Briggs 17.
35. Young, Victorian Essays 160.

> honesty in business affairs, and, it need hardly be added, chastity. Exercise of all these tended to content one's mind and, equally important, to invite the approbation of others. It was like living in a state of grace on earth.[36]

The processes of conservatism and conformity already prevailed in the early Victorian decades; Allen, in fact, argues for 'the universal acceptance of the idea of respectability' by this time.[37] For Allen, the notion 'thoroughly permeates the Victorian novel'.[38] It becomes evident that an orientation of this kind is in every respect at odds with the Romantic temper.

Since the cluster of qualities and attributes just mentioned had developed into an ideal as the nineteenth century progressed, it is unlikely that colonial novelists would deviate from such a schema when picturing the ambience surrounding their chief settings or locations. The writer of popular fiction works to a formula; as Eco explains, he tells 'the same story — the one that the public was already asking of him'.[39] We can say that the notion of colonial domestic life was premised on a number of _a priori_ beliefs and that these became fundamental in its representation. Writers could not afford to ignore precepts characteristic of the age and as I have demonstrated these soon became connected with the myth of the successful colonist. Besides, such an element manipulated the reader into increased admiration for the fictional settler; it invited a happy comparison between such distant people and the imagined prototype at home. In circumstances like these, as Eco has observed of popular writing: 'Ideology and rhetoric here fuse perfectly'.[40] This impulse to sacrifice 'sincerity to propriety' which Houghton sees as typical of the times,[41] is exemplified in many of the colonial novels.

36. Altick, _Victorian People_ 175.
37. Allen 141.
38. Allen 142.
39. Eco, _Reflections_ 14.
40. Eco, _The Role of the Reader_ 139.
41. Houghton 394.

The word 'respectable' made an early appearance in the books under discussion here, and prior to the Victorian era. One concludes that the concept was to prove of value amongst those writing of the disparate people who made up colonial society and, moreover, amongst the disparate people themselves. For example, in The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land Savery makes reference to 'a respectable family residence' (p.145), and from the tone of his observations throughout it could be inferred that such an attribute was acclaimed at the outskirts of the Empire.

My study has demonstrated that the great majority of creative writers directed attention towards this useful index of the social milieu as well. At the conclusion of Porter's narrative the Dudley family embark upon a plan to help 'well-educated, respectable persons' to Australia; other 'deserving persons of a lower class' are also to be included (p.183).[42] Rowcroft undoubtedly links respectability with Thornley's house and the other settings of his Tales. The 'respectable looking cottage' to which Arabin repairs after his ordeals in the bush and at the hands of the lower orders proves to be so as the narrative unfolds. Tucker drew on such ideas and with rhetorical colouring invites an explicit comparison between the houses conjured up in Ralph Rashleigh. In less vivid terms Harris similarly provides a contrast of homes in The Emigrant Family. And when Charles Fitzpatrick comes to isolated 'Bongubine' in Tallangetta he finds that early Victorian ideal of the 'Respectable Family' in residence there and gathered at their hearth.

Of further significance: because most dwellings are seen in evaluative terms, the reader sometimes needs to be reminded of the effort required to preserve such standards. As mentioned earlier, Kingsley alludes to this factor with regard to routine at 'Toonarbin'. In Tender and True Spence

42. See also pp.29,65,111.

records that hard work is necessary 'to keep up old customs' (Vol.I,p.219). These continuities may be variously suggested.

Respectability, like the neatness envisaged at the fictional home and which is only one of its components, was invariably attributed to the major locations. Prose fiction soon took up the theme that whatever excesses were connected with the country's beginnings social responsibility did exist in colonial Australia. Argyle contends that, given the background, 'free settlers to Australia established a more rigorous conformity — called Victorianism elsewhere — than was necessary even in the home of Victorianism'.[43] It was with good reason, therefore, that conformity and respectability came to characterize the bush home. This highly effective strategy provided one of the unifying themes in the earlier colonial novel.

Social historians have seen the home and the domestic ethos it sustained as becoming of increasing cultural significance in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In just such a study Rybczynski has reflected upon the gradual evolution of the domestic impulse. For this writer:

> To speak of domesticity is to describe a set of felt emotions, not a single attribute. Domesticity has to do with family, intimacy, and a devotion to the home, as well as with a sense of the house as embodying — not only harboring — these sentiments.[44]

At the heart of any such dwelling, in a symbolic sense, is the hearth, which historians generally consider to be the focal point of family life of the middle-classes in Britain in the Victorian era. And, as Houghton stresses in his study on the Victorian mentality, the concept of the family was central

43. Argyle 116.
44. Rybczynski 75.

to the social issues of the day.[45] Contemporary novelists naturally included vignettes of family life in the parlour in their narratives. The idealization of home and hearth was foremost in the novels of Dickens and Scott, and since that was so in the most esteemed works of the day minor fiction was likely to echo parallel concerns. Especially is this true of the romance, a genre which Beer has seen as offering a 'peculiarly precise register' of contemporary preoccupations.[46]

In the imaginative recreation of possible settings and events the home and the hearth and the family circle there was that part of colonial culture which attracted a firm and sustained response. I turn to it finally because it was one further strategy and perhaps the most conspicuous which was employed to convince readers of the worthiness of these colonists and the unexceptionable nature of their domestic existence. In writing of the burgeoning colonial society, Ian Turner has mentioned the human need to rise above uncertainty and insecurity. With that in mind he notes the persistent attachment to former patterns of existence. Hence colonial Australians 'aspired to create an antipodean replica of the culture from which they had sprung...'.[47] In the prose fiction of the period this was commonly expressed with recourse to the presentation of the domestic domain. Passages relating to the bush home tend to be prescriptive as much as descriptive. A specific image emerges here and one would judge that it tallied with readers' expectations.

As was richly illustrated in the parlour scene from McCombie's Arabin, this room was invested with positive connotations. As with the notion of the homestead itself, but in a more localized and sharply defined sense, the

45. Houghton 341.
46. Beer 58.
47. Ian Turner, 'The Social Setting' in Dutton, The Literature of Australia 19.

parlour or its equivalent proposed comfort, security and stability. Given the social milieu, mention of the fire at the hearth served as a heightening device for exemplary scenes, those which spoke of plenty and generosity of spirit. All this is represented, to take a further example, in that scene at 'Bongubine' in Tallangetta. Here 'a noble blazing fire of logs' is what the reader might have expected of a home which had such a 'kindly, genuine domestic spirit about it' (Vol.I,Ch.VII). Scenes of both a formal and informal nature could be enacted within settings like this, the women writers in particular leaning towards domestic detail, the telling particulars of which suggested their especial point of view. But almost all writers offered such episodes, these being apt in human terms, and artistically. Rituals, such as story-telling or the offering of hospitality, were naturally and positively linked with such locales.

All this provided imagery of a sentimental and uncontradictory kind. It might be said that in the circumstances such material demanded inclusion; more particularly for the social norms it represented. As I have given to understand, there is a compensatory factor at work here. I turn with good reason once more to that statement by Eco: 'After surprising the reader by telling him what he did not yet know, the author reassures him by repeating what he knows already'.[48] A spatial area which conjures up the domestic and the familiar thus offers subject matter of great potential; it is governed by several major premises: those which govern this literary discourse as a whole.

It must be reiterated, first of all, that these books are marked by prejudice and propaganda; they are underscored by generous praise for the settler. The very fact that these imagined emigrants look back to their spiritual homeland and are attempting to recreate a similar culture epito-

48. Eco, The Role of the Reader 137.

mizes this factor and must have compelled the reader's admiration. In Clacy's 'The Bush Fire' Julia Leonard is said to impart to her brother's home 'that air of comfort which a true Englishwoman disseminates wherever she goes' (Vol.I,p.173); we are not surprised to learn, therefore, that all is as it should be within these precincts, as it is within a host of other imagined homes. Here the house is decorated with Australian wild-flowers and it is a reminder that a requirement of successful colonization is the newcomers' ability to accustom themselves to new ways and novel conditions. Paradoxically, in the portrayal of this attribute writers evince support for their compatriots. In these works the whole idea of domestic upheaval is subsumed into one which valorizes those who have experienced this sweeping change to their lives. Spence echoes such thoughts in Clara Morison: 'An Anglo-Saxon has always had the character of adapting himself better to new countries than one of any other race, and where he can make a home he grows attached to it' (p.237). An intelligent writer, Spence exhibits the same self-righteous attitude as numbers of lesser writers; yet in the context of the times such assertions must have formed a positive, pleasing aspect of colonial prose fiction. Brought to mind here is the remark made by Young that 'the patriotism of early Victorian England ... was at heart a pride in human capacity...'.[49] All this was not uniquely British, however, as Gerstaecker's Tales of the Desert and the Bush,[50] to name only one example, makes plain. Such a mood was typical of the literature of colonizing nations, and politics are never far from fictional recreations of such events. In the books I am studying the homestead, therefore, is seen in the wider perspective of similar homes and hearths within a sustaining mother culture either in the homeland or elsewhere across the globe where fellow Britons had settled.

49. Young, Victorian England 7.
50. F. Gerstaecker, Tales of the Desert and the Bush (London, 1860).

If such loyalty governs these texts and colours the admiration for domestic attainments in the bush, there is also a sense in which it touches upon the position of women in their domestic role. A prevailing factor is the idealized picture of women and womanhood in these narratives. With women were associated notions of refinement and culture, as I explained in Ch.VII. They were 'Custodians of the Standard' Young tells us.[51] That was so in the mother country but in a far-distant colony — one initially inhabited by felons, both men and women — such ideas needed to be reinforced. Atkinson gives voice to such ideals in Cowanda: 'Let not the daughter or the wife forget her home mission, for it is a holy one' (p.105). Like thoughts are advanced in Gertrude, which at times takes on aspects of a moral fable, and similarly in numerous other works, often by means of plot structure or characterization. A shared system of values is assumed here and given colonial circumstances that was inherently desirable. And because the romance is the favoured genre, marriage is eulogized in these narratives. The aptness of this social code is made everywhere apparent — as in, for example, the domestic scenes dreamed up by Sidney in his Gallops and Gossips and, conversely, that incident in Clara Morison where Mr. Reginald imagines the difference that a wife would make to home and hearth (pp.334-5).

So in this respect women are similarly portrayed in these settings, whether serving mutton chops as in Rowcroft's Tales, tending to a party of travellers as in Bowman's The Kangaroo Hunters, or involved in a discussion as to the appropriateness of knitting gentlemen's socks in the parlour as in Bengala — Vidal's sensible heroine believes it is not unseemly (Vol.I, p.309). My point is that, for the most part, women are seen in an idealized light. This is not to say that they entirely avoid the more disturbing aspects of pioneering, but with few exceptions, and as opposed to their men-

51. Young, Victorian England 3. See also Houghton Ch.13 and passim.

folk, their role is both passive and domestic. And yet, through the novels of Vidal, Atkinson, and Spence, readers are made aware that a domestic role is not as tranquil as, say, Kingsley and Howitt, would make out. Departing from the conventional, 'Little Jacob' too makes very deliberate if homespun reference to the lot of women leading a rural existence in colonial Australia. It would seem to differ from pastorals of old. However, more often than not, women are pictured in the parlour where social refinement and the sanctity of the home emerge as fundamental, and this room at the dwelling's centre takes on heightened colouring. In such a context, women are glamorized and sentimentalized. Mentioned above, the parlour scene in Arabin provides a pleasing example.

It has now become axiomatic to say that these writers sought both to educate and entertain. Still, this was a further major factor governing interior scenes in these mid-nineteenth century narratives. I return to that statement made by Watson, namely that: 'The Victorians did not merely expect novels to be accurate: they demanded that they should be so'.[52] On a pragmatic level, such passages worked to inform the reading public, especially in the northern hemisphere, how colonial people conducted their lives. The fireside scenes of the kind devised by Rowcroft in the Tales provide an example of rustic existence in the early days of free settlement; in contrast, Bengala offers parlour scenes in the homes of more affluent and sophisticated colonists. In Marian, the hearth forms the background to a number of domestic gatherings, but the practicalities of colonial life are incorporated into the text. Here furniture is made of cedar and gum. For the contemporary reader, curiosities of this kind may be made acceptable with the mention of material or cultural advancement; it is often, as in this instance, embodied in the arrival of a piano. Exoticism may colour

52. Watson 4.

notions of home and hearth as Howitt, for example, tends to picture in Tallangetta. On the other hand, simple bush homes, as in The Emigrant Family, demonstrate that expatriates can maintain as neat and respectable a parlour as any in the northern hemisphere.

Passages relating to home and hearth likewise entertained the nineteenth century reader to whom the subject of the Antipodes must have been a constant source of interest. As already evident, the homestead hearth could be utilized as the background for interesting or exciting events; in turn, these tended to accentuate the hearth's inherent merit. Yet with regard to edification or enjoyment one would be hard pressed to differentiate between the two when considering the more competent works, or the more imaginative passages in minor texts. In terms of entertainment one would look, above all, to narrative structure or to ingenuity or felicity of plot.

It is noticeable that the movement which structures these narratives habitually takes newcomers into the domestic sphere, and while this allows for scenes of social harmony it also provides the opportunity for a graphic representation of the colonial way of life. Such a setting is found in 'Little Cary's Experiences as a "New Chum"' by 'Little Jacob'. When homesick young emigrants are welcomed to South Australia they share the tin pannikins and blue crockery at the table of kindly neighbours. Here the kitchen serves as parlour, yet the scene's warmth is not lessened by the humble surroundings. The antithesis of such an incident occurs with the intrusion of bushrangers into the parlour in The Rebel Convicts. Scarcely prepared for this key event, the reader must be shocked that the harmony pictured here could be so threatened. Similarly, in Colonial Pen-Scratchings — and closer perhaps to contemporary experience — 'Little Jacob' brings a sneak-thief, instead of a bushranger, into a dwelling to upset the homely routine there. The concept of remoteness is advantageous to the colonial writer in that while it can give rise to the theme of hospitality, as it does

in this case, it can also provide the opportunity for untoward or entertaining events.

In a further literary strategy exemplary scenes are enacted around the hearth. A bias towards moral rectitude governs the delineation of the parlour in what are soberly didactic works in the main. Atkinson's Gertrude articulates precisely such a code. The beliefs and the ideals and 'the cheery home feeling' which the young emigrant assigns to 'Murrumbowrie', and especially the hearth there, is the model to which she aspires. And the absence of such attributes serves to reinforce the idea. Thus Wolfingham's rude housing and the 'dirty, wild, neglected children' there, are the more shocking in this moral climate. Tucker also made striking use of such a ploy although, a more sophisticated writer, he is able to put to good use variations on the theme. In all, though, the sanctity of the home is conventionally stressed in these novels and the customs and traditions enacted there are redolent with the moralistic coloration of Victorian times. The colonial parlour then is not the antithesis of a counterpart in the home country; rather, echoes of the homeland resonate and are sustained within the colonial locale. Accordingly, the reader could sympathize and empathize with expatriate characters who, although so distanced from former surroundings, continued to uphold such ideals.

It is my contention that governed by the principles I have just outlined and given the tenor of the times, the domestic face of these narratives must have been one of their major strengths. Such an approach allowed the presentation of much that was integral to popular sentiment, writers being placed in a position where they both reflected upon, and helped create, contemporary attitudes. Articulated in these novels, then, are the strongly positive aspects of a received moral code, an accepted social hierarchy, the institution of marriage, the raising of children, and a settled domestic existence. Moreover, what Altick has termed 'the sacredness of property' is well in

evidence.[53] Endorsed here is the European's right to the land; if doubts emerge, and they are sometimes expressed, then they are countered on rational grounds.

All this is part of a social, cultural and moral tradition which, it must be said, is as much nineteenth century European as Victorian. When fancied against the background of the bush it worked to counteract the more disturbing elements of a pioneering existence. Key books are the early Alfred Dudley and Tales of the Colonies. These edifying works offer the polarities of domesticity and dramatic action; it is significant that they conclude by stressing the domestic, it forming a valid contrast to the larger event and the wider landscape. Such scenes proliferate. They become more clearly defined and are shot through with sentimentality and warmth. Again, one could speculate that readers' reactions were stimulated by the belief that these fictional settlers closely resembled themselves. An important literary strategy, and one which only partially succeeds, was to convey a sense of displacement; it elicits sympathy for the settler. And yet the sense of alienation and exile is mitigated and largely due to the fact that these figures are portrayed within domestic circles and surrounded by the trappings of civilization. All this becomes an engaging and aesthetically pleasing image at the formal centre of these narratives. The subject matter turned upon a laborious enterprise and perplexing circumstances and, in retrospect, we can see why these authors tended to concentrate on circumscribed events. Civilization is grounded in the homestead. Such a location is a haven where the code of behaviour gives rise to order and predictability; it is therefore the opposite of that posed in the surroundings. As I have theorized, the tensions resulting from this dichotomy are powerful, even if they are muted in our own age.

53. Altick, Victorian People 128.

If exploit and epic in great measure give way to the domestic then, in like fashion, the private and personal are subjugated to that which is public and social. In consequence, there is less of a preoccupation with the individual psyche and with private needs; rather, these writers accentuate communal values and shared ideals. It follows that the public and social is emphasized at the expense of the expression of an inner reality. The notion of personal sacrifice or sense of exile is envisaged in all but a few works in abstract terms and as I have stated it was for writers later in the century to take up that more tragic theme, which was to reach an apotheosis much later again with Richardson's The Fortunes of Richard Mahony. In these works personal questioning is subsumed into wider issues, it being typical of the romance that the inner life of the protagonist tends to be excluded. If the personal tends to be suppressed, then mythic qualities may be elevated, and it is true that the genre of romance, with its coupling of the actual and the ideal, permits mythic elements to emerge. For Wilkes, 'The myth always has a correspondence with reality, but at the same time acquires a status independent of it'.[54] For the mythic is related to cultural identity; it encapsulates popular ideas and helps in their explication. Clearly, myths of inland life are beginning to take shape and I would contend that such a factor provides a compelling reason why these texts might be more widely studied.

What is set forth is an arena where public issues may be attested; whereas the bedroom, which is conducive to privacy of thought and action, and the kitchen, where much hard work inevitably took place, are areas which are relatively obscure. Shadowed forth only occasionally are the dwellings of the lower orders. There is, as I have said, a disparity between colonial life and the presentation of it in literary terms. It would seem

54. Wilkes, The Stockyard and the Croquet Lawn 142.

that the homestead has been tidied up. Cracks both physical and metaphysical, are smoothed over. In valorizing the homestead and in foregrounding its major room, these writers reveal that they are working within a conservative tradition. Writers did not set out to challenge or offend their audience; one has the impression that they were inherently protective of the preconceptions of the reading public.

In this representation of pioneering, settlers are portrayed as working together for the common good. The idea that reason, order and harmony prevail in these marginal lands is a strongly propagandist concept. One would conjecture that it had its wellsprings in eighteenth century thought, this being subsumed into the ideals which animated the Victorian social code. There is a sense in which concepts stemming from the Romantic movement have been bypassed here; they have been set aside in place of those which are cautious and conformist and circumscribed. Only now is it possible to define with some exactitude the nature of the setting to which, with good reason, the writers under discussion conventionally turned. Though having Georgian foundations and Romantic colouring, the homestead in these fictional fields evolved into an essentially Victorian construct.

In depicting the transplantation, assimilation, and consolidation of a people who were to become Australians, authors were recounting a story of achievement. So readers were told what was achieved at the extreme ends of the earth even if how this was accomplished was less clearly defined. Sufficient to say that in these plots the majority of emigrants who by inclination or force of circumstances remain in Australia are pictured in comfort. Both as a site and an institution the homestead emerged as the fountainhead of pioneering existence. It signalled the triumph of Culture over Nature, a pleasing trope. Here industrious, dignified characters

could be portrayed and domestic lives idealized. The setting evoked was one of British cultural mores and the parallels which existed between the bush hearth and its counterpart in the homeland provided a point of reference which endowed the colonial setting with piquant colouring. In the effort to bridge the distance between homeland and colony there was an attempt to render the affinities and correspondencies inherent in the two cultures, which the novelist was happy to perceive as one.

But when the home in the bush becomes a permanent dwelling-place a spirit which is identifiably Australian does become apparent. One way in which it emerges, both literally and figuratively, is in connection with the house in the hinterland. 'Dudley Park' is pictured with lofty Georgian proportions; its windows appear to be closed. That image of confinement gives way to a vernacular style of architecture. The dwelling expands, opens up to its surrounds. The attitude of mind underlining such a development is well illustrated, almost three decades later, at a home envisaged one evening when 'doors and windows were thrown widely open...'. As explained, this telling detail occurs in Marian. Franc shows colonists at ease on their verandah and such a spirit is demonstrated in other works where individuals are similarly depicted. That spot elicits an expanded consciousness towards the surrounding environment in the more competent works. Nearby is the conventional garden and here native flowers begin to appear; sometimes they are found inside the parlour. Creative writers, and their imagined colonists, still liked to see those gardens fenced. However, former constraints, what one might term the fences of the mind and which not surprisingly had been an essential part of this fictional landscape, are slowly being set aside.

I have dealt at length with those factors which have been omitted from

these colonial novels, however I believe it fair to say in many respects and in a variety of ways an atmosphere redolent of a style of life that was evolving has often been represented. It would seem that the initial withdrawal into the dwelling-place does signify a turning away from a landscape generally conceded to be intimidating. Yet by the mid-century an Australian mentality is shown to have emerged in and around a range of dwellings and across the social hierarchy of the Australian hinterland. New words and patterns of speech attract attention, for example. On a thematic level such processes denote acclimatization and the emergence of an indigenous European culture in Australia. In these assessments of pioneering culture, moral certainty and the impulse towards consolidation come to be bound up with the image of the European dwelling. Certainly, by the mid-century, the hold on the land, as pictured in these novels, appears less tenuous.

All these impressions are strengthened as material relating to colonial culture is utilized increasingly in the course of these three decades. Becoming intermittently more discernible is what Sinnett had called for in contemporary prose fiction: it is the imaginative employment of antipodean subject matter.

In coming to terms with a transitional culture roughly half a century after European settlement the creative writer turned to the rural dwelling and made the site central to the colonial novel and its underlying thematic structure. The recurrent imagery associated with this location would suggest that it became more than merely a literary set-piece; more than the sum of its attributes. I have demonstrated that colonial novelists appropriated this domain and invested it with meaning. They worked within the narrowly-defined margins governed by decorum and good taste and borrowed overall from the conventions of romance. It was a limited and limiting vision, and it was for writers later in the century to focus much more critically on the settler and the landscape and the relationship between

the two. While the homestead could have become emblematic of isolation and alienation it became in this literary schema the hub of an accepted social system. Charged with positive moral and mythic connotations, the homestead in the hinterland became a potent metaphor for the novelist working against an Australian background.

Commenting on the changes which took place in Victorian times, Young alludes to a concept which he would see as a Victorian ideal — that of 'perpetual expansion about a central stability'.[55] Referring to the transitional in the nineteenth century he writes elsewhere: 'The advance was in all directions outwards, from a stable and fortified centre'.[56] Such an impulse manifested itself in the British Empire in the course of colonial expansion. Concomitantly, and at its heart, the idea is made visible in microcosm. Here the stable centre is proposed in the family unit and advanced in the dogma of home and hearth. This edifying principle is thoroughly in accord with the Victorian social ethos.

Given the circumstances, it was not surprising that at the Empire's outskirts a similar emphasis should very soon prevail and, above all, in narratives which were preoccupied with an ideal. Here central stability coheres with the dwelling-place in the bush from which, and beyond which, civilization spread ever-increasingly. Here British culture is defined in terms of the quality of domestic life. All this was a conventional, conservative and convenient pattern with which to shape the material available; it provided a sound and credible image of national and social cohesion. Overwhelmingly the fictional community within the homestead considered themselves as a civilized presence in the land. Moral and racial superiority is registered here. And while a countervailing culture is to be found in

55. Young, <u>Victorian Essays</u> 162.
56. Young, <u>Victorian England</u> 134.

the huts and the yard and the juxtaposition of the two was often gainfully employed, there is a sense in which novelists have portrayed this widespread community as largely united. Thus a confederation of newcomers is envisaged as representating civilization. Any threat to the homestead, the stable centre, only serves to enhance its merit and to unite those present, whatever their background.

Accordingly, images of danger, uncertainty and disorientation give way to those of stability and enclosure, and the human desire for containment and self-preservation is revealed by means of narrative action. It would seem that the dispersal of people from their native land and from their former dwellings has resulted in a particular emphasis on association — this getting together in unprecedented circumstances. It can be seen how images of dislocation and dispossession have given way to those of permanence, and present in these texts is the underlying idea that a sense of cultural identity is maintained when continuities are assured. Conversely, few references are made to the dislocation of the land's original inhabitants.

All this reflected and reinforced the assumptions and expectations of the contemporary audience and one suspects that, like these novelists, readers must have found it difficult to remain unmoved from such issues. These tales of Romantic endeavour, pastoral settlement and, in the end, of the domestic felicity revered in Victorian times, surely had vicarious appeal; more particularly, to urban readers of the nineteenth century. It is worth quoting from Russel Ward at this point:

> If it be agreed that the Romantic temper of the nineteenth century stems, in an important measure, from the growth of industrialism and imperialism, it is even more a truism that one of the strongest motifs of Romanticism is the desire to escape from reality to a dream world.[57]

57 Ward 303. Footnotes omitted.

Writing of Victorian literature in general, however, Watson takes up a similar stance when he observes that

> much Victorian literature is based on a series of images of more perfect worlds than the realities of an industrial state will allow: or, if not in a general sense more perfect, at least capable of contributing something that England has lost or never possessed.[58]

It seems clear that such modes of thought, which incorporated both Romantic and Victorian assumptions and preoccupations, colour these colonial narratives. There are links and continuities here. Watson goes on to state that 'the English mind in the nineteenth century suddenly widens into the contemplation of many alien prospects'.[59] One would surmise that the Australian hinterland offered, and especially to the contemporary reader, a perspective as exotic as any, both in geographical or temporal terms, which were then popularly evoked.

Perhaps, identifying with William Thornley, readers entertained hopes of acquiring land in what Rowcroft described as a 'vast wilderness'; had visions of a 'tidy homestead' in the bush. The evaluative mode sustained in Tales of the Colonies and taken up by a host of writers would seem to epitomize middle-class standards and aspirations. To be detected here and elsewhere in this body of work are escapist hopes and dreams, and Beer's observation is surely correct with regard to this literary recreation of antipodean events overall when, speaking in general terms, she theorizes that the romance 'sets out to satisfy contemporary appetites';[60] that the romance 'remakes the world in the image of desire'.[61] Such an element animates the earlier colonial narrative and was exploited by authors who made much of the strongly positive connotations of the notion of a 'new heaven' and a 'new earth'. In short, the romance consoles

58 Watson 206.

59 Watson 207.

60 Beer 14.

61 Beer 79.

the mind, and that is most evident in the optimism voiced in these novels and which is showered on the colonial venture. These works are a celebration of civilization in the wilderness and a confirmation of the civilized ideals which the creative writer invariably connected with Australian settlement.

'I had undertaken a vast task, to establish a home in the wilderness'. With such words Thornley voices the thoughts of innumerable imaginary colonists and expresses the hopes and fears of them all. Rowcroft's protagonist does not disappoint his audience; he thus fulfils readers' beliefs concerning compatriots overseas. Perhaps more than any other novelist (although Mrs. Porter should not be forgotten) Rowcroft set in train the conventions which came to distinguish the colonial romance. And 'prudence, industry and perseverance', the laudable attributes which Rowcroft personified in Thornley's enterprising family, these too were to characterize the successful emigrant in the colonial novels which followed. Standing foursquare down the years and within this literary tradition the house erected by these newcomers becomes a symbol of a new presence in an ancient land.

If such imagery, which is after all an age-old literary ploy, seems unsophisticated or simplistic as it is effected in the prose fiction from 1830-1860, then this is to overlook the force of the surrounding circumstances, the need to affirm the heroic stature of the colonist, or the belief in the permanent possibilities offered in the Antipodes; for it is essential to consider the works in their historical context. Much creative energy is vested in these narratives, and if there is a lack of subtlety then there is a rich suggestibility for today's readers if only they are willing to transport themselves to an Australia of the nineteenth century. The writers considered here were unequivocal in proclaiming their major theme. They were assured in the presentation of the culture they were depicting. Like their characters, they were intent upon establishing civilization in the wilderness.

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