

# PLAGUES AND PREJUDICE: BOUNDARIES, OUTSIDERS AND PUBLIC HEALTH

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Abstract

Author's Statement

#### **ABSTRACT**

Blaming minorities for introducing disease or for being a health threat has been a feature of the social life of many communities as a process that has justified hostility against those minorities and led to the creation of restrictive public health policies and laws focused on them.

This thesis traces the history of this process, predominantly in England and Australia. Examining the response to a number of outsiders and marginal social groups, such as Jews, Chinese and Southern and Eastern Europeans, it considers the role that public health played in arguments for their exclusion and control. It measures the strength of the public health case, arguing that a health threat was generally not a real issue but, more typically, a badge which labelled the outsider as dangerous to the community.

Whilst racial or ethnic minorities were obvious arrivals from the "outside", the process of identifying outsiders generally as health threats was more widely at work. The undeserving and unruly poor, homosexuals, persons involved with illegal drugs and other marginal groups were all seen as presenting health threats to the community. In response, public health regulation was, potentially, a powerful way of controlling these groups and separating them from the mainstream community.

The unifying theme that joins these various narratives is the argument that communities are anxious about the things and people that lie beyond their social and geographical boundaries and that intruders from the outside are seen as anomalous, out of place, challenging spatial order and threatening to the community. Thus, order, classification and the boundaries that separate one social or spatial grouping from another are central ideas about which much public health policy and views about health are organised. It is less to do with preventing disease; more to do with maintaining order. Ill health is the price of disorder; dirt is "matter out of place".

Durkheimian social theory, concentrating on his dichotomy of the "sacred" and the "profane", and the later elaboration of this theory by Mary Douglas and others, provides the theoretical underpinning of the historical narratives discussed in this thesis. This theory offers explanation for the rituals of solidarity and other social events that bring communities together by identifying outsiders and expressing the threats (prominently public health threats) that they present to the community.

The analysis of public health policy from this perspective offers new insights into public responses to current health issues such as AIDS, illicit drug use or continuing anxieties about outsiders. As the concluding Chapter argues, improved medical knowledge about the nature of the disease process or the publicising of "correct" knowledge about the extent of particular health risks are unlikely to provide a public reassessment of this way of thinking. Ideas about outsiders and their alleged health risks are centrally views about groups and the things that separates them from the outside. This is a social rather than a scientific process and should be analysed as such.

#### NOTE

<sup>\*</sup> In this thesis, the word "they" is used rather than "he or she" where the gender of the subject is not specific.

<sup>\*</sup> Where early statutes are cited, regnal years and chapter numbers are given. Later statutes are cited by year and jurisdiction

## **DECLARATION**

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge, contains no material previously published or written by any other person except where due reference is made in the text. I agree to this thesis being made available for photocopying and loan if accepted for the award of the degree.

Christopher Reynolds

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The three following stories, all separated in space and time, each illustrate a local, time-bound response to particular threats and fears. Yet, all three exhibit the same story of the fear of pollution of water, with its attendant physical threat to the community by an alien and threatening group.<sup>1</sup>

#### ASHBOURNE - 1988

Ashbourne is a small settlement of some 150 people in the Adelaide hills. Its relative proximity to the city and its rural aspect made it an ideal site for the South Australian Drug and Alcohol Services Council to establish a residential treatment facility for persons recovering from the effects of drug abuse.<sup>2</sup> The facility, named The *Woolshed*, was to be strictly supervised by Council staff. No drugs other than tobacco were to be permitted and a program of domestic work and therapeutic activities would apply to all residents.

Substantial opposition from local residents greeted the proposal. It was so intense, that the matter became the subject of a protracted hearing under the South Australian *Planning Act* during which the concerns of residents were aired.<sup>3</sup> Some raised specific fears for themselves and their families - for example, that the level of drug related crime such as burglary and theft would increase in the neighbourhood as a result of the facility.

Other fears were not so clearly expressed. Yet, they were so strongly presented that they became part of the planning conditions imposed on the Council as a requirement of operating the *Woolshed*. The Planning Tribunal required that the Drug and Alcohol Services Council "arrange ... for the collection and analysis of water samples" taken from the creek running through the property - this to be done every three months for at least 5 years. It is not clear what purpose the analysis was intended to serve. The Tribunal provided no guidance and the water quality of the creek was already suspect from normal rural activities occurring upstream.

The transcript of evidence suggests that this unusual and vague requirement was imposed in response to a fear on the part of the residents; that their proximity to a small population of former drug addicts somehow presented a health risk to the people of Ashbourne and its surrounds through the contamination of the small watercourse. The nature of this risk was unstated. AIDS was raised as a possibility, though rejected by expert evidence. Other diseases associated with intravenous drug use such as hepatitis B were also seen as possible contaminants. Again, the pollution of the creek from this source was rejected by public health experts as a serious proposition.

Throughout the case, the residents' concerns remained vague. A witness acting on their behalf stressed the "concern of local people about something that is introduced into their environment about which they have reasonable doubts." The nature of that "something" was never stated clearly. Was it the prospect of disease or was it these

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Many other stories could be told: see the Endnotes to this chapter.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> A governmental treatment agency for alcohol and drug dependent persons, incorporated under the *South Australian Health Commission Act*, 1976.

<sup>3</sup> Francis et al v Drug and Alcohol Services Council (1987), Planning Appeal Tribunal, 457-461 of 1986.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, cross-examination of N F Wallman; 306.

urban, marginalised strangers who, as clients of the facility, would be coming into their midst? Was this threat symbolised by the fear that the water supply might become polluted and the community thereby infected?

#### WEDDERBURN - 1931

The depression and the labour unrest of the 1930s made an impact on even the smallest Australian communities. In early March 1931, a great fear swept the Western District of Victoria and in response, the local inhabitants of Wedderburn, a small township in the region, took stock of what they believed to be a perilous position. They understood that a red army of workers was marching on Ballarat and Geelong at that moment, while Bendigo was also likely to fall into Bolshevik hands. Furthermore, a mass of unemployed workers would be sweeping down from their camps around Mildura, thus encircling the hapless community. To make matters worse it was believed that the local Catholics would certainly form a fifth column within the town.

Faced with this imminent threat, the inhabitants set to work defending their town. Two men were driven out to the local reservoir and "hoisted into a gum tree with a loaded gun ... to keep guard, in case the communists tried to do unspeakable things to the Town's water supply." In the event, Wedderburn was never threatened and its inhabitants remained victims only of the rumours and the economic crisis of the time.<sup>5</sup>

## LAKE GENEVA - 1348

Of the epidemics caused by the plague bacillus, the most destructive in European terms occurred in the mid fourteenth century. It is generally accepted that the disease came from the East, following trade and communication routes, many newly opened up as a result of the crusades. Plague spread through settled Europe reaching even its most remote corners. Estimates have put the death toll as high as one third of the whole population of Europe.

Among the victims of the plague were residents of Cillon, a small community on Lake Geneva and their deaths prompted an investigation by the town authorities into the causes of the plague in the area. A surviving report by the castellan of the local prison describes the success of this investigation.<sup>6</sup> It concluded that the Jewish inhabitants of the town were implicated in the spread of the plague. After a period of torture, most suspects admitted to their involvement; for some, merely the threat of torture was sufficient to make them admit to their guilt. These confessions provided the details that explained how the plague had come to Cillon.

The way the Jews spread the plague was simple. By night they would steal out to the wells used to supply drinking water to the town and would drop small bags into them. These contained a poison that been prepared by the rabbis or other Jews, some from as far distant as Spain. The poison was said to contain some part of the basilisk, a fabulous reptile, whose look and breath was believed to be fatal. The horrific effects of the plague

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> This story was taken from a description in Cathcart M. *Defending the National Tuckshop*. Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1988; 12. See also Moore A. *The Secret Army and the Premier*. Sydney: Univ NSW P, 1989; 124.

<sup>6</sup> This account is set out in Nohl J. *The Black Death*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1926; Appendix, *The Trial of the Well Poisoners at Cillon 1348*; 197. See also, Ginzburg C. *Ecstasies*. London: Penguin, 1992; chapter 2, especially page 66. (Here, the community is referred to as *Chillon*.)

on this particular community was eloquent proof of the potency of this poison at work. It was also known that the Jewish communities were, originally, less affected by the epidemic. This was further proof of their involvement in its spread. One Jew volunteered that the rabbis had ordered him and other Jews to avoid drinking the poisoned water for 9 days after its contamination.

When confessions were made, further persons were implicated and they in turn provided the names of yet more suspects. The authorities seemed to be uncovering a widespread conspiracy on the part of the Jews to spread the plague throughout Europe. One suspect volunteered that "all the Jews above the age of 7 were implicated" in the conspiracy, since all had knowledge of it. Sometimes, Christians were said to be involved in the process however, they were known to be acting on behalf of the Jews. Executions followed and none of the Jews caught up in these trials were spared.

This thesis is the product of my attempts to understand a problematic issue in public health legislation. In 1976, the *Royal Commission into the Non-Medical use of Drugs* (the *Sackville Commission*) was established to enquire into the laws and policies relating to drugs in South Australia. This was the first Governmental study that adopted a critical, historically based, approach to the ever increasing spiral in drug penalties that typified Australian drug laws in the 1970s. As part of the background to its work, I prepared a number of papers for the Commission about the development of the drug laws in South Australia. This work revealed what was not well known at the time, that the drug legislation was relatively recent in its origins, which was unusual given the extraordinarily severe penalties that the offences allowed. Secondly, the original Opium laws passed at the turn of the century seemed to have been driven primarily by the fear of a minority group living in Australia at the time - the Chinese. When considered in their historical context, it was as though these laws were anti-Chinese laws rather than anti-opium laws. Post 1965 drug laws and the drug laws of other countries also seemed to suggest a focus on outsiders rather than on the drug itself and its potential for physiological harm.

This observation revealed a window to other important aspects of Australian public health law. A study of the Chinese experience in 19th century Australia demonstrated that drugs were one aspect of a broader series of issues. The Chinese were blamed for the introduction of smallpox and bubonic plague. They were said to be dirty and unhygienic. In a number of ways, they were said to be a health threat to the White Australians with

whom they came in contact. Health occupied a central position in the anti-Chinese campaigns of the period.

What seemed to be the case with the Chinese seemed also to be true for other groups, including the Jews in medieval Europe, the poor and a variety of wanderers, immigrants and strangers in many times and settings. In the mid 1980s, it seemed also to be true for persons (in Australia, usually homosexuals) suffering from AIDS. These historical data, though removed in time and place, when considered together, raised questions about the way communities were characterising threats in public health terms. What began as a useful way of focusing on the history of Australian drug laws since 1900 had the potential to provide important insights about the way social groups characterised and responded to threats.

As an adviser to the South Australian Minister of Health over much of the 1980s and 1990s, it seemed to me that many of the debates and anxieties that accompanied public health legislation still retained a focus on outsiders and marginal groups rather than on the public health needs that legislation should address. For example, unnecessary provisions to again toughen the criminal drug laws (an issue of relatively small public health importance but the users and suppliers were stigmatised as marginal and deviant) could pass through Parliament in an evening with few questions asked. Attempts to limit the extent to which the tobacco industry could advertise cigarettes occupied days of acrimonious debate, yet tobacco constitutes the most significant drug problem in the Australian community. This thesis has come out of the need to understand why this was the case.

Views such as those identified in the Ashbourne / Wedderburn / Lake Geneva examples, about minorities and their alleged health threats, are part of a persistent pattern in cultural traditions. This thesis argues that these patterns are related to the way in which

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> This issue will be considered in Chapter 9.

dominant cultural and racial groups have justified claims for physical and social separateness from other groups. It considers how statements about health, disease and living conditions - collectively, statements about public health - have been instrumental in maintaining and justifying the separation of groups. The assertion that a particular group presents a public health problem to the majority has been a powerful theme in the history of race, ethnic and minority relations and social class.

The narrative method which is employed investigates and brings together many historical accounts of the public health response to minorities, ranging from the Gentile's reaction to the Jews in medieval Europe, to the European reaction to the Chinese in 19th century Australia and the ethnic and cultural conflicts precipitated by the arrival of the Southern and Eastern Europeans in Australia immediately prior to and after World War II. Other writers have dealt with particular aspects of this story but have not attempted to review the wider historical field that is considered here.<sup>8</sup> A study of this wider field allows some generalisations about the application of public health to social minorities and about the way that communities recognise and respond to threats. Finally, this study considers the extent to which the development of contemporary public health policy continues to be influenced by this historical legacy.

The thesis is substantially influenced by Durkheimian sociology in its argument that public health has been, and continues to be, used as a way of marking boundaries between the dominant and other groups and of maintaining, affirming and legitimising the privileged economic position and status of those dominant groups. For example, this occurred when middle class people believe that the working classes smelt and bathed infrequently or when the Chinese were chased off lucrative gold fields because they were said to present a health hazard. These views are important, both in defining group

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> See for example, Helmer J. *Drugs and Minority Oppression*. New York: Seabury Press, 1975. (This deals with the application US of drug legislation to ethnic and racial minorities.) Mort F. *Dangerous Sexualities*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987 and Brandt A M. *No Magic Bullet*. New York: Oxford UP, 1985. (Both books deal with the application of venereal disease control legislation to women suspected of prostitution.) The many histories of the Chinese in Australia generally do not take their subject matter into the wider historical context.

boundaries and also in appearing to confirm to its members the legitimacy of dominant social groups.

John Last, a prominent practitioner and theorist of "public health" defines it as "the combination of sciences, skills, and beliefs that is directed to the maintenance and improvement of the health of all the people." This thesis focuses on epidemics and the fear of epidemics, the use of the term "public health" will focus on disease and illness, things that have been seen as threats to the health of communities. This is an issue we are all familiar with. Many school history texts for example have painted graphic descriptions of the black death, the great plague of London and other epidemics, together with the bacteriologist heroes of the 19th century, triumphant in their conquest of disease. Disease is a powerful notion that expresses and directs community fears, often antagonistically, to outsiders. Hence, serious outbreaks of disease are important periods for observing relations between dominant and minority social groups. Epidemics provide a time of crisis, of heightened awareness in communities that accentuate the process of violence, of finding scapegoats and labelling minorities. In epidemics and fears about disease the creation of boundaries between dominant and minority social groups becomes particularly stark. 10

"Public health," as used here, encompasses other issues including prostitution, drugs and more general ideas about sexuality or presumed genetic inferiority. These are also areas with a public health dimension, for which Ministers of Health in Australia have had direct responsibility and involvement or about which prominent public health practitioners have been vocal - and through which the threat of the outsider has also been expressed. Finally, "public health" is also defined here to include aspects of the way people live and with it the view, often put, that outsiders are dirty, unhygienic or have disgusting practices. These attributes do not bring with them the grand threats of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Last J ed. Public Health and Preventive Medicine (Maxcy-Rosenau) 12 Ed. Norwalk (Conn), 1986; 3.

<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Peter Curson entitled his history of epidemics in 19th century Sydney *Times of Crisis*. (Curson P. *Times of Crisis*. Sydney: Sydney Univ P, 1985.)

epidemics, often they carry no health threat at all, but are expressions that establish differences between groups which are justified in public health terms. These are also powerful and recurring themes in the following narrative

This thesis has the following structure. Chapter 2 considers issues in social theory that are based on the ideas of groups and social boundaries, examining especially the work of Emile Durkheim and related writers. It focuses on concepts such as "ritual solidarity" and the "sacred and the profane" and the things that emphasise and maintain social boundaries. Chapter 3 considers how boundaries between social groups have been significant as issues in public health. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 apply this idea in the contexts of social class, strangers, and the "city and the country". These Chapters argue that there are numbers of ways in which ideas about public health are used to emphasise "good" and "bad"; that they both separate and justify the separation of groups and create and enhance boundaries between groups. These ideas are then considered in the context of the history of race and ethnic relations in Australia. Chapter 7 examines the public health issues surrounding the arrival and settlement of Chinese in 19th century Australia. Chapter 8 extends these ideas to the Southern and Eastern European arrivals in the 20th century. Chapter 9 examines aspects of contemporary public health policy and contends that minority groups remain a prominent focus of public health controls.

There were a number of related areas that this thesis might have considered but did not. It could, for example, have looked at the way in which women were made the subject of repressive public health legislation; the way that they became the objects of blame for disease and ill health; or were labelled as witches and often lost their lives as a result. It could also have considered the issue of madness, arguing that particular social groups have been labelled as "mad", thus bringing them within the ambit of the medical system and justifying their control in health terms. These two examples would be important extensions of the subject matter presented in the following Chapters. They have been

discussed in detail by other writers.<sup>11</sup> The narrative presented here is sufficiently comprehensive to sustain the general proposition that the way outsiders and marginal groups were seen and treated within the administrative and social frameworks of dominant communities allows us to say something about the way ideas of threats from the outside have been organised and articulated as public health issues. It also allows us to say something about the way ideas about public health policy (the things Governments and administrators do, ostensibly to maintain and improve the health of all the people) have been focused historically. As Chapter 10 argues, these two points are important for current public health policy and for providing answers to the problem that precipitated this work; namely, the inconsistencies in current drug policy in Australia.

Finally, the theoretical framework of this thesis is set within what appears to be a recent and increasingly more rich and diverse application of the traditions of boundaries and outsiders to a variety of historical and social perspectives, of which public health is only one.<sup>12</sup>

#### **ENDNOTES**

The theme of the poisoning of water by strangers and enemies appears many times in different historical contexts. For example, it appeared as a poison well story which sought to account for the Plague of Thucydides in 471 BC. (Majors R H. Classic Descriptions of Disease. Springfield: Charles Thomas, 1932; 74.) St Gregory of Nyssa (332-400 AD), wrote that water was rendered impure by lepers being in contact with it. (Brody S N. The Disease of the Soul, Ithaca: Cornell Univ. P., 1974; 80.) This belief of the pollution of water continued into modern history and it was said that the Scots infected the wells at Newcastle with the plague in 1639. (Thomas K. Religion and the Decline of Magic. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978; 667.) In the 20th century, the belief about the pollution of water remained strong in Europe. On the outbreak of the First World War, boy scouts were sent to guard the local reservoirs in Britain in response to the belief that

<sup>11</sup> For example, in the Australian context, see Garton S. Medicine and Madness: A Social History of Insanity in New South Wales, 1880-1940. Sydney: Univ NSW P, 1988. and Matthews J J. Good and Mad Women: The Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth Century Australia. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1984.

<sup>12</sup> See for example, Brett J. Robert Menzies' Forgotten People. Sydney: Macmillan, 1992; especially pages 82-98. (a history of a prominent Australian Prime Minister.) Ginsburg C. Ecstasies. London: Penguin, 1992, originally published 1989 (a reconsideration of European witch beliefs.) Stallybrass P and White A. The Politics and Poetics of Transgression. London: Methuen, 1986. (a study of carnivals, fairs and social order in Europe between the 17th and 19th centuries.) White D C. Myths of the Dog Man. Chicago: Univ of Chicago, 1991. (an anthropological study of boundaries and outsiders.)

German agents would poison the water. (Recollections of W H Joyce, a boy scout in 1914. *This England*. Autumn 1986; 69.)

These stories feature in contemporary themes. In 1977, a Victorian State Parliamentarian drew attention to a publication known as *The Little Red Book for Social Change*, available in Melbourne, which among other things allegedly advocated the poisoning of the water supply. (Victorian Parliamentary Debates 9 March, 1977; 6175.) On Christmas day 1989, there was the assertion that reactionary forces in Romania were poisoning the milk and water supplies of the inhabitants of Bucharest. (ABC News, *Radio National*, 25 December, 1989 - quoting Chris Pantis, President of the Australian Romanian Association.)

More generally, Gordon Allport and Leo Postman suggest that "The rumor that enemy troops have poisoned water wells recurs it seems in every war" (Allport G W and Postman L. *The Psychology of Rumor*. New York: Russell and Russell, 1965; 171.)

The pollution of water is also an important theme in Australia. The Chinese on the Queensland goldfields were said to pollute the water supplies, (Cilento R and Lack C. Triumph in the Tropics. Brisbane: Smith and Patterson, 1959; 199.) In South Australia, it was said that the juices from a burnt aborigine had polluted a nearby well. (South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 2 December, 1898; 1013.) There are more recent examples, Marcia Neave recounted that one of the restrictions imposed on the local prostitute population of Kalgoorlie was that they kept away from the local swimming pool. (Neave M. AIDS and Women in the Sex Industry - Legal Approaches to Public Health, 1989. Community Health Studies, 13: 423-430.) - The swimming pool fear has been recognised in other contexts. For example, early this century, Lord Kitchener prevented soldiers with venereal disease from using the swimming baths. More recently, people with AIDS were also prevented from using these places. (Davenport-Hines R. Sex Death and Punishment. London: Picador; 178 and 331.) - In 1992, an innovative plan to bury bodies (they were to be frozen and buried vertically) in Victoria was objected to on the grounds that it would pollute a nearby lake. One resident objected "they are going to put bodies alongside lapping water. It wouldn't happen anywhere else in the world." The thought of contamination of the water by dead bodies as opposed to dead stock was particularly disturbing. (Adelaide Advertiser, 20 April, 1992; 2.)

The curative powers of water were also recognised. In the New Testament, water was the medium through which a number of Christ's miracles were described. Thus, holy water has had a special significance in the Christian tradition. (Thomas, op cit; 33.) The purifying powers of water have been widely reported across cultures. Within the Hindu context, "water is a great purificatory agent", and the River Ganges had both a purifying and a religious power. (Dumont L. *Homo Hierarchicus*. Chicago: Univ of Chicago P, 1970; 51.) The ancient Greeks used water to purify themselves by washing off profane contamination (Van Gennep A. *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago: Univ of Chicago P. 1960; 90.) Other rituals associated with the use of water as a purifying agent have been reported. Webster argues that "the use of water is world-wide because water is a universal cleanser." (Webster H. *Taboo: A Sociological Study*. Stanford: Stanford Univ P, 1942; 38.) Sometimes, these purificatory rites could be practised so vigorously that they were described by outsider observers as "washing mania." (Steiner F. *Taboo*. London: Cohen and West, 1956; 135.) Both Eliade and Van Gennep have written on the purifying curative and regenerating effects of water. (Eliade M. *The Sacred and the Profane*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1959; 131 and Van Gennep, op cit; 52.)

The site of water was often given a special significance. Thus, holy wells were known throughout Britain and are considered to have pre-Christian origins. (Thomas, op cit; 54.) They were believed to have curative properties. (Brand J. *Observations on Popular Antiquities* (Ellis edition.) London: Chatto and Windus, 1900; 516.) Richards suggests that "Traditions of healing springs are as old as civilisation itself." (Richards P. *The Medieval Leper*, Cambridge: D S Brewer, 1977; 74.) Within a contemporary context, the visual power of pure unpolluted water was the central theme of a recent British television advertisement, "Sky to Tap" promoting the interests of a private water company.

("Religious rites are being used to sell off water, reports Martin Davidson." New Statesman and Society, 12 May, 1989; 42.)

The overriding theme emerging from this brief analysis is the idea of water as a power for good - for purification and cure and its being threatened by the impure and the polluting. These are threats to senses of order rather than threats with direct consequences to health. Yet, the things that protect water from the threat are said to be in aid of preserving the public's health. This dimension of public health practice will be a central theme in this thesis.



## CHAPTER 2 BOUNDARIES AND SOCIAL THEORY

## 1 INTRODUCTION: SOCIAL THEORY AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The central issue that this dissertation explores is the blaming of minorities for health problems and the justification of pejorative attitudes towards minorities on health grounds. The central argument is that the association of minorities with disease is far more than an issue of public health risk: rather, it expresses the fear and concern that a dominant social group has of minorities or outsiders. To establish that argument, this Chapter focuses on the theory of the French sociologist Emile Durkheim and the elaboration of some of his work by the anthropologist Mary Douglas and others. Those sources are shaped into a theoretical lens through which the public health narrative in Chapters 3 to 9 can be considered.

Chapter 1 described three incidents that touched on the theme of the poisoned well. Each emphasised the contamination of water (a vital and symbolic substance) by outsiders or marginal people perceived to be threatening to the majority group. There are many more records of this and related themes. Some colonial Australians verbalised their objections to the local Chinese community by complaining that Chinese market gardeners polluted the vegetables they hawked around Sydney and Melbourne streets by fertilising them with their urine. The same complaint was made by Australian soldiers about Egyptian fruit and vegetable sellers in Cairo in 1914 and a similar view was held later about Greek market gardeners in South Australia.<sup>1</sup>

If these stories were about public health, they might have been laid to rest by the assurances of a medical officer or a health inspector. Indeed, much of the medical and health evidence about the Chinese in 19th century Australia, for example, tended to dismiss the idea that they posed a health risk to the community. However, the fact that these stories and beliefs continued over long periods of time suggests that they are not

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See Chapters 5 and 8.

statements about health, except in the sense that they take health implications as their subject matter. Another way of seeing these stories is to argue that they are more significantly statements about threats and fears held by communities about outsiders and that their strength comes from their alarming and dramatic subject matter - the idea that the outsiders represent a threat to the community's health. Thus, whether or not the events alleged against minorities in the narrative ever occurred and, if they did, whether they in fact resulted in a public health threat, ceases to be the central issue. The lack of verification in no way appears to reduce their appeal and strength.<sup>2</sup>

Narrative histories of the Black Death of 1347 illustrate the point. They suggest that the European Jewish communities were held responsible for the spread of the disease in ways that were quite improbable. While it is important to make this point, in the sense that it refutes the accusation, it is more important to consider why this particular minority was blamed so vehemently. It is also important to consider why the assertions that minorities pollute water, introduce disease and live in such a way as to pose a health threat to the wider community have occurred with such frequency. To aim simply to refute these assertions, to do no more than let the "facts" speak for themselves, is to assume that the process of blaming minorities for public health and other problems simply operates through the continued mistaken beliefs of crowds, newspaper owners, government officials and others. It further assumes that if the truth of these matters could be explained to the "mistaken" groups the prejudice would disappear.

An approach that is restricted to discovering, and then publicising, what is taken to be the truth as the *sole* issue of significance has important public policy implications. It fosters the idea that racism or prejudice against minorities is all the result of mistaken facts and that if it can be demonstrated that, for example, Asian immigrants are not taking Australian jobs or that Asians are peaceful and responsible neighbours, the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In considering the durability of popular views about minority groups, see Brunvand J H. *The Vanishing Hitchhiker*. London: Picador, 1983, which in a variety of contexts, illustrates the continuation of "urban myths". The history and strength of two popular "urban myths", the *alligators in the sewers* and the *mouse in the coca-cola bottle* are considered by Coleman L. Alligators-In-The-Sewers: A Journalistic Origin, 1979. *J of American Folklore*, 92: 335-338 and Fine G A. Cokelore and Coke Law, 1979. *J of American Folklore*, 92: 477-484. The story that Chinese restaurants serve cat disguised as chicken is a well-known example of this process and is discussed in this Chapter.

problems of racial prejudice in Australia would disappear. However, such a view fails to take account of the depth and basis of racist attitudes.<sup>3</sup> Considering this point, John Rex cited the case of the "old lady living in terror of her coloured neighbours", an image used by one English politician as an argument for restrictive immigration policies. Diligent investigation by journalists could not find this old lady. When the story was exposed the argument simply shifted, its proponents claiming that whether or not she existed was irrelevant: the fact was the community *believed* that she and possibly many other old ladies living in similar circumstances existed and, because of this belief, coloured immigrants were a problem.<sup>4</sup>

The prominent Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey has justified his calls for reduced Asian immigration in similar terms. Blainey was concerned not so much with examining the *facts* about Asian immigration and expressing his concern in terms of what was actually happening: he was concerned with the public's perception of what was happening. In his view, it was "public opinion" that would determine immigration policy. By analogy with Rex's example, it was not necessary for Blainey to have to demonstrate, as evidence of the "Asian invasion" of Sydney's West, that thousands of Cabramatta clothes lines did in fact have "noodles drying on them" (this was an assertion quoted by him.) It was sufficient that, as the assertion became more publicised, the community would *believe* that this was occurring and would therefore be concerned about the level of Asian immigration.<sup>5</sup>

Understanding "facts" and exploring the accuracy of racist assumptions is important. However, if racist ideas are to be challenged they cannot simply be refuted as

To define beliefs as public opinion is itself a way of creating public opinion, for such a reference both defines the norm that should be democratically supported and reassures anxious people that authorities respond to popular views

authorities respond to popular views
(Edelman, 1977 - cited in de Lepervanche M and Bottomley G ed. *The Cultural Construction of Race*. Sydney: Sydney Assoc for Studies in Society and Culture, 1988; 26.)

<sup>3</sup> Community education about racist attitudes and confronting myths and stereotypes is an important activity. It is a specific and central function of Australian Equal Opportunity Commissions, administering legislation relating to racism. However, the application of correct information about minorities fails to explore significant issues in the process.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Rex J. Race Relations in Sociological Theory. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970; 148.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Blainey G. *All for Australia*. Sydney: Methuen Haynes, 1984; 132. The following has been said about the call to "public opinion":

errors of fact: they must also be understood as a social process as well as alleged statements of fact. Further, explanations for discrimination should not focus on the victims of the discriminatory practices but on those constructing these practices and, more importantly, on the social process of discrimination. For example, the social attitudes, processes and relationships that gave rise to the witch fears of the 16th and 17th centuries are the important issues in writing about witches and while we may not share these beliefs, we should acknowledge that people who believe in witches have held their beliefs in interesting and significant ways.<sup>6</sup>

The argument presented in this thesis also goes beyond telling the "facts" of the narrative. It is grounded in a social theory that contextualises and explains the narrative. In particular, it shows that communities have maintained views about the association of minorities with public health problems that, while they may be rejected on later analysis, have also been both interesting and significant for public health policy.

## 2 A DURKHEIMIAN APPROACH TO SOCIAL THEORY AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The social theory from which the public health themes in this thesis have been developed was most originally and significantly expressed in the work of Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), the most prominent of the late 19th century French sociologists. Among the principal elements in Durkheim's sociology are the ideas that: society is an entity in itself, something more than the collection of the individuals comprising that society; and the focus of the sociologist should be upon the things that kept society together rather than the things that stratified and divided it. Durkheim remains a central source for modern social theory and his later work, in particular, continues to provide a focus for a number of contemporary writers who have drawn from it and have examined the symbolic and the ritualistic aspects of social activity within his framework.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> See Mary Douglas' comments in Douglas M. *Evans-Prichard*. London: Fontana, 1980; 104 and Marwick M ed. *Witchcraft and Sorcery*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970; 17 & 319.

The social analysis offered in this thesis is shaped by Durkheim's theory, especially his last major work, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (1912), which examines the ritual and symbolic significance of rules and laws as statements about the strengthening of groups and societies. The Elementary Forms was based on a number of ethnographic sources. Prominent was Spencer and Gillen's observations of totemic beliefs among Aborigine communities in Central Australia, written in 1899.7 A second and particularly significant historical strand was the work of the Scottish biblical scholar William Robertson Smith whose influential series of lectures, The Religion of the Semites, was first published in 1889.8 These were disparate sources with different temporal, geographical and social contexts but both emphasised classifications and boundaries between things and people. Robertson Smith's description of ritualistic practices was set within a context that we recognise as public health. The protection of water; the ideas that polluted persons were dangerous; that the polluted person can infect others, particularly through the medium of water, are views that have a coherence and logic within a public health context. The work of Robertson Smith is important; his tracing, from pre Christian times, of the power of ritual pollution exemplified within the context of disease and pollution draws on ideas of public health significance.9

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Spencer W B S and Gillen F J. Native Tribes of Central Australia. London: Macmillan, 1899. See also Mulvaney D J and Calaby J H. "So Much that is New": Baldwin Spencer 1860-1929. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1985; chapters 9 and 10.

<sup>8</sup> Robertson Smith W. *The Religion of the Semites*. New York: Schoken Books, 1972. Lukes S. *Emile Durkheim*. London: Penguin, 1973; 237 and 239.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Robertson Smith's work has been regarded as a central contribution to the sociology of religion and an important influence on Durkheim. See Beidelman T O. W Robertson Smith - The Sociological Study of Religion. Chicago. Univ of Chicago Press, 1974; 67.

Robertson-Smith's analysis was built on ideas about health and disease and its application to religious practice among Semitic peoples, sourced from biblical references and early classical writings. These were cases where holy places, such as fountains and streams, that were taken to have curative and ritual powers were marked off by boundaries recognised and respected by communities and within which "ritual restrictions are stringently enforced." (Robertson Smith, ibid; 167, 165,168.) This was to protect them from pollution emanating from a threatening, profane world. From this Robertson Smith identified what he called a "general principle" that an "impure person dare not approach sacred waters". (Ibid; 179 & 183.) "Impure" is used here in a moral rather than a physical sense although, these two senses are blurred, so that physical impurity could be the outward sign of moral impurity. This dual view gives the obvious outward function of water as a cleansing medium an additional significance as a purifying and consecrating substance. While, in turn, the sacred power of water could also be regarded as bringing physically curative powers. Robertson Smith describes this view: "The healing power of sacred water is closely connected with its purifying and consecrating power, for the primary conception of uncleanliness is that of a dangerous infection". (Ibid; 184.) Exposing water to "uncleanliness" also rendered it unclean and the water itself then became a vehicle for the further propagation of "infection". (Ibid; 447.) There was also a positive side of this protection of water expressed in the belief that it could cure sickness. (Ibid; 183.) He also provided examples where physical illness and disease were explicitly linked to the context of ritual prohibitions, in

Although Durkheim's ethnography has been reinterpreted by a number of anthropologists including the Australians Stanner and Elkin, *The Elementary Forms* is still a work on which many writers as diverse as Parsons, Erikson, Douglas and Giddens rely for their study of groups, communities and boundaries.<sup>10</sup>

Four themes from Durkheim's writings are significant for the theoretical perspective of this thesis. Firstly, Durkheim's idea of society as "a thing in itself", as a collective entity. Secondly, the idea of the "sacred" and the "profane", the things that threaten and the things that protect communities and, with this, the boundary that protects the sacred from the profane. Thirdly, the "collective representations", the common values and ideas of the community. Finally, the idea of "effervescence", times of change and crisis in the life of communities.

## Society as a Thing in Itself

Durkheim's general view of society is summarised in the idea that it is "a reality *sui generis*". In his view society is more than simply the collective sum of the social relations of its members, it is the sedimentation and aggregation of these various relationships and can be thought of as *a reality in its own right* with its own features and characteristics. In this context Durkheim argued that a person is both an individual and a social being, the latter representing "the highest reality in the intellectual and moral

the sense that they were taken to be the result of breach of taboos, for example by eating forbidden food. (Ibid; 449 and 184.)

<sup>10</sup> A substantial body of criticism has been brought together in chapter 25 of Lukes, op cit. Stanner and Elkin in particular have argued that as a specific study of totemism, based on Australian material, Durkheim's conclusions are too generalised and are not an accurate account of aboriginal cosmology. Yet, both acknowledge the importance of Durkheim's contribution in this area. Stanner said of Durkheim: "for some at least, (there is) an impulse to turn back and to study again and again this inexhaustibly interesting scholar." (Cited in Pickering W F S. Durkheim's Sociology of Religion. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984; xxv. See also Lukes, op cit; 459. Stanner W E H. Reflections on Durkheim and Aboriginal Religion in Freedman M ed. Social Organisation: Essays Presented to Raymond Firth. London: Frank Cass, 1967.) Elkin wrote: "Durkheim's position cannot be completely held but his work is an inspiration" (Elkin A P. Book Review, 1937. Oceania, 8: 119-120; 119.)

order."<sup>11</sup> This view of the group as a "thing in itself" has been described by Lukes as the "key-stone of Durkheim's entire system of thought."<sup>12</sup> It is significant for this thesis because it suggests the relevance of concentrating on the response of *groups* to outsiders. In this case, responses that have been prompted by the idea that the group itself, the community as such, is under threat from the outsider.

#### Social Boundaries: Sacred and Profane

A Durkheimian view of society makes boundaries particularly relevant. The idea of a cohesive group or community implies a boundary or a margin, a point that divides "group" from "non-group". It is at the margins, that the community can be under greatest and most direct threat. This thesis shows that the most visible applications of social and public health controls occur at the boundaries. The boundaries of groups are not simply physical barriers, frontiers and customs posts; they are also the ideas and values that separate the community from those outside, the "sacred" in society from the "profane," the "self" from the "other" and the group as "healthy" and the other as "diseased." 13

In *The Elementary Forms*, Durkheim wrote that all known religious beliefs presuppose a dual classification or dichotomy of things "sacred" and things "profane". He thought this classification so complete that it allowed a "division of the world into two domains." In Alexander's view, this separation carried two implications. Firstly, there would be a set of symbols and values that represented the strength of the community, that is "a system of beliefs, symbols that represented collective moral commitments."

Secondly, a social structure would be imposed by this system that:

<sup>11</sup> Durkheim E. The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1976; 16. (first pub. 1912.)

<sup>12</sup> Lukes, op cit; 22.

<sup>13</sup> Gilman S L. Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS. Ithaca: Cornell Univ P, 1988; 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Durkheim (1912), op cit; 37.

articulated and, indeed enforced morality by dividing symbols into contradictory patterns of sacred and profane and by encasing sacred symbols in rituals that made violation dangerous.<sup>15</sup>

In Durkheim's view the "sacred" and "profane" were two distinct spheres, one central and protective of the community, the other threatening to the community. Those sacred things that are held by the community in high esteem contrast starkly with the profane things, which threaten to undermine or destroy the sacred. In giving substance to these ideas, Durkheim considered the contrasting content and qualities of the "sacred" and the "profane" to be as follows:

beneficent powers or forces, impersonal or diffused, anthropomorphic, protectors, gods, holy places, inspiring love and gratitude (we would call these benevolent and "pure" forces);

evil or impure powers, productive of disorder, death, sickness, for example, corpses, menstrual blood (by contrast we would call these malevolent and impure forces)<sup>16</sup>

One obvious meaning of the sacred lies in the religious context but its full significance extends beyond this. In *The Elementary Forms* Durkheim took a broad view of religion, less concerned with specific beliefs and more concerned with systems and symbols of fundamental social organisation. This breadth of definition has allowed one later commentator to claim that "the concept of the sacred [was] an essential category of social thought" that transcended the "narrow concept" of religion as it is commonly defined.<sup>17</sup> The importance Durkheim places on symbols that represent the sacred also has a logical extension to the secular symbols that communities use to protect their values. He wrote:

<sup>15</sup> Alexander J C. Social-Structural Analysis: Some Notes on its History and Prospects, 1984. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 25: 5-26; 15.

<sup>16</sup> Durkheim (1912), op cit; 409. See also, Pickering W S F. Durkheim's Sociology of Religion: Themes and Theories. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984; 126, 127.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Pickering (1984), op cit; 161.

Sacred things are those "representations" society itself has fashioned ... Profane things, conversely, are those which each of us constructs from our own sense data and experience.<sup>18</sup>

The "sacred" or the values of the community group are its collective ideals. 19

Social theorists focused on the sacred as reflecting order, stability and continuity. One example has been "civil religion", the idea that the community has rituals that, while not explicitly religious, help keep the group together and emphasise the outside, the things beyond the group.<sup>20</sup> In a structural context, the dichotomy has been said to be essential in defining and understanding classifications, establishing opposites and identifying things that lay outside the boundaries of the community. The anthropologist Edmund Leach emphasised the importance of classifications and demarcations for communities:

Uncertainty generates anxiety, so we avoid it if we can. The categories of language cut the world into unambiguous blocks. The individual is either a man or a beast; either a child or an adult; either married or unmarried. In relation to any building I am either inside or outside. But to move from one clear cut state to its opposite entails passing through an ambiguous "threshold", a state of uncertainty where roles are confused and even reversed. This marginal position is regularly hedged about by taboo.<sup>21</sup>

This dichotomy between the "sacred" and the "profane" is explored by the narrative part of this thesis. It takes the "sacred" to be the collective views and ideas that a community holds about itself - its values. The "profane" are the things outside the group, the things that evoke disorder and chaos. These are not absolutes. As indicated there are no theoretical limits to the subject matter of the "sacred" and the "profane". Some suggest powerful continuities in human thought such as the idea that the leper is "unclean". The

<sup>18</sup> Durkheim E. Concerning the Definition of Religious Phenomena (1899) reproduced in Pickering W S F. Durkheim on Religion. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975; 95. See also, Durkheim (1912), op cit; 37, 39 and Pickering (1984), op cit; 119.

<sup>19</sup> Durkheim E. *The Dualism of Human Nature* (1914) reproduced in Wolff K H. *Emile Durkheim*, 1858-1917. Columbus: Ohio State Univ P, 1960; 335.

<sup>20</sup> See the entry Civil Religion (Johnson H M) in Kuper A and Kuper J eds. The Social Science Encyclopaedia. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985. 109.

<sup>21</sup> Leach E and Aycock D A. Structuralist Interpretation of Biblical Myth. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1983; 15.

dichotomy is also open to opportunistic representation. For example, governments anxious for electoral favour can define in legislation what is sacred and what is profane. They can create stark categories of "sacred" - the thing to be protected - and "profane" - the threat to the sacred.

In the light of the narrative, it is argued that the threat to the collective was often articulated in terms of health and disease; those symbols of "impure powers" - corpses and sickness. The measures taken to protect the sacred from the profane were often justified formally in terms of public health. The narrative sustains Leach's idea that people who cross boundaries prompt confusion, are dangerous and, in a physiological manifestation of their polluted status, are seen as diseased and a threat to the health of the community. Ideas about disease and outsiders shed light on the anxieties and responses that have kept social groups separate and have identified intruders. The manifestations of disease also demonstrate the polluted status of the person with whom the disease is linked. They illustrate the danger he or she poses to the community. These two ideas reinforce each other: strangers are said to introduce disease as an expression of the threat they present as "outsiders", while the idea (real or imagined) of disease, among outsiders becomes the demonstration of that threat.

#### Collective Representations

Durkheim said that the things that identified the "sacred" were "beliefs, myths, dogmas and legends". He referred to them as "collective representations". They were beliefs and ideas that were socially generated, responded to social concerns, corresponded to the structure of the community from which they came and operated as though they had an autonomous existence. Most importantly, collective representations sat outside the individual, they were a "thing" of the community, an aspect of Durkheim's idea of society as a "reality sui generis." In Sociology and Philosophy (published posthumously in

<sup>22</sup> Thompson K. Emile Durkheim. London: Ellis Horewood, Tavistock, 1982; 62.

<sup>23</sup> Durkheim (1912), op cit; 16 & 444, Lukes, op cit; 19.

1924), Durkheim described collective representations as "partially autonomous realities which lead their own life", that could "attract and repel" each other, form new syntheses and engender new representations. He referred to "the luxuriant growth of myths and legends" as evidence for his views.<sup>24</sup> Adam Kuper described collective representations as social values and norms, embedded in the individual's consciousness through the process of socialisation.<sup>25</sup>

The "poisoned well" stories of Chapter 1 fit within this idea as does the enduring myth that Chinese restaurants serve cat to their customers in place of more traditional forms of meat. This latter "myth" emphasised the view of the Chinese as threatening strangers; their alleged culinary mis-classifications as "dangerous" to Australian ways of seeing and evidence of the danger of the Chinese outsider in Australia. Another collective representation that is more deeply embedded in European culture is the legend of the Wandering Jew, described in Chapter 5 as an example of a "dangerous stranger".

Myths and legends have an important place in communities. Keith Thomas, in *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, described persistent myths and prophesies, which claimed their authority from antiquity or from God and, had currency in the 17th century. Their subject matter varied but themes such as the Arthurian legends or the overthrow of historic invaders such as the Normans were recurring. Although Thomas rejected their historical accuracy, he pointed out that these prophesies "presupposed a continuity between present and past." The narrative examines the embedded nature of a number of public health themes and beliefs, such as the idea that persons who are suffering from disease wilfully seek to infect others, arguing that they also provide a continuity between present and past and are a collective expression of the community process.

The Durkheimian idea of "collective representations" gives a continuity and a framework for the events described in the narrative. It allows us to interpret recurring

<sup>24</sup> Durkheim E. Sociology and Philosophy. London: Cohen and West, 1953; 31. See also Lukes, op cit; 8.

<sup>25</sup> Kuper A. Anthropology and Anthropologists. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983; 50.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas K. Religion and the Decline of Magic. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971; 469 and 513.

ideas such as the poisoned well as a general collective response by a community. It provides individual "public health" stories with a context that links the historical with the contemporary and interprets them as aspects of a general social phenomenon.

#### Effervescence

In Durkheim's view communities were not static; they were undergoing change, sometimes extreme change. He focused on periods of intense social change and times of crisis, arguing that they prompted periods of re-definition and renewal that he called "effervescent" periods. He believed that sometimes, during periods of rapid social change or revolutionary periods, the need for communities to identify themselves, to define their boundaries and to classify who was "in" and who was "out" would become more explicit and more urgent:

when, under the influence of some great collective shock, social interactions have become much more frequent and active.. [m]en look to each other and assemble together more than ever. That general effervescence results which is characteristic of revolutionary or creative epochs.<sup>27</sup>

Effervescence was centrally a collective process, the product of the group coming together. It was most intense when people "are assembled together and are in immediate relations with one another, when they all partake of the same idea and the same sentiment." States of "effervescence" have also been described within a religious context. The Pentecostal tradition of talking in tongues is one example. Whether the context is religious or secular, the dominant factor is the intense collective activity applying equally to crowds and to congregations. It also brings with it a re-creative aspect. Pickering wrote "if effervescence is a vehicle for the creation of new ideas and

<sup>27</sup> Durkheim (1912), op cit; 210.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Durkheim (1912), op cit; 345. See also, Pickering (1984), op cit; 390.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Pickering (1984), op cit; 393.

<sup>30</sup> Lukes, op cit; 462. Pickering (1984), op cit; 383.

activities, it is also the vehicle for the re-creation and reaffirmation of moral and spiritual life." $^{31}$ 

Durkheim does not locate effervescence within particular historical contexts. Pickering suggests that both the social changes of the Carolingian period and some of the events surrounding the Crusades qualify to be called "effervescent periods". They were times of crisis and change that prompted people to come together and reaffirm their collective values in the face of those changes.<sup>32</sup> There were periods in Australian history that were effervescent, periods of uproar and change. These were periods that focused on the changing and reshaping of Australian society such as during the gold rushes of the 1850s and 1860s, and periods of emerging nationalism in the late 19th century. Within these periods there were specific issues: the responses to Chinese immigration during the gold-rush; their (Chinese) implication in the epidemics of smallpox and plague in the late 19th century. The anti-Chinese campaigns of the 1880s occurred during a period when the Australian communities were reaffirming their nationalist values and looking towards Federation. These campaigns and the restrictive legislation that followed them were incorporated into the nationalist agenda and culminated in the White Australia Policy.<sup>33</sup> They protected nascent Australia from outgroups. They located the stranger (generally a person who was not Anglo-Saxon) as a threat and then distanced them in law, policy and public opinion. Public health played a prominent part in this process.

While extreme and sudden changes are publicised as historical "events", communities also routinely renew collective values. National gatherings and holidays, commemorations, such as ANZAC Day, "recharge" the sacredness.<sup>34</sup> These events focus

<sup>31</sup> Pickering, op cit; 388.

<sup>32</sup> Rhea B. *The Future of the Sociological Classics*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981; 29. Effervescent events will form an important part of the historical context within which the health issues are considered in the narrative.

<sup>33</sup> See Britain A M. Victoria, The Chinese and the Federal Idea, 1887-1888, 1969. ANU Hist J, No 6: 44-60.

<sup>34</sup> Kapferer B. Legends of People: Myths of State. Washington: Smithsonian Inst, 1988. See his treatment of Anzac Day, which specifically commemorates the landing of Australian and New Zealand forces (ANZACS) at the Dardanelles on 25 April 1915. Anzac day is a national day of remembrance for all wars that Australia has been involved in.

the communities for which they are significant and express the collective sentiments of the group. In 19th century Australia there were days of significance. American Independence day was one example that was celebrated here and focused on liberties and ideals.35 Such a day commemorated the formation of a new society, free of the old European constraints on individual liberty. To the goldfield diggers it symbolised independence, freedom from alien threats such as the Chinese diggers and freedom from the Colonial Authority that protected the Chinese and regulated the goldfields and the diggers' conduct more generally. It may be significant that the 4 July 1854 and the 4 July 1857 (American Independence Day) and the 14 July 1861 (Bastille Day) were the dates of three significant outbreaks of violence against the Chinese, or were prompted by their presence, on the Bendigo, Buckland (North east Victoria) and the Lambing Flat (New South Wales) diggings respectively. What was clearly significant about these events was the broader context in which they occurred. The Buckland and Lambing Flat disturbances were tumultuous events that went broader than just being seen as anti-Chinese disturbances. They were presented as threats to established order in Colonial society, as seditious attacks on the British State - allegedly by a new nationalism that focused on republican ideals - the American and French diggers were singled out for special mention in the newspaper reports. The Chinese were the expression through which this tumult was occurring.36

To summarise: Durkheim offered an interpretation of society that focused on the community as an entity itself, aware of the "profane" intrusion from the outside. He argued that societies articulated themselves in their collective representations - a broad

<sup>35</sup> See for example, the report in the Age, 6 July, 1857; 6.

On the Bendigo field, one prominent republican digger W D C Donovan evoked images of the Bastille to support his images for excluding the Chinese. He also made the point that the Chinese should be driven from Australia by July 4. (See the report of the anti-Chinese movement in Bendigo Argus, 10 July, 1854.) See also, the report of a July 4 celebration on Creswick creek (Argus, 5 July 1854) and Bendigo (Bendigo Advertiser, 7 July, 1855) See also the references to the Lambing Flat disturbances. (Sydney Morning Herald, 17 July, 1861; 7, 18 July, 1861; 9, 23 July, 1861; 2, 4.) The 14 July disturbances at Lambing Flat were directed towards the Colonial authorities, whose task was the maintenance of law and order and the protection of the Chinese.

range of things including myths and beliefs - and that during periods of effervescence, rapid change or crisis the need to protect the community becomes all the more imperative.

Durkheim's theory is used to consider the idea that disease is the threat and the visible manifestation of chaos and disorder associated with the "other". The powerful and often ritual response to disease is focused by the lens of Durkheim's theory: dirt, disease and disorder are expressions of the "profane" and evidence of its incursion into the world of the "sacred". Public health laws can be seen as boundary fences that police and protect the social margins from that incursion.

## 3 LATER DURKHEIMIAN THEORISTS AND THEIR APPLICATION TO PUBLIC HEALTH

Twentieth century social theorists have relied substantially upon Durkheim's writing. Talcott Parsons has portrayed his work in a functionalist context emphasising his ideas of law and social values as institutionalised within communities.<sup>37</sup> Parson's influential interpretation has bestowed a conservative mantle on Durkheim and has also made his earlier work, in particular *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), more prominent than later work such as *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. One functionalist application of Durkheim was Kai Erikson's study of the Salem witch trials in 17th century New England, an event Erikson interpreted as a *boundary crisis*, a response by a community under the threat of change. This response operated to define more closely and tighten the boundary of the Puritan New England community in such a way as to construct the dimensions of a deviant and threatening world outside those boundaries - in this case, the world of the persons defined as witches. Here, as elsewhere, when

<sup>37</sup> See generally, Parsons T. The Structure of Social Action, Vol 1. New York: Free Press, 1968; chapter 8 etc. (originally published, 1937.) and Parson's entry on Durkheim in the International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences (Sills D L ed, op cit.) Durkheim's work lends itself to functionalist interpretation. One example is his idea of the "function" of crime in strengthening community solidarity. He saw the criminal process as focusing on the criminal as a social outcast, thus allowing the community to define and strengthen its own sense of solidarity. "Crime", he wrote, "draws honest consciousnesses together, concentrating them." (Durkheim E. The Division of Labour in Society. London: Macmillan, 1984; 58.)

communities were under threat, the boundaries were tightened.<sup>38</sup> Anthony Giddens has argued that this functionalist emphasis has detracted from a fuller interpretation of Durkheim, that it has represented his work as becoming "more and more dominated by the notion of moral consensus which thus almost completely blanks out his parallel concern with modes of institutional change."<sup>39</sup>

The functionalist view of Durkheim has been prominent for a long time. More recent writers, including the anthropologist Mary Douglas, whose work is significant for this thesis, have used his theory to identify and focus on deeper "below the surface" descriptions of underlying structures in communities.<sup>40</sup> Douglas' elaboration is important for a public health focus, in particular for the development of a central argument that pollution or contamination is seen as the consequence of breaching social and physical boundaries. She has argued that such a perception is a feature of contemporary Western society as much as it is of ancient or exotic cultures.<sup>41</sup> When used in its cultural or ritualistic sense, "pollution" carries the idea that a transgressor has been marked or defiled, has become impure and unclean and even a danger to the community. This also has great public health significance: the idea of ritual pollution has a physical context of meaning. The idea of something being "unclean" or "defiled" suggests disease and contamination. This is important; ritual pollution avoidance has not been an explicit feature of British and Australian communities in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, as the narrative shows, public health issues have been important and, as Douglas has argued, "physiological pollutions become important as symbolic expressions of other undesirable conduct."42

<sup>38</sup> Erikson K. Wayward Puritans. New York: Wiley, 1966. See also Thompson K. Beliefs and Ideology. London: Ellis Horewood, Tavistock, 1986; 43, and Brett J. Robert Menzies' Forgotten People. Sydney: Macmillan, 1992; 92.

<sup>39</sup> Giddens A. Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory. London: Macmillan, 1982; 44 and 46.

<sup>40</sup> It has been said that Mary Douglas and Victor Turner (who described rituals of collective solidarity in African communities and the rituals that happen on the boundaries of those communities) "remain within the basic Durkheimian framework" (Peacock J L. Consciousness and Change. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975; 30.) See also Douglas M. Purity and Danger. London: Ark Paperbacks, 1966 and Turner V. The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure. Ithaca: Cornell Univ P, 1969.

 $<sup>41~{\</sup>rm Douglas}$  M. "Pollution" in Sills D L ed. The International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences. New York: Macmillan and The Free Press, 1968.

<sup>42</sup> Douglas, "Pollution", op cit; 340.

Thus the stranger, the intruder, is seen as dirty and diseased (the manifestation of his or her "polluted" status) and a danger to others. Public health controls and policies responded to this by focusing on and sustaining the idea of the stranger as dangerous.

Within this general framework, a recent focus for "late Durkheim" analysis is John Alexander's edited book *Durkheimian Sociology: Cultural Studies*, which brings together a collection of essays that use a Durkheimian framework, to consider a range of specific social events from the French Revolution to Watergate.<sup>43</sup> These contributions are informed by Durkheim's idea of the "sacred" and the "profane" and the importance of the boundary in separating and protecting the sacred.

This brief survey of Durkheimian theorists suggests that the boundary question is important for both functionalist writers such as Erikson, for whom boundaries are a protective mechanism for groups under threat, and for structuralists, for whom separations are important in the process of classifying people and objects. In both cases, boundaries, the definition of the community and its separation and protection from incursions are important foci for understanding social activity.

### 4 SIGNIFICANCE OF SYMBOLS

This thesis argues that public health laws and views about public health in the many historical contexts, discussed in later chapters can be seen as symbols or expressions of other issues, of boundary maintenance and the separation of the sacred from the profane. Communities have lived and continue to be vivified by a world of symbols, expressed in a number of ways including rituals and laws. Their meaning can only be understood if a questioner is prepared to go beyond the surface of the ritual or the legislative control in question. While the formal, descriptive content of the law or ritual

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Alexander J C ed. *Durkheimian Sociology: Cultural Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1988. The stated purpose of this set of studies is to bring an analysis of the symbolic phenomena of Durkheim's work more directly into sociology. (See page 1)

may deal with a particular issue, a Durkheimian perspective suggests a more significant meaning, in terms of strengthening community bonds, emphasising social solidarity or reinforcing social classifications. Public health law in particular, expresses a strengthening and a focusing that vests the symbol - the statement or the law - with an underlying meaning that has significance for members of the community in which it exists. One example, considered later, is Mary Douglas' view that dirt and our often powerful reactions to it are more strongly shaped by views about classification and the chaos and disorder of mis-classification than they are with our concerns about adequate public health practice. Adopting this view, we can speculate that some laws about hygiene are more important as ways of classifying and constructing order than they are practical applications of public health. In other words, both an apparent, surface, meaning and a "deeper", more significant, meaning must be considered.<sup>44</sup> This point can be illustrated by considering two rituals that have been part of the collective experience of many Australians, namely: the "crossing the line" ceremony at the equator; and the serving of Christmas dinner by officers to their troops.<sup>45</sup> Victor Turner puts such ceremonies in a general or theoretical framework, arguing that these rituals of role reversal, or temporarily turning established order on its head, "has the long term effect of emphasising all the more trenchantly the social definitions of the group."46

Legislation still current in Australia illustrates the point that "below the surface" interpretations can be more revealing than literal interpretations. Consider these examples taken from the Australian criminal law:

<sup>44</sup> Cohen A P. The Symbolic Construction of Community. London: Ellis Horewood, Tavistock, 1978; 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Kennedy L. A Book of Sea Journeys. London: Fontana Collins, 1981. 47. Gordon Bennet H. Why Singapore Fell. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1944; 83.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Turner V. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca: Cornell Univ P, 1969; 172, 183. The significance of the transitional events in both cases rested in their symbolic quality. Crossing the equator signifies coming home or entering into unknown regions. Christmas is an important watershed in peoples' lives (the phrase "home by Christmas".) These transitional periods are described in anthropological literature as "liminal periods" and role reversal of the type described in the two cases is a common feature of these events.

A notable example from the Christian tradition is the *Feast of Fools*, celebrated in medieval Europe, generally between Christmas and Epiphany. It has been described as a parody of a religious festival and involved mock masses, obscene renditions of the liturgy and the "ordination" of the lowest sub-deacon as bishop. This was a "burlesquing of things sacred". It also had associations with other festivals that turned order on its head such as the *Lords of Misrule* and the, earlier Roman feast of *Saturnalia*. (Entry in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Chicago: William Benton, 1961.)

- \* the South Australian Criminal Law Consolidation Act, 1935 establishes special penalties for a person found guilty of assaulting a clergyman (these are substantially higher than the general penalties for assault);
- \* it is still an offence to exercise powers of witchcraft; and
- \* under the Commonwealth Customs Act 1901 for many years this century, the importation of crystal balls was prohibited.<sup>47</sup>

These provisions are not just interesting legal anachronisms. They have survived a number of attempts to reform the law and the offence of witchcraft was prosecuted in Australia as late as 1989.<sup>48</sup> They emphasise and protect values such as the special character of the cleric, they continue to articulate the idea that there is a "dark" side to the community that must be constrained by laws against witchcraft and its associated activities such as fortune telling. These are laws that can be made sense of if they are characterised as policing and protecting the boundaries of the sacred. Similarly, there are public health controls that, when measured against the public health need, seem to add little to the protection of the community's health. For example, there are the States' Food laws that define prohibited foods, such as horse meat.<sup>49</sup> More recently, South Australian drug legislation established "school zones," (an area 500 metres from the boundary of any primary or secondary school) that substantially increase the penalties for persons committing certain drug trafficking offences within the zone, whether or not children are likely to be involved as potential purchasers. In New South Wales, the siting of condom vending machines is regulated by the Therapeutic Goods and Cosmetics Act 1972 and they cannot be installed "in or near" any schools or kindergartens, residential premises or

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Criminal Law Consolidation Act, 1935 (South Australia) sections 41 & 259. The Customs Act 1901 Proclamation (Commonwealth Government Gazette 9 August, 1917; 1607) prohibited the importation of "crystal balls for clairvoyant crystal gazing" together with "mysterious lucky stones" and "oriental lucky stones"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Charges of witchcraft were laid against two people under Queensland law in 1989. (Adelaide *Advertiser*, 8 April, 1989; 2.)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> The Food Regulations, 1986 made under the Food Act, 1985 (South Australia) invoke the National Health and Medical Research Council's definition of "meat" as "the whole or part of the carcass including the edible offal thereof, ordinarily consumed as food by man, of any cattle, buffalo, sheep, pig, goat, deer, rabbit, hare or poultry" (Food Standards Code, C1 - some species of kangaroo are separately defined as "meat".) Things not included in this definition are prohibited and cannot be sold as meat.

churches. Here is another public health law that seems centrally about protecting the "sacred" against pollution rather than dealing with public health. <sup>50</sup>

In following chapters, this thesis presents a wealth of examples of symbolism in both existing and past public health legislation. In the Australian context, this symbolism is particularly significant in the expression of public health concerns in relation to racial and other minority groups. In other words, the many examples of public health concern and the formal, legislative and policy, response to that concern in terms of those particular minority groups can best be understood as symbolic expressions of other concerns about those groups.

#### 5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the significance of Durkheim's social theory for understanding groups; the things that keep groups cohesive; and the things that separate them from those outside the group. This theory, and later elaborations of it, offers two important perspectives to the study of public health, particularly in its context of protecting social boundaries. Firstly, there is his view that the effect of ritual activity is to strengthen the bonds attaching to the individuals within the communities in which the rites occur. Secondly, there is the process of separation of the "sacred" from the "profane". The two perspectives shape the following argument - that ideas about and the practice of public health are both a ritual that keeps groups together by its affirmation of collective values of health and hygiene and a process on the boundary, that separates and keeps separate the sacred from the profane. Both issues are explored in the following Chapters 3 to 6, which consider an historical account of the significance of boundaries and public health.

<sup>50</sup> Controlled Substances Act Amendment Act (No 2), 1990. See also the discussion in Chapter 9. New South Wales Government Gazette, 8 November, 1985; 5934.

## CHAPTER 3 BOUNDARIES AND PUBLIC HEALTH

#### 1 GENERAL GORDON'S STATUE

Towards the southern end of Melbourne's Spring Street stands a bronze statue of General Charles Gordon who was killed in the Sudan on Australia day 1885. Fifty thousand Victorians subscribed to a fund for its erection. So enthusiastic were they that enough money remained to establish the Gordon Institute for Boys, to echo locally the dead General's work among the neglected boys of East London. Gordon's death had a remarkable impact on Australians, prompting a wave of patriotic responses and civic mourning. Colonial Expeditionary Forces to avenge his death were promised and excitement ran to such a pitch that even the small country town of Warrnambool offered a contingent. The statue's unveiling was a substantial affair. The *Age* report estimated that between 7,000 to 8,000 people crowded into Spring Street to hear the Governor and other dignitaries (accompanied by the members of the Gordon Cadet Band) perform the ceremony. An identical statue had been erected in Trafalgar Square eight months previously, a fact the Governor mentioned when he spoke of how "a scattered people could be one at heart." He spoke also of his hope that both the statue and Gordon's life would "educate generations yet to come."

Many of those attending the unveiling crowded up Spring Street and were literally a stone's throw from Parliament House. This brought them within a zone that prohibited more than fifty people from coming together for any political or unlawful purpose. Since theirs was manifestly a patriotic purpose, the prohibition was ignored. The Act that created this zone had been passed hurriedly in 1860 as a result of a riot around the Parliament buildings thought so serious that the Colonial authorities had summoned the militia and prepared for the full onslaught of mob rule.<sup>3</sup> The apparent purpose of the riot

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Age 14 February, 1885; 9.

<sup>2</sup> Age 27 June, 1889; 5.

<sup>3</sup> An Act for Securing the Freedom of the Deliberations of Parliament and for Preventing Disorderly Meetings, 1860 (24 Victoria, no 108.)

was to protest against the delays in reforming the Colony's land laws. The *Age* suggested that more sinister forces were at work. Describing the disturbance as a "contemptible display" of mob rule and "an outrage on the public peace", it was said to be the work of a few "evil disposed persons" in the crowd. Police evidence suggested that some of the rioters were wearing and distributing red ribbons, proof that they were there for some "ulterior purpose." One officer saw "many persons with the same red mark." The full significance of this mark or its purpose was not spelt out. It may have indicated support for the Italian populist Garibaldi whose name was mentioned in speeches beforehand. Certainly, it hinted that the challenge to wealth and power in Victoria might be wider than just land reform.4

The Melbourne street-scape that General Gordon's bronze gaze commanded bore evidence of orderly prosperity. The Government buildings of Spring Street and Treasury Place were splendid classical monuments to colonial pride and success, tributes to "Marvellous Melbourne", the largest city in Australia. Less than four hundred yards away there was another world, the Chinatown of Little Bourke Street. So remote was this place of darkness from the brilliantly lit prosperity of neighbouring streets that it took on the fascination of a distant and exotic world to which a visit, on one account, was something akin to Dante's descent into hell or a "walk in the shadow of death." In this place the Chinese took on the form of animals, gliding "soft footed" and menacingly from their gambling houses and opium dens. Those who descended into the dark lanes and narrow alleys of Chinatown, this other world of vice and degradation, had left Marvellous Melbourne far behind them.5

General Gordon's statue stood within a web of actual and notional boundaries.

First, in commemorating the gallant deeds of George Gordon, the statue was elevating the idealised Englishman, standing in stark contrast to his heathen foes. Indeed, Gordon's life

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Age 30 August, 1860; 4, 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Hume F W. *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*. London: Hansom Cab Pub Co, 1887. See also, Davison G et al ed. *The Outcasts of Melbourne*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1985; chapter 2.

took on something of a mythical quality. His good works among London's destitute poor, his suppression of the slave trade, the popular picture of him at the head of native armies, armed only with a bible and a cane, made him pre-eminently an Imperial patriot whose civilising mission, both at home and abroad, was to bring light into darkness. Gordon was the spirit of civilised England.6

At another level, the outpouring of grief in colonial Australia at the news of Gordon's death was a collective statement about the Empire that Australians saw themselves a part of. In offering detachments for the Sudan, the Colonies were ready to do their part "as an integral portion of Empire." By their offers, the Colonial governments and the many Australians who supported them could reaffirm their position as adherents to civilised values. This contrasted with the threatening heathen savages that were epitomised in Gordon's foe and assailant the "Mad Mahdi." Heathen savages were also believed to threaten Australia from other directions and when the New South Wales contingent left Sydney Cove to commence its undistinguished campaign in the Sudan, Australian governments had for two decades been passing laws to preserve White Australia by restricting Asiatic immigration. This process had achieved a renewed intensity by the time of Gordon's death and the need to keep the menacing yellow and black hordes at bay by securing Australian boundaries against them was widely accepted, even by those who remained critical of the Sudan adventure.

Second, the Act passed so hastily in 1860, that created a special zone around Spring Street, was described as an Act "for securing the freedom of the deliberations of Parliament and for preventing disorderly meetings." It was not a new idea, similar English legislation was passed in 1817.8 In the most obvious sense, it created a protective boundary around the engine house of the established constitutional process, a protection of the "sacred" from the profanity of mob rule. It also emphasised the boundary between

<sup>6</sup> As The Age eulogised, his was the character of the crusader and the covenanter and his death would cause "a thrill of pain throughout the civilised world." (Age 12 February, 1885; 5.)

<sup>7</sup> Age 14 February, 1885; 9.

<sup>8</sup> Seditious Meetings and Assemblies Act, 1817 (57 Geo III, C19.) This was in response to the fear of civil unrest during the turbulent period that followed the Napoleonic wars.

classes, the privileged groups who had no want of change and those for whom a better life depended upon it.

Third, by the time of Gordon's death the Chinese population in Victoria numbered about 10,000. It was falling away from a high of about 25,000 some thirty years before to about 7,500 by the time of Federation. This was a very small proportion of the Victorian population yet the Chinese were reviled and subject to a campaign of quite extraordinary virulence. They were seen as dirty, diseased and economically and morally threatening to Europeans. Laws were passed to restrict their entry to Australia and to disadvantage them socially and in the workplace. Popular magazines such as the *Bulletin* carried stories that served as warnings to Europeans of the dangers of the Chinese and of associating with them. Crowded together, through poverty and necessity rather than through choice, their "Chinatowns" became a byword for vice and disease. The barriers that separated the Chinese from White Australia were profound, both within the Colonies and at their borders, culminating in the White Australia Policy that policed the boundaries of the country for the better part of the twentieth century.

This Chapter considers the general issue of boundaries, of which public health regulations are a part. It argues that boundaries exist in many contexts, some physical, some notional, delineating social as well as spatial differences. Many of these boundaries take the subject of health in the sense that the dangers beyond the boundary, that are kept separate from the community, are articulated in health contexts. This danger, prompted by outsiders, was often characterised as being to the *health* of the community. Public health needs thus played an important role in justifying restrictive measures against strangers. This chapter considers the idea of boundaries in a general context and then focuses on their public health significance.

The visitor to Gordon's statue was presented with a series of boundaries. Some existed at law; some could be visualised. Others were notional, yet they powerfully distinguished order from chaos or darkness from light. Boundaries distinguish the "good" and the "orderly" within from the "threatening" and the chaotic outside. The world of

General Gordon, as for many 19th century Australians, was the world of imperial values and constitutional order and the prosperity of European development. These were challenged by the other worlds of the Mahdi, the mob and the Chinaman.

# 2 THE CONSTRUCTION OF BOUNDARIES

Boundaries mark the limit of territory and perception. They separate one thing from another. As a physical marking out of territory, boundaries seem to have existed since prehistoric times and frontier posts, fences and road side signs are all modern visual representations of the limits of communities, marking and defining territory.9 Boundaries also separate the "known" from the "unknown" and crossing these borders and entering into the physical space that lay beyond could prove threatening to the adventurer. Some of these spaces were mystical other worlds, such as St Brendan's islands.<sup>10</sup> Others were actual locations invested with special meaning such as the "fairy hills", reported throughout Europe as the homes of elves, dwarfs and fairies. The magical status of these particular sites was often protected by taboos, which emphasised their boundaries and set them apart from the rest of the countryside.<sup>11</sup> Because of their role as gateways to other worlds boundaries have been regarded as "dangerous." Thresholds, crossroads, fords and bridges became mysterious places. For example, to stand at midnight (itself a boundary) on the point where three parishes met was to court disaster. 12 In a study of medieval and ancient fairs. Dexter remarked that "fairs held on the boundary were very ancient" and that Hermes, a god of the boundaries was also a god of fairs and markets. It is worth noting

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> There were megalithic stones of England's West Country which have been interpreted as serving the function of boundary stones (Watkins A. *The Old Straight Track*. London: Abacus, 1974; 27.)

<sup>10</sup> Webb J F. The Lives of the Saints. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965; 34 (Voyage of St Brendan.)

<sup>11</sup> Simpson J. European Mythology. London: Hamlyn, 1987; 36.

<sup>12</sup> Simpson, op cit; 34 & 37.

that fairs were places associated with misrule and chaos and became the subject of restrictive controls (both public health and public order) in Victorian England.<sup>13</sup>

Boundaries also define the "known" world and have been exemplified in a ceremonial way. A prominent example is the rogation week ceremony of "Beating the Bounds", which still occurs in Britain. Described in Brand's *Popular Antiquities*, it involves the parish clergy and choir in a walk to each marked corner of the parish at which point a rite is conducted. The beneficial effects of this ceremony were claimed by Herbert's *Country Parson* (1652) to include:

Justice in the preservation of bounds. Charitie in loving, walking, and neighbourly accompanying one another, with reconciling of differences... Mercie in relieving the poor by a liberal distribution" <sup>14</sup>

Anticipating Durkheim by some 250 years, Herbert's explanation describes a process of definition and inward strengthening of the parish by this ceremony of defining its margins.<sup>15</sup>

Boundaries remain important. The more obvious examples are the major

Australian war memorials which, in both a spatial and a legal way, create a clear
separation of the "sacred" from the "profane." The formal, ordered layout and the
powerful symbolism of these places emphasise their physical and spiritual separation from
the rest of the city. In Melbourne, visitors to the Shrine of Remembrance are reminded
that they are entering "holy ground." These boundaries have also been defined
legislatively. In South Australia, a better code of conduct is required by persons
approaching the Adelaide memorial than is required for the rest of the City. Persons

<sup>13</sup> Dexter T F G. *The Pagan Origin of Fairs*. Perranporth (Cornwall). New Knowledge Press, undated (1920s); sections 39-42. See also the English *Fairs Act*, 1871. This gave the Government the power to close any fairs which were deemed "unnecessary or the cause of grievous immorality."

<sup>14</sup> Brand J. Observations on Popular Antiquities. London: Chatto and Windus, 1900; 113. This ceremony was thought to have been based on the Roman feast of Terminalia. (See "Terminus" Hammond N G L and Scullard H H. The Oxford Classical Dictionary. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1970.)

<sup>15</sup> The theologian Richard Hooker took the same view of the ceremony and would try to persuade all "who desired the preservation of love and their parish rights and liberties" to join him on the walk (Brand, op cit; 114.) Other writers including Cohen and Van Gennep make reference to "boundary ceremonies." (Cohen A P. *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. London: Ellis Horewood, Tavistock, 1985; 53 Van Gennep A. *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago P, 1960; 175.)

within its precincts, must be "decently and respectably clothed" and not of "bad character." <sup>16</sup>

Boundaries are also a visual expression of classifications and the social representation of space. In 19th century Britain, these classification were prominently those of rich and the poor. In 1849, Edward Miall described the physical layout of English churches in the following way:

The poor man is made to feel that he is a poor man, the rich is reminded that he is rich. ... the graduated scale of pews, the free sittings, if there are any, keep up the separation between class and class.<sup>17</sup>

This was one example of a physical layout that separated the classes. The orderly and planned nature of the new towns proposed in Victorian Britain provided a visually grander example of this process. Orderliness and cleanliness were said to be the prominent virtues of the new towns. Physical separation was also central to the scheme. In Titus Salt's new town "Saltaire" for example, the houses of the managerial classes were distinctly separate from the workers' houses. Robert Cheesman wrote:

There was no "chaos" in this plan where, through the careful classification of like people ... into discrete spatial zones, the architects had achieved a "sense of order." 18

<sup>16</sup> See Russell W B. We Will Remember Them: The Story of the Shrine of Remembrance. Melbourne: Trustees of the Shrine pub, 1988; 72, 73 & 61. City of Adelaide By-Law, LXIII (In Respect of the National Soldiers' Memorial), 1950; clauses. 2 & 4. This provision should be compared with a statue of Edward VI, which imposed special penalties in cases where the consecrated area of a church was "polluted" by an act of violence being committed within it. If this pollution did occur a particular ceremonial process was required to be performed before the church could be used again. (Thomas K. Religion and the Decline of Magic. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971; 36.). Another example of the legislative protection of the "sacred" is the War Terms Regulation Act, 1920 (South Australia) which restricts the context within which words such as "ANZAC" can be used (prohibiting its use in association with any commercial venture). A reason being that the word is "altogether too sacred ... to allow it to be lightly used." (South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 26 November, 1920; 1916.)

<sup>17</sup> In Jay E ed. *The Evangelical and Oxford Movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1983; 98. Miall's description of the 19th century separation in churches has an earlier precedent. Christopher Hill noted that during the restoration, the habit of renting pews "helped to exclude the poor" from church. (Hill C. *The World Turned Upside Down*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975; 357.)

<sup>18</sup> Cheesman R. Patterns in Perpetuity. Adelaide: Thornton House, 1986; 149.

Here, spatial boundaries emphasised social boundaries and physical separation was associated with orderliness. Another Victorian planner spoke of the need to segregate or zone "naturally different social classes." 19

Even without the planners' forethought, separation of classes occurred as a simple function of economics and the urban slums seemed a world away from the affluent parts of the city. The chaos, dirt and disorder of the Sheffield slums were described by the prominent town planner C C Reade in the following terms:

[The visitor] wanders down lane after lane, narrow and dirty, and dominated by that overwhelming sense of disorder; children in droves, unwashed women ... and grimy workmen<sup>20</sup>

This idea presents the vision of dirt and disorder within the working class domain of the slums. In the eye of its middle class beholder, dirt was associated with disorder, with misclassification, with the opposite of the orderly classification of the planners. In these ways, the blight of the Victorian slums contrasted orderly prosperity with the grimy and chaotic profanity of the urban poor. Whether this separation occurred through economic disparities or through efforts to positively order the built environment and maintain what was seen as the "natural" separation of the social classes, the effect was the same. Both were visual expressions of the vast boundary that lay between the social classes.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Ibid; 165.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Cited in Hutchings A and Bunker R ed. *With Conscious Purpose*, Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986; 47. The segregation of homeless people from affluent sectors of cities is a feature of 20th Century urban design and policing. In his study of Los Angeles, Davis describes this as a policy of containment. (Davis M. Afterword - A Logic Like Hell's: Being Homeless in Los Angeles, 1991. *UCLA Law Review*, 39: 325-332.)

<sup>21</sup> This idea was also expressed in the comparison between the depictions of the "orderly, family centered, pre urban world" of rural America compared with the chaos of the new industrial cities. (See Boyer P. *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America 1820-1920*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard Univ P, 1978; 32 and illustration.) This representation of the world through spatial contexts has been recognised in both large and small scales. S J Tambiah provides an example of the layout of rural housing in Thailand. Here: "the architecture of the house becomes a central grid to which are linked (in a precise and ordered way) categories of the human and animal word." (Douglas M ed. *Rules and Meanings*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973; 132.) At the grander level, Taylor has demonstrated how the German Nazi party utilised rituals and massed displays in conjunction with powerful visual symbols as a necessary way of expressing its ideology. (Taylor S. Symbol and Ritual Under National Socialism, 1984. *British J. of Sociology*, 32: 504-520.)

A central issue about boundaries is that dangers lie beyond them. This point has been a part of the "way of seeing" of many communities. For example, the dangers of remote "other worlds" was a subject of popular Victorian literature where fictional heroes, ignoring the warnings of terrified inn keepers or desertion by guides, push deeper into inhospitable regions where vampires and other horrors were said to lurk.<sup>22</sup> Some expressions of these dangers will be considered here. Significantly, they were sensed rather than real. They prompted detailed accounts of fantastic figures and other worlds that lay, menacing, beyond the boundary of the known world. Most importantly, they had the effect of defining the boundaries and values of the communities that defined those dangers. Threats to health took a consistent role in the expression of those dangers.

Cannibal beliefs have a rich and varied history which is part of the folklore of many communities. Cannibals were a species of monstrous beings who were said to lie beyond the boundaries of the known world. W Arens, a scholar of cannibal beliefs, maintains that they contain and transmit "significant cultural messages." A common thread of beliefs was that man eating occurred beyond the boundaries of civilised communities. For Herodotus, cannibals lived beyond a great desert. For others, they lived across the seas in the new world, or in darkest Africa and, more recently, in the most remote and inaccessible parts of New Guinea. These were far off and unknown regions.<sup>24</sup>

There is also a tradition of domestic cannibalism. Here cannibals were said to be the marginal and threatening people within the writer's own communities. Both Jews and witches were said to have eaten Christian babies and cannibalism was a sign of their

<sup>22</sup> See as examples: Stoker B. Dracula's Guest, In Ryan A ed. The Penguin Book of Vampire Stories. London; Penguin, 1987; and Butler S. Erewhon or over the Range. Auckland: Golden Press, 1973. There were many examples of a belief in monsters that existed beyond the boundaries of the community. See generally, White G D. Myths of the Dog-Man. Chicago: Univ of Chicago P, 1991; chapter 1.

<sup>23</sup> Arens W. The Man Eating Myth. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979; 182.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid; 10, 22 See also Koch K F. "cannibalism" in Hunter D E and Whitten P ed. *Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. New York: Harper and Roe, 1976.

marginal "outside" status.<sup>25</sup> The linking of cannibalism with unpopular minorities has occurred in the 20th century and cannibal stories remain a powerful ingredient of modern urban horror.<sup>26</sup>

Cannibal beliefs have worked their way into popular tradition and are still accepted by many as real phenomena.<sup>27</sup> For example, they have worked their way powerfully into folk beliefs. Popular European nursery stories portray cannibals, eager to eat children who have wandered into strange places as *Jack and the Beanstalk* and *Hansel and Gretel* illustrate. Yet, little, if any, reliable evidence of ritual cannibalism is available.<sup>28</sup> As with witchcraft, cannibal beliefs are interesting in terms of what they say about the communities who made them. It is important to consider why cannibal beliefs exist and how this relates to the idea of boundaries.

The cannibal stories, like the even richer vein of fairy stories, illustrate the dichotomy between the known world of the community and the unknown world beyond it.

Another group of cannibals were described as having tails. These stories are interesting because the presence or absence of tails is a significant marker between civilised humans and brute "savages." It was also an ancient Devonshire belief that people in Cornwall, ie beyond their boundaries, were born with tails "and were scarcely to be classed with Christian people." Baring-Gould S. *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages.* New York: University Books, 1967; 145 &157. (This is a reprint of essays originally written 1866-1868.)

<sup>25</sup> Scarre G. Witchcraft and Magic in 16th and 17th Century Europe. London: Macmillan, 1987; 15.
Trachtenberg J. The Devil and the Jews. New Haven: Yale Univ P, 1943; 125, 134 & 135. This particular charge against the Jews also occurred in the 20th century. See, Newall V. The Witch Figure. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973; 113.

<sup>26</sup> A 1989 newspaper headline read "Bodies 'cannibalised' by satanic cult." Then followed an equivocal and circumstantial, yet florid, account of cannibalism in Texas which presented a gruesome combination of witchcraft, drug smuggling and cannibalism. (*Advertiser*, 13 April, 1989; 2.) See also "Children of the Flames." *Australian* Magazine, 2-3 November, 1991: 27-30; 29, an oral history of the experiences of Jewish children during World War II. One described a rumour, current in Romania at the time, that a Jewish Vampire was devouring Christian children.

<sup>27</sup> Arens, op cit; 13.

<sup>28</sup> Arens, op cit; 36 and 150. The villains in the cannibal stories have either been savages in strange lands beyond the boundaries of civilised communities or people already marked as marginal and threatening to the centre. The view that they eat human flesh further categorises them as outgroups by stressing both their "non-human" nature and the threat that they present to the communities within which the stories circulate. For example, in Jack and the Beanstalk the hero (Jack) risks being eaten by a giant (who in the story is an "ogre" and therefore a non-human form of giant) who lives in a mystical land in the sky. In Hansel and Gretel, the cannibal is a witch figure who dwells in a dark forest on the margins of civilisation. See Ellis J M. One Fairy Story Too Many. Chicago: Univ of Chicago P, 1983; 154 (Hansel and Gretel.) Opie I and Opie P. The Classic Fairy Tales. London: Oxford U P, 1974; 162 (Jack and the Beanstalk.). Another cannibal story for children is Rumpelstiltskin. Here, the prospective child eater is a type of subhuman being who lives in a forest. (Opie and Opie, op cit; 195.) Other cultures appear also to have a stock of cannibal stories to frighten unruly children, defining the margins of the known (safe) world and the unknown (unsafe) world. The role of golliwogs and "bogy men" as childhood terrors could also be considered in this context. (See Brown P and Tuzin D. The Ethnography of Cannibalism. Washington: Society for Psychological Anthropology, 1983; 12.)

They are an expression of the dangers that lie beyond the boundary. In these stories, the physical boundary is supplanted by a notional boundary that contained the ideas around which the community was organised. Outsiders, physically within communities, but outside its idea of self were marginalised and marked in various ways. The belief that Jews and people described as witches ate humans was an expression of this. The cannibal stories defined the boundary in the sense that they located outlandish behaviour and provided a reference point from which those who accepted the stories could look inwards and protect and strengthen their own values.

Views about convicts in 19th century Australia provide another example of dangers imagined to lie beyond the boundaries of a fragile community. In 1788, over half the European population of Australia were convicts and for the next 70 years, a significant part of the European population were or had been convicts.<sup>29</sup> Firstly, convicts were outcasts from the world of 18th and 19th century Britain, thrust into the chaotic other world of savagery and darkness, and whose outcast status was said to cloak them with a dangerous contagion.<sup>30</sup> Then, within the boundaries of developing Australia, the free settlers displayed a growing antagonism to the "polluting" threat of the convict system.<sup>31</sup> This antagonism was articulated in such a way as to make the boundary between free settlers and convict central.

Free settlers saw the convict society as quite separate and potentially corrupting and threatening. They constructed their idea of community so as to exclude the convict community from it, seeing all convicts as outsiders. This separation was supported by the general idea, held by respectable society, that convicts were *inevitably* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Between 1805 and 1836, the sometime convict population of New South Wales was between 30% and 46% of the total population. Sherington G. *Australia's Immigrants*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1980; 24.

<sup>30</sup> White R. Inventing Australia. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1981; 16.

<sup>31</sup> See the Argus 22 August, 1849 (cited in Grant J and Serle G. The Melbourne Scene 1803-1956. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1957; 63.) See generally, Hirst J B. Convict Society and its Enemies. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983.

depraved. They were described as "the very dregs of society", never trusted and always to be kept safely at arms length.<sup>32</sup> The convict taint was said by some to be hereditary. Commenting on a particularly violent rape in Sydney in 1886, the *Queensland Figaro* introduced the story by saying of the assailants: "the detestable seed of the old convictism of Botany Bay is yielding poison plants true to its heredity."<sup>33</sup> Convicts were seen as fundamentally different from free settlers, a difference emphasised in a number of ways the distanced them; for example, there was their apparent inability to feel pity and to exercise the sensitivities of their betters.<sup>34</sup> Their improvidence and unrestrained search for immediate gratification was another way in which they were distanced. Several writers complained that when food was short, convicts immediately ate whatever they could with no thought for tomorrow.<sup>35</sup> These shortcomings were said to originate from the convicts themselves rather than the convict system. They were accepted as examples of the distinction, expressed in the Parliamentary Enquiry into the Report on Transportation (*Molesworth Committee*) 1838, between the free settlers, who were described as "the men of thrift and probity", and the convicts, described as "the children of intemperance."<sup>36</sup>

Other examples of the convicts' innate depravity could be gleaned from stories such as their tearing pages from the bible to make playing cards.<sup>37</sup> There were also more spectacular and terrifying examples. At the public executions, the condemned man was sometimes seen to remain unrepentant, even joking about his fate and refusing to acknowledge the awful authority of the State over his body. Such moral anarchy, even in

<sup>32</sup> Ingleton G C. *True Patriots All.* Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1952; 8 (Botany Bay, A New Song.) Molesworth W. *Report From The Select Committee On Transportation.* London: Henry Hooper, 1838; 8. Hirst, op cit; 55-56. Paul Carter claimed that, like aborigines, escaped convicts were associated with a "wild nature" that lay beyond respectable society. (Carter P. *The Road to Botany Bay.* London: Faber and Faber, 1987; 320.)

<sup>33</sup> Queensland Figaro, 25 September, 1886; 445.

<sup>34</sup> Lattas A. The Aesthetics of Terror and the Personification of Power, 1986. *Social Analysis*, 19: 20-38; 29.

<sup>35</sup> Ingleton, op cit; 126. Lattas, op cit; 27. Hirst, op cit; 34.

<sup>36</sup> Molesworth, op cit; 8.

<sup>37</sup> Hirst, op cit; 17.

the face of death, was a powerful symbol of the gulf that separated convict and free settler.<sup>38</sup>

There were also the horrifying accounts of cannibalism allegedly practised by escaped convicts in the bush. Cannibalism was a popular subject for the Sydney press of the day. The reports generally were based on the uncorroborated statements of the recaptured convict who confessed to eating fellow escapees while on the run. One such story developed a series of powerful themes that emphasised the inhumanity of the convicts. It was said that the "demon of evil" had possessed them; that their mutual fears and murderous suspicions had reduced them to the status of wild beasts. Here the cannibal theme was exalted and the brute and non-human status of the convict was emphasised in a number of ways. They lacked even the collective solidarity of the group. Rather, they lived in a state of dangerous anarchy.<sup>39</sup> This cannibal story makes an interesting contrast with another story involving shipwrecked sailors on King Island, where the description of what had apparently occurred was more grisly than the convict story. Yet, the sympathy was for the crew who, as the title put it, were "compelled to [kill and] eat each other in order to support existence." The sailors were "poor creatures" drawn together by misfortune and their characterisation was that of people forced to undergo a horrifying and inhuman ordeal rather than horrifying and inhuman people giving vent to their natural depravity.40

The moral gulf between convicts and free settlers was one thing. Convicts were also said to be threatening. The possibility of a widespread convict rebellion was the most obvious direct threat.<sup>41</sup> There was also the view that their presence was corrupting. In a submission to the *Molesworth* enquiry, the Archbishop of Dublin likened the convict

<sup>38</sup> Lattas, op cit; 34. A good example of this is to be found in the description of an early execution in South Australia. The apparently carefree prisoner:

evinced a most perfect indifference to his fate and to everything. He seemed actually to have gone beyond the line of demarcation which subsists between the human and the brute creation."

(Tolmer A. Reminiscences, Vol 1. London: Sampson Low, 1882; 142.)

<sup>39</sup> Ingleton, op cit; 96, 125.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid: 202.

<sup>41</sup> The Castle Hill uprising of 1804 was an example of such a threat, though it was quickly suppressed. Clark C M H. *History of Australia*, *Vol 1*. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1962; 171.

settlement in New South Wales as a vast lazar-house "in which the morally tainted should dwell alone."<sup>42</sup> He also claimed that this moral taint was contagious and risked "infecting" the respectable free settlers.<sup>43</sup> He saw the transportation system as a "river of cholera", perpetually renewed at the source and daily, "carrying off fresh victims" including many "[once] virtuous young women." Such anxieties emphasised the boundary between the convicts and the respectable classes and emphasised the idea that the convicts must be kept as a class apart until the eventual elimination of the transportation system itself.<sup>44</sup>

The boundary between convict and free settler was seen as permanent as well as profound. The convict stamp was the outward sign of permanent depravity and separation. Simply, convicts were born not made. Yet, some emancipated convicts rose to positions of power and wealth in New South Wales. Notwithstanding, they remained "intruders" into respectable society. They were seen as anomalies, persons who had entered improperly into free society. Emancipists were the butt of ridicule that exploited their uncertain status as anomalies. For example, there was the story of Samuel Terry, the rich ex-convict who reputedly kept his wife as a drudge to save money on servants. In England, humorists played on the inversion of ex-convict politicians and magistrates dispensing justice in an upside down land.<sup>45</sup> The stresses that followed emancipation were expressed in a series of social and political issues turning about the acceptability of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Molesworth, op cit; 38. There is no evidence that the Archbishop ever visited New South Wales; he was expressing his views about convicts generally.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.; 52.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Ibid; 52. Prominent Englishmen, both at home and in New South Wales, held these views. This included William Wilberforce and the colonial clergyman J D Lang (Hirst, op cit; 19 & 165.) One particular charge that Molesworth laid against the convict system (though in a round about way) related to the practice of homosexuality among the convicts. The practitioners of such a vice were seen by him as removed from human society, for the act "violates the feelings of the adult" and "barbarises the habits." This was another instance of the separation of the barbarised convicts from the community of the free settler. Molesworth, op cit; 37.

<sup>45</sup> Hirst, op cit; 168, 190 & 198. In one case, Hirst recounts, the military jurymen, objecting to the presence of emancipists on juries scrawled graffiti on the jury desks complaining about their "pollution" by the exconvicts. (Hirst, op cit; 167.) This was a major issue in early New South Wales society around which central social and political rifts occurred. (See Ritchie J. *Lachlan Macquarie*. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1986; chapter 7.)

emancipists at dinner or their holding official positions. This was coupled with assertions that ex-convicts were continuing their old ways in different circumstances.<sup>46</sup>

The central issue in this process was the idea that people who though legally free, and sometimes claiming the entitlements of prominent citizens, remained convicts "at heart." This apparent crossing of the social boundaries made them anomalous in the eyes of the free settlers. The settlers responded by defining the boundaries in such a way as to continue to exclude the emancipists from free society. This was all the more important given the fragile and isolated nature of Australian society in the early 19th century and threats upon it, from both the convicts and the bush. A vision of convicts as permanently excluded from their respectable society strengthened and protected the free settlers in their own identity as respectable immigrants.

Boundaries mark the point between the known and the unknown. They identify the limits of the community and delineate it from the world beyond. Taking Durkheim's view, they separate the sacred from the profane. This discussion of boundaries demonstrates how things were kept separate, for example, how the sacred was defined and protected in the case of war memorials, how the threat outside the boundary was articulated in the form of cannibals and how respectable society visualised boundaries that distanced the threat believed to be presented by convicts and emancipists in colonial Australia.

#### 3 BOUNDARIES AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Boundaries are important issues in public health. Threats from outside are often given shape as public health threats. The boundary that protects the group from the

<sup>46</sup> Hirst, op cit; 153-167. Molesworth claimed that where emancipists acquired property, this was usually the result of illegal or immoral activities and that the owners of public houses were generally ex-convicts. This thinking served to maintain the boundary between convict and free settler long after the formal constraints on the former had been lifted. (Molesworth, op cit; 33.)

outside is the point at which public health policy is most vigorous. The health and hygiene practices of groups have also been interpreted as ways groups protect themselves from the outside world. Views about "good health" and "bad health" can be seen as a way of recognising order, identifying anomalies and expressing the threat of the anomaly. This part of the Chapter considers the public health significance of boundaries.

Gypsy domestic practices and our, European, domestic arrangements about dirt can be viewed in the context of boundaries. They emphasise rules that keep things separate, preserve the orderliness of classification and protect against encroachments and the blurring of categories. Judith Okely's account of Gypsy women and their relationship with the wider world of the non-Gypsy makes particular reference to the fastidious nature of their behaviour.<sup>47</sup> For example, they are careful to use an apron when cooking. This ensures that food does not come into contact with their street clothes. There is also their strict separation of the bowls used for washing plates and cutlery and for bodily washing. At first glance, such attention to personal cleanliness might seem an admirable and sensible response by people whose itinerant way of life and primitive facilities makes hygiene a pressing issue. Okely interprets this process differently. She says that these rules of hygiene or "purity" are part of the Gypsy fixation with the boundary between the Gypsy community and outsiders. The outer body of the Gypsy, her clothing, that part that comes into direct contact with the wider, non-Gypsy, world was potentially polluting to the inner body. The need to protect the inner, Gypsy, self demanded these rules of hygiene. Food was also carefully prepared. It came from the wider world and was accompanied by the fear that it was "unclean" in the sense that it had been handled by non-Gypsies. Okely reports that for this reason Gypsy woman took care in the preparation of food, a process which involved washing and fastidious preparation.

In Purity and Danger, Mary Douglas considers the nature of dirt.<sup>48</sup> She asks; why is something dirty? We may believe that we know instinctively what dirt is and why

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Okely J. *The Traveller Gypsies*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ P, 1983.

<sup>48</sup> Douglas M. Purity and Danger. London: Ark Paperback, 1966.

things are dirty. Dirt and dirty thing are of great public health significance and it is important to explore some of this "instinctive" knowledge. Douglas' introductory assessment of dirt - that it offends because of its disorder; that it is matter out of place gives us the opportunity to reconsider our own understanding of why we see some things or acts as dirty. It may be considered "dirty" not to wipe ones feet and bring soil and litter from the street into a house. It may be considered "dirty" to place shoes on a dining room table or to put begrimed cooking pots in a bedroom. Alternatively, a kitchen would not be a suitable place to sleep and lavatories are separated from kitchens by some obvious intermediate space such as a laundry or a passage. These examples may appear to be about avoiding dirt, appropriate behaviour and the organisation of living space in the interests of public health. However, what is most significant about sleeping in kitchens, not wiping feet, or cooking in a bedroom is that these acts misclassify things, they put them out of place. Soil in a garden is one thing - in a house it is another. People prepare food in one place and sleep in another. None of these things necessarily has anything to do with hygiene: rather, infringements powerfully challenge our ideas of order and place. They also bring with them the view that the transgressor is "dirty" and therefore of interest to the public health process.

At first glance the fastidious Gypsy woman or the person carefully wiping feet at the threshold are both practising the virtues of cleanliness. These actions can be justified as "good health" practices. However, taking the interpretations of Okely and Douglas, they are about boundaries and separateness. They reinforce the Durkheimian dichotomy of the "sacred" and the "profane." They protect the community from the things outside or protect order from disorder.

Public health practice, and ideas about public health, have been a way of protecting groups from encroachments and, also, as a way of identifying and substantiating the things that are anomalous because they are out of place. The anomalous thing is threatening because it evokes disorder. The collective body of the community is so threatened in the same general frame of understanding as the body of the individual is threatened by disorder; in both cases, dirt and sickness are the visible symptom and the

risk to the health of the person and to the public health of the community is the price of the encroachment.<sup>49</sup> Where the anomaly is a person or some class of strangers, the threat to the Group's health (the public health) has been expressed in a number of specific and detailed ways, outlined in later Chapters.<sup>50</sup> Food, leprosy and the Indian *caste system* are three ways in which this general issue will now be examined. All have a common theme, a public health justification for separation, classification and the protection against anomalies.

# Anomalous Things and Forbidden Foods

Mary Douglas remains one of the most influential of the "Post Durkheim" writers. She applies the theme of the "sacred" and the "profane" most explicitly in her work *Purity and Danger* (1966).<sup>51</sup> *Purity and Danger* is about health and hygiene. It is set within the framework of classification and misclassification. Hence, dirt is anomalous - "matter out of place." It is objected to because it "offends against order" and it resists a "positive effort to organise the environment." The unease that this prompts and the rules of cleanliness and orderliness that exist to prevent this transposition are health related expressions of Durkheim's separations.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> The analogy between the body of the person and the collective body is discussed in Feher M et al ed. Fragments for the History of a Human Body - Part Three. New York: Urzone, 1989.

<sup>50</sup> In addition to health, there are also other ways in which this ordering occurs. Rules of etiquette are barriers that separate groups "those who do" from those "who do not." Sometimes the distinction between health and manners are blurred; what is seen as "bad manners" is also seen as "dirty." Elias N. *The History of Manners*: The Civilising Process, Vol 1. New York: Pantheon books, 1978, chapter 2 generally and 115.

<sup>51</sup> Purity and Danger is regarded as a central contribution to anthropological theory. It has been described by R A Barrett as a "classic." - He wrote: "Douglas's writings embody the most significant new approach to religion and cosmology that has emerged in anthropology since the work of Durkheim." (Barrett R A. Culture and Conduct. Belmont (Calif): Wadsworth Pub., 1984;152.) Although Purity and Danger has been criticised on some of its ethnographic detail, its general theme remains a central contribution to social anthropology. The criticism of Douglas's position in Purity and Danger is discussed by Tambiah and Bulmer in Douglas M ed. Rules and Meanings. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973; 159, 191 & 192; and reconsidered by Douglas in Douglas M. Natural Symbols. New York: Pantheon, 1970; 38; and by Leach (Leach E and Aycock D A. Structuralist Interpretation of Biblical Myth. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1983; 20.) Her critics acknowledge the central significant point here, namely, the way that rules about health or diet set groups apart. See, Dr S Strizower, in reviewing the initial publication of the book for The Jewish Chronicle (1966) Douglas, op cit (1970); 38.

<sup>52</sup> Douglas (1966), op cit; 2.

Rules about foods are also aspects of the same classificatory process. There is a central division between food that can be eaten - because it is "clean" - and food which is "unclean" and is prohibited. Pork is an "unclean" food for many people. Yet, from a simple health perspective, pork is not substantially more problematic than other food. For Douglas, the "uncleanliness" of pork must be seen through another focus. She argues that it would be wrong to consider the Old Testament authors of these prohibitions as no more than "enlightened [or mistaken?] public health administrators." For Pork is not the only Jewish dietary restriction, though it is the best known. The point is that these dietary restrictions provide a "summary of the categories of Israelite culture." They are representations of the "symbolic structures organising the [Jewish] universe." In this structure the pig is seen as a taxonomic anomaly. It is within this context, she argues, the anomaly of eating pig must be seen. Pig avoidance was a visible symbol of being Jewish (a fact emphasised by the Gentile habit of eating of pork) and gave Jews who practised this orthodoxy a visible symbol that linked them to their community.

Jewish dietary rules remain a powerful symbol of being Jewish, a point made tellingly in Philip Roth's novel *Portnoy's Complaint*. Alexander Portnoy is a successful New York lawyer moving out of his traditional Jewish environment. When his mother, for whom these traditional rules are a central sign of her Jewishness, suspects her son of not eating kosher food she retorts:

Just wait till your father hears what you do, in defiance of every health habit there could possibly be. Alex, answer me something ... how do you think Melvin Weiner gave himself colitis? Why has this child spent half his life in hospitals? Because he eats 'chazerai.'56

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Ibid; 29. Douglas follows this idea of anomaly by comparing the taxonomy of a variety of animals, whose consumption have been forbidden, including the African pangolin, whose prohibited status was gleaned from her own field work among the Lele tribe. p 54,56 and 167-170.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Douglas (1970), op cit; 38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> ibid; 39-40.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in, Segal A. Breach of One Rule Breaches the System of Rules, in Douglas (1973), op cit; 260.

For Mrs Portnoy, ill health is the logical result of breaking the dietary code. People who want to stay healthy follow the rules, which become "healthy habits" thus masking, though reinforcing, their symbolic function of emphasising separateness. In his analysis of the novel, Segal makes the point that the Jewish dietary rules evidenced by Mrs Portnoy's response construct two worlds, the kosher world of cleanliness and order which then contrasts with the other world of the *chazerai* (meaning "piggishness" and a term associated with disorder, abominations and confusion) which follows from eating forbidden food.

Food anomalies that are the subject of legislative sanction or critical comment can be found in Australia. The idea that it is inappropriate to eat domestic pets is one example that has provided an enduring source of complaint against the Chinese community in Australia. In 1856, the *Melbourne Punch* ran a cartoon in which a Chinese is shown trying to buy the grocer's pet cat, apparently mistaking it for part of the merchandise.<sup>57</sup> These stories continue to the present time. In December 1988, the rumour that an Adelaide Chinese restaurant was serving cat and dog to unsuspecting customers was given as the reason for a drastic loss of trade, while in November 1992, the Australian foreign minister was widely reported as saying that he understood that the Chinese head of state ate "four puppies a day."<sup>58</sup>

Refuting or thinking through these stories is important. Considering why they persist and why they take their particular subject matter is more significant. Eating dog and cat seems anomalous and outlandish to Australians. There is no apparent logic to this view and, as Nancy Viviani suggests, these concerns seem selective when made by people who think nothing of eating fluffy lambs.<sup>59</sup> Public revulsion at the idea of eating dog or cat is a way of defining and separating the groups who are thought to eat these animals -

<sup>57</sup> Fabian S ed. *Mr Punch Down Under*. Melbourne: Greenhouse Pub, 1982; 78. It was again made in the 1940s against a Chinese restaurant in Bendigo. (*Countrywide* (ABC television) 12 July, 1991.)

<sup>58</sup> Advertiser, 28 December, 1988; 38. This rumour was promptly refuted by local public health officials who inspected the kitchen. See also Advertiser, 11 November, 1992; 1. (This was apparently intended as a jocular response to the disappearance of the Governor of Hong Kong's pet dog.)

<sup>59</sup> Viviani N. The Long Journey. Melbourne: Melb. Univ. P., 1984; 264.

the Chinese (generally regarded as outsiders in Australian society) - from those who do not. Assertions about the eating of these animals take on an important symbolic function that orders society and marginalises the Chinese proprietor said to serve dog or cat in their restaurant. Indeed, the person who eats, or serves, cat or dog is removed from humanity, a fact suggested by the 1856 cartoon, where the indignant grocer's assistant dismisses the Chinaman as a "cannibal indian."

Current food policy and laws about food provide other examples where the health focus is secondary to the ordering of the environment in accordance with the ideas of appropriate classification. National Food Standards determine types of foods that can be sold. Foods which are not so determined cannot be sold. For example, horse cannot be called meat and cannot be sold as meat. This is a culturally prompted prohibition. There is no health reason why horse meat should be prohibited. However, like the dog or the cat, though unlike the pig, the horse remains an anomalous addition to most Australian dinner tables.<sup>61</sup> Food Legislation also regulates the use of space. For example, the South Australian *Food Hygiene Regulations* prevent people from sleeping in areas set aside for kitchens or where food is prepared for sale. There is no public health reason why this should be prohibited: rather, the thought of sleeping in a kitchen offends our sense of order and the law reflects that fact.<sup>62</sup>

The public health and the ritual concerns sometimes come together. Under South Australian food law, meat that has come from an animal that has not been slaughtered (it might have died of old age) is, by definition and without further proof required, "unfit for human consumption" irrespective of whether or not a health risk is associated with the meat. This is the most stringent provision in the State's food laws. Such a strict prohibition is at least partially defensible historically in the interests of food hygiene, given Smith's graphic account of the eagerness with which 19th century London

<sup>60</sup> This idea is discussed in detail in White D.C. Myths of the Dog Man. Chicago: Univ of Chicago, 1991.

<sup>61</sup> These prohibitions change as cultural mores change. In 1992, horse remained a prohibited food in South Australia. The first proposal to allow its sale was rejected by the South Australian Cabinet in 1982 on cultural rather than health grounds. (Author's recollection)

<sup>62</sup> Food Hygiene Regulations, 1990; reg 24.

meat traders would pass off diseased meat to consumers.<sup>63</sup> Thus health concerns may seem to require a general prohibition on the sale of all meat where the animal had simply died. However, eating something that has died is a prohibition within another context. Ralph Bulmer's reassessment of the anomalies in Leviticus deals with this issue. In Jewish belief, carrion eating animals are unclean and eating carrion is an unclean act. In Bulmer's view, this is prompted by the idea that the body immediately after death is in an unclear and nebulous state, not alive yet still fully whole. For this reason, the corpse is polluting and to eat carrion is to be polluted. The exception to this is slaughter, accompanied by the appropriate ritual. In some regions, these rituals still occur. In Australia, the only "rituals" are the public health requirements associated with meat hygiene.<sup>64</sup>

These two issues, the health and the classificatory, support each other. As a general rule it is unwise to eat meat from an animal that has died. There may be some infection that renders the meat hazardous. However, sick animals may in fact be slaughtered while the meat from a dead animal (whatever the cause of death) may be quite fit. This *absolute* prohibition under the *Food Act* is not warranted in health terms. Nor does it exist simply out of "an abundance of public health caution." Rather, it gains its strength from the idea that the corpse is polluting and a "danger" to those who consume it.

#### Leprosy

Leprosy is a disease caused by the bacillus *Micobacterium leprae*. It is very slow to develop, difficult to contract and not all cases result in the gross deformity and disfigurement that is generally associated with the disease. It is only in the past 120 years that the mechanism of leprosy has been understood. However what people have realised for millennia was that leprosy was a selective visitor. It did not decimate communities as other diseases did. Rather, it singled out individuals whose resulting disfigurements stood

<sup>63</sup> Smith F.P. The People's Health. London: Croom Helm, 1979: 203-207. Food Act, 1985 (South Australia); section 31(2)(b).

<sup>64</sup> Bulmer R. The Uncleanliness of The Birds of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, 1989. Man (N.S.), 24: 304-320; 312, 313.

them apart so obviously from their neighbours. Leprosy and societal reactions to it bring together notions of physical and moral anomaly. The physical is based on the common idea that the disease causes gross deformities that reduce the sufferer to the status of "less than human." The moral, on the idea that leprosy is a badge of sin, a punishment for wickedness. In both cases, the effect is to place lepers beyond the boundaries of society, to see them as anomalous outcasts. This has been the prominent view in the policies directed to the disease. The person infected, the "leper", was shunned, was considered unclean and was subjected to a process of ritual quarantine and banishment out of all proportion to the public health threat of the disease. For example, legislation passed in Queensland in 1892 provided what was effectively a compulsory and permanent detention on the islands set aside as leper colonies. Significantly, the politicians who supported these restrictive laws knew that the disease was only moderately infectious. 66

Leprosy has prompted disgust and revulsion far beyond its status as an infectious disease. It has been a particular subject of journalistic horror which focused on the slow physical decay of the leper, the grotesque changes that destroy and distort their features, reducing them to marginal creatures, no longer human.<sup>67</sup> The term "leper" found its way into language and literature as signifying an outcast, and has taken a meaning far broader than a simple description of a disease state.<sup>68</sup> Until 1986, South Australian health legislation gave leprosy the formal status of a "loathsome disease."<sup>69</sup> It has been and continues to be freely used as a term that emphasises a general outcast state. A public health analysis of leprosy presents a problem: why has a disease that is only mildly

<sup>65</sup> See the case of one leper and his family, Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 6 July, 1892; 600.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Ibid; 602.

<sup>67</sup> In 1898, the Queensland *Worker* printed a story about a visit to the Dunwich island station. It described one leper in truly gruesome terms: "the whole body was a piece of meat turning black with decay. The features had disappeared, nothing being left but the bones covered with large repulsive scales." Its affect on the viewer was described thus: "the sight ... made our hearts grow sick and a feeling come over us as if the blood were freezing in our veins." (*The Worker*, 28 May, 1898; 7.)

<sup>68</sup> For example, Tennyson refers to a "moral leper", and similar references also appear in Chaucer and Shakespeare. Lepers have been exotic subjects for many writers. For example, James Michiner in his novel *Hawaii* (1959) describes the violent sexual behaviour of lepers and the course of the disease, in very strong and horrifying, though inaccurate terms.

<sup>69</sup> Food and Drugs Act, 1908 (South Australia). This remained in force until 1986.

infectious been the subject of such vigorous control? To answer this question, it is important to consider the idea of the leper as an anomaly, as something out of place, an outsider in the community. The horror reserved for lepers is a horror prompted by that anomalous status and the "dangers" associated with that status.<sup>70</sup> It was this idea that prompted the removal of lepers and their often permanent incarceration in isolated leper stations.

There are prominent themes in the history of leprosy. One is the idea that the leper is "unclean." In the biblical references the prescribed cure involved "cleansing."<sup>71</sup> The idea of "uncleanliness" is a powerful one. It stands in stark contrast with the notion of "clean." It connotes the idea of the leper as disordered, as out of place in the community. With the physical uncleanliness there came moral uncleanliness. Saul Brody, has written: "[s]ince ancient times, leprosy has been considered an unclean disease, and its victims have long been linked with moral impurity" and the leper was seen as an "emblem of spiritual corruption."<sup>72</sup> The physical and the moral came together.<sup>73</sup> Leprosy was a metaphor for both physical and spiritual corruption. It was the outward expression of inner sin. In 1882, the Rev W M Thomson wrote of the "deadly leprosy of sin", it was

<sup>70</sup> Dangers and pollutions that are associated with anomalies are recognised in many cultures. For example, multiple births which are relatively rare among humans but common, indeed expected, among animals. This has caused human twins to be seen as anomalous by some cultures with significant consequences for these twins. For example, among one African culture they are seen to have a "mediating function between animality and deity." In other cases, twins are kept apart from other children and all utensils and dishes employed by them are taboo. This ritual quarantine is lifted by a ceremony which occurs when they are six years old. (Turner V. *The Ritual Process.* Ithaca: Cornell Univ. P., 1969; 47; and Van Gennep, op cit; 47.) In another case, both twins and their parents are seen as having a dangerous contagion that threatens the health of neighbours and animals. This is a state that requires segregation and can only be removed by a particular ceremony. (Turner (1969), op cit; 48.)

<sup>71</sup> Leviticus, in particular chapters 13 and 14, establish rules for the detection, treatment and "cleansing" of lepers. In 2 Kings, 5, Na'aman, a Syrian general, was "cleansed" of his disease by bathing himself seven times in the River Jordan.

<sup>72</sup> Brody S N. The Disease of the Soul: Leprosy in Medieval Literature. Ithaca: Cornell Univ P, 1974; 51.

<sup>73</sup> Justin the Martyr, writing in the second century, believed that leprosy was an "emblem of sin" (ibid; 132.) This view was also held in China. During the Han Dynasty (200BC - 200AD), the disease was called the "reward from heaven" and recognised as a punishment for evil. (Skinsnes O K. Leprosy in Society, 1964. Leprosy Review, 35: 21-35; 23.) There was a more benign explanation for leprosy. Rather than being a punishment for sin, the disease was said to be an affliction "given special grace by God." Leprosy has been referred to as the "Sacred Malady." The origin of this view is not clear. It has been suggested that such a view was the response to an increase of leprosy amongst returning Crusaders (persons unlikely to be branded as sinners by the Church.) - (Brody, op cit; 100.) Yet, it is also consistent with the idea that the leper was in some way (whether for good or evil) touched by the deity and, because of this, occupied an ambiguous, dangerous and marginal status.

"loathsome and polluting; its victim is shunned by all as unclean." Sin was man's "moral leprosy."<sup>74</sup>

One expression of the lepers' sin was the common idea that they were libertines. It was said that lepers "burn with desire for sexual intercourse"; they were *naturally* immoral.<sup>75</sup> This fear built on the threat of the pollution of the "clean" community by the "unclean" leper. It was further enhanced by the long standing idea that lepers were deliberately spreading their disease. In 1346, lepers were forbidden from entering the City of London for this reason.<sup>76</sup> Such views have continued into the 20th century.<sup>77</sup>

One explanation for this was that lepers sought their solace in infecting others and used this fear when confronting authority; another, that they believed that they could cure themselves by infecting others.<sup>78</sup> Both views made them dangerous outcasts to people who accepted them as realities.

The dissonance between leprosy as a public health issue and the public health response to leprosy can be explained in the idea of the leper as an anomaly. The disease process itself encouraged this idea. As leprosy progressed its victim lost human shape and stood on the boundary between "human" and "non-human." In 1896, a New South Wales parliamentarian, also a medical practitioner, said that lepers were "not fit to associate with human beings." It was as though the leper had ceased to be human. The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Lewis G. A Lesson from Leviticus: Leprosy, 1987. *Man*, 22: 593-612; 593.

<sup>75</sup> Brody, op cit; 52. This may have promoted the mistaken, but common, idea that leprosy was a venereal disease.

<sup>76</sup> It was said in the proclamation:

some of them, endeavouring to contaminate others with that abominable blemish (that so to their own wretched solace they may have more fellows in suffering) as well in the way of mutual communication, and by the contagion of their polluted breath, as by carnal intercourse with women do so taint people who are sound.

<sup>...</sup> do so taint people who are sound. (Zeigler P. *The Black Death*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1967; 97.) See also Richards P. *The Medieval Leper and his Northern Heirs*. Cambridge: D S Brewster, 1977.

<sup>77</sup> Zappa P. Unclean! Unclean! London: Lovat Dickson, 1933.

<sup>78</sup> Skinsnes, op cit; 23; Zappa, op cit; 69, 188, 190.

<sup>79</sup> For a discussion of this idea, see Sheehan J J. and Sosna M ed. *The Boundaries of Humanity*. Berkeley: Univ of Calif, 1991; chapter 2.

<sup>80</sup> New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 6 October, 1896; 3771. In a description of a Chinese leper in Western Victoria some 30 years earlier, the newspaper went to some lengths to convey this idea, writing that

quarantine process also advanced this idea. The medieval quarantining of lepers was done through a ritual performed under ecclesiastical law. Its effect was to announce the lepers' "death" to the world, symbolised by their donning a distinctive garb.<sup>81</sup> The ritual made the leper a legal as well as a physical anomaly in the sense of being dead yet living. The process terminated their official civil existence yet, they continued to live both in fact and also in the eyes of God. This "living death" emphasised the anomalous status of the leper.

The responses to leprosy go beyond the public health needs of the disease. They can be explained more significantly in the context of the anomaly and the "danger" of marginal people and the resulting fear that the disease brings. Peter Richards suggested that the reaction to lepers was prompted by a profound horror: "[a] disfigured face or mutilated limb excites in most onlookers not only revulsion but also a primitive fear ... an instinctive fear of something horrible."82 The "instinctive fear of something horrible" is the disfigurement that changes a human into a non-human and reduces them to the status of an anomaly. The leper has become dead to the world yet still lives.

#### The Indian Castes

The third example of boundaries and public health illustrates how ideas about pollution and bodily contaminations underpins social separation. The Indian caste system is a traditional form of social organisation based on the relative dominance of particular groups emphasised through hereditary specialisation in work, inequality of rights and an elaborate system of taboos that emphasise the separateness of their social groupings.<sup>83</sup>

the "leper's livid blotches describe him for what he is." (my emphasis) - Ararat and Pleasant Creek Advertiser, 23 May, 1865; 2.

<sup>81</sup> The office for this ritual is set out in Richards, op cit; Appendix 1. In England, the common law also required exclusion, but only if the leper continued to dwell in a town and associate with other persons. It was argued by the Bishop of Amiens in 1259, that this process of exclusion was divinely commanded. (Brody, op cit; 62.)

<sup>82</sup> Richards, op cit; 61.

<sup>83</sup> See Weber M. *The Religion of India*. Glencoe: Free Press, 1958. (written 1916-1917) - Weber is not considered a symbolic anthropologist. He made this study as part of his wide ranging interest in religion. - See also, UNESCO. *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism.* Paris: UNESCO Pub, 1980; 102.

Rules of separateness are central to this system. They ordered Indian society, keeping the castes apart.

Caste prohibitions focus on health issues such as food handling and dietary restrictions. For example, food could become polluted and therefore inedible to members of a particular caste if it had been handled by a lower caste person. Socially, such a view determined who could eat together or who could perform the tasks of cooks.<sup>84</sup> These prohibitions sat within a range of other prohibitions relating to physical contact. They determined who could work in certain occupations, such as a barber or laundryman; who should be shunned on the basis that they were "unclean." Rules about food handling and contact in this process were not based on public health. They were about keeping groups separate.<sup>85</sup>

For traditional Indians, rules of health and hygiene are deployed to set margins and to preserve the interests of the dominant (Brahman) social class.<sup>86</sup> It is a traditional system of social organisation restricted to a particular culture which used ideas about health as a focus for rules of separateness. There is no direct analogy between this society and Australian society in the 1990s yet there are points of comparison.<sup>87</sup> It is worth

(Steiner F. Taboo. London: Cohen West, 1956; 21.)

Berreman defines the caste system as occurring when: "a society is made up of birth-ascribed groups which are hierarchically ordered and culturally distinct. The hierarchy entails differential evaluation, rewards, and association." (Berreman G D. Caste and Other Inequalities. Meerut: Folklore Institute, 1979; 73.)

A definition of "taboo" given by Steiner, suggests that taboos are concerned:

with all the social mechanisms of obedience which have ritual significance ... with specific and

with all the social mechanisms of obedience which have ritual significance ... with specific and restrictive behaviour in dangerous situations ... with the protection of individuals who are in danger ... with the protection of society from those endangered."

<sup>84</sup> Weber, op cit; 43. The prohibitions also extended to other areas of physical contact such as sharing a pipe.

<sup>85</sup> Weber described traditional Hindu society in terms of classes who were considered unclean. Temples were closed to them, while no Brahman and no barber would serve them. They lived outside the village district, and infected by touch or even by their presence." (Weber, chapter 1.) See also Dumont L. *Homo Hierarchicus*. Chicago: Univ of Chicago P, 1970; 51 and Douglas (1966), op cit; 124 (quote from V S. Naipaul.)

<sup>86</sup> Louis Dumont wrote: "Hygiene is often invoked to justify ideas about impurity. In reality, even though the notion might be found to contain hygienic associations, these cannot account for it as it is a religious notion" (op cit; 47.) See also Weber, op cit; 119, 124 & 128. Steiner says that the taboos of Polynesian society, "provided the means of relating a person to his superiors and inferiors" (Steiner, op cit; 39.) The rigidity of the caste arrangements are suggested in Weber's comment that "The Indian views the individual as born into the caste merited by conduct in a prior life." (Weber, op cit; 121.)

<sup>87</sup> Dumont, op cit; 105. To Western eyes, its structured system of inequality may seem more odious than other forms of inequality. Dumont takes a restrictive view of the extent to which comparisons can be made

recalling some of Geoffrey Blainey's comments about Sydney's Asian population - the sensory assaults of drying noodles on clothes lines, cooking smells and the sight of Asians spitting on footpaths. These were ritual intrusions into the dominant White Australian group that lie within the same general frame as a Brahman's complaint that a lower caste cook had prepared his food. An analysis of the caste system reinforces the general point that public health issues - issues about food and hygiene - are important boundary issues; that matters of apparent public health significance such as the pollution of food are more significantly the consequence of boundary crossing.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has been about the importance of boundaries and the ways in which views about health justify and maintain boundaries. Boundaries must be fixed and recognisable. Crossing them invokes disorder - the dangers of dark places; the threat to the "sacred", the collective ideas of the community; and the disquiet prompted by the presence of an anomaly. People who cross boundaries risk an uncertain and dangerous fate, for themselves and, more significantly as a public health issue, for others. The "danger" is the result of their misclassification, their position as an anomaly. It is threatening to the community into which they have intruded. Hence the danger of the convict emancipist, the profane visitor to a war memorial or the leper. All were subject to social or legislative sanction which policed boundaries and kept things separate, ensuring

between the caste society and Western society. His view is challenged by some writers who suggest similarities (Berreman, op cit; 5.) See also, Dumont's own survey of writers including Lloyd Warner and Oliver Cox, in Doglin J L et al ed. Symbolic Anthropology. New York: Columbia Univ P, 1977, chapter 3. Within other, non-Indian, communities, inequalities are usually explained as the logical result of some process as fixed and "natural" as the caste arrangements. See Turner B. Equality. London: Ellis Horewood, Tavistock, 1986; chapter 4 - "Ideologies of inequality." One example of the development of an "ideology of inequality" involved the Calvinist Dutch colonisers who degraded the black slaves upon whom their profits depended by describing them as "black and polluted." (Smith G L. Religion and Trade in New Netherland. Ithaca: Cornell Univ P, 1973; 128.) See also Beteille A. Castes: Old and New. London: Asia Publishing House, 1969; 24-25.

<sup>88</sup> Blainey G. All For Australia. Sydney: Methuen, 1984; 132.

a fixed and categorical view of the world. Views about health and health related laws are part of those sanctions.

As a general way of seeing, outgroups were commonly believed to be diseased and threatening to the health of the community. The significance of public health rules in policing boundaries lies in the persuasive power of health threats. As subsequent Chapters demonstrate, health touches us all; disease and illness is personally, profoundly threatening. It is also enormously destructive of communities. The desolation of so much of Europe by the plague and the recurring epidemics in 19th century Australia made disease a powerful symbol; the embodiment of the danger that communities felt in response to the belief that they or their way of life was under threat from outsiders beyond those boundaries.

# CHAPTER 4 PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL CLASS:-SETTING BOUNDARIES I

## 1 INTRODUCTION: SOCIAL CLASS AND SOCIAL THREAT

This Chapter develops the themes of Chapters 2 and 3 by applying a particular focus on the relationships between social classes in 19th century Britain and Australia and considers the boundaries between the classes who considered themselves respectable and those groups considered by many social observers of the day to be threatening. It describes the way that these threats were articulated and how the dominant, politically powerful, groups responded with policies of containment. The analysis is presented in the context of 19th century public health policy and contemporary views about two aspects of public health. The first is about how separation of social groups was justified on public health grounds and how a markedly unequal burden of mortality and morbidity, which was higher among the poor, was explained as the product of the *natural* differences between classes. The second involves attitudes about alcohol and argues that alcohol policy was constructed and described in class terms. Within this general framework the following three points are considered: how views about health and disease have been used to construct a barrier between social groups with stated or tacit rules that separate one class from another; how the presence of health and disease was used as a justification for the view that social disadvantage is the product of personal failings; and how the dominant social stratum sought to maintain its position and disarm the unruly working class threat through a "civilising" process that included public health control.

These three issues will be considered in turn. They must be considered against a backdrop that threw into stark contrast the different health status of the different social classes. The health of working people in Britain and Australia in the 19th century was substantially worse than that of more advantaged groups and the burdens of morbidity and mortality were disproportionately greater for the poor. This unequal burden of ill-health

has been an issue throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.<sup>1</sup> The 19th century health records suggest that the residents of the poorer parishes in England were more susceptible to diseases such as cholera or diphtheria.<sup>2</sup> William Farr's detailed study of the health of 19th century England adds to this picture. It demonstrated that the poor generally led less healthy lives than other classes, a fact Farr attributed to a number of possible causes including impure air, overcrowding, poor ventilation and unhealthy occupations.<sup>3</sup>

The way that these differences were explained and the social context within which they occurred is the significant point in this discussion. For example, the differential class specific death rate, which was particularly stark during the British cholera epidemic of 1832, was seen as "normal" while other views saw these unequal burdens of disease as the fault of the poor themselves or a reason for keeping them separate from the better off.<sup>4</sup> The public health issues of the 19th century should be seen against the more general context of social class and the way that the poor were viewed at the time. In particular, against the general view of the poor as chaotic, distant from their "betters" and even dangerous, a prevalent 19th century view in both Australia and Britain as the following two examples illustrate.

The first Royal visit to Australia, by Prince Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh, in the summer of 1867/1868 was a momentous event for the infant colonies. Triumphal arches and lengthy addresses of loyalty by local dignitaries were a constant feature of Prince Alfred's tour around the Australian countryside, a tour marred only by an attempt on his life by an embittered Irish patriot in Sydney and a spectacularly disastrous public banquet in Melbourne. The banquet was the idea of Dr Louis Smith a prominent medical

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> For current differences in health status, see: Broadhead P. Social Status and Morbidity in Australia, 1985. *Community Health Studies*; 9: 87-98. McMichael A J. Social Class (as Estimated by Occupational Prestige) and Mortality in Australian Males, 1985. *Community Health Studies*; 9: 220-230. Townsend P and Davidson N ed. *Inequalities in Health: The Black Report*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982. Balarajan R et al. Inequalities in Health, 1987. *British Med J*; 294: 1561-1564.

<sup>2</sup> Smith F B. The People's Health 1830-1910. London: Croom Helm, 1979; 150 and 231.

<sup>3</sup> Farr W. Vital Statistics. London: The Sanitary Institute pub, 1885; 113.

<sup>4</sup> Morris R J. Cholera 1832. London: Croom Helm, 1976; 125.

practitioner. It was proposed that to celebrate the visit, Melbourne's poor might be treated to a free lunch held at the site of the first zoological gardens. The organising committee consisted of Dr Smith and a bevy of "genteel ladies", whose job was to wait upon the poor at lunch.

In the event, the plans went dreadfully wrong. A crowd vastly in excess of the numbers catered for, a hot unpleasant day and the non-appearance of the Prince (who was advised by apprehensive police to keep away) all contributed to "scenes of frightful saturnalia", "wild revelry and a disgusting debauch" let loose as the crowd, tired of waiting for admission, forced its way into the gardens and set upon the food and wine.5 The newspapers provided a graphic description of what followed. For the *Argus*, it was "a demonstration of the natural debasement of the masses." To the *Age* reporter, the inebriates who climbed into the trees to sleep off their binge remained there like "drunken possums." The *Melbourne Punch*, in doggerel verse, denounced the mob as "savages dirty and greasy." Particular excesses of the event were described in great detail; how the contents of the finger bowls were drunk by the thirsty crowd; how food was wasted, used as missiles or cast into the dirt. The crowd itself was described as "animal like", a "dense mass of struggling carnivora", or "like wolves", and the siting of the banquet in the zoological gardens, said to be particularly appropriate given the animal behaviour of the crowd.

During the course of the afternoon, the crowd left the gardens. The affront to the genteel ladies of the organising committee was only temporary and by the time their antics were described in print the participants were in their homes or back at work. The pandemonium had come and gone.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Age, 29 November, 1867; 5.

<sup>6</sup> McKinlay B. The First Royal Tour: 1867-1868. Adelaide: Rigby, 1970; 75-77.

<sup>7</sup> Argus, 29 November, 1867; 5.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

The Melbourne disturbance was a brief and contained affair, other urban disturbances such as the riots in London's West End of February 1886 were more menacing. These occurred against the backdrop of cyclic depressions, high unemployment and a recognition of the potential power of the substratum of the London poor and the threat that this might present to the community generally.9 The focus of these events was the gathering of the unemployed in Trafalgar Square, which in itself took on a sinister note as red flags were seen among the crowd. The riot that followed caused extensive damage to property. Even the Gentlemens' clubs of the West End were stoned. The London press saw the demonstrators as sinister and threatening - "many rough looking characters were revealed by the light of the lamps." They were distanced from ordinary society, described as "brutish, drunken and immoral", "lawless" and "disorderly ruffians." According to the *Times* correspondent, they were not really workers at all, but the "vagabondage of London" who "shouted and howled" at their betters and were led by shadowy, sinister figures, who stood out from the mob because they were "respectably dressed." 11

The behaviour of the crowds at the Prince's banquet was not seen as threatening in the same way as the West End rioters, the antics of the former being described as some type of "carnival of the animals." However, reports on both events developed the same theme: they distanced the working classes from their betters, in ways that emphasised the natural debasement and depravity of the masses. They focused on physical marks that distinguished them from other social groups. They drew analogies with animals, suggesting that the crowd behaved like animals, looked like animals and, by implication, were animals. These were ideas that emphasised and sustained the gulf that separated the threatening masses from their betters.

<sup>9</sup> Stedman Jones G. Outcast London. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976; 284.

<sup>10</sup> Times, 11 February, 1886; 6. See also Stedman Jones, op cit; 285.

<sup>11</sup> Times, 9 February, 1886; 6.

In these events, the threat to orderly society from the "outside" was exemplified. These were not the respectable poor but threatening intruders, dehumanised "roughs" removed from all the worthwhile social values of their betters and sometimes said to be urged on by shadowy figures. They were like Mary Douglas' anomalies, out of place both within the context of a genteel garden party or as agents for political change. The descriptions of the Melbourne revellers or the London demonstrators emphasised the dehumanised form of the participants, which emphasised their anomalous state.

# 2. SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN 19TH CENTURY BRITAIN AND AUSTRALIA

There are two reasons for focusing on the urban world of 19th century Britain and Australia. In both countries, the century was a period of considerable social change and the coming together of social classes into relatively new urban environments. It was also a period of intensive public health control and development, commencing with the English Health Act 1848. Interest in public health reform was intensive in the 19th century cities and this gave the opportunity for ideas about health to be enlisted in the debate about social class and separation.

Ideas about social order were also clearly articulated in terms of class and strata during this period. Terms such as "working class" or "the poor" were categories around which policies were constructed and which tended to emphasise and articulate the separateness of those groups. Many commentators on 19th century English social life employed elaborate classifying systems that mapped, positioned, separated and distanced the social classes. Perhaps the most elaborate of these social surveys was Charles Booth's, 1891 opus, which constructed 6 social classes, graded A to H. Class A was the "lowest class", the street sellers and criminals, leading the lives of "savages" whose only luxury was drink. These classes became steadily more respectable until class H, the servant owning class, was reached. The London population of Class A was estimated at some

38,000 or only 1% of the total. To this must be added Class B - the very poor - (nearly 320,000 or 7.5%) which was little better: it contained people made poor by their shiftless habits and through drink but, significantly, without a criminal taint. The first hint of respectability became apparent with class D.12

There had been earlier attempts at classifying the population. In 1868, R Dudley Baxter calculated that for a population of 30 million in Great Britain, around 7 million (23%) could be classified as upper and middle class with the remaining 23 million (77%) falling into the manual labouring classes. However, the 23 million were a vast range of people living in different circumstances. Many were agricultural labourers and as such, were regarded as settled workers. Others were the sober, intelligent artisans, for example, Mayhew's "honourable tailors" who, provided demand and their health remained good, were able to fit within the mould of poor but honest workmen. These groups were not threatening but other segments of this 23 million were. They were the mendicant poor of whose London representatives the *Quarterly Review* said in 1855:

the most remarkable feature of London life is a class decidedly lower in the social scale than the labourer, and numerically very large ... for the most part their utmost efforts do little more than maintain them in a state of chronic starvation ... by graduations imperceptibly darkening as we advance, we arrive at the classes who are at open war with society, and professedly live by the produce of depredation or the wages of infamy .<sup>15</sup>

These problems, like the problems of public health, were characteristically the problems of the city. Stedman Jones wrote that London was seen as "the Mecca of the dissolute, the lazy, the mendicant, "the rough" and the spendthrift." It was "one huge magnet for the idle, the dishonest, and the criminal." This was the outcast group into which economic

<sup>12</sup> Booth C. Life and Labour of the People in London. First Series: Poverty. New York: A M Kelly, 1969; First Series - Poverty, page 20 and following. Booth's analysis was cited approvingly and summarised in the Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (1903). Parliamentary Papers, 1904. Vol 25, cd2175; Appendix III.

<sup>13</sup> Baxter R D. National Income (1868), cited in Golby J M ed. Culture and Society: Britain 1850-1890. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1986; 18.

<sup>14</sup> Yeo E and Thompson E P. The Unknown Mayhew: New York: Schoken Books, 1971; 192.

<sup>15</sup> Stedman Jones, op cit; 12.

<sup>16</sup> ibid.

down turns, industrial accidents, poor health and personal crisis always threatened to tip many of the labouring classes. It was against this group that much of the public health and moral control of the 19th century was aimed.

Britain's urban world was not simply transported unchanged to Australia. When demand for labour was strong, as during the 1850s gold rushes, the conditions of working people here were generally thought to be substantially better than in Britain. There were also other important differences. For example, the first major social gulf in Colonial society was between the free settlers and the convict community. Despite these differences, Australia did appear to replicate the vast disparity between incomes and an embryonic urban and industrial environment that seemed to bring with it the worst of British 19th century urban life.<sup>17</sup> The embryonic political institutions that were developed in Australia during the mid 19th century suggested an awareness of the problems of the "dangerous" classes in colonial society. Stewart Macintyre has described the Victorian Constitution Act of 1855 as containing a "series of defences against levelling democracy", while political disturbances in 1858 provided evidence of possible threat to bourgeois colonial institutions.<sup>18</sup> If, during economic upswings, Australia was more of a "working man's paradise" than Britain, class divisions remained and the fruits of that prosperity were unequally distributed according to those structures. The separation of the classes was articulated and justified in similar terms as occurred in Britain.

The visual expression of the idea that the poor were naturally separated from the better off was the creation of two worlds and the resulting gulf that lay between the world of the poor and the world of the better off. In Victorian England, this gulf was profound. The journalist Henry Mayhew saw London's poor as a world apart, of whom the better off "had less knowledge than the most distant tribes of the earth." This distance was

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Davison G et al ed. *Outcasts of Melbourne*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1985; chapters 7 and 8. Pook H. A Worker's Paradise: A History of Working people in Australia 1788-1901. Melbourne: Oxford U P, 1981; 26-46.

<sup>18</sup> Macintyre S. A Colonial Liberalism. Melbourne, Oxford UP, 1991; 28, 32 and 65.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Walvin J. Victorian Values. London: Cardinal, 1987; 23.

emphasised by a geographical and social separation that operated to divide and define these worlds so effectively that Walter Besant could write this about London's East End in 1901:

The population is greater than that of Berlin or Vienna, or St Petersburg, or Philadelphia ... in the streets there are never seen any private carriages; there is no fashionable quarter ... one meets no ladies in the principal thoroughfares. People, shops, houses, conveyances - all together are stamped with the seal of the working class ... perhaps the strangest thing of all is this: in a city of two million people there are no hotels! That means of course that there are no visitors.<sup>20</sup>

This sense of mystery and distance was also a feature of other cities. It was used to great literary effect by the "slumming journalists" of the period whose prose briefly cast some light into the shadowy underworld of vice, disease and degradation constructing as they went the sharp contrasts between the two communities, one bright and prosperous, the other dark and hopeless. The latter could seem quite exotic and dangerous to the readers of these accounts, sensations heightened by the knowledge that they were often only a short cab journey from the city offices or the terrace houses of the well to do.<sup>21</sup> Physical separation was complemented by other ideas that distanced Victorian social groups. So removed from the everyday activity of the middle class society were the poor that it was with some difficulty that they were seen as fellow human beings, a point made by one Sydney clergyman, when commenting on his work among the slum dwellers.<sup>22</sup>

The poor were also threatening to established order, an idea that was uppermost in the minds of many of the better off, including the prominent constitutional lawyer and banker Walter Bagehot, for whom electoral reform was a necessary evil to be undertaken

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Cited in Stedman Jones, op cit; 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Davison, op cit; chapter 1 "This Moral pandemonium" - Images of Low Life. Mayne A. The Question of the Poor in the Nineteenth Century City, 1983. Historical Studies, 20: 557-573; 563. Markus Clarke's "Sketches of Melbourne Low Life" in Hergenhan L T. A Colonial City High and Low Life: Selected Journalism of Markus Clarke. St Lucia: Univ of QLD P, 1972; 100-173. Hill O. Homes of the London Poor. London: Frank Cass, 1970; 40.

<sup>22</sup> Mayne, op cit; 565. See also, Richardson R. *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*. London: Penguin, 1989; 268. For other prominent Victorians, the poor were not adults but children. An earlier view in 1848 of the prominent Victorian social theorist John Stuart Mill, described the idea that the rich should be "in loco parentis" to the poor, guiding and restraining them "like children", ensuring that they were spiritually uplifted and innocently amused. (Golby J M ed. *Culture and Society: Britain 1850-1890*. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1986; 135.)

in order to prevent the "lower classes" from combining and forcing wider changes that would "impair the safety of the country."<sup>23</sup> Bagehot was writing in 1872 and was echoing the fears that politicians and others had harboured throughout the 19th century. Political and social reforms were made grudgingly and slowly. They were of limited scope and did not substantially reduce the gulf that lay between the classes in Britain.

Throughout the 19th century, the poor remained a threatening mass of humanity, with the occasional outbreaks of violence to emphasise this point. The stage on which this idea of threat was played out varied. Sometimes public health was the context, sometimes crime. For example, there were the "garotting panics" of 1856 and 1862. This was a response to the fear that London was becoming the haunt of violent robbers who were choking or "garotting" their victims. Public anxiety was heightened by the fact that "respectable" citizens were publicised prominently as the target of the garotters.<sup>24</sup> This panic has also been interpreted as a middle class response to the end of transportation prompted by the fear that, because convicts could no longer be banished forever, London streets would become the haunt of robbers (described in colourful terms such as "Street Bedouins", "assassins" and "footpads.") The response to this fear was calls for the more stringent application of the criminal law. The garotting panic has much in common with more recent moral panics.<sup>25</sup> It is of interest here because it sits in the same general frame as public health threats. Both the fears of disease and the fears of crime were directed at the working class and expressed as a threat to the personal safety of other classes. In the case of garotters, the Security From Violence Act 1863 was introduced, designed to impose exemplary punishment on those convicted.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Bagehot W. in *The English Constitution* (1872), cited in Golby, op cit; 274.

<sup>24</sup> Chesney K. The Victorian Underworld. London: Penguin, 1972; 163.

<sup>25</sup> Sindall R. The London Garotting Panics of 1856 and 1862, 1987. Social History, 12: 351-359. Moral panics have been a recurring theme in social history. Two relatively recent examples have been the Bank Holiday Monday clashes between the "mods" and "rockers", described by Cohen (see Cohen S. Folk Devils and Moral Panics. London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1972) and the Bathurst motorcycle races, an event which entailed conflict between spectators and police in New South Wales in the late 1970s (see Cuneen C et al. Dynamics of Collective Conflict: Riots at the Bathurst Bike Races. Sydney: Law Book Coy, 1989.)

<sup>26</sup> The panic echoed across the Empire. In 1866, the South Australian Parliament passed similar legislation, for no apparent reason other than it followed the earlier British model. In the words of the Minister introducing the proposal, these were provisions designed for "brutes" not men. Crime was a "disease" and

The "garotting panic" was a colourful and much publicised expression of the direct threat that the "unruly" poor were believed to present to the personal safety of their betters. For Walter Bagehot, the threat was projected through the wider focus of popular political change. Another dimension of the threat was expressed through health and disease.

# 3 CLASS, PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF BARRIERS

In the 19th and 20th centuries, prominent views about health and hygiene have been articulated in ways that drew on social difference. It was said by many that the health and hygiene of the lower classes was deficient, that working people were dirty, diseased and that they smelt. Such views emphasised the gulf between the classes. It also expressed, through ideas about health, the threat that they might present to their "betters." A well known example of these views was George Orwell's frank admission of his own belief, a legacy of his public school childhood, that the working classes smelt. There were, he wrote in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, "four frightful words" that were "bandied about quite freely" in his childhood - "The lower classes smell." So powerful in Orwell's view was its effect that he described it as "the real reason why a European of bourgeois upbringing ... cannot without a hard effort think of a working man as his equal."<sup>27</sup>

Orwell was writing about his experiences earlier this century. He was not the first person to consider the proposition that the working classes smell. It was a common view in the 19th century and was shared by the medical profession. F B Smith, in his history of public health in 19th century England, wrote "Doctors ... began to complain openly during the mid-1840s that their poor patients stank ." 28 One example occurred during the

the new penalties were the sharp remedies necessary to cure that disease. (South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 7 September, 1866; 344.)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Orwell G. The Road to Wigan Pier. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962; 112.

<sup>28</sup> Smith, op cit; 219.

parliamentary debates on the (English) *Health Act*, 1848. Dr Southwood Smith, a city physician, was reported as saying this about his working class patients:

I am unable to stay in the room even to write the prescription. I am obliged after staying the necessary time at the bedroom of the patient, to go into the air, or to stand at the door.<sup>29</sup>

Other speakers in the debates made a number of references to the smell of the working classes. Sometimes they just smelt. Sometimes they smelt worse than wild animals. Sometimes they smelt so badly that a pestilence "must surely originate from it."<sup>30</sup> Comments about smell made frequent appearances in the writings of reformers and commentators such as Octavia Hill, the housing reformer, who complained of the foul smells of her working class clients. Andrew Mearns' *Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (a detailed account of "the conditions of the abject poor") referred to the offensive smells that emanated from the "pestilential human rookeries" and the "rotten and reeking tenement houses" of the London slums.<sup>31</sup>

This abhorrence of working class life based on smell was carried to Australia. In 1889, the *Argus* said this about the members of the embryonic Australian Socialist League: "They smelt of tobacco, onions and beer; the main thing they needed was soap." It is a view that is still with us. In 1990, a correspondent to an Adelaide newspaper complained of the smell of the "urine infested areas", of one of the city squares that had become a congregating point for the City's poor. 33

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Parliamentary Debates, 8 May, 1848; 785.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid; 782-783.

<sup>31</sup> Hill Octavia, op cit; 41. Mearns A. The Bitter Cry of Outcast London. London: Frank Cass, 1970; 6-7.

<sup>32</sup> Argus, 11 April, 1889; 6.

<sup>33 &</sup>quot;Fix Whitmore Square by Not feeding Them" (letter). City Messenger (Adelaide), 4 July, 1990; 4. See also the conservative journalist Auberon Waugh's comment that the Greenham Common women (an encampment of anti nuclear campaigners in England in the late 1980s) smelt of "fish paste and bad oysters." (Stallybrass P and White A. The Politics and Poetics of Transgression. London: Methuen, 1986; 23.)

Smell could be more than a description of a physical phenomenon; it could also be a metaphor for another threat to the better classes - the populist stench of change. An American writer described a 19th century political demonstration in the following terms:

It smells to heaven. Bad tobacco, stale beer, and the incense which always arises from the assemblies of the great unwashed perfumes the air, and the moral atmosphere is not less tainted.<sup>34</sup>

The idea of smell was a powerful marker. Stallybrass and White argue that smell was seen as an insidious invader into the world of the respectables, that it encoded revulsion and that it challenged social reformers because it was so difficult to regulate.<sup>35</sup> It was also associated with fundamental classifications. There is the stench of a corpse, the smell of sickness and decay, an idea that both strengthened and drew strength from the miasmatist idea that disease was spread through effluvia and bad air. Smell was something that radiated out from the source of infection to impact on the senses of the healthy and to threaten. For example, according to European beliefs, vampires were associated with "a great stench." This was said to be the stench of death and the stench of the disease that vampires were believed responsible for.<sup>36</sup> Smell was a way of classifying. Bad and threatening things smelt and smell was a powerful metaphor in separating good from bad, healthy from diseased and order from disorder. For the middle classes, the smell that emanated from the working classes bodies articulated their distance from respectable and healthy society. It also emphasised the threat of the working class, their actual smell and the smell of populist change.

Smell was a powerful way of separating social class. It was also a signal of two central public health issues; dirt and disease. In the descriptions of 19th century London,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Boyer P. *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America 1820-1920*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard Univ P, 1978; 172.

<sup>35</sup> Stallybrass and White, op cit; 139.

<sup>36</sup> Barber P. Vampires Burial and Death. New Haven: Yale Univ P, 1988; 8. An enduring urban myth is the "Death Car", an expensive vehicle on sale for very little. The explanation being that its previous owner died in the car and was undiscovered for a week, hence the smell of death that could not be removed from it. (see Brunvand J H. The Vanishing Hitchhiker. London: Pan, 1983; 27.) Another example can be taken from the writing of an Australian soldier during World War I. "A dead man's boot in the firing-possy has been dripping grease on my overcoat and the coat will stink forever." (Gerster R. Big-Noting: The Heroic Theme in Australian War Writing. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1987; 125.)

dirt seemed a constant companion of working class life. This is not surprising given the poor living conditions and inadequate sanitation endured by so many in the 19th century. What is significant is the context in which the point was made, where dirt was part of a process that marked and distanced them from respectable society. Dirt became yet another way of classifying social groups. Complaints that the working class were dirty became common. Octavia Hill, for example, made many references to the "dirty wild faces of the poor."37 Dirt was also a ground for the criticism of the working class in Australia. In 1898, the New South Wales Royal Commission on Public Charities heard evidence from the Superintendent of the Industrial School for Girls that his "lower class" inmates were "stupid and .. dirty generally."38

These views were common ways of categorising the poor in the 19th century. They built upon a strong tradition. Dirt was claimed to be a marker for moral degeneracy as early as 1654, when vagabonds (a large body of itinerant unemployed) were described as "generally given to horrible uncleaness, they have not particular wives, neither do they range themselves into families but consort together as beasts."39

By comparison, cleanliness was a positive value to which the reformed poor might aspire.40 Smith reports that the values of cleanliness were taken up by the upper and middle classes with a reforming zeal. In the 1850s, "fastidious upper and middle-class improvers began to carry the gospel of cleanliness to the dangerously insalubrious classes."41 One such organisation was the "Ladies Association for the Diffusion of Sanitary Knowledge." By 1861 it had distributed nearly 140,000 tracts on "the power of

Though I am but poor and mean

I will move the rich to love me

If I'm modest neat and clean

And submit when they reprove me. (Cited in Wingfield-Stratford E. *The Victorian Tragedy*. London: Routledge, 1930; 63.)

<sup>37</sup> Hill Octavia, op cit; 40 and 49.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> O'Brien A. *Poverty's Prison*. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1988; 124.

<sup>39</sup> Hill Christopher, op cit; 320.

<sup>40</sup> The moral tone that linked cleanliness with respectability was echoed by the following verse of the 18th century evangelical cleric Isaac Watts:

<sup>41</sup> Smith, op cit; 218.

soap and water." This good work was based on the view that the poor were more in want of sanitary salvation than other social groups.<sup>42</sup>

Reforming zeal, directed at the dirty habits of the poor was also at work in Australia. Both education and sanitary reform were prominent instruments through which their transformation could be achieved.<sup>43</sup> Both initiatives involved legislation and public health legislation was sometimes justified explicitly by the idea that the poorer classes were dirty. The coercive Lodging House regulations contained within the Queensland *Health Bill* 1884 were said to be a necessary remedial measure insofar as they "were intended for the poorer classes where the people had not the habits of cleanliness; where those habits had to be forced on them."<sup>44</sup>

In the 19th century, the dichotomy between clean and dirty was constructed with dirt the consort of chaos and immorality. Dirt and its associates were the province of the poor, while the values of cleanliness and order were the province of the better classes. The triumph of cleanliness was implicitly the triumph of the moral order of the better classes.

Extending the issues of smell and dirt, the poor were also said to be diseased and, because of this, a threat to the health of their betters. Disease was held to be the product of dirtiness and disorder. In New South Wales, the smallpox epidemic of the late 19th century was blamed on "immoral and overcrowded living", a view that was confirmed by the received knowledge from Britain where the press reported that "smallpox seems to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Ibid. The stigma of dirtiness is enduring and is self perpetuating. For example, prompting the belief, quite common in England, that if the poor were provided with baths they would use them to store coal. This in turn perpetuated and strengthened the attitude. It became a reason for not spending money on improving housing standards. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 April, 1939; 13. ("Fowls in the Bath: Inspector's Experience") Views abut disease have also been stigmatising. When outbreaks of headlice have occurred in South Australian schools, health workers report considerable denial on the part of parents, who consider vermin to be something that only disadvantaged and dirty families get. (personal communication - Director, South Australian Health Commission School Health Branch, 1980.)

<sup>43</sup> In Victoria, the prominent publicist and colonial Minister of Education C H Pearson wrote in 1877 on the future of Melbourne's "gutter children", marked as the offspring of drunkards and the relatives of thieves of prostitutes. Pearson believed that education could provide their salvation and introduce to them the values of "order, cleanliness and good taste." (Macintyre, op cit; 157.)

<sup>44</sup> Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 4 September, 1884; 571.

have taken up its home in the poorer districts ... the more respectable suburbs being almost entirely free of the disease." This did not mean that the better off were immune, since this knowledge also claimed that "the germs of disease that are generated in the back slums will travel to broad thoroughfares." The effect of these concerns was to concentrate the public health policing in the "lower quarters" of Sydney. The central issue here seemed not to be the poverty of its residents or their living conditions that put them at greatest risk for the disease. Rather, it was said to be the moral character of the "lower classes" evidenced by what, to more fortunate eyes, was their dirty and crowded living conditions, which then made disease the logical associate of their other failings.

The distinction is important. As Curson illustrates in his history of Sydney epidemics, the majority of smallpox cases did come from the poorer areas of the city.<sup>46</sup> The reasons for this were environmental, in the sense that the risk of disease was increased in insanitary and crowded conditions. Yet, they could be interpreted as moral in the sense that the poor, as a result of their various failings, were said to aid the spread of smallpox. In other words, did the sty make the pig or did the pig make the sty?<sup>47</sup> There were many who preferred the latter view, including the editor of the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* who railed against the lower strata of society for their "inordinate, unseemly, and perverse fondness for dirt ... and daily defiance of the sanitary laws."<sup>48</sup>

Overall, the idea of disease as being the product of moral deficiency and intemperance was a powerful one which focused on the most visible victims of 19th century urban society, the poor. With this focus came a sense of threat: despite the barriers between the classes, no urban dweller, even the wealthy, were immune from the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Macleod R and Lewis M ed. *Disease Medicine and Empire*. London: Routledge, 1988; 226. See also Wohl A S. *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain*. London: Methuen, 1983; 79.

<sup>46</sup> Curson P. Times of Crisis. Sydney: Syd Univ P, 1985; 96, 102.

<sup>47</sup> Mayne, op cit; 567.

<sup>48</sup> Daily Telegraph, 11 August 1882; 2. The paper was scathing in its denunciation of certain lodging houses in Sydney. It attacked their working class owners and residents calling them "sluts and slovens" with "an acquired or innate appetite for garbage and putrescence" and suggested that any improvements would only be temporary for these people were like "dogs returning to their vomit" or "pigs wallowing in the mire." (ibid; 2) See also Octavia Hill, op cit; 51.

possibility of disease, particularly where some measure of inter-class contact occurred Through the spread of disease, the poor, with their moral failings, were seen to threaten the better off in urban society. Smith provided one example of this idea, translated into policy; he wrote that it was believed that "fallen women" were dangerous wet nurses because they risked transmitting cancer to their infant charges.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to smell, dirt and disease, there was another, more profound, way in which the "lower" classes were said to be separated from the "upper" classes. It centred around the idea that the former were degenerate. This view was prevalent in both the United Kingdom and Australia. It drew strength from the social thought of the day, particularly that of the eugenicists. Eugenicists argued that there were fixed hereditary differences between social groups and that these determined generalised characteristics and traits that could then be said to apply to individuals within the group. While eugenics is best known for its claim to make statements about the relative worth of different races, it also offered views about the relative worth of the classes. In this context, eugenics offered the simple idea that "the upper and lower strata of society are not equal in regard to ability; that the upper strata have produced more people of talent and genius than the lower strata." This difference was said by eugenicists to be a product of hereditary differences rather than environmental differences or differences in opportunity.

Significantly, this was a fixed and unchangeable difference.50

In Britain, the economist Alfred Marshall, writing in the late 19th century of the residual pauper class, suggested that, in addition to ability, there were other differences determined by heredity that distinguished the residual poor from their betters. They had "poor physique and a weak character"; they were "limp in body and mind." They were

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Smith, op cit; 73 and 178.

<sup>50</sup> Docker J. Can the Centre Hold? in Sydney Labour History Group. What Rough Beast? The State and Social Order in Australia. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1982; 59.

Marshall was a self proclaimed socialist and supporter of the interests of working people. However, he was talking here of a residuum, people whom "charity and sanitary regulations are keeping alive, in our large towns ... [without which] thousands of such persons would have died, even fifty years ago." He added "private or public charity might palliate their misery, but the only remedy is to prevent such people from coming into existence." This was in his Paper presented to the Industrial Remuneration Conference, 1885.

simply poorer specimens of humanity. For the Victorian policy makers, the causes of this physical and moral state of "pauperism" lay centrally with the individual's makeup. This was seen to be more relevant than the environmental and structural issues of poverty. With this concern for pauperism came a concern for what was said to be its attendant vices, "drunkenness, improvidence, mendicancy, bad language, filthy habits, gambling, low amusements and ignorance."52

This type of view underpinned and legitimised the policies that kept the poorest classes disadvantaged and disenfranchised. It drew stark contrasts between the responsible and the irresponsible classes. These ideas were fundamental to the way the social classifications were seen because their deterministic and fixed character implied that there was no scope for change; that inequalities, poverty and ill health were the result of the *natural* differences between classes and not the product of the 19th century environment.

Smell, dirt disease and physique were public health categories used in a number of public policy contexts to emphasise social distinctions. They accompanied other social processes that also gave a health significance to everyday conduct. Johan Goudsblom wrote that the evolution of a number of rules, such as those associated with sneezing or spitting, are less to do with hygiene (though this provides their formal justification) and more to do with creating barriers between people. These rules create "an invisible wall ... between one human body and another, repelling and separating." <sup>53</sup> The rules of conduct discussed in Chapter 3 are an aspect of this. <sup>54</sup>

(Industrial Remuneration Conference. *The Report of the Proceedings and Papers*. London: Cassell, 1885; 197, 198.)

<sup>52</sup> Stedman Jones, op cit; 11.

<sup>53</sup> Goudsblom J. Public Health and the Civilizing Process, 1986. *Millbank Qtrly*, 64: 161-188; 163. The development of manners at table or the prohibitions on spitting, or open sneezing or coughing are associated with the development of rules about personal hygiene. In his detailed history of manners, (first published in 1939) Norbert Elias argues that they are part of a process that was intended to distinguish social groups. For example, he quotes Erasmus (who wrote also on these matters) as saying:

In good society one does not put both hands into the dish. It is more refined to use only three fingers of the hand. This is one of the marks of distinction between the upper and lower classes Thus, in Elias' argument, manners were created primarily as badges of distinction that separated social groups rather than as aspects of health and hygiene. (See Elias N. *The Civilizing Process*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978; 57.)

The proposition that rules about health and manners constitute a way of recognising social boundaries and distinguishing between classes takes more significance if the principal adherents of good hygiene and manners are considered. George Orwell's repulsion at the smell of working class bodies was, characteristically, a bourgeois, middle class reaction. A concern for cleanliness has been said also to be a middle class trait. For example, in considering racism (in the form of anti-Semitism) Mosse, writing in 1978, said "racism picked out such qualities as cleanliness, honesty - virtues which, during the nineteenth century, came to symbolise the ideals of the middle class." The significance of this middle class concern lies in the fact that, socially and economically, this class and the working class sit side by side and tend to blur at the margins. The economic status of many of the middle class has been precarious. George Orwell emphasised the characteristic middle class burden of "genteel poverty", writing:

The essential fact about them (middle class families) is that all their vitality has been drained away by lack of money. In families like that ... there's more sense of poverty ... than you'd find in any farm-labourer's family.<sup>57</sup>

The precarious financial state of many middle class families was also illustrated in Australia where social changes, rapid economic development and labour shortages were a feature of life in the 19th century. Most obviously, this was expressed in the wage and salary rates: in Melbourne, for example, a clerk, for whom the costs of maintaining even a modest social position were relatively high, might earn little more than a skilled

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> As the Indian caste system demonstrates, health rules within this structure are more to do with the exclusive status of a particular group rather than to do with public health (See Beteille A. *Caste as a Form of Social Inequality*, in Beteille A ed. *Social Inequality*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969; 285.)

<sup>55</sup> Mosse G L. Towards the Final Solution. New York: Howard Fertig, 1978; 234.

<sup>56</sup> Marx and Engels suggested that large segments of the middle class would, because they were undercapitalised, risked being swamped by larger capitalists, and "sink gradually into the proletariat". (Marx K and Engels F. *Selected Works*. Moscow: Progress Pub, 1970; 42.)

<sup>57</sup> Orwell G. Coming Up for Air. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962; 136. The financial insecurity of many of the middle class necessarily made its claims to exclusivity rest on status and values, such as manners and hygiene, attributes that were said not to be shared by the working class. These attributes became features of the way that the middle class saw itself and was seen. Thus, G D H Cole, defining the middle class, said: "it is not simply a matter of income." Manners and education all play a part in defining this group. (Cole G D H. Studies in Class Structure. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955; 93.).

tradesman. In these cases, manners and beliefs and values about hygiene and dirt rather than wealth would become the markers of distinction and define the barriers between the classes.<sup>58</sup>

However, in Australia, separateness was not so easily achieved as it was in England. Richard Twopeny noted the blurring of traditional class barriers prompted by local circumstances and restricted opportunities, expressed for example in the prevalence of inter-class marriages. Such descriptions emphasised the theme of "upside downess", which was prevalent in the comic sketches of Australia at the time. Thus, when labour was in short supply, there were cartoons about servants demanding references from their prospective mistresses, while a working class wife of a respectable man (the result of the shortage of females in Australia at that time) could be added to the list of strange events in an antipodean world. Some, the republicans and nationalists, might have seen this as admirable evidence of the equality of humankind in Australia (perhaps epitomised by Henry Lawson's idealised shearer who "called no biped lord or 'sir'.")<sup>59</sup> But, there were other ways of seeing this social environment. The idea was projected in the cartoons and the writings of observers such as Twopeny that this equality was anomalous and an inversion of the established order of things. More particularly, it was shown to be anomalous through obvious social failings such as Twopeny's notion that the working class wife of a wealthy man would betray her origins by dropping her h's or eating peas off her knife.60

Davison G. The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1978; chapter 9. One example of these social distinctions being emphasised where social classes were grouped together was the account of Nell Hartland, the middle class wife of an engineer, who came to Australia in the 1920s under an assisted scheme. On the voyage out she said of her working class companions: "the people (in the next door cabin) were just awful, they used to steal our towels and soap, their language was dreadful, I can't tell you what their personal habits were like" Jenkins T. We Came to Australia. London: Constable, 1969; 205.

<sup>59</sup> The Shearer, published 1901.

<sup>60</sup> Twopeny R. Town Life in Australia. Melbourne: Penguin, 1973; 108. (first pub 1883.)

## 4. ILL HEALTH AND DISEASE AS THE PROBLEM OF THE POOR

Health and disease were visible expressions of the differences between social classes. Measurable differences in their morbidity and mortality emphasised those differences. This part of the Chapter considers how they were explained and how they were a way of retaining the status quo and justifying inequalities.

The view that the poor bring upon themselves the unhealthy conditions in which they live has wide, long standing currency. Daniel Defoe's, novel about - but written well after - London's great plague of 1665 presented the poor as quite oblivious to the epidemic, taking great risks and being responsible for spreading the disease and bringing their problems upon themselves. He did not consider other explanations: that these people, with few if any financial reserves, had no option other than go about their normal business, exposing themselves to the risks of infection. As such, their foolhardiness and ignorance was beside the point. The poor were quite unable to flee to country houses or lock themselves away. They were at greatest risk from the plague simply because they were poor.<sup>61</sup>

This kind of thinking was expressed during outbreaks of disease in the 19th century. In the United States, a Medical Commission inquiring into the cholera epidemic of 1832 wrote: "the disease in the city is confined to the imprudent, the intemperate, and those who injure themselves by taking improper medicines." By this, the Commission meant the mass of urban poor. In focusing the blame on the victims of the disease, the Commissioners, like Defoe, ignored the reality that daily the "imprudent and intemperate" class of society were required to face the many risks they allegedly invited. These risks included sharing polluted water sources and living in crowded and unhygienic conditions that encouraged the spread of the disease. Finally, when they were sick, conventional medical treatment was often too costly to be available.

<sup>61</sup> Defoe D. A Journal of the Plague Year. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986; 220 (first published, 1722.) This account was not contemporary, it was written nearly 60 years after the plague See also Dahrendorf R. The Origins of Inequality among Men. In Beteille A. ed. Social Inequality. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969; 18.

<sup>62</sup> Cited in Rosenberg C E. The Cholera Years. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1962; 30.

The British cholera epidemic of the same year also illustrated the point. The disease came to Britain at a time of the populist movements emergent after the Napoleonic wars. William Farr described it as a "time of great political excitement, and a year of election riots." Far more cases of cholera occurred among the working classes and paupers than among wealthier classes. This would be expected since they were far greater numerically and their environment put them more at risk. In the view of one Member of Parliament however, the spread was at least partly due to their ignorance of the risks in not hospitalising sick relatives, while the autopsy reports of the victims commented on their poor circumstances and intemperate habits. Throughout the epidemic, the middle class view seems to have been that cholera was a disease predominantly of the working classes, in particular, "itinerant labourers, tramps, hawkers and vagrants," probably because they were mobile, conspicuous dirty and distasteful representatives of this class. This may have been a prevalent view; Morris regards it as, overall, a mistaken view.

While cholera did strike the poor to a greater extent than other classes, it was a function of the environment in which they lived rather than the trait of *being poor*. Yet, the differential death rate was seen in a way that emphasised a tension between social classes and the implied threat to the more fortunate from the "lower classes." This

<sup>63</sup> Farr, op cit; 364.

<sup>64</sup> Morris, op cit; 91 and 92.

<sup>65</sup> Parliamentary Debates, 15 December, 1831; 308 and 313. Morris, op cit; 85 and 137.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Morris, op cit; 117.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid; 93.

<sup>68</sup> Standardised death rates for cholera during the period 1848-1854, indicate that the new urban areas (which contained the largest congregations of working class poor) in most cases had the highest rates for the disease. (Greenhow E H. Papers Relating to the Sanitary State of the People of England (1858). London: Gregg International Pub, 1973; 136-141.) Morris suggested that the French experience of city of the lower classes. See also Rosenberg, op city 56.

There is evidence to suggest that at least some of the poor considered cholera a plot designed by their masters to kill them off. In England, Durey cited evidence of attacks by the poor on doctors and hospital staff because it was believed that they were in fact murdering the so called cholera victims and using their bodies for dissection. In France, the reaction to the cholera epidemic by some persons, was to claim that it was the product of a conspiracy between the ruling class and the medical profession to kill of the surplus poor. (Durey M. The Return of the Plague: British Society and Cholera 1831-1832. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1979; 156, 162.) It is difficult to know whether such a view was widespread and applicable to other epidemics. Guy de Chauliac, writing of the plague of 1348 at Avignon, suggested that the nobles were considered responsible by the general population "and that they (the nobles) were afraid to go among the people." (Majors R H. Classic Descriptions of Disease. Springfield: Charles Thomas, 1932; 79.)

thinking was endorsed in other contexts by some medical practitioners whose work brought them in contact with the London poor during the 19th century. One, whose practice included administering Poor Law relief, complained that:

a sort of fatalism is very prevalent among the poor; they have ... far less reliance on medical care than the upper classes. Some appear careless and apathetic; some resign themselves to the event ... not a few of the poorest and most degraded allow their diseases to take their own courses<sup>69</sup>

Such an opinion was not restricted to the 19th century. In a relatively recent account of tuberculosis in England published in 1973, Harley Williams claimed that responsibility for the continued spread of the disease in the United Kingdom lay with its last remaining victims "the tramps and the homeless wanderers" who sought to avoid the X-ray caravans and the treatment programmes. In considering why itinerants were less likely to comply with screening and medication, Williams directed the problem back to the individual sufferer:

These men resent not merely the tiny acts of self discipline which have to be observed by those who wish to remain healthy, they loath the slightest infringement on their private notion of freedom.<sup>70</sup>

This process of seeing the usually poor victims of tuberculosis as though they were entirely responsible for their plight once again ignores a variety of complicated issues in the lives of marginal people. It is an expression of the circular, but powerful, view that those who are poor are by their nature negligent and lazy and that is why they are poor. By extension, the cause of a disease which unfairly selects the poor as its victims is associated not with environmental circumstances, but with these same defects in character.<sup>71</sup> There is also an important social and policy consequence of blaming the

<sup>69</sup> Smith, op cit; 159.

<sup>70</sup> Williams H. Requiem for a Great Killer. London: Health Horizons, 1973; 70.

<sup>71</sup> This is similar to the view attributed to puritan merchants: namely, that the accumulation of wealth by economic activity was a sign of salvation. People who were successful by sober industry, "deserved" to be wealthy and people who remained poor also deserved their lot. (see Weber M. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1976; 3-5.)

victims of disease for their misfortune. It focuses responsibility towards the sufferers and away from the conditions that promote the course of disease and direct its spread. It exempts from responsibility those who are unwilling or unable to make the social and structural changes necessary to alter this situation.<sup>72</sup>

## 5 THE GOVERNMENTAL RESPONSE

A central task for the Victorian policy makers was to introduce the values of thrift and providence into the mass of the working classes and to disarm the threat they were assumed to present to established order. In the minds of the legislators, moral reform of the working classes sat side by side with sanitary reform. Public health legislation was a part of this civilising theme. The main plank in the public health reform of the 19th century urban environment was a series of Health Acts, first passed in England in 1848 and copied in the Australian colonies at different times over the next 30 years. These established a range of environmental controls designed to clean up the cities and to survey the "other world" inhabited by the poor. The moral agenda was also prominent among the supporters of this legislation. At first glance, the English Health Act 1848 was an enactment that clarified central and local government responsibility for public health while providing the rudimentary powers to remedy insanitary conditions. In the minds of the legislators it did more than this. It addressed the problem of the classes itself. So, it was argued, sanitary reform "had a great bearing on the moral and religious condition of the people."73 Even members who opposed the legislation on the basis of its cost and centralist intrusions accepted the idea that good sanitation was important, "that it was

<sup>72</sup> A similar explanation has been put forward for accusations of witchcraft: namely, the accuser, having suffered from a guilty conscience for refusing assistance, justifies the refusal by convincing him or herself that the person in need is in fact a witch. - Scarre G. Witchcraft and Magic in 16 and 17 Century Europe. London: Macmillan, 1987; 41 and Thomas K. Religion and the Decline of Magic. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971; 558.

<sup>73</sup> Parliamentary Debates, 5 May, 1848; 733.

highly conducive to the cleanliness, the comfort, and the morals of the population."<sup>74</sup> The link between crime and disease was drawn strongly in the debates. As one member said, "the same condition of things and habits of life which gave rise to fever, also powerfully stimulated to the perpetration of crime."<sup>75</sup>

Similar views were expressed in Australia during the passage of health legislation in the Colonial Parliaments. During the debates on New South Wales Infectious Disease legislation in 1881, it was said "cleanliness means healthiness and healthiness was synonymous with holiness." A belief in the moral power of public health legislation was an enduring one. In 1940, the evil effects of insanitary housing in Adelaide was commented upon in the South Australian Parliament. It was said:

the conditions in which ..[the occupants] live are responsible for many young men and women committing crimes and many children being committed to reformatories.<sup>77</sup>

While the moral and sanitary salvation of the working class was a prominent feature of public health policy, other legislation also sought to redress and contain the vicious influences of the urban slums and their inhabitants. While panics such as the garotting fear might prompt urgent legislation, imposing exemplary punishment on the urban criminal classes, more reasoned and less hasty responses to the problem were introduced in a number of other legislative provisions. One early, English, attempt at civilising the working class is remarkable for the legacy of suburban Gothic churches that it left behind. The *New Churches Act*, 1818 provided a million pounds for the construction of new churches in the towns. This was designed to extend the influence of the established Anglican church among the newly formed urban classes in order to avert their "vicious habits" and to combat other, unstated, "corrupting influences, dangerous to

<sup>74</sup> Ibid; 774.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid: 782.

<sup>76</sup> New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 7 December, 1881; 2476.

<sup>77</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 30 October, 1940; 1122.

the public security, as well as to private morality."<sup>78</sup> Other initiatives included those that sought to provide housing for the working classes, to establish savings banks, to impose compulsory education and to institute reform schools for the miscreant working class youth. These initiatives were introduced in both Australia and Britain and sought to create a working class whose transformed values were cast in the mould of prevailing middle class ideology. The twin values of moral and sanitary cleanliness was explicit in one enactment. In 1846, English legislation was passed to provide public baths and wash houses for the "labouring classes." Its aim was to combat both the moral and the physical dirt of the working classes. The responsible Minister explained the importance of:

teaching men to entertain self-respect and to cultivate those habits which made them seemly in the eyes of others, and enjoy a state of respectability ... these habits [cleanliness] were counted ... with many of the highest moral and religious virtues<sup>81</sup>

The moral power of bathing was also advocated in Australia. In 1913, a Victorian Parliamentary Select Committee considering housing conditions in Melbourne heard evidence of the lack of regular bathing among the City's poor. A constable Kelly, whose duties took him to their houses, asserted that where baths existed they were often full of lumber. Given the power, he claimed that he would compel "everyone to use their baths." In his view, people who bathed frequently would become "better citizens" and "cleaner in

<sup>78</sup> Parliamentary Debates, 15 May, 1818; 712. (Second Reading Speech of the Earl of Liverpool.)

<sup>79</sup> See for example, Dickey B. No Charity There. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987; 23.

Making culture available to the working classes was also an aspect of this civilising process both in England and Australia. In 1883, the Melbourne museum and art gallery was opened on Sunday as a way of encouraging the uplifting of the City's working class. The Age reported that the crowd attending was "quiet and respectable" and gave no trouble. (see Tregenza J. Professor of Democracy: the Life of C H Pearson.

Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1968; 177.) There were earlier moves in Britain to open museums and galleries on Sundays. In 1846 a member of the House of Commons advocated this on the basis of its "civilising effects" He put the following motion:

That with a view of lessening the temptation to drunkenness and immorality, and of promoting thereby the welfare of the working classes especially, and also of society generally, it is the duty of a Christian Legislature to open the British Museum, the National Gallery, and all similar public places calculated to afford innocent and instructive recreation for the reception of visitors.

Such a motion he said was the best means of "humanising the people." (Parliamentary Debates, 14 August, 1846; 717.)

<sup>80</sup> An Act to Encourage the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash Houses 1846. (9 & 10 Vic, C74.)

<sup>81</sup> Parliamentary Debates, 3 August, 1846; 277.

their habits."82 As a form of control over those deemed to be in want of sanitary reform, the public health provisions and related interests were also said to be effective. Graeme Davison recounted that in Australia, the truancy officers and the local public health inspectors exercised a more effective control over the lives of the slum dwellers of Melbourne than did the City police force with their traditional and quite predictable methods.83

Of course, the 19th century reformers did not lift the poor into their midst. Rather, they envisaged the formation of a body of respectable poor, the grateful and worthy objects of the largesse and moralising of the better off, a body of people that the middle classes could disarm, civilise, control and on occasions, even romanticise.<sup>84</sup> There were others that were not deserving. They were those who were said to have spurned the proffered hand of moral improvement. They included the rejects of the Victorian housing reformer, Octavia Hill, who complained that:

the vicious, dirty and destructive habits of the lowest strata have obliged me at last to decline them as tenants. These are the people that are the despair of small property owners, and drive even the most considerate of them to regard expenditure on repairs and health appliances as money thrown away.<sup>85</sup>

By way of contrast, the successful poor were trained in "punctuality, thrift and respectability." A prime test of punctuality for Octavia Hill was paying the rent. Tenants in arrears were evicted.<sup>86</sup>

These reforming initiatives had the effect of emphasising, rather than reducing, the barriers that stood between social groups in Australian and British society. They underscored and strengthened the twin categories of the deserving and the undeserving poor. They distinguished those who would receive the limited and conditional charity of

<sup>82</sup> Joint Select Committee upon the Housing of the People in the Metropolis (Progress Report). Victoria, Parliamentary Papers, 1913-1914, Vol 1, no 4; 61 (questions 963, 965.)

<sup>83</sup> Davison et al ed, op cit; 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> Golby, op cit; 112, 174, 296.

<sup>85</sup> Cited in Stedman Jones, op cit; 196.

<sup>86</sup> Cited in Hill, op cit; 194.

the middle classes from those whose conduct rendered them unworthy of it. Depravity, dirt and disease were the hallmarks of the undeserving poor, the vagabonds and the threatening pauper class upon whom good works were wasted. They were to be the objects of more coercive and controlling legislation. Yet, the deserving poor also sat separate and apart from the middle classes as the object of the latter's charity and good works. The Ladies Benevolent Societies and allied institutions turned charity into a personalised affair, emphasising the giver on the one hand and the receiver on the other. Such an arrangement could only underline the natural superiority of the giving classes. Charity, sensitively given and gratefully received, was a ritual that strengthened and solidified the class that gave. In this process of controlling and civilising, the deserving recipients were as sharply categorised and defined as were the undeserving. Importantly though, since their moral and sanitary salvation could be achieved, the threat as such, though not the social distance, had been removed. In contrast, the gulf of depravity, dirt and disease that separated the "undeserving" poor, from their betters remained, to be remarked upon, complained about, distanced and finally, explained by sanitarians, politicians and eugenicists.

#### 6 ALCOHOL

In both Britain and Australia during the 19th and 20th centuries, the regulation of the consumption of alcohol and the social views that accompanied its use and the regulation of it have both social and public health significance. These have often been blurred; while the history of alcohol control may appear to be about public health, it is centrally about the history of morals and boundaries. Alcohol use has provided a basis from which particular social groups have been criticised. With this came the prevalent view that alcohol was a cause of poverty. Other alcohol policies also focused on the problems of the users, labelling them "alcoholics" and clinically "sick." Put simply, the history of alcohol control suggests that it was of most concern when it went down working

class throats. Yet, alcohol consumption has always been and remains a central public health problem, accounting for some 6,000 premature deaths in Australia annually.87

The general argument presented here is that, historically, alcohol consumption has been assessed in class terms and that it has been argued to be a cause of disease and poverty among working class drinkers. The language of this argument has been a mixture of criminalising, medicalising and moralising, collectively creating another barrier between the respectable and the degraded groups in society. The poor were said to be degraded because they drank and drunkards were threatening to the community.

Adverse comments about working class life and morals in 19th century Britain and Australia were often made through commentary upon their drinking habits and what was said to be the resulting intemperance. Alcohol use became another way in which boundaries between social classes were maintained and reinforced. It has been said that during the 18th century the social classes often drank and mixed together. By comparison, the middle and upper classes of the 19th century enforced their class segregation to a much greater extent and were reluctant to mix socially with the people they considered their inferiors. More generally, they sought to exclude themselves from working class company and lamented the occasions when unavoidable circumstances forced it upon them.<sup>88</sup> When viewed through middle and upper class eyes, working class alcohol consumption brought with it the prospect of disorder and chaos that alarmed genteel society. A vivid example was the drinking bouts of the "navvies", the canal and railway builders, whose invasion of the English countryside marked them as a threatening group, a

<sup>87</sup> Australia, Department of Community Services and Health. *Statistics on Drug Use in Australia*. Canberra: AGPS, 1990.

<sup>88</sup> Harrison B. *Drink and the Victorians*. London: Faber and Faber, 1971; 24. In practice, respectable Victorians did all that they could to separate themselves from working class bodies. This was generally, though not completely, possible for those using the newly created railway system. For example, Waterloo Station boasted First, Second and Third Class lavatories! (Richards J and MacKenzie J M. *The Railway Station: A Social History*. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1986; 137-139.) Another example of this separation was the differential admissions to the Great Exhibition of 1851 at the Crystal Palace. Prices varied from one pound to one shilling for different days. (de Mare E. *London 1851: The Year of the Great Exhibition*. London: Folio Press, 1973. *Illustrated London News*, 17 May, 1851.)

"race apart," whose debauches around the local public house on pay day Saturday were graphic glimpses of the, alcohol assisted, world of disorder and chaos.<sup>89</sup>

By the 19th century, the middle and upper classes tended to drink in private or in semi-private contexts, at home or in their clubs. The working classes drank more publicly in bars and streets. It has been said that private as opposed to public drinking was becoming a "mark of respectability." This public/private distinction is important. The evil effects of intoxication were most obvious when drinking was done in public. As such, drunkenness (the state of intoxication) was taken to be a working class vice because alcohol use by the poor was most visible.

Alcohol has been a prominent feature of Australian social life. It has been said that it was a way of softening what, to Europeans, was a harsh and alien environment. Alcohol also played an economic role as the virtual currency of New South Wales in the early 19th century.<sup>91</sup> Writing in 1847 of his experiences in Australia, Alexander Harris, the "Immigrant Mechanic" claimed:

the labouring population are universally lost to all sense of moral duty and religious obedience. ... Drunkenness, profanity, dishonesty, and unchastity are the prevalent habits which the class has acquired.<sup>92</sup>

However, in Australia, there was also some evidence that drunkenness was not solely the preserve of the labouring poor. Here was another "inversion." Twopeny made the observation that while drunkenness here was not much worse than in England, there was one notable difference "in the class that gets drunk." In Australia, he wrote, "it is not merely the lower classes but everybody that drinks" with drunkenness common among "those who may claim to be considered the upper classes here." This, Twopeny claimed,

<sup>89</sup> Chesney, op cit; 34.

<sup>90</sup> Harrison, op cit; 45.

 $<sup>^{91}</sup>$  See the historical survey in Powell K C. Drinking and Alcohol in Colonial Australia 1788-1901 for the Eastern Colonies (NCADA Monograph Series No 3). Canberra: AGPS, 1988.

<sup>92</sup> Harris A (An "Immigrant Mechanic"). Settlers and Convicts. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1964; 230.

contrasted strongly with England: "[an] English gentleman of the present day, whatever his other sins may be, does not get drunk, because "it is bad form", if for no better reason."93

Drunkenness (at least its public manifestation) among the colonial gentry blurred the boundaries between social classes and threatened the clear division between them. Such behaviour was anomalous, potentially a threat to social order and worthy of comment along with other antipodean anomalies. Amplifying this concern, a most serious anomaly occurred when poor people had the opportunity to genuinely "ape their betters." The Australian gold rush provided such opportunities and when they occurred, the antics and sprees of the few lucky, working class diggers were widely reported. According to varied reports they poured champagne into horse troughs for the benefit of passers by and lit their pipes with banknotes or even ate them in sandwiches. They hired coaches with liveried footmen and, with prostitutes on their arms, drove noisily and drunkenly around the streets of Melbourne, even going so far as to carry out parodies of wedding ceremonies.94 While their accuracy may remain arguable, these stories remain one of the most enduring images of the gold rush. More significantly, their popularity as a way of presenting an "upside down" world is important. Here were grotesque assaults on the sacred values of the community: success through merit, thrift and marriage. Alcoholic excess prominently featured in these glimpses of riot. It was presented in grotesque ways, as champagne poured down the throats of drunken diggers or into horse troughs and buckets.

It was the threat posed to the maintenance of traditional class structures that made the diggers' behaviour so memorable. Their nuggets had enabled them to cross the traditional barrier of wealth and power that separated the classes. Money in the hands of working people could make sudden and radical inroads into established class stratification.

<sup>93</sup> Twopeny R. op cit; 125.

<sup>94</sup> For example, see Serle G. The Golden Age. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1977; 29. de Castella H. Australian Squatters. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1987; 44. Clacy C. A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings of Australia in 1852-1853. Melbourne: Lansdowne, 1963; 23. Powell, op cit; 20. See also S T Gill's watercolour "Improvident Diggers", Fine Art Gallery Ballarat.

Consequently, their behaviour had to be painted as grotesque, ridiculous and, above all, illegitimate and anomalous. This was part of a broader issue. As Manning Clark described the gold rush period: "All was confusion. Respect for worth, talent and education had ... been subverted. Brawn and muscle, not birth, marked the aristocracy."95 Behind this lurked a more significant threat, that the world of the lucky diggers would overturn the world of order. It was a world where rough diggers flaunted their wealth and cried "it is our turn to be masters now."96 The lurid reports of the lucky diggers' grotesque alcoholic excesses emphasised the essential illegitimacy of working people with money and power. They emphasised the fact that, for all their new found riches, the diggers could not, without great difficulty, hope to cross the boundary between classes.

The view that alcoholic excess was a working class vice was accompanied by the view that it was also associated with their wider misery. For the critics of the working class it was associated with an increased susceptibility to cholera. One case report, written during the British epidemic of 1832, described the deceased person as "one of those reprobates whom cholera is said to know for its victims - an idle ... drunkard." <sup>97</sup> During the same year, a letter was published in a provincial newspaper which claimed that most of the cholera victims in Sunderland "were drink and smoke addicts." <sup>98</sup> R J Evans claimed that this was also a prevailing view in Germany and Austria during cholera epidemics. The disease was said to be "an affliction of the 'dangerous classes' caused by drunkenness and vice."

<sup>95</sup> Clark C M H. A History of Australia (Vol IV). Melbourne: Melb. Univ P, 1978; 45. See also Palmer V. The Legend of the Nineties. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1954; 38.

<sup>96</sup> Macintyre, op cit; 19.

<sup>97</sup> Morris, op cit; 137.

<sup>98</sup> Durey M. *The Return of the Plague*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1979; 195. Rosenberg, (op cit; 56) states that cholera was considered by the middle classes to take only the "vicious and the indolent amongst the poor" as its victims and that the "healthy and industrious" (ie, the sober) workingman need not fear cholera.

<sup>99</sup> Evans R J. Epidemics and Revolutions: Cholera in 19th Century Europe, 1988. *Past and Present*, 120: 123-146; 139.

There was and is no evidence that links between alcohol consumption and an increased risk of cholera were anything other than coincidental. In the case of cholera, the risks were heightened for those who lived in crowded and insanitary conditions. In the case of alcohol, the risks were heightened by lack of expectations and lack of opportunities. Often during the 19th century, these two factors would come together. Those who took the view that cholera was caused by alcohol consumption shifted the responsibility for the cholera epidemic away from the environmental causes, of poor sanitation, and back to the victims of the disease. There was an implicit argument that if the poor and the intemperate classes could mend their ways they would cease to run the risk of cholera. More generally, this kind of thinking allowed alcohol to be portrayed as a cause of all their problems and to justify the view that the victims brought these on themselves.

Another way of blaming drinkers for their misfortune was to associate alcohol with poverty. The tract writers and benevolent associations often chose to see the problem of alcoholism in the 19th century in terms of a simple model of "drunkenness leading to poverty." This model remained prominent in the ideology of charitable organisations and justified the idea that the poor and the destitute were responsible for their plight. For example in 1855, the New South Wales Chief Justice, addressing a meeting of the Destitute Childrens Society, observed that "the wretched passion for liquor" was a prime cause of the abandoning of children by their parents. In 1865, three Sydney charitable organisations identified links between drinking and poverty that were, they thought, "permeating the working class." In 1865, three Sydney charitable organisations identified links between drinking and poverty that were, they thought,

Alcohol was also important in the policing of charity. In her history of slum Sydney, Anne O'Brien records that if the workers of the various benevolent societies detected any evidence of alcohol in a recipient's house it might be sufficient to cancel

<sup>100</sup> Dickey, op cit; 44.

<sup>101</sup> Powell, op cit; 47.

their meagre allowances.<sup>102</sup> These concerns were carried into law. The pensions legislation introduced by the Australian Government in 1908 provided special eligibility criteria that addressed the applicant's use of alcohol. Applicants had to be "of good moral character" and "leading a sober and reputable life." Convictions for drunkenness carried with them the additional penalty of loss of one or more pension payments. In extreme cases, a guardian could be appointed if it was considered that the pensioner was "misspending or wasting" his or her benefit. Alan Jordan's account of this legislation shows that, in practice, alcoholism was the main ground upon which this action was taken. This was a policy that remained until 1973.<sup>103</sup>

Not all agreed with the model that alcohol promoted poverty. Some 19th century authors and experts chose to emphasise the environment in which so many of the intemperate poor lived. Farr suggested that the greatest risks for alcoholism were occupation and downturns in prosperity among the working population. Edwin Chadwick, the prominent public health reformer, said that:

when intemperance is mentioned as the cause of disease ...on carrying investigation a little further back, discomfort is said to be the immediate antecedent to the intemperance.<sup>105</sup>

Friedrich Engels, describing the lot of the urban poor in 19th century Manchester, saw drunkenness as the logical result of the prevailing economic conditions and the only thing that made work bearable. For Engels, alcohol was the only source of pleasure for the poor and to that extent "drunkenness has here ceased to be a vice, for which the vicious can be held responsible." 106

<sup>102</sup> O'Brien, op cit; chapter 3.

<sup>103</sup> Jordan A. Of Good Character and Deserving of a Pension: Moral and Racial Provisions in Australian Social Security. Sydney: Univ of NSW, Social Welfare Research Centre, 1989; 9.

<sup>104</sup> Farr, op cit; 282.

<sup>105</sup> Harrison, op cit; 355.

<sup>106</sup> Engels F. *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*. Moscow: Progress Pub, 1973: 142. Charles Dickens also took this view. In 1844, he referred to:

that monstrous doctrine which sets down as the 'consequences' of drunkenness fifty thousand miseries which are as all reflective persons know, and daily see the wretched causes of it. (cited in Harrison, op cit; 355.)

These views were not those of the popular imagination. Rather, the public was exposed to a stream of moral exhortations that emphasised the destruction of prosperous tradesmen and happy family life through drink. In the lithographs of the temperance tracts, the gateway to prosperity stood side by side with the gateway to ruin and the working man simply made his decision. Alcohol use, and the poverty and the disease known by the temperance reformers to be associated with it, was represented as the result of the free and unfettered choice of its victim. In this view, its problems were something that the poor brought on themselves while the wealthy carried no particular responsibility for them unless they chose to get involved in good works and attempts to reform the drunkards.

The views about alcohol that saw drunkenness as a working class vice, that saw it linked with poverty and illness, were expressed in legislative responses that brought together and confused notions of public order, morality and health. In particular, these laws focused on the use of alcohol among the working class. As early as a statute of James I, in 1606, the attack on the use of alcohol among the working class was explicit. 107 The potential criminalising of alcohol use that commenced with this Act has continued for more than three centuries in a variety of Police and criminal law legislation.

The laws of the Australian colonies in the 19th century suggest a continuing emphasis upon the public order aspect of alcohol consumption. The South Australian

moralists might rail against the beastly drinking habits of the majority of the population, but considering the conditions that they endured, it was a wonder that anyone of them was ever sober. (Kiddle M. Caroline Chisholm. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1950; 98.)

107 This was a statute to repress the "odious and loathsome sin of drunkenness" (4 James I, C5.) Its thrust was a mix of moral improvement and social control and the preamble read as follows:

Whereas the loathsome and odious Sin of Drunkenness is of late grown into common Use within this Realm, being the Root and Foundation of many other enormous Sins, as Bloodshed, Stabbing, Murder, Swearing, Fornication, Adultery, and such like, to the great Dishonour of God, and of our Nation, the Overthrow of many good Arts and manual Trades, the Disabling of divers Workmen, and the general Impoverishing of many good Subjects

This Act punished drunkenness and prevented people from staying too long in alehouses. It commenced a series of Acts that controlled drunkenness and the operation of alehouses and other places at which alcohol was sold. The moral component of James' Act may have been explicit - drunkenness was described as an odious sin - but its thrust seems to have been directed towards the working population given its concern about the overthrow of skills and trades.

In Australia, Similar sentiments in relation to working conditions were expressed by Margaret Kiddle in her biography of Caroline Chisholm. Regarding the excessive use of alcohol. She wrote:

Police Act, 1869 penalised public drunkenness. 108 It also permitted any person with three such convictions within twelve months to be declared an "idle and disorderly person", an offence that attracted a penalty of imprisonment. 109 The idle and disorderly provision existed in both Australia and Britain. It was part of the powers available to the magistrates in their efforts to maintain order and to police the boundaries of respectable society. Along with drunkards, beggars, wanderers, people without lawful means of support and the associates of reputed thieves and prostitutes were declared to be outside those boundaries and were all subject to being dealt with as "idle and disorderly." 110

The context in which this type of legislation operated should be considered. General police powers over the disorderly members of the working class had been in force since Tudor times (predating James' Act.) During the 19th century, the English *Vagrancy Act* 1822 provided the general model for the criminalising of working class excesses (particularly their alcohol induced excesses) and their assaults on the decency of the better classes. In an analysis of this Act, Roberts highlights the symbolic importance of the "idle and disorderly" provisions as a way of policing social boundaries and protecting the delicacies of the better off classes from the visual and verbal assaults and the antics of the lower classes. The extent to which these were taken to be a direct threat to the sensitivities of the better off was put by one better class spokesman who asked:

What! Are our wives and daughters, are our youth of both sexes - nay, are we ourselves, to be disgusted in our public walks by the dirty and obscene bestialities of wretches, who find a vulgar gratification in their commission, because they are a sort of tacit insult and offence offered to the better part of society?<sup>111</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Section 52.

<sup>109</sup> Section 62. This applied to "any habitual drunkard having thrice been convicted of drunkenness within the preceding twelve months." The penalty was to be declared "idle and disorderly" and to risk two months imprisonment with hard labour.

<sup>110</sup> Police Act 1865 (Victoria), section 35.

<sup>111</sup> Roberts M J D. Public and Private in Early Nineteenth Century London: The Vagrant Act of 1822 and its Enforcement, 1988. *Social History*, 13: 273-294; 286. This view was applied in a number of contexts where outrages, said to be of working class origin, were seen as intrusions into the world of the better off. See an extract from the *Lancet*, 1857, complaining about the moral contamination of prostitution (in Jackson P. *Maps of Meaning*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989; 165.)

The drunkenness components of police and vagrancy legislation took their place as part of the armoury of provisions available to preserve the respectable from moral outrage and chaos. Typically, they were cast as *public order* offences. The work of these drunkenness controls has largely been to select the poor and the homeless, those more likely to be visibly drunk in public places and without the supports to get themselves home. These provisions, virtually by definition, operated selectively even into the late 20th century. When a decriminalised form of protective custody replaced the public drunkenness offence in South Australia in 1984, the new system appeared also to have operated this way, being used specifically against the poor and the aboriginal community.<sup>112</sup>

Regulations over the supply of alcohol have also had differential effects on social classes. In Australia for much of the 20th century, differential trading hours existed between public bars and restaurants. Restaurants were more expensive and exclusive places than bars, catering to a wealthier and "better" class of patron. Their hours of opening were also more liberal. By comparison, the Australian working man had to compress his drinking into the relatively short period between leaving work and 6.00pm, the closing time for public bars, creating a phenomenon known locally as the "six o'clock swill." 113

The laws relating to alcohol also medicalised the issue and constructed the idea of the drunkard or the inebriate as a "sick" person, further distancing them from the community. In South Australia, the *Inebriates Act*, 1908 provided lengthy periods of detention for "inebriates", defined as persons who "habitually use alcoholic liquors or

<sup>112</sup> Prior to 1984, the *Police Offences Act*, 1953 (South Australia.) carried the offence of being drunk in a public place. Proceedings under this section, generally, were directed only against the very poorest sections of the community such as the homeless. After 1984, this position did not change greatly: a report of the South Australian Office of Crime Statistics (November, 1986) has shown that the implementation of the *Public Intoxication Act*, 1984 by police has demonstrated a clear race and class bias. (South Australia, Attorney General's Department. *Decriminalising Drunkenness in South Australia (research bulletin No 4)*. Adelaide: Government printer, 1986.)

<sup>113</sup> Room R. The Dialectic of Drinking in Australian Life, 1988. Australian Alcohol and Drug Review, 7: 413-437.

intoxicating or narcotic drugs to excess." Three convictions for drunkenness or an application made by a relative, justice of the peace or family member might be sufficient to detain a person under the Act. This Act presented a "disease model" through which the alcohol problem could be viewed and politicians supporting the proposal approached the idea with a scientific gusto appropriate to the new century. Persons with frequent convictions were sick: one politician said, "the drink curse had got hold of them", another that the cure must include hard work and turkish baths. 114 A third claimed that "excessive drunkenness was a disease which needed drastic treatment" and that drunkards must be "scientifically cured." 115

The medicalising of alcohol use was no less intrusive to the person than was the criminal law. Indeed, the period of detention was longer. It also allowed the classification of the "inebriate" as a sick person whose disease "quarantined" them from the rest of society. In a sense, the drunkard was like the leper, a moral rather than a physical outcast. Under the laws in colonial Queensland, this outcast status was made quite explicit. Along with lepers and venereal disease sufferers, inebriates were detained without any attempt at treatment, other than moral exhortations, in what amounted to penal conditions for prolonged periods of time. 116

The "sick" model emphasised the gulf between the "normal" drinker and the "inebriate." It provided a boundary between the normal and the marginalised. This model was not necessarily restricted to the poor but, since they were more often the focus of comment and the control of other alcohol policy (such as the criminal law), the "sick" model was more likely to be applied to them.

Another facet to the control of alcohol was the laws that applied to the places at which liquor could be sold. A control over licensed outlets has been a plank of British

<sup>114</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 29 October, 1907; 759.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> Ibid; 855.

<sup>116</sup> See generally Raymond Evans' Chapter *The Hidden Colonists: Deviance and Social Control in Colonial Queensland* in Roe J. *Social Policy in Australia: Some Perspectives 1901-1975*. Melbourne: Cassell, 1976.

alcohol policy since the enthusiastic measures of James I which, in addition to his other Acts, obliged alehouse keepers to be licensed in 1606.<sup>117</sup> This gave the local justices of the peace, as licensing authorities, policing powers and oversight over the premises so licensed. Christopher Hill has written that these powers were used to control the gathering of the rootless and disaffected elements, the potentially dangerous groups in Stuart society.<sup>118</sup> Legislation requiring the licensing of outlets and imposing discretionary controls on their number was one of the first initiatives of the British governor in South Australia in 1837.<sup>119</sup>

Licensed premises have always been seen as "dangerous" places. Generally, these dangers were presumed moral and social. They could in fact be dangers to health. For example, it was said that tuberculosis rates in Britain earlier this century were higher among people who lived and worked in public houses. Yet, despite the matter being raised, it did not become an issue for health authorities. It was as though the inhabitants of these places "deserved what they got." The moral and social dangers of licensed premises were taken more seriously however, and were addressed by a form of legislative quarantine. Licensed premises have been surrounded by a number of statutory provisions attempting to protect the community from the evils emanating from them. Largely, these provisions have been restrictions on public houses, frequented more by the working class than by other social groups, places described in the New South Wales Parliament as "poor mens' clubs." They contrasted strongly with the much reduced level of control on the other outlets for alcohol sales such as the "gentlemens' clubs."

Licensing has been the most central and effective control over the public houses; it monitors and keeps a surveillance on the day to day operation of the premises. It is a

<sup>117</sup> Statutes at Large, James I, C4 (1606). An Act to restrain the Utterance of Beer and Ale to Alehouse-keepers and Tipplers not licensed.

<sup>118</sup> Hill, op cit; 49.

<sup>119</sup> The licensing of suppliers of alcohol was the fourth Act passed in South Australia, after Acts setting up the courts and juries and regulating employment. *Licensing Act*, No 4 of 1837.

<sup>120 &</sup>quot;Mass Observation". The Pub and the People. London: Cresset, 1987; 53-54.

<sup>121</sup> Powell, op cit; 38.

method of control that has been argued to heighten the idea that the public house was a "dangerous" and immoral place. 122 There were other controls in addition to licensing. The *Police Acts* created special offences for people whose behaviour was disturbing to the "good order" of a public house. 123 The role of licensed premises as a catalyst for wider social change and uproar than simple disorderly behaviour was addressed in New South Wales in 1849. Here, licensed premises were forbidden places for the meetings of societies whose initiation process required "any religious, or other solemn mystery, rite or ceremony" or where the meeting required the "display of ... any arms, flags, colours, symbols, decorations, or emblems." 124

As places of potential immorality and ruin for prosperous workers and tradesmen, licensed premises were also surrounded by a web of laws that sought to preserve decency and order and to protect the honest patron. Thus, publicans were prohibited from bartering for goods or taking pledges and, in South Australia, along with the Chinese, were not permitted to hold a gold buyers licence. Generally, wages could not be paid in licensed premises. "Decent and separate" public conveniences were to be required in order to prevent nuisances and offences against decency. Premises that were situated too close to a school, church or hospital risked being denied a licence if they could cause "inconvenience or annoyance" to those places. The morality of barmaids was ensured by requiring that they be registered and if convicted of indictable offences or shown to be of "bad fame or character" risked losing their registration; they were also prohibited from working in the evenings. Finally, trading hours were restricted to take account of Sunday, Good Friday and Christmas. While the controls that regulated the conduct of licensed premises differed between jurisdictions, they emphasised the potential danger of these

<sup>122 &</sup>quot;Mass Observation", op cit: 232.

<sup>123</sup> Police Act, 1869 (South Australia); section 54.

<sup>124</sup> Licensed Publicans Act 1849 (New South Wales); section L.

<sup>125</sup> Licensing Acts, 1837 and 1932 (South Australia). Gold Buyers Act, 1916 (South Australia) section 15.

places as a source of chaos and uproar, threatening to orderly values. The laws aimed to keep this danger in check.

Why was the middle class concern about alcohol consumption so significant? Why did sobriety become a value promoted by the respectable classes? Centrally, the association of social problems with alcohol provided a plausible way of blaming the poor for their own plight and a convenient basis from which to justify the continuing existence of poverty and inequality in Victorian times.

Responding to this process of blame and personal responsibility and building on its logic, there were reforming movements that sought to direct the working man down the path of respectable frugality. The temperance movement was characteristically the product of the 19th century. It has been suggested that sobriety became valued at this time because it helped to ensure a regular and reliable work force. Membership of the temperance organisations support this view. There was a significant representation from employers such as textile manufacturers and printers who had an understandable interest in a sober labour force. 126 More particularly, it has been suggested that the function of the temperance movement in Britain was not to rescue the working man from poverty and ill health. There was plenty of poverty and ill health not caused by alcohol that the temperance reformers seemed happy to ignore. As one socialist wrote "those most anxious to protect the working man from the drink seller were precisely those that wanted to preserve him against housing reform and factory legislation."127 What the temperance reformers sought was a sober and industrious work force that knew its place, was able to do its job and accepted cheerfully the small rewards of its labour. Such an ordered view of the world is the antithesis of the antipodean image of riotous diggers flaunting their wealth in Melbourne streets. The temperance ideal of reforming the vicious labouring poor into models of respectability was potentially a powerful and effective model of social

<sup>126</sup> Harrison, op cit; 152 and 221.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid; 399. However, not all temperance reformers were blind to the inequalities of the times. See the work of the American temperance advocate Frances Willard, (Gusfield, op cit; 92.)

control over the working class. It can be argued to be benign, "a non-violent alternative" to the other, punitive, methods of social control. 128

The issue of alcohol policy throws light on the issue of social boundaries and the things that separate groups. Firstly, views about alcohol were views about class and therefore, they provided a way of making a classification - intemperance on the one hand and sobriety on the other. The intemperate classes were the rank outsiders in Victorian society, of all groups they were the least likely to conform to the regimentation of the loom and the steam engine. In the strongest sense of the term they were idle and disorderly. Whether they were immoral or diseased may have been a matter for debate; in either case, the law provided a powerful remedy to isolate and contain them as effectively as if they were lepers or otherwise threatening to the public health. For those who believed in an orderly society and, indeed, had a vested interest in maintaining it, the public house was a dangerous place. It was the source of intemperance and the haunt of the intemperate. It was a place where uproar and chaos stood to threaten the values of the middle. This threat was met by the web of laws that controlled and surveyed the activities of these places.

More generally, the work of the temperance movements, together with the legislative responses to alcohol, were strategies that helped to strengthen the ideology of the prosperous, industrious classes. It was a ritual of solidarity that identified and protected the worthwhile social group from those whose behaviour stood to threaten its mores. Dominant ideas and public policy about alcohol in the 19th and 20th centuries both justified and sustained the barriers between social groups. They also provided a ready explanation for the health and economic problems of the poor that focused, not on

<sup>128</sup> See for example, Harrison, op cit; 91.

the environment in which people were obliged to live but, on the assumed personal failings of the individuals themselves. 129

### 7 CONCLUSION

The health status of the vast mass of the poor remained an issue of public health concern for both Britain and Australia throughout the 19th century and the public health laws of the period were not particularly successful in improving the health of the population overall.<sup>130</sup> What was significant however, and is central to the argument presented in this thesis, is the way that the "lower class", so much of the population in both countries, were categorised and marked by a process of public health legislation and discourse, which saw it as a race apart, bringing its problems on itself and threatening other classes.

The articulation of the working class threat was expressed significantly in the language of public health. Its solution was also seen to lie partly in the public health process. The *Health Acts* sought to address not merely the sanitary needs but also the moral improvement and the civilising of the "dangerous" classes. The process of public health was part of the wider process of social legislation and control that was about

<sup>129</sup> The late nineteenth century abounded with moralistic tales of reformed drunkards, see Gusfield, op cit; 82. Rather than criminalising and punishing, the temperance movement, through example setting, made the individual focus inwardly and examine his own guilt and its meetings regularly featured reformed workingmen who harangued crowds with details of their past evils. Implicit in such admissions of guilt is an acceptance both of the temperance values and also of a regime where the individual regulates their own behaviour in accordance with those values. Foucault argued that this is the most powerful form of social control. See the "Birth of the Asylum" and "Panopticism", in Rabinow P ed. *The Foucault Reader*. Harmondsworth: Penguin 1984.

<sup>130</sup> The very slow rate of improvement in the health of most Britons during this period can be illustrated by central markers of public health such as infant mortality rates which remained little improved. In 1900 (52 years after the first *Health Act*) they were no better than they had been 6 decades previously. (Walvin, op cit; 26.) The poor health of the working class was most strikingly publicised by the extremely high medical rejection rates of Boer War volunteers. See the report of The Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, (Parliamentary Papers, 25; cd2175 1904) set up to enquire into the "allegations concerning the deterioration of certain classes of the population." See also Davis A and George J. *States of Health: Health and Illness in Australia*. Sydney: Harper and Roe, 1988; 35-46.

creating a respectable and orderly working class and restraining the threats of riot and disorder.

The social boundaries between classes were also marked and strengthened through the public health process, in the sense that health and its related contexts were used to emphasise and justify the separation of the classes and to police the boundaries between them. This was expressed in the view that the burden of ill health, depravity intemperance, disorder and riot was the *natural* and fixed identifier of the lower classes. The unreformed poor were the objects of control. They were believed dirty, and diseased, they smelt and were intemperate. They were potentially dangerous to their betters and, in their drunken revelry, grotesque and anomalous. Both the public health and the alcohol regulations policed and contained these threats.

# CHAPTER 5 PUBLIC HEALTH AND STRANGERS: SETTING BOUNDARIES II

#### 1 INTRODUCTION: EGYPTIANS AS STRANGERS

The presence of the "stranger", the outsider, the person from beyond the boundaries of the community has often been responded to by legislative control and adverse social comment. These controls applied both at point of entry (for example as immigration restrictions) and also on everyday activities. The *idea* of the stranger - the things that identified persons as strangers - traditionally focused on racial and cultural differences. These differences are important; the more heightened the differences, the more marked the stranger becomes. The history of Australian immigration policy illustrates this. In descending order, the desirable immigrants were Britons, Nordics, Eastern and Southern Europeans and then Asians. Physical differences were a marker of outside status. Strangers were marginalised individuals; like the dangerous poor, they were separated by a social gulf from other groups. Often, this problem of strangers has been expressed in a health context.

This chapter considers the public health significance of the way that communities in Britain, Australia and the United States responded to strangers, exploring the idea that strangers as outsiders were threatening. It examines the way in which ideas about health and disease gave substance to the idea of threat; were used to justify and maintain the outside or marginal status of strangers; and were seen as ways of protecting the community from the believed threat from the outside, firstly by articulating that threat as a health threat and then by surrounding it with public health controls.

Public health was one response in a wider context that regulated and devalued strangers. The following two cases provide examples of the way in which this process occurred. Both involve "Egyptians" and, through this, illustrate the depth of antipathy towards people taken to be strangers and the public health dimensions of that antipathy. In 1530, Henry VIII passed legislation directed at a group of "outlandish People, calling

themselves Egyptians." Where these people came from is unclear. The Act asserted that many of them had come into England and travelled through the Shires in a "great company", exercising no skills or property, other than the skill of using "great, subtle and crafty means to deceive the people." This meant fortune telling, robbery and other unspecified heinous felonies. The intended effect of this Act was to banish them from the realm. In 1554, the Act was strengthened. Mary Tudor decreed that any Egyptian not complying with the Act could be hanged.

These were the first of over twenty statutes designed to deal with that group of itinerants known initially as "Egyptians" but more commonly as Gypsies. The original arrivals may have come from the Middle East, (at that time known as "little Egypt") or from further afield. In reality they were itinerants and wanderers, not necessarily foreigners, holding no fixed employment.<sup>2</sup> Their way of life made them the archetypical strangers in English society. The restrictive provisions that were the response to their presence were focused on them as strangers. In various ways these provisions dealt with their ejectment, their containment and their control.

Gypsies have always lived on the margins of the settled community, a position emphasised by popular myths. These included stories that they kidnapped children, practised cannibalism and claimed to exercise mediating powers such as fortune telling. These beliefs prompted and shaped the legal controls that surrounded them.<sup>3</sup> It was also claimed by their critics that they contributed "nothing to the economy of the nation, while at the same time living in open defiance of all education and sanitary laws."<sup>4</sup>

Gypsies were believed to offend against all ideas of order including conventional standards of hygiene. It was a general view that they were dirty.<sup>5</sup> They were said to live

<sup>1</sup> Egyptians Act 1530 (22 Henry VIII, C10.) Egyptians Act 1554 (1 & 2 Philip and Mary, C4.)

<sup>2</sup> Okely J. The Traveller Gypsies. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ P, 1983; chapter 1.

<sup>3</sup> Kenrick D and Puxton G. *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*. London: Chatto Heinemann, 1972; 33. Okley, op cit; 23. This view has been incorporated into much adult and children's fiction. See as one example, Herge (Georges Remi) *The Adventures of Tintin: The Castafiore Emerald* Tournai: Casterman, 1963

<sup>4</sup> Mayall D. Gypsy-travellers in Nineteenth-century Society. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ P, 1988; 22.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid; 22.

together like so many dogs, regardless of "sex, age or decency." They were claimed to be ragged and dirty and to spread infectious disease. The metaphors of plague and leprosy were used to describe them and public health formed a significant part of these controls aimed at them.<sup>6</sup> The complaints about Gypsies were also underpinned by a more general idea, of their being a degenerate race, genetically different to other Europeans and given to wanderlust - a picture starkly in contrast with the sedentary and permanently employed factory labourers of the 19th Century.<sup>7</sup> Gypsies were said to be "more like beasts than men."<sup>8</sup>

The Gypsies were strangers in the communities through which they travelled. They were believed dangerous to those communities because their way of life was so obviously different. The danger was expressed by their marginal status and emphasised by the boundaries that separated Gypsy from non-Gypsy. There was their distinctive and itinerant way of life and their exercise of the mysterious otherworldly powers implicit in fortune telling. The ideas of cannibalism, child stealing, dirt, disease, immorality and chaos further separated them from the community and further emphasised this sense of danger.

A range of legislative responses, including public health responses, put in place during the 19th century focused on Gypsies. They policed the boundary between Gypsy and non-Gypsy, containing and controlling the Gypsy community. Here was an example of public health control and views about disease and hygiene being one way in which the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Mayall, op cit; 135, 147, 148. The legislation aimed explicitly against the Gypsies was repealed in 1783 (*Egyptians Act*, 1783, Geo III, C83.) However, the Gypsy communities in Britain became the objects of special legislative controls dealing with itinerant lifestyles. These included the *Vagrancy Act* 1824. More specific public health legislation was also put in place with special application to the Gypsy communities. These enactments sat within a field of social legislation that imposed particular controls on Gypsies. (Mayall, op cit; appendix 1.) See also Kenrick and Puxton, op cit; 35.

<sup>7</sup> Mayall, op cit; 76.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid; 80.

<sup>9</sup> The following has been said about one enactment "The *Public Health Act* 1936 makes it an offence to be in a tent or van 'which is in such a state or so overcrowded as to be prejudicial to the health of the inmates.' As Gypsies almost always live in conditions which, in terms of house dwellers, would be considered to be overcrowded, it means the law can be used against them should a bloody-minded local authority want to harass them or take their children from them." (Sanford J. *Gypsies*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1973; 211.) For other public health legislation applicable to Gypsies see *Public Health (Fruit Pickers Lodgings) Act*, 1883 (45 & 46 Victoria, C23.) *Public Health Act*, 1891 (54 & 55 Victoria, C76.)

marginal status of a group of strangers who had come into a community could be expressed and their activities regulated.

"Egyptians" or Gypsies were a marginal group in English society. The second case that considers the marginalising of a group of strangers examines the response by Australian soldiers to strangers - Egyptians in Egypt at the beginning of this century. It also demonstrates how public health concerns were prominent in constructing the general idea that these strangers were dangerous.

Since the beginning of European settlement, Australian history has in many respects been a history of arriving and settling, a history that largely looked inwards and saw much of the rest of the world as potentially threatening. The outbreak of World War I in August 1914 saw, for the first time, a concerted exodus of Australians as enlistees in the *First AIF* (the Australian forces raised in 1914 in aid of the Imperial war effort.) Their initial destination was Egypt, chosen as a training point for the soldiers in preparation for Gallipoli and the Western Front. The history of this Egyptian prelude, because it was not overshadowed by carnage and conflict on a grand scale, provides interesting insights into the attitudes and beliefs of Australians as visitors among strangers. These were expressed in their views about the Egyptian community and also of the environment in which they temporarily lived.

Firstly, there was the simple physical comparison between the soldiers and the Egyptians. The Australian press wrote enthusiastically of the soldiers' magnificent physique "the like of which had never been seen", attributes that were apparently both "feared and admired" by the Egyptians. Their hosts, the native inhabitants of Cairo, were seen by the visitors as starkly different. They were pictured as dirty, diseased and treacherous. Their humanity was overwhelmed by this image. One soldier author described them as "animated lumps of muck." The Egyptians were degraded into objects

<sup>10</sup> Brugger S. Australians and Egypt. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1980; 22.

<sup>11</sup> Gerster R. Big Noting: The Heroic Theme in Australian War Writing. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1987; 51.

of fun. They became the victims of the soldiers' larrikin excesses which sometimes erupted into violence and the destruction of local property.

Underpinning many of the soldiers' views about the Egyptians and also the official AIF view, which advocated a minimum of contact with the native population, was a focus on health and hygiene. This emphasised the threat that the native population posed to the health of the soldiers. Dirt and smell played a prominent part in this focus, a fact emphasised by the poor sanitation, squalor, poverty and smell of much of Cairo.12 A soldier of the 14th Battalion wrote of the slums surrounding the AIF camp at Heliopolis "It was our first sight of Egypt and the smells of the slum quarters were sufficient to make dinner a very light meal."13 It was also said that the Egyptians were "very dirty ... and could not be trained otherwise."14 Both the soldiers' narratives and the official AIF guide, What to Know in Egypt, (published in Cairo) were liberally sprinkled with assertions about shortcomings in Egyptian hygiene and its associated smells, especially when made in the context of food vendors. These focused on the contamination of Australian bodies through the consumption of food whose preparation had brought it physically into contact with the locals.15 The author of What to Know was CEW Bean, the official war historian. Its text was a mixture of local history and things to avoid, some of the latter evidenced by gruesome descriptions of Egyptian food preparation techniques. For example, Bean claimed that:

To clean strawberries a seller will put them into his mouth, lick them all round, and lay them on green leaves. With larger fruit and vegetables, if water does not happen to be handy, he will not hesitate to use a far filthier method. 16

<sup>12</sup> Brugger, op cit; 33, 34.

<sup>13</sup> Grant I. Jacka VC. Sydney: Macmillan, 1989; 15.

<sup>14</sup> Brugger, op cit; 27.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid: 37.

<sup>16</sup> Bean C E W. What to Know in Egypt: A Guide For Australian Soldiers. Cairo: Societe Orientale de Publicite, 1915; 11. This was a common complaint; a related view was that native street vendors licked fruit to give it an extra shine (Brugger, op cit; 37, 38.)

Bean continued this theme of contamination and pollution by referring to the local alcohol which apart from being "practically pure poison" was, he said, sometimes coloured "in ways too disgusting to be described."<sup>17</sup>

The opportunities for prostitutes resulting from the arrival of the Australians, and the accompanying spread of venereal disease, was an issue that particularly concerned the AIF commanders and was the subject of stern advice from Bean. Cairo, he warned, was a "hotbed" of venereal disease. He even suggested that syphilis must surely be the "Egyptian disease", claiming that in the skulls of the mummies there was evidence of a disease "which is almost certainly syphilis." Native women were to be avoided on all grounds "because if they are respectable they will get into trouble, and if they are not venereal disease will probably be contracted. 19 Bean's exhortations were not spectacularly successful. Outbreaks of venereal disease did occur among the soldiers, leading to their public and shameful repatriation to Australia, while civil disturbances forced stringent curfews in the military camps. Sometimes it was said that the "old lags" in the AIF provided the corrupting environment but essentially, it was the place itself. Vice and depravity were said to be the natural associates of the local population and references were commonly made by the soldiers to the "loose life" and "lasciviousness" of Cairo. 22

To the Australians, the Egyptian inhabitants of Cairo were at best an inconsequential backdrop against which their natural superiority might better be seen. However, with every "gyppo" stranger lurked a threat - they were out to pick the Australian pockets, to assault them with smells or infect them with enteric or venereal

<sup>17</sup> Ibid; 13.

<sup>18</sup> Bean, op cit; 14. Fifteen years earlier, in the New South Wales Parliament, leprosy was also said to have been an Egyptian disease, in this case evidenced by biblical references. (Parliamentary Debates on the Leprosy Bill, New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 16 October, 1890; 4557.)

<sup>19</sup> Ibid; 16.

<sup>20</sup> Bean C E W. Gallipoli Correspondent: The Frontline Diary of C E W Bean. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983; 37.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid: 38.

<sup>22</sup> Brugger, op cit; 40.

disease. The boundaries between the Australian soldiers as visitors and the "native population" as strangers were very clearly drawn, placing a particular emphasis on dirt and disease and the bodily contaminations that would result from crossing those boundaries.

#### 2 STRANGERS AS THREATENING

This part of the Chapter examines responses to strangers that might easily be dismissed as "just racism" or "xenophobia." It examines the historical disabilities on strangers, prompted by the idea that they were dangerous. It argues that the response to strangers has been one of setting and protecting boundaries and reinforcing community values, which emphasises the positioning of strangers as outsiders and as anomalies within the community. Part 3 of this Chapter applies a public health focus to this general notion.

The idea of strangers as outsiders to the communities into which they come has been an issue in folk memory as well as in legislative sanction. This is usually seen as a power for harm. It has also been seen as a power for good (as in masked strangers such as the *Lone Ranger*, who arrive among troubled communities and set things to right.)<sup>23</sup> Sometimes the status of the stranger is ambivalent, emphasising both a power for harm and good (as in the Wandering Jew). All these views emphasise the power and the potential "danger" of the stranger as outsider and anomaly. Typically, the response to the stranger has been the imposition of legal disabilities and controls imposed by the communities into which they come. These sought to limit and contain the power and uncertainty of the stranger's ambiguous status.

Statutory disabilities applying to strangers, most obviously defined at law as "aliens", were ancient and substantial. These included restrictions on land tenure, on inheritance, on occupations and restrictions on their importing goods. The Index to the

<sup>23</sup> Alexander J C and Seidman S. Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates. Cambridge Univ P. 1990; 20.

British Statutes at Large list 20 Acts relating to aliens covering the 400 years between the reigns of Edward II and George III.<sup>24</sup> The logic of these restrictions turned on an idea of the "alien" that was articulated by the courts. One leading case involved Robert Calvin, a prominent Scottish landowner whose claim to an English estate was defeated on the basis of his being an alien.<sup>25</sup> This alien status, and its accompanying disabilities, resulted from the finding that Calvin owed no allegiance to James I as King of England. The owing of allegiance was the general test. The alien was one who was "born out of the leigeance of our sovereign Lord the King."<sup>26</sup> In *Calvin's case*, the notion of allegiance was expressed as the bonds that kept the community together and defined by the courts as follows:

As the ligatures or strings do knit together the joints of all the parts of the body, so doth leigeance join together the Sovereign and all his subjects.

By this argument, the community was a collective entity with allegiance as its common thread. The alien fell outside this collective entity. Civil restrictions (for example owning land) accompanied this alien status. They were devices that classified the alien as being outside the group. They imposed a range of restrictive provisions that maintained the completeness of this classification and established rules of separateness that distanced the alien from the English community. This idea, explicit in earlier times, of distancing through the imposition of civil restrictions recurs today; for example in the frequent calls for restrictions on the ownership of land in Australia by foreigners.

These traditional English controls on strangers were a part of the legal system imposed in its virtual entirety on the European settlements in Australia, where the relatively isolated and undefended coastal settlements emphasised the sense of vulnerability felt by many colonists and heightened the apprehension felt towards strangers. The first visitors, the 2 ships of the French explorer La Perouse, only days after the arrival of the First Fleet, were met with initial alarm and trepidation.<sup>27</sup> For the White

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Index to the *Statutes at Large* London: Eyre and Strahan.

<sup>25</sup> Calvin's case (1608) 7 Co Rep. 1.

<sup>26</sup> This view was also expressed in Doe d Thomas v Aclam (1824) 2 Barn & Cres. 799.

<sup>27</sup> Tench W. Sydney's First Four Years. Sydney: Library of Australian History, 1961; 34.

settlers, these were the first of many strangers against whom their anxieties and then controls were directed. The history of the province of South Australia was one case in point.

Established in December 1836, South Australia was to be a settlement of free colonists organised along the road of orderly prosperity. It was to be guided by wealthy capitalists harnessing the work of the reliable labouring classes. This was not a penal settlement: the criminal classes were not welcome in South Australia and it was from this class that one of the infant settlement's most memorable threats came. Initially, it came from escaped convicts from New South Wales known to be lurking around Encounter Bay and the Adelaide Hills. In 1838, Governor Gawler speculated that some hundreds of runaway convicts - in his view, mostly Catholics - were living in the forests of the Adelaide Hills, posing an imminent danger to the settlement and aided and abetted by the local Catholic "peasantry." 28

Beyond a few armed robberies and assaults, for which the offenders were caught and hanged, the threat never materialised.<sup>29</sup> Yet the fear of the convict onslaught continued to be a prominent feature in South Australian history. The creation of the penal settlement at the Swan River in the 1850s led to a renewed awareness of the threat to its nearest neighbour South Australia from escaped convicts and released ex-convicts.<sup>30</sup> Sightings of suspicious characters were reported. In 1857, a member of Parliament said that he had seen a gang of 10 men who he was sure were convicts: "their appearance was that of men who had not got their living honestly for years."<sup>31</sup> Another member expressed concern about the "bands of ruffians" that would be landed on the solitary parts of the South Australian coast.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Pike D. A Paradise of Dissent. Melbourne: Melb Univ. P, 1957; 287.

<sup>29</sup> Bull J W. Early Experiences of Life in South Australia. Adelaide: E S Wigg, 1884; 163.

<sup>30</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 14 May, 1857; 108.

<sup>31</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 7 August, 1857; 473.

<sup>32</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 9 June, 1857; 226. The arrival of a group of Fenian transportees in Western Australia in 1868 caused particular concern to the Adelaide *Observer*. The paper described these convicts in quite brutal and dehumanised terms as "wild beasts"; the whole cargo of convicts was said to be "incurably contaminated" by the hardened convicts that comprised a part of it. This account

These concerns prompted a legislative response directed at this particular group of strangers. The *Convicts Prevention Act*, 1857 imposed requirements on masters of vessels to disclose the presence of any suspect person, whether escaped or on conditional release.<sup>33</sup> This was a form of civil quarantine not unlike its public health equivalents operating at the time.

1857 was a mixed year for immigrants to South Australia. Both restrictions and encouragements on immigration were set in place by the Colonial Parliament. The *Chinese Restriction Act* was intended to prevent the landing of prospective Chinese gold seekers in Robe on their way to the Victorian diggings. Some strangers, the convict classes and the Chinese, were to be kept away from South Australian shores. Yet, at the same time, discussions were occurring on the "right type" of immigrant for South Australia. It was the "humble but industrious small capitalists" and that "most healthy class of immigrants", the agricultural labourers, who were to be encouraged. While members of Parliament might disagree on the relative numbers of English, Irish and Scots to be encouraged as arrivals, it was clear that what was wanted was new arrivals who were free, prosperous and British. These were people like themselves. Groups such as the convicts or the Chinese would always be seen as outsiders and were not wanted.<sup>34</sup>

The South Australian settlers' fears of strangers continued through the 19th century. New restrictions on Chinese immigration were debated in 1881, a time of renewed concern throughout the Colonies about the Chinese presence in Australia.<sup>35</sup> In that same decade, police resources were devoted to preventing imagined gangs of armed burglars, said to be from Melbourne and Sydney, intent on robbing Adelaide homes deserted during the Oakbank racing carnival.<sup>36</sup> The fear of strangers also took on a moral

was refuted by the ship's Captain. More significantly, it was a graphic and public representation of the barbarous and savage threat that was believed to lie beyond South Australia's boundaries. (cited in Amos K. *The Fenians in Australia*. Sydney: Univ of NSW P, 1988; 100.)

<sup>33</sup> Section 2. (Also known as the Convicted Felons Act, 1857.)

<sup>34</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 26 May, 1857; 145 and 5 June, 1857; 214.

<sup>35</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 19 July, 1881; 290.

<sup>36</sup> Clyne R. Colonial Blue. Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1987; 7 and 194, and Bull, op cit; 58. In order to prevent the influx of ex-convicts from the Eastern States, a police detective was stationed at Bordertown to

dimension when, in 1884, the Adelaide *Advertiser* described the "fearful injury" occasioned to young men "especially clerks" from the young, exquisitely dressed and seductive barmaids in some Adelaide hotels. "These girls" the paper warned, "are generally of Melbourne or Sydney extraction."<sup>37</sup>

Strangers were persons outside the group. They were the subject of legal disabilities and restrictions. They were also the object of fear and scorn. The public health dimension of this process was considerable. Public health was one way of expressing the threat and articulating the threatening status of the person outside of the group. This Chapter now considers some prominent contexts in which strangers were associated with poor health and disease.

## 3 STRANGERS AND THEIR PUBLIC HEALTH THREATS

People seeking explanations for the causes of disease and epidemics often focused on strangers. While they have been common culprits, they have not been the only culprits. There have been a variety of opinions for the cause of epidemics and models of explanation were fitted into the views and dominant anxieties of the times. For example, it was only the relatively recent writing of the 19th and 20th centuries that linked the origins of the Medieval and Early Modern European Plague outbreaks with the East and China in particular. Norris suggests that this, later, explanation for its origins was prompted by the way the Chinese were seen at the time of writing and was "a combination of ethnic prejudice, ... [and] a sense of Western technology and cultural superiority." For

enforce the provisions of the *Convicts Prevention Act*. This has obvious parallels with the process of medical quarantine.

<sup>37</sup> Pearl C. Wild Men of Sydney. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1977; 13. The traffic in immorality may not have all been one way! Lord Robert Cecil's *Goldfield Diary* described a notorious and finely dressed, Adelaide prostitute (named Livinia) as being particularly successful at relieving honest diggers of their earnings. (quoted in Kiddle M L. Caroline Chisholm. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1950; 204.)

<sup>38</sup> Norris J. East or West? The Geographic Origin of the Black Death, 1977. Bull Hist Med; 51: 1-24; 5.

example, Daniel Defoe, who was writing in the 18th century, seemed to give no particular significance to the possible outside origins of the plague of 1665. In a passing reference he commented that the plague had come from Holland. His main concern was to look inward and focus on the responsibility of people who were marginalised socially because they were poor and also to consider whether the epidemic was a divine punishment.

Defoe wrote "it mattered not from whence it came."39

However, the association of strangers with disease and the threat of disease has many long standing and developed themes that can be traced for millennia. These stories had their greatest cogency where the strangers were enemies and the threat to the public health was one aspect of the conflict. The poisoned well stories were prominent examples. They can be traced back to Classical Greece.<sup>40</sup> This context has also been prominent in the 20th century. In both World Wars, venereal disease has been said to have been deliberately spread among troops by prostitutes in league with the enemy.<sup>41</sup>

Even without the overt characterisation of strangers as enemies, blame for disease was directed to strangers living as part of marginal groups within communities. The blaming of the Jewish communities for the spread of the Plague in 14th century Europe was a prominent example of this. This process can also be identified in both the 19th and 20th centuries. The Jews as refugees over this period in both England and Australia are one example, the Chinese communities in 19th century Australia are another. A relatively

See also the link between bolshevism and disease, made in Australia in 1920 by Benjamin Hoare who likened the "plague of Bolshevism" with the destruction of the Spanish influenza. (Hoare B. *The Two Plagues: Influenza and Bolshevism.* Melbourne: Progressive and Economic Association, 1920.)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Defoe D. *A Journal of the Plague Year*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986; 23 (first pub 1722.) Defoe was interested in other things - John Bender suggests that a central interest was his exploration of the character of the people who lived through the plague, without being morally transformed by the process. Bender J. *Imagining the Penitentiary*. Chicago: Univ of Chicago; 1987; 73,74.

<sup>40</sup> The Athenian plague described by Thucydides, was said to have been caused by their Peloponnesian foes poisoning the City's wells. (Major R H. Classic Descriptions of Disease. Springfield: Charles Thomas, 1932; 74.)

<sup>41</sup> This will be considered below. Katherine Porter's novel *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*, inspired by her contracting influenza during the 1918 epidemic in the United States, incorporated the idea of the threatening stranger as a popular explanation for the epidemic, suggesting that the disease first reached America when a camouflaged German ship entered Boston harbour and released "a strange, thick, greasy-looking cloud" that spread over the town. (Porter K A. *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1939; 206.) In another view, the threat of the disease and the threat of the enemy became synonymous. This is discussed in Forster's analysis of US involvement in the typhus epidemic in Poland (1919). For the American Red Cross, the parallel between typhus and the Bolshevik Red Army was significant. Poland became "a logical place to stop the spread of Communism' as well as the typhus bearing lice of Eastern Europe." (Foster G M. Typhus Disaster in the Wake of War, 1981. *Bull Hist Med*, 55: 221-232; 223.)

recent illustration of this process occurred in 1962, when the Pakistani community in the Northern English city of Bradford was blamed by the local press for introducing smallpox. In all these examples, fear of disease was part of a more general campaign against the strangers. In the Bradford case, Pakistani involvement in the outbreak was emphasised by a newspaper that was a prominent supporter of proposals to restrict Asian immigration.<sup>42</sup>

Whether the stranger was an arrival from beyond the seas or a member of a social outgroup within the community, the fear of the outsider has been a close companion of the history of health and disease. This fear has been emphasised in the legislative and administrative responses to disease and also in immigration policy. Some examples of this fear, emphasised in the development and administration of public health controls, will be considered here. For example, in justifying the provisions of new vaccination legislation in South Australia, outsiders, in this case said to be the "poor fanatical races - the Saracens and the Mohammedans" - were blamed for spreading smallpox.<sup>43</sup> Pure Food legislation passed in Victoria in 1905 was also said to be necessary in part to discourage the activities of adulterators and other poisoners, prominent among whom were said to be "weazened foreign chemists wearing gold eye glasses and working until midnight, to stew out these poisonous concoctions."<sup>44</sup> The administration of public health controls also focused on the sanitary deficiencies of new arrivals. The medical officer involved in the quarantine of the *Golden Empire*, arriving at Port Phillip in 1864, made a particular reference to the "dirty passengers" who could not "be got out of their berths or induced to

<sup>42</sup> The reports in a number of national and regional papers, including the *Yorkshire Post*, *People* and the *Sunday Express* and *Daily Express*, then suggested that the City's Pakistanis were to blame for the outbreak, that their vaccination certificates were forged and that the disease spread because the community lived in squalor. Many of these assertions were simply speculations. Butterworth's account of the newspaper coverage suggests that their language and content were more designed to amplify racial tensions and to polarise the community than to report the course of the outbreak. The health issues associated with the Bradford epidemic became generalised statements about the threats the Pakistani community posed to the country, which in turn, was used to support and justify the case for more restrictive immigration controls. (Butterworth E. The 1962 Smallpox Outbreak and the British Press, 1966. *Race*, 7: 347-364.) See also, Declercq E and Lacroix R. The Immigrant Midwives of Lawrence, 1985. *Bull Hist Med*, 59: 232-246.

<sup>43</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 7 August, 1872; 1830.

<sup>44</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 16 November, 1905; 2749.

clean them."<sup>45</sup> Here was a comment about a group of passengers whose privations as immigrants were added to by the fear of disease and the disappointment of further detention on board within sight of their destination. As strangers and new arrivals, their dirtiness and lassitude was described as though it was an aspect of their natural state. It could more understandably be explained by their difficulties rather than some personal failing.

The 40 years between the 1880s and the 1920s was a period of momentous migration. It brought with it the unsubstantiated, though powerful, fear particularly in the United States, that "degenerate" migrant races were breeding at a faster rate than the "respectable" established groups. Both in the United States and Australia, health issues were central justifiers for the imposition of controls on the boundary - namely immigration restrictions. These restrictions were broadly grounded in health and included ideas about the physical worth of prospective immigrants. The United States controls illustrated a concern for measuring physical worth. The way of measuring the "degeneracy" of prospective new arrivals was the application of culturally selective "intelligence tests."

Not suprisingly, the tests proved the point. However, a more realistic view of the matter, which might appear to lend itself to the degeneracy claim, was that these Southern and Eastern European immigrants were poor, largely uneducated and culturally very distanced from Anglo American society.46

Implicit in the policy that sought to restrict immigrants on these grounds was a fear of invasion, a fear that the power and control of the "respectables" would be diluted or their system of order overturned. When expressed as a health issue, it was said that this type of immigrant would increase the incidence of both genetic problems and infectious disease.<sup>47</sup> The objects of this concern were those who were most obviously strangers;

<sup>45</sup> Quarantine - *Golden Empire* (Report of the Chief Medical Officer) Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1864-1865, Vol I A No 35; 5. See also, Vol II, no 42; Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Enquire into the *Golden Empire*.

<sup>46</sup> Chase A. *The Legacy of Malthus*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1977. 256, 271. Restrictive policies based on these public health grounds generally found favour with the popular American media. See Simon R J. *Public Opinion and the Immigrant: Print Media Coverage*, 1880-1980. Lexington (Mass), Lexington Books, 1985.

<sup>47</sup> Brandt A M. No Magic Bullet. New York: Oxford U P, 1985; 19.

those whose appearance least conformed to the Anglo Saxon or Nordic ideal of the traditional European American. These strangers were Southern and Eastern European Immigrants. They became the focus of restrictive legislation. The United States *Immigration Act*, 1891 imposed quotas based on country of origin and also sought to exclude as immigrants, persons suffering from "a loathsome or dangerous contagious disease." This was defined widely to include any venereal infection.<sup>48</sup>

The history of immigration restrictions in Australia, where similar issues were used to justify restrictions on the Chinese and other "undesirable" immigrants, will be considered in Chapters 7 and 8. This Chapter now considers three cases where strangers have been implicated in the spread of disease. It considers: the way in which syphilis has been the subject of a process of labelling that has constantly associated it with national groups; the extent to which Jews have been blamed for spreading disease and for many public health deficiencies; and how the Irish as immigrants to both England and Australia were seen as dirty, diseased and dehumanised. These are three prominent examples in the process of blaming strangers for disease.

Syphilis: the Disease of Other Countries

The first medical writing about syphilis appeared in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. It is difficult to trace the origins of the disease. There is some agreement among early writers that the first recorded outbreak of syphilis occurred at Naples in 1493, affecting French and Spanish soldiers besieging the city. Whether this outbreak was the first epidemic of the disease is not known but it was critically placed. By infecting numbers of young itinerant males, the disease spread widely as the soldiers returned to their homes in France and Spain.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Ibid; 20. A number of prominent Americans expressed concerns about the immigration of undesirable races. The Methodist, pro-temperance, bishop, James Cannon saw the restricting of immigration as tantamount to a holy war necessary to maintain the social supremacy of native Americans. In, 1928, Cannon said of Eastern European immigrants: "We have been unable to assimilate such people in our national life ... [they are] the kind of dirty people that you find today on the sidewalks of New York." (Gusfield J R. Symbolic Crusade: Urbana: Univ of Illinois P, 1963; 155.)

From the early 16th century, European authors including Almenar, de Vigo and Bethencourt described syphilis and speculated on its origins. As with the writers on leprosy, they speculated on the moral condition of the victims of the disease then widening their focus to the collective moral condition of the communities in which the victims lived. From the outset, syphilis was associated with particular national groups and chauvinism was to play a powerful role in the description of the disease.

Syphilis became known by a number of different names that generally depended on the nationality of the author. Writing in 1588, Juan Almenar described syphilis as a disease "which amongst the Italians is called Gallicus, that is to say the French disease." Almenar, a Spaniard, had no problems with the name: he entitled his work *A Treatise on the French Pocks*. However, Juan de Vigo, in a book published about 1530 and called *A Treatise of the French Disease*, did make the note that the French, objecting to this name and "disclaiming that it should be called of their Country, gave it the Name of Neopolitane, or the Evil of Naples." The French, he added, considered it to be "a Scandal to them to have it called ... the French Pox." But de Vigo, a Genoese, was unsympathetic and added that since the "French Pox" was the name given to syphilis with the "Consent of all Nations" it was the name he would continue to use. 50

It was a Frenchman, Jacques de Bethencourt, writing in 1527, who first suggested a name for syphilis that was free of chauvinistic overtones. Because the illness arose from "illicit love" it should, he suggested, be called the disease of Venus or venereal disease.<sup>51</sup>

A more recent general history of syphilis notes that Lopez de Villalobos (a Spaniard) named the new disease the "Pestilence of Egypt" because it was similar to a disease known to have occurred there.<sup>52</sup> By comparison, the Jewish communities that

 $<sup>^{49}</sup>$  Major, op cit; 20. See also the early English medical text, Clowes W. *Morbus Gallicus*. London: John Daye pub, 1579.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid; 31.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid; 35. This suggestion was not immediately taken up, at least by those for whom a traditional antipathy for France existed. The plays of William Shakespeare for example contain a number of references to the "French" disease, and also to the "Neopolitan bone-ache" Troilus and Cressida, II, iii, 21. See also Kail A C. The Bard and the Body. *Med J Aust*, 29 Oct. 1983: 445-449.

<sup>52</sup> Dennie C. A History of Syphilis. Springfield: Charles Thomas, 1962; 34. In Villalobos' opinion it occurred in this country in order to punish the inhabitants for the sins of "lust and its gratification".

were expelled from Spain at that time found that the disease followed them in their travels across North Africa. For them, the malady became the "Spanish Disease." <sup>53</sup>

The writings about syphilis suggest that its naming and renaming was not just a simple exercise in medical nomenclature: the choice of name emphasised the alien nature of the disease; that it was an affliction of foreigners. Explanations for the origins of syphilis or venereal disease illustrated the way that ideas about disease reinforced ideas about national rivalries. It projected the view that disease was an outside threat and that outsiders were threatening. This theme continues: one explanation of AIDS was that it was an "Haitian disease" because early cases were reported there. This description had a cogency: AIDS was a mysterious disease, it provided a ready link with Haiti both as the source of some early cases and also as a source of mystery, of exotic and sinister voodoo rituals and illegal immigrants.<sup>54</sup>

Australian responses to venereal disease also illustrate the idea that it was a disease of foreigners. In 1867, during the debates on the punitive provisions of the Queensland *Contagious Diseases Bill*, it was said that "immigrants ... from the old world" were introducing "a species of contagious [venereal] disease ... that was rapidly infecting every young man in the colony."55 Increased controls over venereal disease were introduced by Australian State governments during and immediately after World War I. National concern prompted by the number of Australian soldiers with the disease was the principal reason for the renewed interest in these controls. With it came the characterisation of the disease as one of foreigners. In 1916, during the debate on the Victorian Venereal diseases legislation, a member described syphilis as a foreign disease whose course had been checked by the White Australia Policy.56 Two years later, during the New South

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Ibid: 34.

This association caused significant damage to the country, and prompted the Haitian Ambassador in the US to write complaining that:

Haiti has sufficient problems without being selected as a scapegoat for a mysterious ailment that has, sadly, descended largely upon the American homosexual community (Cineas F N. Letter, 1983. New England J Med, 309: 668-669.) See also, Shilts R. And The Band Played On. London: Penguin, 1987; 135.

<sup>55</sup> Oueensland Parliamentary Debates, 15 October, 1867; 471.

<sup>56</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 19 September, 1916; 1470.

Wales debates, it was said that the prevalence of the disease in Australia was due to closer contact with Egypt and other Eastern countries.<sup>57</sup> In 1920, during the South Australian debates, it was suggested that a central provision of control policy should be the "medical inspection of immigrants from overseas."<sup>58</sup> This linking of venereal disease with outsiders was not restricted to parliamentarians. A few years later the Australian Natives Association, calling for "a clean wholesome nation" and, opportunistically responding to the Bolshevik threat from overseas, dubbed syphilis the "red plague."<sup>59</sup> Most recently, in the wake of an influx of Indochinese boat people, a Federal member of Parliament warned his colleagues about a particularly virulent form of syphilis known as "Saigon Rose" which, he claimed, would be introduced into Australia by the refugees.<sup>60</sup>

Two central themes can be drawn from the venereal disease legislation. Firstly, there was the expression of national concern, identified in the express need to protect Australian soldiers and their wives from infection and, secondly, the association of venereal disease with outsiders (the person doing the infecting was typically a foreign prostitute.) These themes demonstrated a perception of the threat from the outside that stood to corrupt and weaken the Australian race. It was a strongly put view. It was not necessarily an accurate view; there is some evidence to suggest that for Australian soldiers, the threats lay locally rather than overseas.<sup>61</sup>

The Australian war-time responses to venereal disease and their association with strangers was not unique; the disease prompted similar views elsewhere.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>57</sup> New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 4 December, 1918; 3380.

<sup>58</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 5 October, 1920; 975.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> White R. *Inventing Australia*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1981; 144.

<sup>60</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 30 May, 1978; 2784.

<sup>61</sup> Data from Australian military sources cited in the New South Wales Parliament suggested that 60% of syphilis cases among soldiers in Egypt were contracted in Australia, 20% in England and 20% in Egypt (New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 4 December, 1918; 3310.)

<sup>62</sup> In the United States, venereal disease was seen as a disease of Europe, of the old world. American soldiers were believed to be at risk from the corrupting influence of the place. Domestic propaganda went as far as to infer that the Kaiser was responsible for the spread of venereal disease back to the United States. (Brandt, op cit; 107 and 73.) Also, during World War I, the enemy was associated with that other traditional evil, alcohol. The American Temperance movement drew strength for its prohibition campaign from the fact that prominent American brewers were of German origin and brewing could be characterised as implicitly pro Kaiser. (Gusfield, op cit; 123.)

Overwhelmingly, the threat was viewed wihin a sexual context, women as well as strangers (another social minority) were subject to the undue focus of venereal disease controls.<sup>63</sup> However, on occasions, other explanations were offered as a cause of the disease, for example that it was spread through cups, towels or toilet seats. These mistaken ideas in fact broadened the notion that sufferers were threatening by projecting the view that they were socially polluting; that they were "generally unclean" and, therefore generally threatening.<sup>64</sup> This spawned a series of pointless prohibitions on the places at which people with the disease could work (particularly in the food industry).<sup>65</sup>

Portraying strangers as the source of venereal disease was significant for the construction of national stereotypes. Certain undesirable foreigners were threatening in the sense that they were said to have a greater likelihood of introducing the disease. The early writings on syphilis developed the idea of threat from the particular to the general. For example, de Vigo argued that different populations presented different risks of venereal infection. The Germans, because of their greater intemperance, presented a high

Women were said to be more dangerous than men in spreading the disease and in this regard they were believed threatening to men. They also became the objects of the draconian legislative controls of the late 19th and early 20th century. (de Vigo, in Major, op cit; 33.) This notion is perhaps the precursor of the "fallen woman" concept that formed the basis of early venereal disease campaigns this century. (Brandt, op cit; 32.) For an analysis of social policy and venereal disease control in 19th century, see Walkowitz J R. *Prostitution and Victorian Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ P, 1980. Venereal or "Contagious" disease legislation can in many respects be characterised as controls aimed at women who were seen by some policy makers as a "reservoir" of infection and therefore dangerous for males. The notion of blaming women for spreading venereal disease, was also prominent in the military public health campaigns during the two world wars. As well as reinforcing traditional stereotypes, it was possibly also a way of imputing less blame to soldiers with the disease, since to contract venereal disease whilst on active service was seen as a considerable disgrace. See Bean's account of the 1st AIF in Cairo (Bean C E W. *Gallipoli Correspondent*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983; 38.)

Other diseases were also seen in this framework. Female lepers were meant to enjoy sexual intercourse more than other women "as her blood tingles when she is tickled" (an anonymous treatise from the 15th century.) In a similar context, leprosy was also depicted as a woman "who kills by her embraces" (see Demaitre L. The Description and Diagnosis of Leprosy by Fourteenth Century Physicians, 1985. Bull Hist Med, 59: 327-344.). This idea carried through to the 20th cent, According to Zappa, a female leper when asked to describe her symptoms, added "I have a wild desire to amuse myself". (Zappa P. Unclean! Unclean! London: Lovat Dickson, 1933; 51.)

<sup>64</sup> This was said to have been used as a way of encouraging victims into treatment without having to admit to moral lapses. Brandt, op cit; 22. One historical exception to the "sexual transmission" explanation was provided for the benefit of the clergy for whom this means of transmission would cause acute embarrassment, Almenar, writing in 1558, speculated that there might be two ways the disease could be contracted. For some persons, such as the clergy, the disease could come from their breathing in "corruption of the aire". For most others, the disease was the result of "carnal copulation". (Major, op cit; 21.)

<sup>65</sup> Venereal Diseases Act, 1920 (South Australia); section 18. South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 7 September, 1920; 580, 8 September, 1920; 611. Fear of contamination extended to food, bedding, towels, crockery. However, this view was questioned by some legislators. (see: New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 4 December, 1918; 3396.)

risk whilst the Italians and the Spaniards (who, in de Vigo's view, lived soberly, - he was a Spaniard) presented a smaller risk.66 Here, the fact that syphilis was spread by sexual intercourse was employed to label a national group. Germans he argued were at greater risk because all Germans were intemperate and so a statement, apparently about the disease, became also a statement about the moral standards of Germans generally.

The Jews in Medieval and Modern European History

In *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*, the Victorian cleric and polymath Sabine Baring-Gould devoted his first entry to *Ahaverus* the Wandering Jew, a Jerusalem shoemaker, punished for mocking Christ on his journey to Calvary. Since then, Ahaverus was destined to wander the world without rest and never ageing. His was to be an ambivalent existence, as both a penitent and a pilgrim, needing no food, punished by God, yet also protected by God, existing in a state of suspended animation between the first and the second coming. Baring-Gould described numbers of alleged sightings of Aharverus. The first reports occurred in the 13th century. There were at least 6 in the 17th century and 3 in the first half of the 19th century (he was writing in 1866). The presence of the Wandering Jew was also taken to be a signal for disaster and during outbreaks of the plague, his presence was said to be a sinister prelude to the coming pestilence. <sup>67</sup>

This legend symbolised the outside and marginal status of the Jews in Europe. It was also a linking of the Jews with misfortune, threat and disease. The association of the Jews with dirt and disease has been an enduring historical phenomenon, expressed particularly during the "Black Death", the plague epidemic of the 14th century, which had devastating effects on European communities and remains the most profound epidemic of

<sup>66</sup> Major, op cit; 31-32.

<sup>67</sup> Baring-Gould S. Curious Myths of the Middle Ages. New York: University Books, 1967; 1 (originally written 1866.) For example, one sighting was said to have occurred just prior to the epidemic of 1602. The story of the Wandering Jew (Ahasuerus, Ahasverus or Ahaverus) is deeply embodied in European folklore with many variants yet, the theme of his marginal and itinerant status and his "danger" as a harbinger of pestilence and misfortune has remained the central core of the story. (See "Wandering Jew" in Roth C and Wigoder G ed. Encyclopaedia Judaica. Jerusalem: Keter Pub, 1972.)

its kind visited on Western society. It was believed by many at the time that the Jews, who were a significant and distinctive minority in medieval Europe, were responsible for its spread.<sup>68</sup>

The plague spread along trade routes, first through the sea ports and then inland. Before reaching Europe, it was reported in Asia Minor and settlements further East. However, when seeking its cause, people looked inwards and focused on marginal groups within the European community. Specifically, they focused on the Jewish communities living in affected areas. The view that the Jews were responsible for spreading the plague was so entrenched that even when other culprits were found, they were then linked with the Jews in such a way as to maintain the guilt of the latter. In 1321 when lepers in Languedoc were burnt for spreading the plague, allegedly by poisoning wells, they were said to be in the pay of the Jews. The lepers were seen as "the mere instruments of (Jewish) wickedness."

This process occurred in a wider context. In the 14th century, Jewish communities were small but visible components of medieval European society. They were the subject of continual vilification by the Church. It was said by some that they were the demon attendants of the anti-christ; that they abducted and killed Christian babies in satanic rituals. These views made the Jews clear and obvious outsiders, threatening to the Christian communities among whom they lived. The plague could be added to this list of Jewish malevolence.<sup>70</sup>

The relationship between the historical enmity Christians had for Jews and the more immediate issue of their alleged spreading of the plague is complex. Blaming the Jews for the plague could both be justified by and in turn justify the wider context in which they were seen and provide a logic for the anti-Jewish hysteria of the period.<sup>71</sup> For

<sup>68</sup> For the way that Jews were seen at this time, see Trachtenberg J. *The Devil and the Jews*. New Haven: Yale Univ P, 1943.

<sup>69</sup> Zeigler, in Bowsky W M ed. *The Black Death*. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1971; 73. So violent were the reactions against the Jews that, reportedly, it was not even necessary for the plague to have come to a town for its inhabitants to begin murdering the local Jews. (Zeigler in Bowsky, op cit; 77.)

<sup>70</sup> Trachtenberg, op cit; Chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>71</sup> As suggested by Zeigler, op cit.

example, the Jews' role as money lenders has also been represented as a basis for anti-Jewish feeling.<sup>72</sup> Immediate economic gain seems also to have been a feature of the violence. The confiscation of Jewish property as a result of persecutions was one way of getting rich.<sup>73</sup> The confusion and panic associated with the epidemic heightened fears and anxieties and provided scope for further "demonising" of the already demonised Jews. The historian Norman Cohn has written:

when a situation arose which was not only menacing but went outside the normal run of experience, when people were confronted with hazards which were all the more frightening because they were unfamiliar - at such times a collective flight into the world of demonological phantasies could occur very easily. <sup>74</sup>

This atmosphere provided a backdrop to the trials of the well poisoners. The subsequent findings of guilt then amplified these fears. Indeed, proof of all the things alleged could be obtained from the Jews themselves by extracting admissions under torture. The confessions often implicated other persons, emphasising the strength of the Jewish conspiracy while leading to a further round of persecutions.<sup>75</sup>

The argument for the Jewish involvement could appear plausible because of the way that the Jews were regarded and this then became further proof of their malevolence.

Money lending appears to have shaped some contemporary criticism. Chaucer, for example, described the Jew as a usurer, and hateful to Christ. Zeigler argued the economic rationale for the persecutions. This view is to some extent supported by Noonan who said that Jewish money lenders were "generally hated by the poor whom they exploited" (Noonan J T. *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury*. Cambridge Mass: Harvard Univ P, 1957; 35.) However, the Lombards were also open money lenders and overall, they appeared to escape the criticism and resentment directed to the Jews. Cohn has argued that their role as small businessmen was quite limited and his explanation for the violence is based on its being the result of traditional cultural and sectarian hatred that saw the Jews as a threat to Christians. In justifying this view Cohn relied on the religious view of the times, that the Jews were the "demon attendants" of Satan. (Cohn N. *The Pursuit of the Millennium*. London: Paladin, 1970; 78.) This opinion was reinforced for example by the medieval miracle plays and later, in *The Merchant of Venice* where the following line appears: "Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnate."

<sup>73</sup> For example, the Emperor Charles IV promised the Margrave of Brandenburg a choice of the best three Jewish houses, "when there is next a massacre of the Jews." Presented with this offer, the Margrave would have found it in his interest to uncover more evidence of poisoned wells. (Zeigler P. *The Black Death*. New York: Torch Books, 1969; 105.)

<sup>74</sup> Cohn, op cit; 87.

<sup>75</sup> Zeigler (1969), op cit; 102. The only factor that might have pointed towards Jewish complicity in the plague was the fact that they may well have been less prone to infection (at least in the short term) than their Christian neighbours (Douglas M. *Purity and Danger*. London: Ark, 1966; 30.) Ironically, this fact, possibly the result of their relative isolation and more particular hygiene standards, may well have strengthened the view that they were responsible for the outbreaks. (Zeigler, op cit; 100.)

The Jew as a stranger, as a marginalised person, a symbol of threat within Christian Europe provided a seemingly logical scapegoat for this most disastrous of all threats.

Dirt and disease has become an enduring feature of anti-Jewish thought and its articulation in the context of disease has continued into the 20th century, a century so catastrophic for European Jews.<sup>76</sup> In England, Jewish refugees from Central and Eastern Europe were met with hostility which took health and living conditions as a particular focus for complaint. In England at the turn of the century, a barrage of popular opinion was directed against the "Alien Invasion" of London's East End, the area where most of the Jews settled. Much of this focused on Jewish health status and living conditions. One local official, giving evidence to a Royal Commission in 1903, complained "they dirt all over the floor. If you don't mind how you go, you may slip down and find yourself covered with vermin or something else."77 He further complained that the immigrants urinated and defecated carelessly, concluding that in all of this some sinister process might be at work; that these dirty immigrants might be some part of a wider Jewish conspiracy to bring filth and pestilence to England.<sup>78</sup> Another witness focused on filth and smell, claiming that the immigrants "chuck fish heads over the yard and the fish guts stink and its altogether disgraceful and disgusting."79 Worse was alleged by another witness who claimed that, in order to get the better of the trade, Jewish milk sellers would pollute the milk of their Christian competitors with faeces.80 The litany continued, many witnesses

<sup>76</sup> See Mosse G L. Towards the Final Solution. New York: Howard Fertig, 1978; 114. On the question of Jewishs living standards, Mosse says that the poor quarters of many nineteenth century European cities, containing the ghettos in which Jews lived did breed foul odours, and that: "all too many people connected those not to the endemic poverty in which Jews lived, but to the inherent "dirtiness" of their race". (111-112) See also Nohl, op cit; 203. In Australia, the strength of the idea of Jewish dirtiness, can be illustrated by a parliamentary comment made by a Federal Liberal backbencher (1944) when he likened the Labour Party to "followers of that filthy Jew Karl Marx" In making a subsequent retraction, the member stated that although he had not intended to attack all Jews, he understood that "Karl Marx was not exactly a very clean person." (Blakeney M. Australia and the Jewish Refugees, 1933-1948. Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985; 78.)

<sup>77</sup> Great Britain Royal Commission on Alien Immigration, Parliamentary Papers, 1903 Vol 9, cd1741; q4192.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid; qs 4193, 4222.

<sup>79</sup> Cited in Gainer B. The Alien Invasion: The origin of the Aliens Act of 1905. London: Heinemann, 1972; 47.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid; q8727.

focused on the alleged filthy living conditions and habits of the Jews. One witness, a Port medical officer, emphasised the smell of the new arrivals. He said:

Their clothing was dirty and the smell was unbearable; it was such a smell as you would not like to travel on the same bus with these persons ... a smell I have never been able quite to find anything to compare with.81

One final insult, made by a Whitechapel midwife, was that they were worse than the Irish.82

These assertions should be considered in the context of the refugees' generally straitened circumstances and the mean conditions of their homes in London's poorest slums. More particularly, they were not regarded as sufficiently substantial to warrant official action. The Royal Commission made no particular recommendations in relation to them. Nevertheless, they built on historic dislikes and further reinforced the ideas of anti-Jewish writers, one of whom was Joseph Bannister. In 1901, Bannister embarked on a vitriolic attack on the Jews in England, an attack that focused both on disease and the traditional hatred of Jews. "Lupus, trachoma, favus, eczema and scurvy" he affirmed, were inseparable from the "Wandering Tribe." He also argued that Jewish blood, like that of other "oriental Breeds" was "loaded with scrofula."83

Observations such as these about the East End of London had significance for Australia. In the 1901 debates on the *Immigration Restriction Bill*, H B Higgins a prominent Irish lawyer and member of the Federal Parliament justified his restrictionist stand by referring to the Polish Jews that he saw in London as "the most wretched specimens that one could look upon; wretched and dirty, and bearing traces of smallpox and habits of the very worst kind."84 At this time, both England and Australia were considering laws designed to restrict the immigration of Jews and other "undesirables."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> Ibid; q6116.

<sup>82</sup> Cited in Gainer B, op cit; 47.

<sup>83</sup> Cited in Holmes C. Immigrants and Minorities in British Society. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1978: 150

<sup>84</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 6 September, 1901; 4657.

The English, Aliens Restriction Act 1905 and the Australian Immigration Act 1901 both contained powers to keep the diseased, the criminal and the otherwise undesirable classes away from their shores.85

Anti-Jewish feeling in Australia continued as the European political crisis of the late 1930s caused the flight of Jewish refugees into many parts of the world including Australia. Many segments of the Australian community were critical of these refugees, claiming that they were dirty and diseased and were not suitable immigrants. Health issues became one of the major justifications used by persons opposed to their arrival and will be considered in Chapter 8 in the context of European immigration to Australia in the 20th century.

The association of the Jews with disease and dirt in the 20th century was persistent, often put forward as an argument for preventing their immigration or to contain, control or persecute them. The context of public health was important. The threat of disease was a powerful embodiment of the threat of "invasion" by the Jews as historic strangers. But, the complaints outlined here went further than this: they dwelt on smell, dirt, the contamination of food, which all emphasised the polluting powers of the Jews as outsiders in England. They were powerful themes, used against other outsiders as well as the Jews.

Irish Immigrants in England and Australia

Not only the alleged characteristics of the Jews but also, the national characteristics of the Irish have also been the subject of generalisation. The Irish have been stereotyped as objects, simplified and in many ways incomplete.86 This picture has been sustained by the culture of popular entertainment in both England and Australia. The

<sup>85</sup> Aliens Act 1905.

<sup>86</sup> Holmes, op cit; 88.

"paddy" has been portrayed variously in jokes and cartoons as subhuman, comic, stupid, dirty, primitive and menacing.

For many who wrote of their experiences, either in Ireland or of their association with the Irish as immigrants (the writers were usually middle or upper class Englishmen), the Irish were a race apart, quite beyond that boundary that preserved English culture and civilisation from the barbarous Irish celts that lay outside of it. For many writers, the Irish were the very symbols of backwardness, surrounded by poverty, chaos and dirt.<sup>87</sup> A public health focus on dirt and degradation was one way in which the negative stereotype of the Irish was constructed, emphasising the gulf between them and the English. In their place, the Irish might be presented as lovable and stupid paddies, not unlike the Negro "Uncle Toms." When they crossed the boundary into England or when they were taken to be a threat to British interests, the Irish were dismissed in harsher terms. The Earl of Kimberley, speaking of the Fenian troubles of 1867, claimed that "the true source of Irish unhappiness lay in the character of the Irish race."

Yet for some, the Irish were more than simply a race apart, they were subhuman.

As one early 19th century description put it:

his garments are such as an English labourer would scarcely stoop to pick up from the ground, his cabin and his food such as would be appropriate for the lodgement and subsistence of our working animals, while he himself, in many instances performs the various species of labour in England allotted to those useful brutes<sup>90</sup>

In other words, the Irish were clothed in rags and lived, worked and ate like animals. The accounts of other English tourists were no more charitable. J A Froude, the celebrated journalist traveller, described the people he saw in a journey through Ireland as "more like tribes of squalid apes than human beings." This theme of "simianising" the Irish, was a

<sup>87</sup> Holmes, op cit; 84.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid; 94.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid; 89.

<sup>90 &</sup>quot;Anon." The Irish Tourist, Vol 1, The Past and Present State of Ireland, London: J Dowding, 1820; 4.

<sup>91</sup> Holmes, op cit; 99.

popular one, particularly in cartoons that distorted and coarsened their facial features - a process that became increasingly popular in England in the wake of the Fenian outrages and the other civil disturbances in aid of home rule.

The "problem" of the Irish immigrants to England featured in descriptions of London life in the early 19th century that often made reference to the uproar and the ruffianism of the Irish immigrants and the squalor in which many of them lived. In 1816, a medical practitioner complained of the "noisome condition" of the Irish quarter, claiming "some of the lower habitations have neither windows, nor chimneys, nor floors, and are so dark that I can scarcely see at mid day without a candle." They were blamed for spreading cholera, a charge said to be demonstrated by their alleged lack of hygiene.

A slum landlord writing during this time, (and perhaps wanting to justify his decision to avoid the expense of sewering his properties) claimed that the Irish were "not the most cleanly in the world." Irish customs were also characterised as insanitary: for example, their keeping the bodies of deceased relatives rather than giving them up for the quick and un-ceremonial official burial.94

The idea that the Irish were agents in spreading cholera is significant. The disease imposed stresses and threats on the social cohesion of affected communities. Both Durey and Morris have described the unsettling effects of cholera on the British community.<sup>95</sup>
The process of re-establishing social order and cohesion focused on the Irish as outsiders

<sup>92</sup> George M D. London life in the Eighteenth Century. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966; 129. (first pub 1925.) George provided many examples of the complaints made against the Irish in 18th and 19th century London. These were descriptions that emphasised filth and chaos, described Irish lodgers sharing beds, or their living space with pigs and other livestock and the street violence for which the Irish were blamed. None of these images really addressed the underlying issue: the poverty and the very inadequate conditions of the London ghettos in which the Irish lived. (pp 120-137.)

<sup>93</sup> Holmes, op cit; 99. Durey M. *The Return of the Plague: British Society and the Cholera Epidemic 1831-32*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1979; 57. Complaints and suspicion against the Irish were a common feature of the cholera epidemic both in England and US, and are reported by most historians of the disease.

<sup>94</sup> Richardson R. Death, Dissection and the Destitute. London: Penguin, 1989; 227, 228.

<sup>95</sup> Durey has written that the cholera epidemic of 1832 in Britain "unsettled the normal functioning of society and brought to the surface latent social antagonisms." (Durey, op cit; 1.) R J Morris, writing about the same epidemic, made a similar point: "to follow the cholera track was to watch the trust and cooperation between different parts of the society strained to the utmost." (Morris R J. Cholera 1832. London: Croom Helm, 1976; 17.) Other historians have taken a similar view Richard Evans has written: "Most historians who have dealt with cholera have been drawn to the subject because they have seen the impact of the disease on social cohesion" (Evans R J. Cholera in 19th Century Europe, 1988. Past and Present, 120: 123-146; 126.)

(together with alcoholics and other socially marginalised groups) and as traditionally "dangerous." This danger was given form in the idea that they were responsible for spreading the epidemic. This was a threat to the centre by outsiders. Identifying and responding to that threat was a way of solidifying and unifying a society under stress. In fact, their unaddressed poverty was the issue; their overcrowded dwellings and their lack of private space, both the consequence of poverty, made the Irish immigrants susceptible to disease and the visible participants in the violence and alcohol use promoted by the slum culture in which they lived.

Irish immigrants to Australia attracted similar criticism. For example, in 1850, the South Australian Immigration Agent, seeking to explain a higher than usual rate of sickness on one arriving vessel, suggested that it was due to the Irish passengers, since "it was extremely difficult to enforce the observance of cleanliness from the dirty habits of the people." In a diary of his voyage to South Australia in 1858, a colonist, William Calder, wrote that the "Irish are a dirty set." His only evidence seemed to be that they were attempting to delouse themselves. 97

Dirtiness was a common theme in 19th century writing about the Irish in Australia. Richard Twopeny complained that of the servants available, "four fifths were Irish - liars and dirty. He built on this theme with the idea that they were rural simpletons, claiming "your Irish immigrant ... has as often as not never been inside any other household than her native hovel, and stares in astonishment to find you don't keep a pig on your drawing-room sofa."98 As Margaret Kiddle has shown, these particular concerns about health occurred against a backdrop of general anxiety about Irish Catholics as suitable immigrants to Australia.99

<sup>96</sup> South Australian Government Gazette, 17 January, 1850; 45.

<sup>97</sup> Richards E ed. *The Flinders History of South Australia (Social History)*. Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1987; 151.

<sup>98</sup> Twopeny R. Town Life in Australia. Ringwood: Penguin, 1973, 51. (first pub 1883.)

<sup>99</sup> Kiddle M. (1950), op cit; 77, 113, 126.

These themes of simplicity and dirtiness were repeated in the official records dealing with Irish immigrants. In 1850, the South Australian Children Apprenticeship Board emphasised what it considered to be the problems of the Irish orphan children brought out to the province as immigrants. The Board cited their indolence, their casual attitude to work and the fact that some would not wash and needed to be corrected for "dirty and irregular" habits. 100

At home, the Irish were simple paddies with their pigs and hovels, distanced curiosities for English travellers. In England and Australia, they were more threatening. This threat was articulated in two ways significant for public health. Firstly, in the subhuman descriptions emphasising the idea of the threatening stranger, that expressed their anomalous, uncivilised and even de-humanised status. Secondly, in the emphasis on their living conditions, the many references to dirt and disease, which was a constant part of the description of Irish life in London and elsewhere, and presented as an inevitable feature of *being Irish*. In fact, their marginal economic position meant that most Irish were among the lowest social class, signified by their poverty and very low standard of living. These were conditions that promoted disease and insanitary living.

As with the Jews, the health complaints against the Irish sat within a wider field; they were the companions of other expressions of anti-Irish feeling. There was the issue of Home Rule and the struggles associated with it. There was also the view that the Irish were economic competitors, that they would work for low rates of pay. For some Australians (for example the Presbyterian cleric J D Lang) Irish immigration was less preferable than English and Scottish because it was feared that their arrival in large numbers would tend to promote a Roman Catholic ascendancy in Australia.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>100</sup> South Australian Government Gazette, 28 February, 1850; 128.

<sup>101</sup> Kiddle, op cit; 110. See also, Fry E ed. *Rebels and Radicals*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983; 99. Similar concerns were expressed elsewhere. See Morris, op cit; 155. In the US, Ludmerer claimed that Irish immigrants were considered inferior because they were Catholic, (Ludmerer K M. Genetics, Eugenics, and the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924, 1972. *Bull Hist Med*; 46: 59-81; 61.)

Yet, anti-Irish feelings were of limited effect compared with the anti-Chinese campaign in Australia for example. They were at their strongest when the Irish stood out most obviously as a new group of arrivals. However, the Irish immigrants had no particular distinguishing racial features or substantial cultural differences that singled them out from English and Australian working class communities generally and they became a part of those communities. The things that were used to identify the Irish as strangers, the ideas of dirt and disease, were therefore of limited effect. In Australia, the complaints about Irish health and hygiene standards became less public and less vehement than similar complaints about arrivals from China and Southern and Eastern Europe.

## 4 STRANGERS AND PUBLIC HEALTH - CONCERNS AND REALITIES

The association of disease with strangers, if they were newly arrived, often had a cogency. The history of the movement of peoples is intertwined with the history of epidemic diseases. The spread of infection followed trade routes and migration patterns. A central example was the Black Death in Europe. There were other examples such as the introduction of epidemics to the South Pacific by European sailors. This was part of a general process that has been described as "the unification of the world by disease." In Australia, the new European arrivals introduced many diseases. Perhaps the most profound, though it was not well recorded, was the "Great Sickness" of 1789. This infection, possibly smallpox or a less serious disease, decimated the aboriginal

<sup>102</sup> Holmes, op cit; 102.

<sup>103</sup> Gottfreid R S. The Black Death. London: Macmillan, 1983; Chapter 4.

<sup>104</sup> Lange R. Plagues and Pestilence in Polynesia, 1984. *Bull Hist Med*; 58: 325-346. Here, Lange is quoting Woodrow Borah. See also Cumpston J H L and McCallum F. *The History of Smallpox in Australia*. Melbourne: Govt. Printer, 1925, and *The History of Plague in Australia* 1900-1926. Melbourne: Government Printer, 1926. Coleman W. Epidemiological Method in the 1860s, 1984. *Bull Hist Med*; 58: 145-163.

communities around Port Jackson and by many accounts spread inland along the river trade routes, 105

The Australian epidemics which occurred in the 19th century were associated with shipping movements and the arrival of immigrants. Early this century, Cumpston and McCallum, undertook detailed investigations of the cases of plague and smallpox in Australia. They concluded that the arriving vessels from foreign ports, and then the port areas of the major cities, were the sources of both infections. Later studies have also demonstrated the importance of this point. 106

These epidemics affected both the immigrants and the communities into which they arrived, while immigration that required long sea journeys was also fraught with risk. For example, during the years 1849 (when accurate records began) to 1865, some 1300 deaths in transit were recorded for immigrant ships arriving at Adelaide (nearly 100,000 people arrived over this period.) Children were particularly at risk from the epidemics of measles and enteric diseases that swept many of the ships and it was their deaths that provided such harrowing accounts of some of these voyages. For many people living during the latter part of the 19th century, the fear of epidemics conjured up memories of their own perilous journeys to Australia and emphasised their continued vulnerability to disease. Within this experience, and where epidemics occurred in the various colonies during the 19th century, newly arrived foreign immigrants risked blame, often with apparent justification.<sup>107</sup>

These were negative aspects of immigration. There were also positive aspects; periods of expansion and development made labour a scarce commodity and immigration an important issue. The hundred years between 1850 and 1950, was one of enormous population movement. It was a period during which expanding "new world" economies

<sup>105</sup> Curson P H. Times of Crisis. Sydney: Syd Univ P, 1985; chapter 3. See also, Butlin N G. Our Original Aggression: Aboriginal Populations of Southeast Australia 1788-1850. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983.

<sup>106</sup> Cumpston J H L, and McCallum F. The History of the Plague in Australia 1900-1925. Melbourne: Government Printer, 1926; 13. See also Curson (1985), op cit and Curson P. Plague in Sydney: The Anatomy of an Epidemic. Sydney: Univ of NSW P, 1989.

<sup>107</sup> South Australian Government Gazette, 25 January, 1866; 75 and information provided from the South Australian Maritime Museum.

required labour and population to strengthen and develop. Stripped of any rhetoric, the purpose of immigration programmes simply was to supply that need. Provided they were the "right" types, immigrants were encouraged and welcomed. 108

Immigrants then were essentially a commodity. The "quality" of the immigration pool became important, a legitimate subject for eugenicists and others to pick over. This allowed criticism of these new arrivals if it was felt by some that the community was not getting good value for the money spent on the immigration programmes. This also added another dimension to the public health response to strangers. Undesirables were judged on their physical appearance, the puny, the weedy, those who did not look like Anglo Saxons were devalued. As Chapter 8 illustrates, this thinking was a prominent feature of Australian immigration policy in the 20th century.

Once arrived and settled, immigrant communities were not always the healthiest groups. There is evidence that their health was in many cases worse, or made worse by their new environments, than the health of the host population. Their incomplete and inadequate immune status also made some immigrants more susceptible to disease. Associated with the economic view of immigration, that immigrants were there to satisfy labour demands, was the fact that often they had the worst jobs, those not taken up by the local labour force, and the most inadequate living standards. These issues exacerbated

The British Royal Commission into the Resource Development of the Dominions (1917) made this point quite explicitly. Resources, it said, could not be developed without adequate labour power. It was the function of immigration to supply that power. This view was repeated on numbers of occasions. (Sherington G. Australia's Immigrants. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1980; 89.)

<sup>109</sup> Rosenberg made the point that the squalid conditions in which immigrants were forced to live was the central issue; that it was the conditions rather than the person, that encouraged the spread of disease. For this reason, he concluded, the urban immigrant poor, as the most deprived group in the United States, were to be expected to be most at risk from cholera. It was this that explained why the Irish and other marginal groups such as negroes had high mortality rates from the disease. (Rosenberg C E. *The Cholera Years*. Chicago: Univ of Chicago P, 1962; 37.)

<sup>110</sup> In his study of migrant mortality during the 1919 influenza epidemic, Katz found that increased mortality could be expected among only certain groups of strangers, notably the Jews and Italians, and less so from other groups such as the Irish. He attributed this to the fact that "at risk" immigrants tended to be recently arrived and from isolated rural backgrounds, with no pre-existing exposure to influenza. By comparison, more long standing immigrants such as the Irish had developed some immunity. (Katz R S. Influenza 1918-1919: A Further Study in Mortality, 1977. Bull Hist Med, 51: 617-619.)

their health problems and seemed to prove the point, that they were less healthy than the host population.<sup>111</sup>

Observations about the poor health of immigrants were most significant in the ways they could be explained. For some, it was simply one aspect of the general characteristic of, for example, being Irish or being Southern European. Here, ill health was a way of classifying social groups, identifying outsiders in communities and then articulating the threat that these strangers presented to the community. Descriptions of people living in filth, or descriptions that degraded them, presented the idea that they were not human and emphasised their outside status. Such a process might lead to the general conclusion that some groups are more susceptible to disease because they are dirtier or less like the dominant social group in the community into which they settle. The fact that cholera was a disease of poverty and crowding made the poorest immigrant populations of 19th century America a particularly "at risk" group. This seemed to justify explanations for the disease and encouraged policies which exalted nativist ideas and condemned strangers. Thus Americans for whom the burden of the epidemic was lightest - the healthy farmers and sturdy small town mechanics - were able to take the view that the disease was of little significance to them since it seemed to be restricted to the inhabitants of the slums. the "pagans, Moslems, and papists of Europe." For as long as the disease was contained among people who mattered little, such as the immigrant poor, it had little relevance to the established American community. 112

The problem of immigrant ill health and the way those problems might be interpreted still remains. For example, in Australia, Goldstein has reported that among recently arrived Indochinese refugees, the prevalence rate for tuberculosis in 1987, was 220 times the rate of the general population. How is a statement like this to be

This process has occurred in Australia and will be illustrated in later chapters in the case of post World War II immigrants to Australia, see Wilton J and Bosworth R. *Old Worlds and New Australia*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1984; Chapter 8.

<sup>112</sup> Rosenberg, op cit; 15. In considering the poverty of immigrants at the turn of the century, Ludmerer, op cit; 67, cites a prevailing view: namely that "the high incidence of disease; illiteracy; poverty and crime in immigrant neighbourhoods constitutes sufficient testimony to the newcomers "innate inferiority" and could simply be dismissed as such.

<sup>113</sup> Goldstein G B et al. A Review of Refugee Screening in NSW, 1987. Med J Aust, 146: 9-12.

contained within the context of public health? What must be done to ensure that it remains a statement about tuberculosis rather than a statement about the Indochinese community? This issue is of great significance for public health policy and will be considered in the final Chapter of this thesis.

# CHAPTER 6 PUBLIC HEALTH - THE CITY AND THE COUNTRY: SETTING BOUNDARIES III.

#### 1. REAL MILK, RAW MILK

Real milk.. fresh milk, straight from the cow and frothing with creamy bubbles, not the homogenised pasteurised tasteless liquid that we poor city folk are forced to drink

(Adelaide News, August 1987)<sup>1</sup>

There are many concerns, well documented and reports of incidents of milk borne infections associated with the consumption of raw milk. These infections have occurred and will continue to occur sporadically in South Australia while unpasteurised raw milk is available for consumption.

(South Australian Minister of Health, August 1987)<sup>2</sup>

In 1987, the South Australian Government introduced regulations restricting the sale of unpasteurised milk. These regulations sought to phase out its home delivery and to regulate, though not prohibit, "farm gate" sales (that is, sales directly from the place at which the milk was produced.) The proposal was the result of specialist advice from a number of health authorities given to the Minister of Health. There was evidence that outbreaks of gastric illness had occurred in South Australian country areas and that unpasteurised milk was the suspect agent. Yet, the regulations provoked intense opposition from these areas. The rural supporters of the unpasteurised product they called "real milk" referred to the generations of country children that had been raised on it. Arcadian memories of long gone holidays on grandparents' farms and pails of milk straight from the dairy were part of the imagery used in opposition to the regulations. These ideas called up the wholesomeness, naturalness and goodness of an uncontaminated product. By contrast, pasteurised milk was seen as contaminated and processed, the product of busybody bureaucrats and experts from the City. The level of country

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Adelaide News, 31 August, 1987; 20.

<sup>2</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 26 August, 1987; 469.

opposition to the regulations was so effective that they were defeated in Parliament. The unrestricted sale of unpasteurised milk continues in South Australia.

A dominant idea that underlay the pasteurised milk debate was a dichotomy, "the country and the city." The country was associated with naturalness and health while the city with process and contamination. In this context, it was ironic that the debate should focus on a product that in its natural state is known to have significant health risks. Yet, the defeat of the proposal suggests that the dichotomy of "the country as good" and "the city as bad" is extremely powerful and brings with it ideas about health that are not necessarily demonstrable but which have the potential to sustain the dichotomy and shape health policy and thinking about health.

This Chapter examines the idea of "the country and the city" and its significance for ideas and policies about public health in Britain, Australia and the United States. It argues that the dichotomy of "the country as good" and "the city as bad" is an underlying idea that has influenced views about health, sometimes with no justification, sometimes with apparent justification and, in turn, gave an important public health dimension to the dichotomy - where the "good" country and the "bad" city were in part emphasised and sustained by statements about health. It allowed a rehabilitative or curative response: good health and cures were to be found in the country, as if the change of location itself was the dominant agent in the cure. More generally, health was not seen simply as a "good in itself"; it was a way of identifying, rewarding and reinforcing the group that believed that it adhered to traditional (rural) values. By comparison, the city was often presented as the place of threat, chaos and change whose inhabitants were morally and physically inferior to those of the country and whose diseases were characterised as evidence of the threats of urbanism and change.

The persons constructing and claiming these views were most obviously prominent 19th and 20th century politicians, writers and policy makers. However, the ideas were held more generally, as common responses to traditional values and reactions to change (usually seen as an urban rather than a rural phenomenon.) As with social classes or

strangers, the two issues considered in Chapters 4 and 5, health policy and views about health expressed a boundary that helped justify, strengthen and protect those who adhered to traditional rural values and were responding to outsiders and change.

#### 2 THE THEME

Raymond Williams has written that "country" and "city" are powerful words; that "[a] contrast between country and city as fundamental ways of life, reaches back into classical times" and even earlier.<sup>3</sup> It may be described as a profound dichotomy; a "way of seeing." Indeed, the country/city dichotomy is one of the oldest recorded ideas. It has been argued to be part of the structure of the earliest written work, the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* (written some 5,000 years ago.) This work has been analysed by G S Kirk as, in part, drawing on the contrast between the wild man in a state of nature who becomes corrupted by the city and its prostitutes.<sup>4</sup> The idea can also be found in classical times. The Roman empire focused on its capital Rome, the prominent city of the Mediterranean. Compared with the country, it was seen by some to be a corrupt place. Juvenal's *Satires* (100AD), made this point when the author asked "What can I do in Rome? I never learned how to lie."<sup>5</sup>

The idea was popular enough in literature and art long before the worst cases of the 19th century industrial city appeared, suggesting that it met some valued need. As Williams illustrated, the country provided the stage for a looking back towards a period of rural innocence and tranquillity, a golden age said to have existed before the fall of humankind. It was also a way of looking forward to a utopian ideal and was attractive to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Williams R. *The City and the Country*. London: Hogarth Press, 1985; 1. This work provides a comprehensive analysis of the country/city theme in literature.

<sup>4</sup> Kirk G S. Myth its Meaning and Function in Other Cultures. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ P, 1971; 132.

<sup>5</sup> Williams, op cit; 46.

some social reformers such as William Morris, whose brand of socialism drew heavily on rustic themes.6

In the event, the country and the city have been endowed with opposing sets of "good" and "bad" values. While this has not been a universal view, it has been a prominent component of the European cultural tradition and has been significant in Australia and the United States. Developing this, the country has generally been seen as the mainstay of traditional values which sat in tension with the values of the city. In Australia, Manning Clark, prompted by his boyhood experiences, expressed this idea when he spoke of "the conflict when a simple boy from the Australian bush goes down to the suburbs." He said of the city:

we do not go down from Jerusalem to Jericho to fall amongst thieves: we go from the country to the town ... The bush is our source of innocence ... the town is where man's adversary the devil prowls around seeking whom he may devour.7

This tradition of thought has been significant in Australian political life and has been allied with conservative values. It justified political systems that kept conservative parties in power by electoral distributions weighted towards the more conservative country voters. This was a deeply entrenched feature of the Australian political scene until relatively recently. It was justified in South Australia, for example, in terms of the greater worth of country voters; that those who were developing the country ought naturally to have a greater share in power than the urban masses; and that reason and property must

<sup>6</sup> Within this view, the countryside could be seen as representing a large Garden of Eden, of naturalness and innocence, with the city emphasising mankind's alienation from that ideal (Williams, op cit; 42). See also Morris W. News from Nowhere, especially chapters 10, 29 and 30. (Morris W. Selected Writing. New York: Nonesuch Press, 1934.)

<sup>7</sup> Clark C M H. A Discovery of Australia. Sydney: Aust. Broadcasting Commission, 1976; 10, 11. In a much earlier view, Alexander Harris, the "Immigrant Mechanic" and 19th century social commentator painted a graphic contrast between city and country in his comparison between the Rocks area of Sydney in the 1840s - with its "forlorn and infamous abodes" of brothels and sly grog shops and, as a bright and stark contrast, the idyllic simplicity of bush life, rewarding the happy worker.

(Gibson R. The Diminishing Paradise. Sydney: Sirius Books, 1984, 74.)

Manning Clark's view was reflected in the popular culture of his age. Perhaps the best known were the Dad and Dave radio programmes and films, based on the "Steele Rudd" short stories of a poor Queensland farming family. (Davis A H (Steele Rudd). On Our Selection. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1953 - originally pub. 1899.) This theme comes out strongly in other cinema of the period. See Cunningham S. Disaggregating Landscape and Nation in Chauvel in Foss P ed. Islands in the Stream: Myths of Place in Australian Culture. Sydney: Pluto, 1988.

necessarily hold the tyranny of urban democracy in check.<sup>8</sup> Such a distinction may have been self serving for those who upheld it; its justification was important. Country voters and their values were said to be worthwhile; the city and its mass of voters were threatening to established order.

The construction of the two worlds of the country and the city and the way in which views about health sharpened those worlds are issues which emphasised the boundaries between these two categories and the people categorised into them, which is the general theme of this thesis. At times, these two worlds had important social significance. Groups under threat from social change, from the urbanism of the 19th and 20th centuries, adhered to and advanced rural, traditional values that coalesced and strengthened the group under threat.

#### 2 BRITAIN.

In Britain, the country/city dichotomy was central to much social and literary life. For some, concern focused naturally on London as the largest urban congregation. It was pictured as a place of sophisticated corruptness that stood in contrast with rough rural honesty. It was a "diseased wen." It was a huge parasite that fed on and weakened the country. As one 19th century social commentator wrote:

London is to a great extent nourished by the literal consumption of bone and sinew from the country; by the absorption each year of large numbers of persons of stronger physique who leaven the whole mass.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Jaensch D ed. The Flinders History of South Australia (Political History.) Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986; 362.

<sup>9</sup> H Llewellyn-Smith in Booth C. Life and Labour of the People in London, (Vol III). New York: A M Kelly, 1969; 65. Williams reviewed a range of 18th -19th century representations of London, including Defoe, Gay, Fielding and Hogarth. In different ways, they all emphasised the idea of London as the opposite of order and civilised values. (Williams, op cit; 143-146) The dichotomy between the country and the city was also apparent in the literature of the period. The theme was used to great effect in Oliver Goldsmith's Play She Stoops to Conquer (1773), where, as a place of fast life and refinement, London stood in stark contrast with the slower, more ordered and less sophisticated pace of rural life.

One expression of threat was the idea that the City was a place of disease that could spread to the country. There was some truth in this idea. In Britain, epidemic diseases such as plague and cholera had their origins in seaports which were generally centres of urban population. It was logical for country inhabitants to fear the spread of infection outward from the towns. Daniel Defoe suggested that this happened during the plague of 1665. He wrote of widespread alarm amongst country dwellers that refugees from London would descend on them by force, threatening disease, that they would come "with the distemper upon them without any control." 10

Defoe's country dwellers also held another fear; that these refugees from the city also threatened violence, that they came to "plunder and rob." Christopher Hill suggested that during the 16th and 17th centuries, the population of London expanded greatly through the influx of "masterless men", vagabonds, criminals and displaced rural workers, victims of the enclosure system. Similar pools of sedition and menace were also said to exist in other centres of population at this time, including Newcastle-upon-Tyne where, in 1633, it was said that "people of mean condition ... are apt to turn every pretence and colour of grievance into uproar and seditious mutiny." 12

The problems of the city dwellers in Victorian Britain was in part given shape by the prevalent Social Darwinist ideas of race deterioration. These provided what Gareth Stedman Jones described as a "framework for a comprehensive theory of hereditary urban degeneration." In effect, it was a view that city dwellers were a physically inferior social group. One application of this view was the recruitment by London transport services, the Metropolitan Police and specialised trades of country men in preference to London dwellers. For example, H Llewellyn-Smith, a contributor to Charles Booth's *Life and Labour in London*, 1902, claimed that builders preferred to employ country immigrants

<sup>10</sup> Defoe D. A Journal of the Plague Year. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966; 168. (first pub. 1722.)

<sup>11</sup> Hill C. The World Turned Upside Down. London: Penguin, 1975; 20.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Stedman Jones G. Outcast London. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984; 130.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid; 131.

"partly because of the physical strength they require." Llewellyn-Smith went on to suggest that the areas of London with the most rural inhabitants were the least degenerate, an observation he put forward as a "general law": the more country dwellers, the less degenerate the area; the more city dwellers, the more degenerate. Application of this test of degeneracy would focus simply on the urban or rural background of the population in question. 16

The growth of the cities in the 19th century and their associated problems attracted the concern of many Victorian policy makers and reformers. Prominent among the reformers were the "slumming journalists" (whose social reporting provides insights into 19th century urban life in Britain) and the private philanthropists.<sup>17</sup> Their writings and social surveys presented a dominant theme that linked poor health with a city populace who were demoralised, pauperised, depressed and diseased. It was impossible to avoid the urgent social problems of the 19th century cities.<sup>18</sup> The related decline of religious observance in the cities was also a matter of such concern to the Government that it provided for the building of new churches under the provisions of the 1818 Act.<sup>19</sup> This provision of moral infrastructure was accompanied by the construction of the public health infrastructure of sewers and drains which, as Chapter 4 argues, was also intended to address the moral as much as the public health needs of the new cities.

Governmental interest in reforming the health of the cities continued with amendments to health legislation throughout the second half of the 19th century. Yet, the urban population of Great Britain by the end of this century remained extremely

<sup>15</sup> Booth, Vol III, op cit; 96.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid; 123.

<sup>17</sup> In addition to the work of the work of Charles Booth, (op cit), there was Henry Mayhew's Labour and the Poor, (first published as a series of 82 letters in the Morning Chronicle during 1849 and 1850); Octavia Hill's The Homes of London Poor, (published as a pamphlet in 1875); Andrew Mearn's The Bitter Cry of Outcast London, (1883); George Sims' How the Poor Live, (1883); and William Booth's In Darkest England and the Way Out, (1890).

<sup>18</sup> Briggs A. Victorian Cities. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968; 12.

<sup>19</sup> This was part of a long standing concern about the morals of the city: see Thomas K. Religion and the Decline of Magic. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971; 205. This was also Durkheim's argument. See Suicide: A Study in Sociology. (1897) and Luke's analysis of Durkheim's theory. (Lukes S. Emile Durkheim. London: Penguin, 1975; chapter 9 especially, p 217.)

unhealthy, to the extent that it was seen as a national problem. In 1904, the *Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration* took much evidence about the health of the urban poor and focused in part on the country/city question. The Committee made observations on what it termed the issue of "urban degeneration", contrasting the problems of the cities with the apparent good health of the country. It subscribed to the idea that the city and ideas of urban modernism were threatening and corrupting to the country. For example, it took issue with the availability of tinned food which it feared was rapidly being taken up by farmers' wives as an alternative to their own well stocked gardens. One witness suggested that she attributed this trend to laziness and the proximity to London: "[T]he nearer you come to London the more infamous ... the food and cookery."<sup>20</sup> It was as though "germs of laziness" radiated out from the City.

The Committee claimed to have identified another threat to the country, expressed in the concern that the rural fit were being drawn to the towns, while the enfeebled town dwellers were moving to the country. Hence, "the rural districts (were) becoming ... both the recruiting ground and the asylum of the towns."21

Another response to the problems of urban dwellers in 19th century Britain was expressed in the idea that the problems of the city could be cured by the country. Thus, the victims of the city - "shipwrecked in life, character or circumstances" in the words of the Salvationist General William Booth - could be resettled in the country in a supporting and productive (though often controlled and regulated) environment. These people would be transferred back to the country, back to some kind of golden Arcadian age where:

the process of reformation of character would be carried forward ... including those forms of labour and that knowledge of agriculture which ... will qualify him for pursuing his fortunes under more favourable circumstances in some other land.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on National Deterioration (United Kingdom). Parliamentary Papers 1904, cd 2175; para 229.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Ibid; para 205.

<sup>22</sup> Booth W. In Darkest England and the Way Out. Atlanta: Salvation Army, 1984; 100.

Booth's discontent with the city was supported by other theorists. In 1918, the United States eugenicists, Popenoe and Johnson, in their text *Applied Eugenics*, listed a "back-to-the-farm movement" as one of the reforms necessary to address the problems of urban degeneration. Both sources were subscribing to a belief that rural living would help to counteract this evil, that urban destitutes might usefully be rehabilitated as agricultural workers.<sup>23</sup> The idea of reform through exposure to rural values has been (and remains) a prominent feature of social welfare policy.

There was another context in which the "country" was proposed as a way of changing the problems of urban life. Prominent town planners such as Ebenezer Howard saw the synthesis of country and city in the "garden city" which he claimed was the ideal way of housing populations that would otherwise live in crowded cities. The garden city combined the enterprise of the city with the "pure air and water" and the natural health of the country.<sup>24</sup> Here, the country was reforming the city by being planned into it.

This survey of British attitudes towards the country and the city illustrates the long standing idea that the city, in contrast with the country, was unhealthy and corrupting; that its problems were also threatening to the country by radiating out into it. This idea was expressed and built upon in different ways by many commentators. Yet, there was also a reforming response that has been important for public health policy. The city might threaten the country but, it was a place that could in part be changed by the values of reformers such as Ebanezer Howard and the New Town Movement. City dwellers might also be cured of their ills by the country and its values. It has such a strong appeal that the successors of the 19th century policies flourish today.

<sup>23</sup> Docker J. Can the Centre Hold?: Conceptions of the State 1890 - 1925. In Sydney Labour History Group. What Rough Beast? Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1982; 60. See also, Popenoe P B and Johnson R H. Applied Eugenics. New York: Macmillan, 1920.

<sup>24</sup> Howard E. Garden Cities of To-morrow. London: Faber, 1970. (originally pub. 1889.) Cheeseman R. Patterns in Perpetuity. Adelaide: Thornton House, 1986; 151-153. The, earlier, Gothic Revival, an influential school of 19th century architecture, drew its inspiration from the lost medieval world of England. (Clark K. The Gothic Revival. London: John Murray, 1962.)

#### 3 AUSTRALIA

Australian public health and social welfare policies and the ideas about the city and the country have many similarities with the British experience. The majority of Australians has always lived in the few cities along the Southern and Eastern coasts. In these cities, many concerns about health and welfare were to be found as they were in British cities. The responses to these issues by the local social reformers and commentators and the enthusiastic reporting of them by the slumming journalists was very similar to their British counterparts. It seemed that many of the worst problems of London's East End had simply been transported across the world to the tenements of Sydney's Rocks and to the mean alley ways around Bourke and Lonsdale streets in Melbourne. The problems of the city in Australia potentially stood stark in comparison with the health of the relatively few country dwellers.

In addition to the comparison based on living conditions or health, Australian history projected specific ideas that further emphasised the difference between the country and the city. The idealised Australian was a bushman. This has heightened the idea of the country as a valuable force. It is an ideal through which the Australian identity has been focused and defined. With this view prominent, writings about Australia and Australians have played upon the idea of the country and the city. Many popular writers, such as "Banjo" Paterson and, in a different way, Henry Lawson, have focused on the bush and constructed their heroes from bush men and women. For example, Paterson's poem *The Man from Ironbark*, depicts an innocent bushman, tricked and mocked by a flash Sydney barber (who is also an "s.p." - illegal - bookmaker). The bushman responds by laying into both the barber and his assortment of larrikin customers. In the broader sense, this represents the clash between honest rural credulity and the corrupt urban values of crime, trickery and sharp dealing.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Paterson A B. Collected Verse. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1982; 34.

This view of the worthwhile Australian as bushman is all the more significant given its mythical nature. Essentially, Australian society has always been urban (both Lawson and Paterson were city dwellers) and its European origins were also essentially urban. The first Europeans, mainly convicts, were predominantly petty criminals from urban backgrounds and it was from this group that the origin of mateship, the supposed social cement of male rural society, has been argued to have come.<sup>26</sup> It was not a product of the bush.<sup>27</sup> Despite this, the idea of mateship and the things that were valued in social relationships have been characterised as rural values.

This idealising of the bush complemented the importance of land in Australia. Its historic economic basis has largely been rural and has fostered the idea that the prosperity of Australians depends upon the farmer. The land has a strong economic as well as emotional attachment for European Australians. Rural settlement schemes illustrate both attachments. There have been many attempts at land settlement in Australia; some were the product of post war restructuring and others sought to provide a focus for English immigration.<sup>28</sup> Whatever the economic benefits of these schemes to the Nation, they emphasised strongly the supposed benefits to the prospective settlers, emphasising the improvement of both health and morals. This claim to improvement was explicit in one English advertisement for a *Dreadnought* farm. Located in "sunny New South Wales," it proudly claimed: "Here men are made."<sup>29</sup> In a story about farming in South Australia written in 1909, the point is put that: "life on a farm is better for ...[a] boy than living in Adelaide."<sup>30</sup>

Another facet of the rural development policy was the soldier settlement programmes that occurred after 1918. While they were not great successes overall, their

<sup>26</sup> Hirst J B. The Convict Society and its Enemies. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983; 32.

<sup>27</sup> Schedvin MB & CB. The Nomadic Tribes of Urban Britain, in Carrol J ed. Intruders in the Bush: The Australian Quest for Identity. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1982.

<sup>28</sup> Hirst J B. Adelaide and the Country 1870-1917. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1973; 3. and Sherington G. Australia's Immigrants. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1980; 94, 107.

<sup>29</sup> Sherrington, op cit; 95.

<sup>30</sup> Hirst (1973), op cit; 59.

initial popularity was remarkable. Ken Fry has written that 25% of all soldiers hoped to become farmers on their return. He attributes this popularity to the:

romantic, populist and arcadian idea that farming represented an ideal way of life because it was "close to nature", and therefore in some way morally superior to urban industrial life. 31

One prominent expression of the idealisation of the bush and its inhabitants was based simply on physical worth; the idea that the bushman was naturally superior to others. This was made explicit during World War I, when the bringing together of young soldiers from both country and city allowed comparisons. In this context, the rural ideal was exalted by C E W Bean and others in the descriptions of the first Australian soldiers sent abroad in 1914. These were descriptions that emphasised both the physical and the moral prowess of the bushman.

The initial, invidious, distinction between country and city was made by one author (John Cooper, a local Melbourne historian) at the door of the recruiting office itself. Here the town dwelling volunteers, urban factory workers, appal the country volunteers (from the fictional, but appropriately named country town of "Ironbark") by their "ill nourished bodies, narrow chests and general weedy appearance." The bushmen on the other hand, "stripped well, appearing to be as hard as nails."32

The Light Horse Brigades were mounted units and attracted a high number of country recruits. They also received lavish praise. Summarising the view of one Official War Historian, Gerster has written that they were seen as:

the very flower of their race. They were a remarkable band of brothers in arms ... drawn from the wide and fragrant countryside. ... Despite their relaxed bearing

<sup>31</sup> Fry K. Soldier Settlement and the Australian Agrarian Myth After the First World War, 1985. Labour Hist 48: 29-43; 41.

<sup>32</sup> Cooper J B. Coo-oo-ee! A Tale of Bushmen from Australia to Anzac. quoted in Gerster R. Big Noting: The Heroic Theme in Australian War Writing. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1987; 42. See also, Bean's pre 1914 comparisons on the same theme, cited in Davison G. The City-Bred Child and Urban Reform in Melbourne 1900 - 1940. in Williams P ed. Social Process and the City. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983; 147.

they were distinguished by great physical strength, superb athleticism and a love of physical exercise even more ardent than the ancient Greeks.<sup>33</sup>

Even the excesses and disgraces of the Australians in Cairo were not seen by some prominent commentators to be the fault of the troopers of the Light Horse regiments, though Gerster says that as many of them were sent home as any other group. For Bean, the official correspondent, responsibility for these misdemeanours lay with the infantry and a "certain class of waster" who had enlisted with it.<sup>34</sup> Implicitly, then, this indiscipline was an urban rather than a rural problem. Bean's attitude to the AIF and to the Light Horse in particular was almost mystical and embodied his veneration of rural Australia. He saw the soldiers as "fundamentally the shining product of the wide open spaces, cleansed by the burning winds and the simple strengthening lives of those spaces." <sup>135</sup>

These wartime reminiscences were very powerful in shaping myths about idealised Australians that emphasised the value of the country over the city. They were added to by other fictional accounts and descriptions of rural life that made the same point. For example, in Mary Grant Bruce's popular children's novel *Gray's Hollow*, published in 1914, the Sydney cousins, on a visit to the country, are described as "pale and languid with limp handshakes." They dislike games and despise rural simplicity but eventually, after sufficient exposure to rural ways, are reformed.<sup>36</sup>

The articulation of the "country as good" and the "city as bad" within an Australian context was made more significant by the consequences that flowed from the idea. As in the British experience, the point was made by some that the city was threatening and stood

bush, notwithstanding the rough life led in it, is the stronghold of hospitality and good feeling. (Quoted in Gibson R. *The Diminishing Paradise: Changing Literary Perceptions of Australia*. Sydney: Sirius, 1984; 74.)

<sup>33</sup> Gerster, op cit; 46. See Gullett H. Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Vol VII Sinai and Palestine. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1939; 30, 33, 35-36.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Gerster, op cit; 53. See also, Bean's comment that it was the "old soldiers and Boer War veterans" rather than country enlistees that were the main troublemakers in Cairo. Bean C E W. *Gallipoli Correspondent*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983; 37, 38.

<sup>35</sup> McCarthy D. Gallipoli to the Somme. Sydney: John Fergusson, 1983; 95.

<sup>36</sup> This and similar passages are included in Brenda Niall's analysis of Australian children's fiction. - Niall B. Australia Through the Looking Glass. Melbourne: Melb Univ P,1984; 118. See also, G H Haydon, who in 1846, wrote Five Years' Experience in Australia Felix. Haydon wrote:

Illness is almost unknown in the bush; a life there is far preferable to living in the towns ... The

to corrupt and infect the country. For example, this idea was presented powerfully in some of the popular Australian magazines of the day. In 1895, Louisa Lawson, in her periodical, The Dawn, complained about what she saw as the general dirtiness of Sydney. In her view, no one, however careful, was safe. She wrote "we must constantly run the risk of inhaling the germs of the most terrible diseases as we walk through the City."37 The moral threat to the City was also significant. In 1866, the Newcastle Chronicle complained of the burden to rural taxpayers of remedying the costs of child destitution, said (though not accurately) by the paper to be a City problem.38 The Bulletin adopted a more generalised and florid view of this question. Written and produced by thoroughly urbanised men, it saw the "city" as a place of vice, which sat with the paper's other betes noires, Asian immigration and British influence. Together, these were themes through which the Bulletin's idea of emerging Australian nationalism was expressed. In 1899, A G Stephens, the Bulletin's most prominent journalist, wrote that Australia's future lay with the individualism and strength of its rural population and not with the "criminal aggregation of the people in the coastal cities" who presented a threat to the future. Stephens continued his theme over the next 20 years. The cities, he claimed, were "bloated" places of easy life and high wages, of public houses and picture shows. They were "tumours" whose insatiable demands were starving the country.39

This view, that the bush was at risk from the city, was expressed in the context of public health when the threat was said to be a threat of disease. In 1867, during debates on the Queensland Contagious (ie venereal) Disease legislation, one member of Parliament claimed that "he had no doubt the disease was carried from the towns to the bush." This idea that the City was threatening was articulated in another public health

<sup>37</sup> Lawson O. The First Voice of Australian Feminism: Excerpts From Louisa Lawson's The Dawn. Sydney: Simon and Schuster, 1990; 156.

<sup>38</sup> Ramsland J. Children of the Backlanes: Destitute and Neglected Children in New South Wales. Sydney: Univ of NSW P, 1986; 139.

<sup>39</sup> See the essays of Stephens For Australians and For Australia, both published in the Bulletin and reproduced in Cantrell L ed. A G Stephens: Selected Writings. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1978; 306-406, especially 398, 404, 405. See also Sydney Labour History Group, op cit; 72, 73.

<sup>40</sup> Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 15 October, 1867; 474.

context during the debates on the South Australian *Health Bill*, 1898. One member, talking of the Adelaide milk supply, eulogised about the "clear heads and strong bodies" of the country dwellers whose simple life kept them free of disease. The country he said had no need of the sterilisation of its milk; it came from "a cleaner, greener land in the ranges." By comparison, the city was a dangerous place, threatening to health and to the country. He emphasised this point by quoting the poet Cowper:

The town has tinged the country, and that stain appears a spot upon the vestal's robe, the worse for what it soils.<sup>41</sup>

By implication, the product of the City was contaminated and threatening to health. The product of the Country was not.

The idea of the country threatened by the city can still be identified. A common response to the troubles of the country has been to identify as culprits, "outsiders" from the City. In 1991, a National Nurses' Conference in Australia was told of the difficulty AIDS educators were experiencing in rural areas. Their work was said to be threatening to these communities on the basis that it was interpreted as "promoting promiscuity and homosexuality." These were said to be seen as threatening and alien "city values."42

There is also a view among country dwellers that certain diseases are restricted to the city and are not a problem for the country. Commenting on a steep rise in venereal disease rates, in New South Wales in 1992, a health worker said "a lot of country people think that it (venereal disease) doesn't apply to them ... that (the diseases) are a city problem." This view was particularly significant since some of the country areas reported the highest rates.<sup>43</sup>

As in Britain, Australian health and welfare policy articulated the country/city dichotomy in its endeavours to reform and improve. Improvements to personal health

<sup>41</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 2 December, 1898; 1013.

<sup>42</sup> Advertiser, 23 March, 1991; 23.

<sup>43</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 10 July, 1992; 3.

could, in the view of some medical practitioners, be achieved by adopting rural lifestyles. In 1913, the South Australian head of public health told an international conference that habits promoting fresh air and imitating rural life such as "camping out" and "sleeping out" were beneficial to health.44 One prominent text book in public health, published the next year, also took this view and eulogised the benefits of fresh air and rural living. Approvingly, it cited Lord Baden-Powell's advice on this subject: that the whole population should "live outside for a month each year, reviving and expanding a custom ... deemed essential to the national well being."45 Fresh air was widely seen as a cure for consumption and other diseases. The idea spawned the *Fresh Air League*, formed in Sydney in 1895, one of whose interests was providing the sick and respectable poor with summer holidays in the country.46

More broadly, the dichotomy shaped the social welfare policies related to young delinquents placed in care. Social welfare administrators employed a number of strategies to remove children who came to the attention of the police and welfare system from the evils of the city. Margaret Barbelet, in her study of female state wards in South Australia, has outlined the concerted policy of that Government to send the girls to work in the country, away from the temptations of city life, where there was every hope that the girls would be "morally improved" by the simplicity and hard working nature of country life. In reality, they risked squalor, poverty and often exploitation that seemed to be the lot of

<sup>44</sup> Smith W Ramsay. Compulsory Notification of Pulmonary Tuberculosis in South Australia. Adelaide: Government printer, 1913; 5. The idea was followed up in the design of Australian houses in the early part of the 20th century, with their enclosed verandahs and sleepouts to maximise the benefits of fresh air. (Taylor A. Craftsman Bungalows in Blackburn, 1986. Historic Environment, 4: 4-18; 9 and fn 8. Cuffley P. Australian Houses in the 20s and 30s. Melbourne: Five Mile Press, 1989; 21.)

<sup>45</sup> Springthorpe J W. Therapeutics, Dietetics and Hygiene, Vol 1. Melbourne: Ford and Son, 1914; 172. This view was firmly held by other writers on chest diseases in the 1890s. See also Neale A J. Consumption in its Modern Aspect: Its Prevention and Cure by Climatic and Open Air Treatment. Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, (undated - 1890s) - He wrote "the main thing at the bottom of all is simple pure air." (;58) Turner D. Air and Diet in Chronic Chest Disease. Melbourne: Melville, Mullins and Slade, 1893. Turner advocated both altitude and a rural aspect as important cures for these conditions. He claimed that "it was in the cities that the greatest concentration of destructive bacteria in the air is the greatest." (; 3)

<sup>46</sup> The aim of the League was to provide the "tired and weary of our respectable poor, exhausted by domestic cares, and more especially the young with a country holiday during the summer months." By 1892, the League claimed that some 2,000 persons had enjoyed "four weeks country air" through its work. The League's pamphlets were decorated with bucolic scenes of hay wagons and rosy faced children gathering wild flowers. (Fresh Air League. *Rules and Regulations*. Sydney: Fresh Air League, undated-1890s.)

so many relocated under these and other schemes.<sup>47</sup> So strong was the idea of the reformist power of the country that these realities were read down in favour of the wider ideal. These traditions of rural values had, as their direct descendant, the country living programmes for drug and alcohol dependent persons such as the Ashbourne facility, described in Chapter 1. They built on the idea of the curative value of a rustic environment far removed from the temptations of the city.

The Australian experience of the country and the city, has therefore been significant, both in shaping views about health but also, in directing health and welfare policies. The health aspects reflect the wider view which has been central to the way that Australians have seen themselves and the idea of the bushman and his mateship, whatever its reality and origins, has been accepted as a central part of Australia's popular cultural values.

#### 4 UNITED STATES

In the United States, the contrast between country and city has also been a powerful issue in the social life of the community, reflected in ideas about health policy. Like Australia, the United States experience has emphasised the rural frontier community. This notwithstanding the fact that, historically, its main economic power lay in the urban communities of the North East. Rural values have been exalted as "real" American values. Within this context, there are the two important themes: one of threat, the other of cure and each had a bearing on public health policy. One prominent playing out of these

<sup>47</sup> Barbalet M. Far from a Low Gutter Girl. Melbourne: Oxford U P, 1983; 52. See also O'Brien. A Poverty's Prison: The Poor in New South Wales 1888-1918. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1988; 122, 145-150. Dickey B. No Charity There: A Short History of Social Welfare in Australia. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987; 47. See also the descriptions of the harsh conditions of those brought to Australia and Canada under the various British "Child Immigrant" schemes. (These are outlined in a series of oral histories in Bean P and Melville J. Lost Children of the Empire. London: Unwin, 1989.)

themes was through the 19th and early 20th century temperance movement, whose supporters argued for a prohibition on the sale of alcoholic products in the United States.<sup>48</sup>

In the temperance debate, the city was presented by the supporters of prohibition as the place of intemperance and vice. The country, by comparison, was said to be a place of rural decency, honesty and temperance. This expressed the traditional divide through a public health lens. Gusfield, has characterised the movement as an aspect of the clash between the values of traditional, rural America and the values of the new urban and immigrant masses. Building on this idea, the city was threatening to the country. One example was the economic plight of the small farmer in debt to the urban institutions of bankers and financiers. Temperance reformers described a world where the "sober man was the underdog" and where the saloon, like the bank, was "pre-eminently an urban institution." In essence, the movement argued that the "growth of urban communities would wreck the republic." 50

There were other contexts in which health was used to emphasise the threat of the city to the country. Venereal disease was said by some to be a product of the cities. The anonymity and loneliness of these places was seen as a contributing factor in its spread amongst young workers arriving from the country. Prostitution, and with it venereal disease, was considered to be a problem of industrialisation. In the early 1900s, a New York Vice Commission insisted that "America's burgeoning metropolises provided ubiquitous opportunities for social contacts that could lead to moral decline." 51 So here, it was the place itself rather than the behaviours of individual people in it that attracted the focus of concern.

<sup>48</sup> This was realised Nationally in 1919 with the passage of the *Volstead Act* and a period of prohibition was put in place that lasted until 1933.

<sup>49</sup> Gusfield J R. Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement. Urbana: Univ of Illinois P, 1963; 96, 99.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid; 100.

<sup>51</sup> Brandt A M. No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States since 1880. New York: Oxford UP, 1985; 33. This was powerfully developed in Scott Fitzgerald's novel The Great Gatsby where the protagonists, innocents from the mid-west, come to New York and become corrupted by its urban values. (Fitzgerald F S. The Great Gatsby. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986.) In this context, Gusfield says that amongst the natural enemies of the temperance movement were the "sophisticated Eastern society people." (op cit; 106.)

As with Britain and Australia, United States health policy tended to focus some curative programmes through the idea that the country could cure the evils of the city. As in Australia, tuberculosis cures emphasised the importance of a rural lifestyle as part of the curative process. Since deaths from tuberculosis, as elsewhere, were mainly an urban phenomenon, the significance of a cure away from this source of infection, and therefore in the country, had a logical appeal. Sanatoria were situated in isolated rural areas providing the fresh air and exposure to the outdoors which were said to be the elements of the cure. In the 1860s, American consumptives were encouraged to escape the city by travelling Westwards. This movement was advocated in a book, *Gaining Health in the West*, written by a former sufferer. Such a radical and complete departure from urban life carried with it a symbolic value of the sufferer leaving the source of the infection far behind in the city and emphasised the role of the country as a power for purification.<sup>52</sup>

This short analysis of two issues in United States public health policy is another example of how arguments about health have built on the idea of the "good" country and the "bad" city. The Temperance debates used the idea to articulate the notion that the city was a dangerous place and threatening to the country but more generally to the collective values of the established American community. The tuberculosis cures built on the idea that the country was a place in which the evils of the city might be cured. These were public health expressions of the more general idea, which continues to be expressed in the contemporary linking of place, "middle America", with traditional social values. This dichotomy has always been a powerful issue in American social life and the "true" values of the United States community have traditionally been, and continue to be, widely seen as those of the small country town and the farm.

<sup>52</sup> Whitaker C R. Chasing the Cure, 1974. Bull Hist Med, 48: 398-415; 411.

### 5 THE HEALTH OF THE CITY / THE HEALTH OF THE COUNTRY

The health of city dwellers in the 19th century was in many cases poor and generally worse than that of those who lived in the country. The rapid development of new towns, their crowded and insanitary conditions, the severe levels of environmental pollution all contributed to the poor health of the city population. This gave substance to the idea of the city as a place of ill health. There are data to suggest that rural dwellers in both Britain and Australia had less disease and a lower rate of premature mortality than people living in towns. This is implied for Britain by the Bills of Mortality and parish records compiled by medical practitioners in the 18th and 19th centuries. One of the first detailed accounts of the health of the community was published in 1750 by Thomas Short. This suggests, though somewhat crudely, a significantly higher infant mortality rate for London than for country parishes. Granted these differences, it was the explanation given to them that needs to be considered. For example, Short believed that this comparison was not simply that of a city and a country environment, it was also a comparison between "Manner of life", between:

such as live in an open and pent-up Air, loaded with Variety of Effluvia; between a laborious and idle life; between luxury and plain simple Diet; between Temperance and Intemperance.<sup>53</sup>

Here, the nexus between immorality and ill-health was quite explicit.

Some decades later, at the end of the 18th century, Dr Price, the "scientific founder" of the Equitable Insurance Society extended this work. He noted that length of life in the cities was almost half that in the country. As well as the insanitary conditions of the towns, Price attributed this difference to "the irregular modes of life, the luxuries, the debaucheries, and pernicious customs, which prevail more in towns than in the country."54

<sup>53</sup> Short T. New Observations on City, Town and Country Bills of Mortality. London: Gregg International Pub, 1973; 98.

<sup>54</sup> Farr W. Vital Statistics. London: Sanitary Institute of Great Britain, 1885; 103.

Some medical practitioners sought reasons why a relatively low mortality rate existed in the country. In one particularly healthy district, a doctor gave the reason as relating to the abundance of plain substantial food, the pure bracing atmosphere of the place and the intelligence and abstemious nature of its inhabitants.<sup>55</sup>

In these cases, the medical observations were coloured by the observer's "way of seeing", in the sense that the country dwellers were not healthier simply because the cities were environmentally unpleasant places. They were said to be healthier because they were considered *better people*. The health data had been fitted into the pre-existing moral framework and the reasons for these health differences were seen as moral.

Not all observers came to this conclusion. In his study of public health in 19th century England, William Farr also noted a substantial difference between the health of the city and the country. For example, he reported that the infant mortality rate in large towns was over twice that of healthy urban districts. However, Farr attributed this to environmental causes (such as poor sanitation and pollution) rather than moral causes. He also determined that there were healthy towns and unhealthy towns.<sup>56</sup>

In South Australia in 1891, Thomas Borthwick published an analysis of mortality rates in the Adelaide local government area, other Corporate Towns and the country areas of the Province. His data suggest that Adelaide and the few non-metropolitan towns had a higher mortality rate overall than the country for the most common causes of death.

However, Adelaide city, the most concentrated body of population, did not always have the greatest death rate. Some country towns had a greater rate for particular causes such

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Ibid; 149.

<sup>56</sup> Farr, op cit; 161-168. In other descriptions of English life, its rural residents were not always regarded as enjoying a universal state of good health. Thomas Malthus rejected the idea that the country was a place where good health was to be found. He described the sons of rural labourers as particularly stunted in their growth, and "a long while arriving at maturity." Poverty and mean conditions existed in both city and country and here, Malthus was not making a comparison between the industrial city and the country. He was writing in 1798, before the worst of the urban development prompted by the Industrial revolution had occurred. (Malthus T. An Essay on the Principles of Population. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986; 94.) For at least one Victorian author, the problems of the city were not as significant as those of the country. In The Adventure of the Copper Beeches, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle prompted Sherlock Holmes to make the following observation: "It is my belief Watson ... that the lowest and vilest alleys in London do not present a more dreadful record of sin than does the smiling and beautiful countryside." Here Holmes was referring to the isolation of the country houses and the opportunities that this presented for crime. It produced a predictably startled cry of disbelief from Dr Watson whose bucolic reverie about the countryside had been rudely shattered by this observation. (Conan-Doyle A. The Illustrated Sherlock Holmes. New York: Avenel, 1976; 161.)

as respiratory or enteric diseases. Here, it was not the simple aggregation of people as such, "the city", that had the greatest impact on health. Rather, it was the particular issues of each town, of poor sanitation and occupational illness that stood most significantly to affect the death rate.<sup>57</sup> Generalised comments about the city, the "spot on the vestal's robe", as statements about health, could not be sustained on the data alone. Yet, these comments were commonly made and the detailed patterns of Australian mortality data were also lost in the general idea that the Australian country dwellers had healthier lives than their city counterparts and that this difference was the result of their leading *better* lives. In 1892, a guidebook to the Australian Colonies said this of the country: "epidemics have little chance of spreading, people lead temperate outdoor lives, the plain fare does not tempt one to practice gluttony, early hours are the rule."<sup>58</sup> However, neither a starkly positive nor a negative view could be sustained on the data. Rather, those who were claiming otherwise, who were claiming that the country was simply a better place than the city, were reflecting the more general idea, informed by the dichotomy of country and city, that good things and good health were *of* the country.

#### 6 CONCLUSION

The idea of the "country and the city" has been a highly significant way of categorising good from bad. So entrenched is this view that it was a given, a "way of seeing." Essentially, it was a view about good and bad - a view that "God made the

<sup>57</sup> Borthwick T. A Contribution to the Demography of South Australia. London: Bailliere, Tindall and Cox, 1891 tables 19 and 20. The public health of Adelaide in the 19th century has been a matter of conflicting opinion. For some, it was a "city of stenches" or a "city built on a dunghill", for others it was "one of the finest drained cities in the Southern Hemisphere." In 1898, Sir John Downer said that Adelaide was "the purest, best looked after, and most healthy city in the world." The historian John Hirst, describing Adelaide at the turn of the century, concluded that the city's public health was good. The debate has not been resolved other than to say that the public health of Adelaide was worse than some centres of rural population but better than others. (Hirst (1973), op cit; 59. See also, Woodruff P. Two Million South Australians. Adelaide: Peacock Pub, 1984; 34. Hammerton M. Water South Australia. Adelaide: Wakefield P, 1986; 83.)

<sup>58</sup> James G L. Shall I Try Australia? or Health, Business and Pleasure in New South Wales. London: Edward Howell and Simpkin Marshall Hamilton Kent & Co, 1892; 241.

country and man made the town."<sup>59</sup> With it has come the idea that the country stands for order, prosperity and tranquillity. Such ideas have been described as the product of nostalgia or of imaginations in search of some ideal which has taken the shape of an Arcadian past or a utopian future. It has been said to be a reaction by some to change and modernism, seen as urban phenomena, and to the association of the cities with change and strangers. The fact that the romantic view of the country was really a mirage has not dampened its appeal or significance.<sup>60</sup>

This underlying view has been very significant in explaining the public health policies which sought to address the problems of the cities. These problems were not seen simply as environmental but a product of the aggregation of the people in them. They were centrally moral issues and so moral improvement could be argued to have a legitimate place on the agenda of public health reform. Associated with this view was the idea that the city was threatening to the country. This was expressed in the spread of disease or intemperance or the danger to the national health, posed by the unproductive consumption of the city and its degenerate inhabitants, feeding upon and weakening the country.

There was also the reforming aspect of the country/city idea. It allowed unquestioning assumptions about what made "good" health. It emphasised the rural cures that distanced the sufferer from the city. It prompted folk ideas about the benefits of fresh country air and wholesome country food that are still with us. It added moral agendas to the reform of the cities and to the preservation and the protection of the country and its significance can be identified in current public health policies.

Health and beliefs about health were symbolic expressions that articulated and strengthened the two classifications of country and city. They went beyond the limits of fact; beyond the data that suggested, though not overwhelmingly or consistently, that the towns were less healthy places than the country. Rather, they introduced moral values

<sup>59</sup> Williams, op cit; 54.

Williams has written: "When we moved back in time, consistently directed to an earlier and happier rural England, we could find no place, no period, in which we could seriously rest." (Ibid; 35.)

into ideas of health and made general statements about worth and degeneration, which seemed unrelated to the environmental issues of rapid urban growth. These were statements whose subject matter was health: they were not statements about health. Rather, the statements were ways in which categories were articulated and sharpened; they emphasised that there was a boundary between these two categories. They were specific responses by those who sensed the threat of change and modernism, who looked back to an age they believed free of those threats and saw it as the "country." The country had become the embodiment of things that are good and virtuous. Ideas about public health were used to emphasise that point; its policies were also shaped by it.

### POSTSCRIPT - CHAPTERS 1 to 6.

The first part of this Thesis (Chapters 1 to 6) develops the proposition that community views about public health and disease are influenced strongly by the social circumstances of the groups that hold those views. Specifically, the views have often played a part in: protecting and reinforcing the boundaries of social categories, distancing outsiders and labelling outgroups as dirty or diseased. Thus: when intrusions blurred these categories they were characterised as health problems; intruders were diseased and insanitary and threatening to the wider community; dirt was matter out of place and threatened order; and physical anomalies such as lepers were "dangerous" and were controlled more stringently because of this.

The work of Emile Durkheim, his focus on the solidarity of communities and the collective values that hold them together and the development of these ideas by Mary Douglas and others provides an important basis for explaining what might otherwise remain problematic for public health - why groups were singled out and blamed so enthusiastically for health deficiencies when the evidence seemed unconvincing or where the problems of the environment in which they lived seemed so obvious and pressing. This body of theory offers a symbolic, rather than a medicalised or "scientific", way of seeing public health policy; that it has sharpened categories and policed margins and protected communities from the threats from outside that stood to dilute or weaken their sense of self. Current public health law suggests that this type of thinking remains important for the formation of public health policy.

The three boundaries that have been the subject of the earlier chapters - those that exist between: social classes; strangers and communities; and country and city - all provide examples of public health policies and attitudes directed towards protecting the community or its values from the outsider and the threat. Generally, this process was "owned" and applied by dominant social groups, for example, the middle and upper classes, established communities or those with a traditional value system. However, as the hygiene rules practised by Gypsy women illustrates, the process, though it was often about

power - the dominant group responding to intruders and threats - or, used as a way of explaining and justifying inequality, it was, most importantly, about separation and protection of the group.

The second part of this Thesis (Chapters 7 to 9) places these themes in the context of Australian public health policy in the 19th and 20th centuries as it applied to new arrivals and other outsiders. It illustrates the importance of the theories about public health and boundaries developed in earlier chapters and provides an Australian, historical, context through which immigration and the related issue of racism and the social policies relating to minorities can be considered.

# CHAPTER 7 "VICE AND VEGETABLES": THE CHINESE IN AUSTRALIA

## 1 INTRODUCTION - THE CHINESE IN 19TH CENTURY AUSTRALIA

As Melburnians opened their copies of the *Age* on 6 July 1857, they read of two recent celebrations. Page 6 carried a detailed and lengthy report of a dinner held in Melbourne's Criterion Hotel to celebrate the Fourth of July anniversary of the American Declaration of Independence. It also carried a briefer report on the opening of a Chinese joss house on the Buckland Valley diggings in the remote North East of the Colony. According to the *Age*, the dinner represented a gathering of local American citizens and other dignitaries to celebrate "the day of days to every American heart." The dining hall was lavishly decorated with many national flags and "banners draped in graceful folds; underneath a shield; above an eagle." Copies of the American Constitution and George Washington's farewell address hung from the walls, while "at the head of the table stood a massive silver epergne loaded with choice flowers, making a pretty finish to the arrangements."

The joss house had been opened some days before the dinner. In the racy and condescending style that came to typify newspaper accounts of the Chinese, a local journalist described the opening ceremony and celebration. The outside of the building was decorated with a scroll containing "Chinese hieroglyphics." Inside, there was a large mirror. On seeing their reflections, the Chinese broke into smiles. One smiling Chinaman reminded the journalist "of a large baboon when presented with an apple." On a central table, stood three "ordinary ale glasses filled with some sort of liquid too pale for ale or wine" and on either side, "what appeared to be a couple of silver plated candle sticks." The table was further decorated with "gaudy coloured paper covered with numerous Chinese devices." In describing the ceremony, the journalist went to some lengths to convey the sounds of the devotees and their musical instruments, "making a chorus that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Age, 6 July, 1857; 6.

defied description." He was also taken with the appearance of an officiating person he took to be a "high priest." The old man's beard reminded him of the whiskers of a tabby cat and he took particular note that the Chinaman had dispensed with wearing socks for the ceremony.

In these two stories, the gulf between the embryonic Australian and the Chinese cultures is presented massively. The world of the Chinese in 19th century Australia was alien and incomprehensible for almost all Australians. At best it was portrayed with a sense of detached amusement. At worst, with the idea that it was threatening to the Australian community. So overwhelming was the view that the Chinese were a group of aliens removed from European values that it is unlikely that the stark irony in these two articles appearing side by side struck the readers of the *Age*. There was a further irony: by the time the Joss House story appeared in print, the building was a smoking ruin, destroyed along with much other Chinese property in the anti-Chinese riots on the Buckland Valley diggings that had also occurred on the fourth of July.

They were uninvited; they were said to lessen the opportunities of the European miners and workers with whom they were in competition on the gold diggings; they came in large numbers and kept closely together; and, most obviously, they were different in appearance and manners. From the first descriptions of them it seems that, for many European observers, the Chinese were a pestilence, a dehumanised mass. One wrote in 1854: "when I first came in sight of them, I could not make out what was coming. They were winding across the plain like a long black mark."<sup>2</sup>

A closer examination seemed to do little to reassure the colonists who, standing by the roadsides, watched the Chinese as they made their way to the diggings:

 $<sup>^2</sup>$  Chandler J. Forty Years in the Wilderness, cited in Clark M. Select Documents in Australian History 1851-1900. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1955; 67.

trotting in single file ... in blue lines that often extended for miles ... each group was guided and incomprehensibly exhorted by a headman, and when they camped for the night, their tents formed quite a little township by the roadside.<sup>3</sup>

Public health concerns were a prominent part of the case against the Chinese in 19th century Australia. This chapter examines the European response to Chinese immigration to Australia over this period. It considers how that response was shaped by the language of public health; how disease, hygiene and morals became prominent ways through which anti-Chinese feeling was articulated. This emphasised their alien status, their sense of threat and their distance from European society. Responding to these ideas, public health regulations and policies focused on the Chinese and policed the margins of European society in Australia; they were part of the general process of exclusion and immigration control directed at the Chinese. Here was a prominent example of how the language of public health and public health policy could be redirected from issues of health significance to focus on unpopular minorities that were seen as dangerous and polluting outsiders.

This Chapter will examine the following four assertions about the Chinese and public health in 19th century Australia. Namely that: Chinese arrivals introduced disease and that this threatened the Australian community; that their living standards were insanitary and, because of this, the Chinese presented another health risk to the community; that they posed a moral threat to Australians (particularly women and children) as a result of their opium use and sexual behaviour; and that they were subhuman, a race physically apart from and threatening to Europeans. The Chapter draws on contemporary sources - the newspapers and popular periodicals of the time - and governmental sources such as annual reports of health authorities, special commissions of inquiry into the Chinese and the parliamentary debates associated with the passage of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Kiddle M. Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria, 1834-1890. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1961; 193. See also, Blainey G. Our Side of the Country, Sydney: Methuen Haynes, 1984; 49, Cronin K. Colonial Casualties: Chinese in Early Victoria. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1982; 50 and Serle G. The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria 1851-1861. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1977; 321 and 325.

public health and explicit anti-Chinese legislation in the Australian Colonies during the second half of the 19th century.<sup>4</sup>

The first groups of Chinese arrived in Australia before the gold rush, imported in the 1840s and early 1850s to ease the labour shortages in the rural industries.<sup>5</sup> However, it was the gold discoveries that brought many Chinese to Australia, along with people from many other parts of the world, in hopes of finding a fortune. They were committed to returning to China. Like all diggers, their intention was to find enough gold to provide for their future.<sup>6</sup> From a high in the 1850s, when the Chinese amounted to over 25,000 in Victoria (8% of the Colony's population,) their numbers dropped steadily though, on occasions, they appeared to increase as new gold fields were discovered.<sup>7</sup> These, more focused, changes to the Chinese population were used as evidence of a renewed onslaught.<sup>8</sup> As new arrivals, the Chinese became an easy focus for concern since they stood out as visibly different in a community characterised by its homogenous, British,

<sup>4</sup> The Reports used centrally in this Chapter are as follows; where not cited fully, they will be cited in the text by year, Colony and author:

New South Wales: Eleventh Progress Report of the Sydney City and Suburban Sewerage and Health Board. (Pell Report) Parliamentary Papers (Legis A), 1875, no 42. The Select Committee on Common Lodging Houses. (Cameron Report) Parliamentary Papers (Legis A), 1875-1876, no 396. Chinese Camps, Report Upon. (Brennan and Quong Tart Report) New South Wales Legislative Council J, 1883-1884, vol 36, pt3; 1655. New South Wales Royal Commission into Chinese Gambling and Related Issues. (Manning Commission) Parliamentary Papers (Legis Council Journal), 1891-1892 Vol 49 Pt 5; 691.

Victoria: Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Gold Fields. (Westgarth Commission)
Parliamentary Papers, 1854-1855, no 76. Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on Chinese Immigration (Fawkner Committee). Parliamentary Papers, 1856-1857. Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Victorian Goldfields (Young Report). Parliamentary Papers, 1868, no 56. (With one notable exception, Quong Tart, the authors of all these views were Europeans.)

<sup>5</sup> Cronin, op cit; 15. Evans R. Keeping Australia Clean White, in Burgmann V and Lee J ed. A Most Valuable Acquisition: A People's History of Australia Since 1788. Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1988; 178.

<sup>6</sup> Yong C F. The New Gold Mountain. Adelaide: Raphael Arts, 1977; 1-3. 1856-1857, Victoria (Fawkner Committee). Parliamentary Papers, 1856-1857, Minutes of Evidence, questions 17 - 18 and 238. Campbell P C. Chinese Coolie Immigration to Countries Within the British Empire. London: P S King and Son, 1923; 68-51.

<sup>7</sup> Their increase was over the period of the alluvial diggings, where gold was easily gained by individuals or small groups. This allowed the Chinese and others to work independently; it also heightened the competition between individuals for the available yields. (For a discussion of the social effects of alluvial and more complex mining, see Bate W. Victorian Gold Rushes. Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1988.) Every year between 1881 and 1891 demonstrated a steady decline in the Chinese population in Victoria. See Cronin, op cit; 134 and Serle, op cit; Appendix 1, 2. See also Census of Victoria, 1861; Statistical Register for the Colony of Victoria, 1881 (Pt 1 Blue Book) and 1891.

<sup>8</sup> Age 27 January, 1886; 15. Markus A. Divided We Fall: The Chinese and the Melbourne Furniture Trade Union 1870-1900, 1974. *Labour History*. 26: 1-10; 3. Between 1880 and 1881, it increased by 10,000, to 38,500. This was largely attributable to the opening up of the Queensland goldfields. See Price C A. *The Great White Walls Are Built*. Canberra. ANU Press, 1974; 277.

origins and, for most Australians, the Chinese were an impersonal yellow mass, bringing with them disease, vice and economic ruin. Sometimes, this resulted in overt violence and deaths, such as occurred on the gold fields of Lambing Flat and the Buckland Valley. Generally, the violence was sporadic and the hostility felt by Europeans tended to find its expression in newspapers, public meetings and calls for increased legislative controls over Chinese immigration.

The response by the Colonial governments, to restrict Chinese immigration, occurred during two periods of anti-Chinese feeling. Firstly, legislation of the 1850s imposed poll taxes on arriving Chinese. This was put in place against the backdrop of the first gold rushes. These controls were intended to be an effective prohibition on their entry however, the Acts were repealed in the 1860s. The second wave of restrictive legislation commenced in 1881, following an Intercolonial Conference convened by Sir Henry Parkes the Premier of New South Wales. The Colonies passed new restrictive legislation, based either on a poll tax or a limitation on the number of arriving Chinese immigrants calculated by the tonnage of each arriving ship. 13

By 1888, anti-Chinese feeling was running at fever pitch and scarcely an edition of the main Australian newspapers appearing in May and June of that year failed to deal at some lengths with what was termed the "Chinese Problem." A rally of 40,000 protesters had occurred in Sydney on 2 June and a Second Intercolonial Conference (commencing 12

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> The Chinese in the 19th century, were by far the largest "foreign", that is non-British, national group. In the late 1850s, the Chinese population in Australia was eight times larger than the next largest foreign population, the German community. (Price, op cit; 73.) See also the discussion in Markus A. Comment, 1985. *Labour History*, 48: 86-91; 88.

<sup>10</sup> These were the most publicised anti-Chinese riots. There were others; violence occurred at a number of fields, including Ararat and Bendigo. (Cronin, op cit; 53.) Anti-Chinese violence also occurred on the Californian gold fields, see Markus A. Fear and Hatred. Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1979; 4.

<sup>11</sup> An Act to Make Provision for Certain Immigrants 1855 (Vic). It was followed by An Act to Regulate the Residence of the Chinese Population in Victoria 1857 This was the first Colony to respond. Other Colonies passed similar legislation, including South Australia and New South Wales, both in 1857.

<sup>12</sup> The Victorian legislation was repealed in two parts. The residence tax was repealed in 1862 on the basis that it was burdensome and that non payment of the fee led to the imprisonment of many Chinese (Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 25 February 1862; 683.) The entry tax was repealed in 1863 because it was said to be too difficult to enforce and that the numbers of arriving Chinese were in any event declining. (Victorian Parliamentary Debates 19 January 1863; 926.)

<sup>13</sup> A survey of this legislation is contained in Willard M. History of the White Australia Policy to 1920. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1923; 65.

June) supported more stringent entry controls. These second and third waves of legislative restriction were put in place during a period when the Chinese population in Australia was declining, a fact recognised at the time by the colonial politicians. If Indeed, once the simple fear of numbers was removed, some politicians were unable to state a case for the proposal. Some claimed that the numbers *might* increase if unchecked or that the Chinese were a "nuisance." The Sydney press justified the New South Wales Government's concerns on the "increased immigration in the Northern part of the Colony of South Australia" (now the Northern Territory), well over 3,000 kilometres distant, and this in days of slow communication! Is

Myra Willard, the first historian of the Chinese restrictions and, writing 40 years later, outlined a number of factors for the increased legislative prohibitions at this time, including: the opening up of the new gold fields; the temporary increase in numbers; the introduction of "dreaded diseases"; and, in the case of the 1888 legislation, the "voices of 'Young Australia' becoming articulate in the cry 'Australia for the Australians'."16

These are not explanations, yet they provide a basis from which some explanations can be sought. At first glance, they fail to take account of the completeness with which the Chinese were isolated and ostracised from the European community, kept separate from it by the overwhelming idea, expressed on so many occasions between the 1850s and the turn of the century, that they were rootless, mere birds of passage, and never legitimate colonists. They were also separated from European Australians, not simply on the basis of their physical or cultural differences but also, through the view that they were less than human and the anti-Chinese debate was rich in analogies to animals, both singly or collectively as "herds" or "swarms." They were portrayed as a collective hazard, "polluting", "contaminating" and "degrading" the European communities in which they

<sup>14</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 30 November, 1881; 931, 933 and 20 December, 1881; 1240.

<sup>15</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 18 June, 1888; 17. Brisbane Courier, 2 March, 1888; 4.

<sup>16</sup> Willard, op cit; 37 and 70.

<sup>17</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 20 December, 1881; 1246.

lived.<sup>18</sup> The intensity of this anti-Chinese emotion was expressed regularly in terms of health and disease, which this Chapter examines.

The effect of these views was the distancing and separating of the Chinese community in Australia from the European community. More particularly, Willard's point about "young Australia" is important. The Australian community in the late 19th century was constructing its idea of self. This was a world of the White man in which the Chinese had no place. It was a period of inward definition and strengthening, which emphasised the idea of the Chinese as outsiders. The Chinese in Australia were anomalies and were described as such in the context of public health. The boundaries between the world of new Australia and the threats that lay beyond it were protected in a number of ways of which public health was a significant one.

### 2 THE CHINESE AS BRINGERS OF DISEASE

Throughout the 19th century, Australia was the destination for ships and peoples from many parts of the world. Illness might have come to Australian shores from anywhere, yet "the East", Asia and its inhabitants, were commonly held responsible for the introduction of disease. There was little evidence, either in contemporary or in subsequent studies, to suggest that the Chinese introduced disease.

However, Australian governments argued otherwise. Throughout the second half of the 19th century, they imposed public health controls that focused specifically on the Chinese. This was most obvious in the case of high profile exotic diseases. South Australia, for example, required that all arriving Chinese be vaccinated against smallpox. 19 Quarantine controls were also applied with particular harshness when Chinese arrivals were involved, even where there was no hard evidence of smallpox. 20 The arrivals were

<sup>18</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 24 November, 1898; 946.

<sup>19</sup> Chinese Immigrants Regulation Act, 1881; section 7.

<sup>20</sup> See the case of the *Ocean*; - Curson P. *Times of Crisis*. Sydney: Syd Univ P, 1985; 114. The case of the *Burrumbeet* was another example of the selective use of quarantine powers at a crucial time in Australian

being singled out because they were Chinese and it was assumed that they would introduce disease. These actions were occurring at the same time as other anti-Chinese measures; the New South Wales *Chinese Restriction Bill* was introduced in July 1881 in the wake of the anti-Chinese feeling generated by the smallpox epidemic.<sup>21</sup>

Smallpox provided an ongoing justification to other specific anti-Chinese measures. At Darwin, an entry point for many Chinese, the South Australian Government (as administrator of the region) routinely sought to quarantine all vessels from China and the Straits Settlements on the basis that this was necessary to prevent the introduction of the disease. Significantly, this procedure was introduced in conjunction with a proposal to restrict Chinese entry into Northern Australia. The selective nature of the proposal was illustrated by the fact that the local health officer had power to exempt the first class European passengers from the requirements of quarantine and also by its singling out Asian ports. Opponents of this quarantine provision suggested that it was fuelled by the anti-Chinese sentiment of the time and that, while it had the appearance of a public health measure, it was in fact set within the general context of anti-Chinese feeling as expressed in the other restrictive legislation of the time. Supporters of the quarantine provisions saw it as a necessary component of uniform colonial restrictions on the Chinese generally.<sup>22</sup>

Some diseases provoked a special horror and were the focus of stringent control. Leprosy was the most prominent case. Throughout the 19th century, legislators imposed controls aimed specifically at the Chinese arrivals. Two Colonies adopted special leprosy legislation. In 1890, the New South Wales Government passed a *Leprosy Act*, which permitted indefinite custody for lepers. The passage of the provision was hastened by the

Chinese relations. This ship arrived at Melbourne on 30 April 1888, during a time of great anti-Chinese excitement. The European passengers were allowed ashore. The 14 Chinese on board were detained under a "special quarantine" for a further 24 days. (Britain A M. Victoria, The Chinese and the Federal Idea, 1887-1888, 1969. ANU Hist J, No 6: 44-60; 52.)

<sup>21</sup> Martin A W. Henry Parkes. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1980; 316. Chinese Restriction Act, 1881 (New South Wales.)

<sup>22</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 4 July, 1888; 218. Willard, op cit; 73. The *Brisbane Courier*, wrote: "The steamers from China to Port Darwin not only brought large consignments of Chinese under a thraldom to "bosses" little better then slavery but they were importing an enemy as much to be feared as the Chinese themselves, namely, smallpox." (2 March, 1884; 4.) See also South Australian Government Gazette; 1 March, 1888; 503.

discovery of leprosy among the "white population of this colony."23 Even where the stringency of the controls were questioned, their potential application to the Chinese community was simply accepted. One member, debating the New South Wales legislation, who questioned the appropriateness of this custodial "living death" for Europeans, took a very different view when it came to the Chinese: "[i]t may be that we should not harbour lepers of the Chinese race, and that they should either be placed in a leper-house or sent to their own country."24

In 1892, the Queensland Government introduced its Leprosy Bill, despite the fact that the disease was not officially considered to be a problem.<sup>25</sup> Yet, the legislation followed the New South Wales model and strictly segregated sufferers. While the Government took the position that leprosy was not a problem in the Colony, it claimed to be acting because people believed that there was a problem and that the Chinese were responsible for it:

there is no doubt in the minds of many men that this disease emanated from Chinamen and it behoves us one and all ... to look after these hells or dens or Chinese boarding houses as they are called.26

The various Parliamentary references to leprosy focused on the Chinese. The threat that leprosy was thought to present to the European community fuelled the legislation and vilified the Chinaman in the process. By contrast, the European leper, taken to be the victim of Chinese infection, was commonly seen as their innocent dupe through foolishly employing or associating with them.27

<sup>23</sup> New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 15 October, 1890; 4532.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Ibid, 16 October, 1890; 4557.

<sup>25</sup> Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 11 April, 1892; 239.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 11 April, 1892; 240.

<sup>27</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 6 September, 1901; 4646 and 4647. It was said: Europeans who have contracted the dread disease have lead as cleanly lives as most of us. The disease has not come through any immoral relations with these people (Chinese) but through their dealings with them. (; 4647.)

The administration of the leprosy legislation in all Colonies was very vigorous. Sometimes health officials, when faced with suspect cases among Chinese, overreacted markedly, as occurred in Adelaide in 1898. Such a case illustrated the ease with which the association of the Chinese and leprosy could be made and the extraordinarily harsh treatment that could apply even where there was only a suspicion.<sup>28</sup>

Vigorous public health administration was also a feature of other diseases. During the Sydney smallpox epidemic of 1881, the Chinese, sent to the North Head Quarantine station, were segregated and housed in tents away from the wards. In some cases, they were removed forcibly from their houses which were then burnt. Though vaccination was not generally compulsory, there were instances where Chinese were vaccinated against their will. Even those opposed to the compulsory vaccination of the community generally, supported it where the Chinese were involved. Indeed, while the popular press and parliamentarians expressed great concern at the breach of civil liberties of Europeans during the epidemic, there was no corresponding concern for the liberties of the Chinese.<sup>29</sup>

Sydney's Chinese community was also blamed for introducing the plague in 1900 and were subjected to both official and unofficial harassment. Unlike the European cases, Chinese cases of plague taken to the North Head quarantine station were compulsorily vaccinated (even where they objected.)<sup>30</sup> Where warning notices about the disease were posted, they were written both in English and Chinese suggesting that, of all Sydney's foreign nationals, the Chinese were to be considered to be most closely associated with the epidemic.<sup>31</sup> Curson claims that public health officials also adopted a more draconian and

The discovery by an Adelaide doctor in 1898 of a Chinese patient suffering from what he (mistakenly) took to be leprosy led to the man's incarceration at a remote part of the Torrens Island Quarantine Station in primitive conditions and apart from all other persons. See Correspondence etc., Re Alleged case of Leprosy. South Australian Parliamentary Papers, 1898, no 67. See also *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 June, 1888; 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Curson (1985), op cit; 104, 106 and 115. See also *Southon Board of Enquiry*. Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1882, No 55. This was an Enquiry into the alleged mistreatment of a European woman suspected of having smallpox.

<sup>30</sup> Curson P. Plague in Sydney. Sydney: Univ of NSW P, 1989; 164.

<sup>31</sup> Kelly M. Plague Sydney. Sydney: Doak Press, 1981; unpaginated.

insistent approach when fumigating Chinese houses, while the Chinese were singled out for special mention by government officials as being particularly susceptible to plague and thus a risk for its spread.<sup>32</sup>

Beyond their specific responses, parliamentarians were also expansive in their assessment of the Chinese disease menace. Undaunted by the lack of evidence, the supporters of increased restrictions attempted to substantiate their public health case by looking to the future. It was argued that the Chinese *might* introduce disease. In 1857, South Australia's Chief Secretary was asked in Parliament to prevent the landing of Chinese at Robe in order to "ward off the danger which exists with the introduction of leprosy or other contagious diseases." There was never any evidence that these types of disease were found among the Chinese landed at Robe.

Twenty four years later, during the second reading of the *Chinese Immigration Bill*, 1881, the South Australian Government gave as part of its reasons for increased restrictions on entry (and these applied only to the Chinese), the fact that smallpox had "on several occasions made its appearance on ships arriving from Eastern ports." Yet, it was not simply the known diseases that were of concern; the Government further argued for the restriction "on account of the diseases still unknown in Australia which thus may be introduced among us."<sup>34</sup> In this kind of thinking, the association of the Chinese with specific diseases was broadened to the point that it became a general association with all disease - the Chinaman had become diseased as such! - Yet, the evidence is so lacking. There were many ports beyond Australia from which disease might come - it was the Asian ports that were singled out. Public health laws became the vehicles through which more general concerns about the Chinese were focused.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Curson (1989), op cit; 175. Cumpston J H L and McCallum F. *The History of Plague in Australia*. Melbourne: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1926; 95.

<sup>33</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 11 September, 1857; 523.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 19 July, 1881; 290. Granted, tropical ports did have a reputation as nurseries of fevers and disease.

<sup>35</sup> Not all parliamentarians agreed with this charge; see the remarks of the Honourables R Baker and J Pearce, South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 10 August, 1881; 520 and 19 July, 1881; 294.

More generally, the diseases became a reason for supporting exclusionist policies. The spectre of the leprous Chinaman became a plank of the anti-Chinese campaign. During the 1901 Immigration Restriction Debates, the issue was raised more specifically to justify the exclusionist proposals by the Queensland Parliamentarian James Page. Decrying the unhappy European victims of leprosy, Page asserted: "[w]ho brought this disease to Australia? The vile Eastern races, which I am pleased to say the Barton government is going to keep out."36

The political views were reflecting the prominent popular views of the day that linked the Chinese with epidemics. From the date of their earliest arrival in significant numbers, the Chinese were linked with disease. For many in the community, as well as legislators, leprosy stood out as the most stigmatising of these diseases. The idea of the "leprous Chinaman" became a shorthand way of expressing the hostility of so many Europeans against them.

It is not surprising that leprosy should be the disease that exemplified the Chinese presence in Australia. It affected the Chinese community, seemingly to a disproportionate extent and, despite its low infectivity, leprosy has for the reasons discussed earlier in this thesis been the subject of a particular horror. The disease became the focus of comment in newspapers that kept the issue prominent and also linked it with the Chinese. In 1857, the Ballarat *Star* published a letter from a local digger warning that "many Chinese were dying of leprosy." Later that month, the *Star* again raised the issue of leprosy. The answer was seen by the paper to lie in the more vigorous enforcement of sanitary arrangements among the Chinese. Leprosy remained prominent in the pages of the *Star*.

<sup>36</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 6 September, 1901; 4650.

<sup>37</sup> Star 12 August, 1857. Cronin wrote that "leprosy was the 'coloured' germ most feared by the colonists" and that the headlines of the mining papers made reference to a "Virulent Chinese Plague." (Cronin, op cit; 69.)

<sup>38</sup> Star 21 August, 1857. Bowden K M. Goldrush Doctors at Ballaarat. Melbourne: private pub, 1977; 59. (note, Ballaarat was an early spelling for Ballarat.)

On 3 September 1857, the paper used the coroner's report of the apparent drowning of a Chinese leper (Jen Soong), shipwrecked at Port Willunga in South Australia, to remind readers that "the shocking disease of leprosy prevailed in the Chinese encampment."

Leprosy became the "Chinese disease" and it was given a central place in the pantheon of Chinese evils.<sup>39</sup> It retained that position throughout the 19th century and became a short hand way of expressing the resentment that many, particularly writers in the popular press felt against the Chinese.<sup>40</sup> It was said to be threatening to the European community and very elaborate paths of infection from the Chinese to unfortunate Europeans were alleged. Two examples touched closely on commercial activities that brought the Chinese into contact with their local community. It was said that vegetables became contaminated with the disease when they were stored too close to Chinese houses while, in 1895, the *Bulletin* published as true the story of *Loong* the Chinese laundryman (and a leper) who spread the disease by squirting water from his mouth onto the clothes that he was ironing. Given the relatively large number of market gardeners and laundrymen and the highly publicised accounts that associated leprosy with the Chinese, the threat that *all* Chinese posed to *all* Europeans was strongly reinforced by these stories and the disease was offered as a reason for excluding them from Australia.<sup>41</sup>

Other epidemics also unleashed popular antagonism against the Chinese. The Sydney smallpox epidemic of 1881 was a prominent example.<sup>42</sup> Publicity centred on the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Other newspapers expressed similar concerns to the *Star*. A correspondent for the *Presbyterian Review* conducted an investigation of the Chinese in Ballarat and concluded that in exchange for the gold they were removing from the diggings, they introduced a variety of evils: "they had brought opium smoking, gambling, procuring and a loathsome disease, leprosy." (cited in Bowden, op cit; 59.)

<sup>40</sup> There were many examples where this occurred. One was the Queensland labour paper, the *Worker*, which, through cartoons and articles, prominently linked leprosy with the Chinese, (Patrick R. *Horsewhip the Doctor: Tales of our Medical Past.* St Lucia: Univ of Qld P, 1985; 142 and 143.) In 1888, John Potts, the author of an anti-Chinese pamphlet warned that "we must expect Chinese cities of cholera and leprosy in our Northern cities"; he singled out leprosy for special treatment, expressing it in capitals. (Potts J. *One year of Anti-Chinese work in Queensland and Incidents of Travel.* Brisbane: Davison and Metcalf, 1888; 15 and 17.)

<sup>41</sup> Bulletin, 3 March, 1888; banner page and 2 November, 1895; 7. It was also reported that an undertaker contracted the disease by burying a dead leper. (Star 12 August, 1857.) In an article about leprosy, published in Queensland in 1898, the Queensland Worker concluded: "Our advice to the people of Australia is to take no risks from the filthy Asiatic and South-Sea aliens who bring with them many disgusting vices and habits ... the sooner legislation exists that will exclude them from the country altogether the better and safer it will be for the people of Australia." (The Worker, 28 May, 1898; 7.)

<sup>42</sup> By the standards of 19th century Australia, this was a most significant outbreak of exotic infectious disease, involving a reported 163 cases and 41 deaths.

presumed first Chinese victim (a child), referred to by the *Bulletin*, in bold capitals as "ON CHONG'S CHILD"; little publicity was given to the circumstances of that infection and the subsequent view that the child had contracted the illness from his European nurse, who, in turn, had been infected from an unknown source some weeks earlier.<sup>43</sup>

Whatever the origins of the smallpox outbreak, the epidemic provided a focus for the already vehement anti-Chinese campaign that reached its zenith towards the end of the decade. It also illustrated the strength of anti-Chinese opinion in Sydney and the way that smallpox was used to shape those fears. The *Bulletin* had no doubt that the outbreak had begun among the Chinese, as had "often been predicted."<sup>44</sup> The papers heightened the anti-Chinese feeling and the panic associated with it by describing the disease as "Asiatic smallpox" or by making references to the "great plague" and the "black death" in the same context as smallpox, although the two diseases were quite unconnected.<sup>45</sup> The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported random acts of violence against individual Chinese. In one case, a Chinese was ejected from a tram by the conductor who told him, "we don't want no smallpox here." Other articles in the paper described people making false reports of smallpox against resident Chinese and the smashing of their shops.<sup>46</sup>

In 1900, the governmental responses to the Plague epidemic focused on the Chinese community. While they may have been traditional scapegoats, there was no evidence that they were in any sense prominent victims of the disease, as any investigation at the time would have shown. Of the first 94 cases, only one (the last) was Chinese, though the circumstances of this victim were reported in significantly more detail by the Sydney press. More generally, Curson wrote that the:

<sup>43</sup> Bulletin, 25 June, 1881; 1. This change of view was buried away in a 9 line report on page 6 of the Sydney Morning Herald, 16 June, 1881. Curson (1985) op cit; 90 and 93. This point was noted in another Colony however; see South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 10 August, 1881; 525.

<sup>44</sup> Bulletin, 30 July, 1881; 1.

<sup>45</sup> As Norris suggested, (discussed in Chapter 5) the plague was regarded a having Chinese origins. To refer to smallpox in this particular context was an exercise in "guilt by association", designed to make the Chinese guilty of this disease as well. Curson (1985), op cit; 115.

<sup>46</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 20 June, 1881; 4 and 26 June, 1881; 4.

papers were full of charges against Sydney's Chinese community claiming that they were responsible for introducing the disease and hiding away those of their number who caught the plague.<sup>47</sup>

So vehement was the belief in their alleged complicity that even when the facts seemed to prove differently - for example, that the Chinese deaths from plague were no higher per head than others (which would be surprising if they were really at the centre of the epidemic) - the facts were explained away, for example, by alleging that the Chinese were hiding and secretly disposing of their own victims of the epidemic. The outspoken anti-Chinese proprietor of *Truth*, John Norton, explained away the lack of Chinese corpses by explaining that they did not bury their dead, rather, "they pickle them and send them home to their ancestors."

The general view that the Chinese were diseased was woven into popular 19th century culture in many ways. Both the national and the provincial press, in articles, stories and cartoons, raised the spectre of the yellow peril, the menacing Asian hordes and the threat, both within and outside of Australia, of the Chinese.<sup>49</sup> The literature of the time also played on the idea that the Chinese were diseased. One example is this extract from *A Bushman's Song* by "Banjo" Paterson, Australia's most celebrated popular poet:

"We shear non-union here" says he. "I call it scab says I" I looked along the shearing -floor before I turned to go There was eight or ten dashed Chinamen a-shearin' in a row, It was shift, boys, shift, for there wasn't the slightest doubt It is time to make a shift with the leprosy about.

Another example was a short story, *The Last of the Wombat Barge* by "Price Warrung" (William Astley) published in the *Bulletin* in 1890. Here a barge captain grows rich by

<sup>47</sup> Daily Telegraph, 10 April, 1900; 7. Curson (1985), op cit; 159.

<sup>48</sup> Daily Telegraph, 10 April, 1900; 7. A similar explanation was applied to Chinese miners in California. They were said to have come from "leprosy infected" parts of China and the fact that there was not a large number of lepers among the Californian Chinese to prove the point, was then explained by the assertion that Chinese lepers were being concealed from the officials by families and friends. (Markus, (1979) op cit; xix.)

<sup>49</sup> In the case of the press and literature, some examples can be found in chapters 14 and 15 of Stevens F S ed. *Racism, The Australian Experience*. Sydney: ANZ Books, 1974 and also Cronin, op cit; 74.

employing cheap Chinese labour (referred to in the story as the "spawn of the lazar house") and contracts leprosy, apparently as a result of touching the poles and ropes handled by his crew. Although of very dubious public health validity, the story was intended as a warning to any potential employer of cheap, Chinese labour,<sup>50</sup>

These were specific aspects of the more general way in which the Chinese were seen by many in Australia at the time. In cases where the anti-Chinese message was not being sharply expressed, they were simply part of the background scenery or provided part of the local colour for the slumming journalist, novelists or diarists of the period.<sup>51</sup>

Here were two views, official and popular, blaming the Chinese for introducing disease into Australia. There are two ways of testing the accuracy of these views. Firstly, through the contemporary evidence available at the time and secondly, through the more general studies of public health in Australia. In either case, the evidence relating to the health of the arriving Chinese suggests that there is no case where a new epidemic in Australia can be attributed to them.

Considering the contemporary evidence, there is little to suggest that the Chinese presented a health threat beyond the normal risks of 19th century arrivals. In 1858, Dr H G Alleyne, the port medical officer in Sydney, said of the Chinese arrivals: "no class of immigrants suffer so little from sickness or present a more cleanly appearance on entering port." His view was supported by other observations made at the time.<sup>52</sup> This was important; the conditions of the ships were likely to be the major determinant of the state

<sup>50</sup> Bulletin, 20 December, 1890; 20.

<sup>51</sup> There were also supporters of the Chinese including Cardinal Moran, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sydney. However, this support was generally lost among the mass of popular anti-Chinese sentiment. See, Travers R. Australian Mandarin: The Life and Times of Quong Tart. Sydney: Kangaroo Press, 1981; 127.

<sup>52</sup> Cumpston J H L and McCallum F. The History of Intestinal Infections (and Typhus Fever) in Australia. Melbourne: Government Printer, 1927; 458. Another point of entry for many Chinese at the time was the South Australian port of Guichen Bay (Robe). The contemporary accounts of their arrival here make no reference to the Chinese introducing exotic diseases, only those endemic to shipboard life. (Bermingham N. Gateway to the South East. Robe: privately pub, 1984 and Spregel W. Robe's Chinese Invasion. Robe: privately pub, 1986.) A group of Chinese arriving at Port Adelaide in 1856, with no apparent sickness, were described by the South Australian Register as "cleanly and respectable" (See Foss P ed. Islands in the Stream: Myths of Place in Australian Culture. Sydney: Pluto Press, 1988; 91.)

of health of any recent immigrant and the conditions on Chinese immigrant ships were often poor, prompting a higher than usual rate of illness and death.<sup>53</sup>

There seems to be no evidence from the annual public health and quarantine reports that singled out the Chinese or justified the idea that they presented a particular health threat, one for which more stringent than normal quarantine was required. For example, the Third Annual Report of the Victorian Central Board of Health (1858) considered that there was no need to apply particular vaccination requirements to arriving Chinese, concluding that:

there is ... no reason to apprehend the probability of this disease (smallpox) being more extensively propagated among the Chinese than the European residents of this colony.<sup>54</sup>

Rather, the smallpox scare for this year was prompted by the arrival of the *Commodore*Perry, from Liverpool via the Brazilian port of Bahia. The next year, 1859, the

Superintendent of the Victorian Sanitary Station reported that eight arriving vessels were placed in quarantine. None of these had come from Asian ports.<sup>55</sup>

As early as 1857, medical evidence discounted the idea that the Chinese were introducing smallpox. The Victorian Central Board of Health concluded that incoming Chinese were not a smallpox risk because "vaccination ... is very extensively practiced in China." In the case of the 1881 epidemic, it was never established that the disease was of Chinese origin and a subsequent official report published two years later remained tentative about the origins of the disease. 57

<sup>53</sup> See the case of the *Onyx* (reached Melbourne, August, 1854) Cronin, op cit; 20. See also the report in the *Bendigo Advertiser*, 5 September, 1854.

<sup>54</sup> Victoria, Parliamentary Papers, 1858, No 5; 4.

<sup>55</sup> Victoria, Parliamentary Papers, 1859-1860, No 36. Significantly, the Reports for the year 1881 (the year of the smallpox epidemic) show that while vessels from Chinese ports were routinely quarantined and their passengers and crews compulsorily vaccinated, no cases of smallpox were detected. (Victoria, Parliamentary Papers. Report on the Sanitory Station for the year ending 31 December, 1881, 1882, No 28.)

<sup>56</sup> Third Annual Report. Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1858, no 5; 1.

<sup>57</sup> Report upon the Late Epidemic of Smallpox. New South Wales Parliamentary Papers, 1883. LC no 43.

In some parts of Australia, leprosy was prevalent among the Chinese community. In 1868, a Victorian medical practitioner (Dr Clendenning) identified 27 cases of leprosy in the Ballarat region. All were Chinese.58 However, its low infectivity did not make it an issue for the wider community and studies cannot explain how the disease spread to Australia. (see below) In other cases, where diseases spread through the Chinese community, this was thought to be associated with their living conditions, harsh even by the standards of the gold fields.59

Leprosy, smallpox and the plague were exotic diseases, representing a small minority of preventable deaths in colonial Australia. Diseases such as dysentery, diarrhoea, typhoid and typhus were also infectious diseases and far more potent and constant sources of mortality. They were a major issue in Australia. For example, in Sydney in 1900 (the year 103 people died from plague), there were 1,587 deaths from diarrhoeal diseases and 398 deaths from typhoid fever.60 Considering these diseases, the major killers in the 19th century, there is no evidence that linked the Chinese to any marked extent with their introduction. Cumpston and McCallum concluded: "the Chinese inhabitants have not played any significant part in the introduction and dissemination of the group of diseases under discussion."61 This was supported by a local medical practitioner writing about enteric diseases in 1873: he said of the Chinese "I am not prepared to say that these people do actually contribute more than their proportion to the

<sup>58</sup> Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Victorian Goldfields (Young Report). Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1868, no 56; 28.

<sup>59</sup> There is some evidence that the Chinese miners on the goldfields were subject to infection to a greater 59 There is some evidence that the Chinese miners on the goldfields were subject to infection to a greater rate than Europeans and this could fuel ideas that the Chinese were introducing disease. One example occurred on the volatile Buckland field. Known as "ankle vapours," the disease seemed to affect the Chinese in particular. It caused swelling of the limbs and discolouration of the skin. This condition may have been a blood borne disorder that the Victorian Central Board of Health called *Elephantiasis Grecorum* caused, it was said, not by any peculiarity of constitution (ie being Chinese) but by the "influence of uncleanly habits, bad food and lodging, conditions to which the Chinese are generally exposed." Largely, these were environmental factors that the Chinese had little control over. The Board concluded that the disease was not infectious or contagious, which may explain why it did not appear to effect the European miners to a great extent. (Victoria Parliamentary Papers, 1859, no 3; 13. Cronin, op cit; 21.)

In early 1858, the *Star* commented on mortality figures for Ballarat that suggested the Chinese had a disproportionate burden. The paper explained these data as "dropsy and diseases of the lungs brought on by the privations of their overland trek from Robe." (14 January, 1858.)

by the privations of their overland trek from Robe." (14 January, 1858.)

<sup>60</sup> Cumpston J H L and McCallum F. The History of Intestinal Infections in Australia, op cit; ch 1, tables p539 & 542.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid; 461.

return of deaths from dysentery in Melbourne and its suburbs."<sup>62</sup> This suggested that the Chinese were no more at risk for these diseases or a cause of their spread than were other inhabitants of Melbourne at the time. Simply, the big killers could not be, and with the one exception of typhoid were generally not, linked with the Chinese.<sup>63</sup> The exotic diseases were - they were seen to come from beyond Australia and were seen as alien by the Australian Community.

Studies undertaken on specific epidemics in 19th century Australia also suggest that the Chinese were not responsible for the introduction of disease. For example, in the case of the 1900 plague epidemic in Sydney, (responsible for 103 recorded deaths, and also for a wave of anti-Chinese feeling in the City) it was not possible to trace the source.64 In the case of leprosy, seen as a "Chinese" disease, the available data for 19th century Australia suggest that, compared with the European population, the disease was over represented among the Chinese. Cumpston noted that between 1850 and 1900, there were 312 known cases of leprosy of which at least 159 were Chinese and that by all accounts the disease did not appear in Australia until the 1850s, coinciding with the Chinese arrivals.65 However, this did not mean that the Chinese first introduced the disease or that Europeans were at risk from them. One early record of the disease in Queensland suggests that the first cases of leprosy in Queensland came from local contact with South Sea lepers.66 Cecil Cook (a medical practitioner who studied the disease in 1927) claimed to have been unable to find a single case of leprosy among Europeans in Victoria that was not contracted outside of Australia. There were cases of European infection in other Colonies. Cook concluded that the aboriginal communities were the

<sup>62</sup> Ibid: 458.

<sup>63</sup> See the discussion of typhoid later in this chapter.

<sup>64</sup> Curson, (1985), op cit; 150. Cumpston J H L and McCallum F. *The History of the Plague in Australia*. Melbourne: Government Printer, 1926; 9, 13 and Introduction.

<sup>65</sup> Cumpston J H L. Health and Disease in Australia (Vol 1). Canberra: AGPS, 1988; 209. (originally written in 1928.)

<sup>66</sup> It was described by a Dr Bancroft in the 1860s as "Islanders' toe disease". (Patrick R. Horsewhip the Doctor: Tales From our Medical Past. St Lucia: Univ Qld P, 1985; 138.)

intermediaries through which leprosy travelled from either the Chinese or the Pacific Islanders.<sup>67</sup> The Chinese posed virtually no threat to Europeans who were unlikely to contract leprosy from any source, Chinese or otherwise. Yet, leprosy became a prominent banner of horror for the anti-Chinese campaign in Australia. Leprosy was characterised as the "Chinese disease" and the term "leprous Chinaman" became common currency in the process of vilification and degradation of the Chinese.

Despite these conclusions, views that the Chinese introduced disease remained powerful and were carried into the 20th century. In the first historical survey of the events leading up to the White Australia Policy, Myra Willard (writing in 1923) appeared to accept the view that the Chinese living conditions and their disease status was a problem. She assumed that the Chinese were entirely responsible for the introduction both of the 1881 smallpox epidemic and also the problems of leprosy in Queensland.<sup>68</sup> This unproblematic sheeting home of blame was accepted by a number of 20th century writers of public health, concerned more generally about the resilience of the European race in Australia.<sup>69</sup>

The evidence suggests that public health legislation and practice occupied its place in the framework of anti-Chinese controls and controls on immigration without independent evidence of an accompanying public health problem. There is no evidence that the Chinese posed any significant threat for the introduction of disease, either at the point of entry or once living in Australia.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Cook C. The Epidemiology of Leprosy in Australia. Canberra: Government Printer, 1927; 297.

<sup>68</sup> Willard saw the responsibility for the disease lying with the Chinese and stated that "the (smallpox) epidemic caused a much-needed inspection of the Chinese quarters." (op cit; 61.)

<sup>69</sup> Cilento R and Lack C. *Triumph in the Tropics*. Brisbane: Smith and Patterson, 1958. See also, Gregory J W. *The Menace of Colour*. London: Seely Service and Co, 1925. See also, Springthorpe J W. *Therapeutics, Dietetics and Hygiene Vol 1*. Melbourne: Ford and Son, 1914; 27. This issue is considered in Chapter 8.

<sup>70</sup> The evidence of public health officials strongly suggests that the health of the Chinese once in Australia did not pose a particular threat to the rest of the community. In its Sixth Annual Report, (1860-1861) the Victorian Central Board of Health said:

In conclusion, it is important to consider the diseases for which the Chinese were most vehemently blamed and the wider context in which they occurred. One of the most prominent was smallpox. This epidemic came at a time of intense anti-Chinese hostility, between the Intercolonial Conference (designed to agree upon uniform restrictions on Chinese immigration) and the passage of the New South Wales *Influx of Chinese Restriction Act* 1881. Blaming the Chinese community for introducing diseases became both a popular and the official view (it was reported by the *Bulletin* as the view that Sir Henry Parkes had transmitted to the other Colonies.)<sup>71</sup> Smallpox was different to other, more prevalent, causes of illness in colonial New South Wales. It came from the outside; it was not part of the expected burden of ill health that the Sydney community accepted. For many in Sydney there was also a second outside threat - the Chinese - and both came together in time and place. The Chinese and the smallpox were part of the same threat from the outside; the smallpox was a Chinese threat.

The late 19th century - the period over which the Chinese were most stridently blamed for introducing disease - was a period in Australian history when the community was defining its sense of collective identity and looking forward to Federation. It was also the most vigorous period of exclusion, commencing with the reintroduction of restrictive Asian immigration legislation in 1881. The decade culminated in a monster anti-Chinese demonstration in 1888. Against this background, leprosy, smallpox or plague were expressions of the threat that the Chinese were said to present. The most obvious response was to protect the boundaries and, as the parliamentary debates suggest, the immigration restriction legislation was at least partly justified by the spectre of introduced disease. Public health concerns were a prominent justification for restricting

The reports which have gained some currency in this colony of the filthy and offensive habits of the Chinese residents of this colony, and of their liability to loathsome and infectious diseases, have induced us to give their condition much consideration, and to direct an inspector to visit the encampments ... Under ordinary conditions in towns and scattered over the country, the Chinese do not differ from their European neighbours in their regard for sanatory conditions (Victoria, Parliamentary Papers, 1860-1861, no 104; 29.) See also, Cronin, op cit; 61. Bowden, op cit; 58.

<sup>71</sup> Bulletin 25 June, 1881; 1.

the immigration of the Chinese. Much popular opinion also supported the view that the Chinese were diseased and therefore a threat to White Australia. Together, these opinions and restrictions, though grounded in public health, were statements about the Chinese; they were more significantly part of the process of their exclusion rather than statements about public health.

### 3 THE CHINESE AS INSANITARY

The second prominent complaint of public health significance made against the Chinese in 19th century Australia was that they were insanitary and that their living conditions and hygiene made them a health threat to the European community. This was a view widely held at the time. Robert Thomson wrote in his frankly anti-Chinese book Australian Nationalism: "look in the Mongol's backyard ... you will find pestilence and malaria seething in every hole and corner. In short, his house is a den, his yard a sewer." His was one assertion among many. Collectively, they projected the view that the Chinese were naturally dirty, or to use idea of the Bulletin in 1886: "his nature, his essence, his unalterable self is unclean."

The first major impact made by the Chinese on 19th century Australian society was on the diggings. With miners of many other nationalities, they endured the crowded and primitive settlements that grew up around the gold fields. Later, the Chinese diversified into other work that brought them into everyday contact with urban Australians. After the 1850s, increasingly more Chinese in Victoria were employed as small farmers and market gardeners. Other significant areas of employment included

<sup>72</sup> Thomson R. Australian Nationalism: An Earnest Appeal to the Sons of Australia in Favour of the Federation and Independence of the States of our Country. Burwood (Sydney): Moss Brothers pub, 1888; 116. Another work, written the same year by John Potts and also fiercely anti-Chinese, offered the following description of Chinese backyards in Cairns: they are "covered with dingy dens and populated with stinking pigs, poultry and Chinamen." (Potts J. One year of Anti-Chinese work in Queensland and Incidents of Travel. Brisbane: Davison and Metcalf, 1888; 5.)

<sup>73 1</sup> May, 1886; 4.

laundry and domestic work and the furniture trades. Both the world of the diggings and the cities will be considered here in the context of Chinese living conditions.

# The Diggings

The sudden influx of people into the newly discovered goldfields turned previously small communities or unoccupied bushland into thriving communities. The resulting inadequacy of sanitary services was recognised generally by those who lived in these settlements and also by public health authorities. However, the Chinese were singled out by many in these settlements as being at particular risk for disease. In 1857, the Ballarat Star warned that the close settlement of Chinese on the fields was likely to "give rise to and foster these epidemic scourges which strike down their victims by hundreds."74 Cholera remained a particular (though unrealised) fear for many Australians in the 19th century and, in a spectacular exercise in guilt by association, the Star introduced the idea to readers in January 1858. It used a report on enteric diseases on the Bendigo field ("if not actually of Asiatic Cholera", the paper admitted) to warn all medical practitioners in Ballarat to be on their guard in case cholera might be diagnosed. The Star concluded that it was Asiatic, rather than English cholera that would be of concern.75 To people for whom the British cholera epidemics of 1832 and 1848 were within memory, the prospect of a similar epidemic in Australia was a cause of anxiety. Without evidence, the Chinese were singled out as potential introducers of the disease; the use of the term "Asiatic cholera" by the paper was a particularly significant reference to the large number of Chinese in the town (there were approximately 6000 Chinese inhabitants in Ballarat at this time - nearly 20% of the adult male population.)

The references to disease, specific to the Chinese, reported in Ballarat had parallels on most, if not all, gold mining settlements where they were present. They were subject to a variety of assertions with the general thrust that they threatened the health and welfare

<sup>74</sup> Star, 21 August, 1857.

<sup>75</sup> Star, 25 January, 1858. See also Bowden, bid; 70.

of their European neighbours. Their camps were described as: "putrid, loathsome, fetid, vermin ravaged", "nurseries of fevers ... and ulcerous skin eruptions." These environments were also linked with the diseases that were believed to be prevalent among the Chinese. For example, some argued that leprosy could come from "dirt, bad food and neglect of the sanitary laws." The visual chaos of these camps were seen as foci of diseases that radiated out to infect the wider European community.76

The Central Board of Health Reports suggest that Ballarat was a most unhealthy town, yet, it was only one example of the conditions in which many diggers including the Chinese lived.<sup>77</sup> Conditions for all diggers were harsh and there was never evidence that justified singling out the Chinese for sustained criticism.<sup>78</sup> Along with many others they were the victims of the conditions rather than the cause of them. In the case of Ballarat: parts of the town around the Flat had improved drainage systems; the areas around Main Road and Golden Point, where most of the Chinese lived, had very poor drainage likely to result in insanitary conditions and risking the health problems that stood to affect all the residents of the area.79

One complaint, commonly made against the Chinese on many gold fields, was that they wasted and polluted water supplies. In some cases the complaints referred to the fact that the Chinese washed their gold in dams and other water reserved for drinking or mining purposes. The idea that the Chinese contaminated and wasted the water supply became the focus of much anti-Chinese feeling and was expressed as early as 1854 during a period of unrest at Bendigo.80 It also became the subject of a regulation promulgated by

<sup>76</sup> Star, 21 August 1857, Cronin, op cit; 69.

<sup>77</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Papers 1858, No 5; 10. See also Bowden, op cit; 70. Star, 28 April, 1858.

<sup>78</sup> Sometimes, all diggers were subject to criticism; Robert Schachner, a German observer of a Victorian gold field at the turn of the century wrote of the diggers' sanitary arrangements:

It was only fifteen minutes walk to the stream, but very few workers went to wash off the sweat of their day's exertions. Often wash water is used more than once. Toothbrushes are unknown. And since every man must launder his own clothes, they are never in good condition.

<sup>(</sup>Schachner R. (Lack et al ed.) The Workers' Paradise?: Letters from Australia 1906-1907. Melbourne: Univ Melb, History Dept, 1990; 49.)

<sup>79</sup> Strange A W. Ballarat, The Formative Years. Ballarat: B + B Strange, 1982; chap. 11 and also, Bate W A. Lucky City (Ballarat 1851-1901). Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1978; 250 and chapter 6.

<sup>80</sup> Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Gold Fields. (Westgarth Commission) Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1854-1855, No 76; Q 3574.

the Victorian Government in December 1857, which prohibited Chinese miners (but not other miners) from interfering with or polluting water supplies.<sup>81</sup> The "pollution" claim became an enduring complaint against the Chinese and a catchery for the violence against them.<sup>82</sup> William Kelly, an Irish barrister and author turned digger, a contemporary observer, suggested that this was an excuse to harass the Chinese and to jump their claims. In a number of letters to the Argus, written in 1856, he defended the Chinese miners. In one, he wrote:

They [Chinese] work ... quietly and unobtrusively, unless pounced upon by some hungry digging-wolf on the plea that they are muddying the water although drinking below him on the stream.<sup>83</sup>

However, the complaint remained a strong one, the emotive power of water made the assertion that it was being defiled and polluted by Chinese bodies convincing and memorable. It also gave a coherent and powerful substance to the idea that the Chinese were threatening to the Europeans.

In addition to their alleged pollution of water, there were other examples where Chinese customs could be pictured as both bizarre and insanitary. One of these occurred in 1883 when the Chinese community in Albury, conforming to tradition, sent a consignment of human bones to Sydney, en route for burial in China. It was said that they arrived in Sydney in a "stinking condition." In order to avoid this problem the next consignment of bones was washed and scraped on site to the strong objection of local

<sup>81</sup> Cronin, op cit; 44, see also, the report of the 1868, Victorian, *Young Report*, op cit; 18-19. and, McLaren I F. *The Chinese in Victoria: Official Reports and Documents*. Melbourne: Red Rooster Press, 1985; 18.

<sup>82</sup> Selth P A. The Burrangong (Lambing Flat) Riots, 1860-1861: A Closer Look, 1974. *J. of the Royal Aust Historical So*, 60:48-69; 51. Clark C M H. *A History of Australia, Vol IV*. Melbourne: Melb Univ P. 1978; 128, see also, McQueen H. *A New Britannia*. Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1970; 48-49. See also the evidence of the Castlemaine publican, Henry Melville, to the 1854-1855, Victorian *Westgarth Commission*, op cit; qs 3081-3102.

<sup>83</sup> Kelly W. Life in Victoria. Kilmore: Lowden Pub, 1977; 304 (first pub 1859) See also Selth, op cit; 51. The shortage of water and its use by the Chinese was used as a justification by the perpetrators of the Lambing Flat violence but rejected by at least one source, the Yass Courier - Connolly C N. in Miners' Rights, in Curthoys A and Markus A. Who Are Our Enemies? Racism and the Australian Working Class. Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1978; 39.

residents, heightened by the fact that this was done in a local creek.<sup>84</sup> This funerary rite was in accordance with the wishes of some Chinese to be buried in China. As an exotic practice, involving the preparation and conveying of the dead, it was a focus of opposition both in Australia and elsewhere, where it was treated with a mixture of mirth and disgust.<sup>85</sup>

The fear of dead bodies and their potential to "pollute" is an important issue for many communities. When the Chinese rituals were performed in European communities they were polluting. The publicity given to them emphasised the general idea that the Chinese diggers were disgusting and insanitary. It supported the view that their customs were outlandish and, to European eyes, disgusting. More generally, this distancing became an effective part of the anti-Chinese campaign, emphasising that they were profoundly outside the cultural boundaries of White Australian society. It also emphasised their marginal status as outsiders in Australia. Markus summarised the extent to which the diggers distanced the Chinese by saying that they considered them to be "repulsive to the feelings of a Christian population", while Clark concluded that the Lambing Flat miners justified their acts by claiming that "their habits and customs are repugnant to all civilised men."86

### The Cities

Compared with the many popular representations of the fortunes of the Chinese on the goldfields, their role in towns is less well known. However, by 1900, the majority of Chinese in Australia lived in towns with the largest concentrations in the capital cities. As the producers and hawkers of vegetables in cities and towns, the Chinese came into close

<sup>84</sup> McQueen, op cit; 48. This issue was raised as an issue of concern during evidence taken during the 1892, New South Wales *Manning Commission*, op cit; qs 14495-14498.

<sup>85</sup> Markus, (1979) op cit; 115. See also contemporary reports of these ceremonies - Argus, 12 April, 1860; 6. Ballarat Star, 23 April, 1867, Ararat and Pleasant Creek Advertiser, 26 January, 1864; 2.

<sup>86</sup> Markus, (1979) op cit; 21. Clark (1978), op cit; 129. Back in Sydney, a miners meeting of 1,000 organised by an anti-Chinese League declared that "their (Chinese) social habits are repulsive to ours" - Markus, op cit; 33.

and regular contact with urban Australians.<sup>87</sup> In this context they became subject to some of the most vehement assertions that their practices were insanitary and presented a risk to the European community. Mainly, it was their role as food producers and vendors that was the focus of concern. However, it was sometimes argued that their very proximity to food might contaminate it.<sup>88</sup>

These charges were a common feature of anti-Chinese articles in the popular press and the literature. For example, one edition of the Bulletin declaimed, "[w]e know the Chinaman better than most people ... He produces two things - vice and vegetables."89 In Louis Stone's novel "Jonah", (published 1911) the Chinese stall holders were said to be "the scum of the earth, less than human, ... selling cheaply [and undercutting their competition] because they lived like vermin in their gardens."90 There were cases where the allegations were accompanied by calls to action. In 1888, the Brisbane Courier urged the introduction of public health initiatives to "abate the Chinese nuisance." This included registering the Chinese and the "strict and constant" inspection of their premises, both day and night. It said that health inspectors should be "armed with unusual powers and responsibilities to compel prompt and unfailing observance of the spirit as well as the letter of the law." It recommended the registration and licensing of every Chinese in the Colony and a special Chinese tax to recoup the costs of the exercise. The proposal. though couched in public health terms, was, by its very vehemence and discriminatory application, another expression of the anti-Chinese feeling that reached its peak in that year. It was seen as a way of reducing the numbers of Chinese in Queensland.91

<sup>87</sup> Cronin, op cit; table 9, pp 144-145.

At the main Melbourne lunatic asylum in 1860, Chinese patients were isolated because it was said that if Europeans ate food in close proximity to them it would retard or prevent their (European's) recovery. This was a view held by Dr William McCrea, the head of the Colonial Medical Department. (See Minutes of Evidence to the Lunatic Asylum Report. Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1860-1861; qs 301-302 - 22 March, 1860.)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> 1 May, 1880; 1.

<sup>90</sup> Stone L. *Jonah*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1965; 71.

<sup>91</sup> Brisbane Courier, 1 March, 1888; 5. In Charters Towers, the local anti-Chinese league formed a market garden company, in order to break the Chinese domination of this industry, and also suggested that the provisions of the Health Act be used to force the Chinese from their homes. - Markus, (1979) op cit; 128.

Grisly images of the alleged practices of the Chinese food vendors were standard fare in the campaign against them. At a public meeting at the height of the anti-Chinese campaign of 1888, the prominent, five times, Mayor of Sydney "Honest John" Harris, in the best traditions of the slumming journalists, reported on a trip he made to the low life of Chinatown. Of the market gardeners he said "[if] I were to describe the conditions of the Chinese vegetable dealers to you ... it would stop you eating vegetables for a week or so."92

There were more specific assertions, views that the vegetables were vectors, transmitting the diseases of their Chinese growers and sellers. For example, it was said that vegetables might be the conductors of smallpox or leprosy while, in 1890, a case of leprosy in a European resident was explained by the fact that he had bought vegetables from a Chinese hawker.93 One complaint about Chinese market gardeners was the assertion, widely reported, that they fertilised their growing vegetables with their urine and excrement and it was said that the practice would lead to the spread of typhoid. This issue was enduring and surfaced where the Chinese came under scrutiny, even where their market gardening was not the main object of this scrutiny. For example, the local European market gardeners raised the matter as a public health concern to the 1892 New South Wales Manning Commission which was an Inquiry into other alleged problems such as Chinese immorality. This method of fertilisation was not restricted to the Chinese and was even encouraged by some public health reports yet, it became part of the anti-Chinese campaigns.94 Significantly, it added to the idea that Europeans, here the purchasers of Chinese produce, would be polluted by the Chinese body itself through the medium of the produce.

<sup>92</sup> Travers, op cit; 77.

<sup>93</sup> Evans R et al. Exclusion Exploitation and Extermination: Race Relations in Colonial Queensland Sydney: ANZ Book Coy, 1975; 261. South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 10 November, 1896; 698. Leprosy in the Australian Colonies, New South Wales Parliamentary Papers (Legislative Council), 1890, no C11; Appendix. Smallpox was also associated with the Chinese produce. (Queensland Punch, 1 July, 1881; 153.)

<sup>94</sup> Ninth Annual Report of the Central Board of Health. Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1864, No 14; 44. As early as 1860, the Victorian Central Board of Health commented on this practice without suggesting any health problems attendant upon it - see also Bowden, op cit; 58. However, see Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 31 October, 1883; 1734.

In Victoria, the particular practice of fertilising market gardens with urine and excrement formed the basis of a long running campaign against the Chinese market gardeners at Brighton. Weston Bate suggested that this campaign was prompted by the economic concerns of European market gardeners. It was said to be one part of a more general campaign against the Chinese. However, the Council used its public health powers, to take action against the Chinese gardens despite the fact that the local medical officer reported that the sanitary conditions were adequate. More generally, their methods of fertilising were not viewed by medical and other experts of the time as a possible health threat to European customers. It was practised more widely than the Chinese. In the early 1880s, both Sydney and Adelaide had sewage farms on which a variety of produce grew. 97

Contamination of Chinese grown food, sold to Europeans was also said to have occurred in other ways: in addition to complaining about the smell of the shops, a Queensland parliamentarian complained that opium dens were often part of the same premises as fruit shops.<sup>98</sup> These images of food contamination were used to bolster the anti-Chinese case generally. During the Commonwealth Immigration Restriction Debates in 1901, a Queensland participant and supporter of restricting the Chinese made much of a recent incident in Townsville, where allegedly:

Some of the Chinese oystermen ... kept boxes of luscious bivalves lying in slimy mud with a stream of sewage trickling round and through the boxes to fatten the oysters.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Bate wrote "They were fined for working on Sundays, though others did the same thing without being summonsed. They were assailed by missionaries. They were harried by doctrinaire believers in public health." (Bate W. *A History of Brighton*. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1962; 359.)

<sup>96</sup> See the evidence of experts such as C H L Anderson, Director of Agriculture; 377. J Ashburton Thompson, Chief medical Inspector; 369. The evidence of John Lines, the President of the Gardeners Union, suggested that economic concerns were fuelling the anti-Chinese case; 467.

<sup>97</sup> Beder S. *Toxic Fish and Sewer Surfing*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989; 8. See also Frost L. *The New Urban Frontier*. Sydney: Univ NSW P, 1991; 135. - A Japanese city where the sale of human excrement for manure occurred was described as "immaculate in comparison with the unutterable filth and misery of similar quarters in nearly all the great cities of Christendom."

<sup>98</sup> Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 4 September, 1884; 565.

<sup>99</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 6 September, 1901; 4646.

Nasal pollution accompanied the oral pollution of allegedly contaminated food. Thus, the idea that the Chinese smelt, as with the Working Classes, was a powerful idea, also vested with public health significance. It sometimes became part of the anti-Chinese case. In 1888, one Sydney resident complained of the foul atmosphere traceable to "neighbouring boiling down establishments and Chinese hovels." The smell of Chinese food shops was remarked upon in the debates on the Queensland *Health Bill* in 1884, where it was alleged that "the stench from them was enough to knock one down." 102

Most, though not all, of the official reports in the 19th century tended to minimise the extent to which the living standards of the Chinese could be said to present a risk to the European community. Two were very critical, these were the *Pell* and *Cameron Reports;* each had a wider anti-Chinese agenda though they were officially about sanitation provisions and Lodging Houses respectively. <sup>103</sup> Both provided graphic and often highly coloured evidence of Chinese living conditions which was often intertwined with their alleged opium use and the ruination of European women. Both went considerably beyond the public health conditions of the Chinese, highlighted their moral shortcomings. <sup>104</sup> More focused public health concerns were less critical of the Chinese. Evidence given by Robert Bowie (the Melbourne inspector of Nuisances) to the *Fawkner Committee* in 1857 said that the Chinese homes and yards were clean and that they were

<sup>100</sup> Sixth Annual Report of the Central Board of Health. Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1860-1861, no 104; 25. Four years earlier, the Ballarat *Star* published a letter describing how a local Chinese encampment had been burnt by local Europeans "as the stench used to come into the township, although the camp was a quarter a mile away." (12 August, 1857.) On 21 August, the *Star* described in great detail what it said was the putrid and offensive nature of the Chinese camps and the smells that emanated from them, which it suggested were particularly offensive for a European constitution.

<sup>101</sup> Walker D. Youth on Trial: The Mount Rennie Case, 1986. Labour Hist, 50: 28-41; 34.

<sup>102</sup> Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 4 September, 1884; 565.

<sup>103</sup> The Select Committee on Common Lodging Houses. (*Cameron Report*) New South Wales Parliamentary Papers (Legis A), 1875-1876, no 396. Eleventh Progress Report of the Sydney City and Suburban Sewerage and Health Board. (*Pell Report*) New South Wales, Parliamentary Papers (Legis A), 1875, no 42.

<sup>104</sup> See, for example, *Pell Report*, op cit; recommendation 16.

"cleanly in their habits." <sup>105</sup> In the same year, the South Australian Government Surgeon noted that the health of many thousands of Chinese camping at Guichen Bay before making their journey to the gold fields was good and that, provided suitable camping places were set out, their temporary residence would not inconvenience the local inhabitants. <sup>106</sup> In 1860, the Victorian Central Board of Health, suggested that the health of the Chinese in the Colony was no different from their European neighbours and that the Chinese lodging houses were "a model, in regard to cleanliness, to many European establishments of a similar nature." <sup>107</sup> The Report continued, suggesting that the sanitary deficiencies were not a product of the Chinese so much as the conditions in which they, more than other diggers, were forced to live:

as mining operations have become less remunerative, many of the Chinese often find considerable difficulty in earning the small sum which supports them and they are constantly moving from place to place, leaving without notice, an encampment, half, or perhaps wholly deserted, and frequently in a very dirty state.<sup>108</sup>

Kathryn Cronin wrote that Chinese morbidity and mortality rates on the gold fields were generally not higher than others despite the widespread publicity given to leprosy and the other cases of exotic disease. Where problems did occur, it was often the result of policies that concentrated the Chinese together into camps under the protectorate arrangements. These camps were not about improving conditions for the Chinese; they were set up to placate popular feeling against them and to exercise an effective surveillance and control including the payment of the residence tax. To From a public health perspective this control was unnecessary and detrimental, a fact recognised both by

<sup>105</sup> Select Committee on Chinese Immigration (*Fawkner Committee*). Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1856-1857, no 19; qs132, 167 and 168.

<sup>106</sup> Adelaide Observer, quoted in Sprengel, op cit; 7.

<sup>107</sup> Sixth Annual Report of the Central Board of Health. Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1860-1861, op cit; 29-30.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid: 30.

<sup>109</sup> Cronin, op cit; 92. This was a view taken by the Ballarat *Star*. In 1857, it claimed that if the Chinese were to be kept in their current "encampments ... the public health is endangered." (22 August, 1857.) It saw the proper laying out of the camps as the answer.

<sup>110</sup> Cronin, op cit; 81 and 82.

some Victorian Parliamentarians and medical officers. Even one parliamentary supporter of restrictions on Chinese immigration sought to distance himself from the "popular clamour" against the Chinese and claimed that he had found them "clean in their camps and habits, perhaps cleaner than many other classes of persons there."<sup>111</sup> It was the view of the Victorian Chief Medical Officer that the existing sanitary arrangements were quite adequate. In a report to the Chief Secretary he claimed that "they [Chinese] are as intelligent and capable of taking care of themselves as other people."<sup>112</sup> Commenting on the protectorates, the Central Board of Health in its Annual Report (1860) said:

The assemblage of such a number of individuals in the circumscribed space ... cannot but cause some offence, as there are many reasons why sanitary regulations cannot be properly carried out in these places.<sup>113</sup>

The Chinese also imposed their own rules regarding cleanliness. The *Young Report* cited the rules of the *Su Yap Society* at Ballarat. Rule 10, in particular, imposed strict requirements on sanitation and the disposal of refuse.<sup>114</sup>

Chinese living standards were the subject of close scrutiny throughout the second half of the 19th century and, on occasions, evidence was presented which suggested that they were substandard. One such case came out of the survey of Chinese settlements along the Murrumbidgee and other parts of rural New South Wales conducted in 1883 by Martin Brennan, a police inspector and Quong Tart. This Report suggested that the camps suffered from poor sanitation and had no drainage; that living conditions were also crowded; and that people were sleeping in the kitchens of food shops. Essentially, this was a problem of poverty rather than *being Chinese* since the Report also found that the furnished rooms of the richer Chinese in the area were adequate: "but they are few compared with the many tenements which in hot weather must breathe pestilence because

<sup>111</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 14 January, 1857; 267.

<sup>112</sup> Cronin, op cit; 92.

<sup>113</sup> Sixth Report of the Central Board of Health. Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1860, no 104; 30.

<sup>114 1868,</sup> Victoria, *Young Report*, op cit; 17. These rules were likely to be drawn up by Chinese headmen with a view to minimising occasions that might lead to anti-Chinese violence, and infringements brought severe sanctions. Young did not comment on the extent to which compliance occurred, but the realities of life on the gold fields must have made strict compliance with rule 10 not always possible.

of the neglect of all hygiene laws."115 The Report's recommendations focused on the need for more stringent regulations on sanitation and on places where food was prepared for sale. It also recommended that the owners of the houses in these camps be required to provide adequate drainage and sanitation.

The findings of the *Brennan/Quong Tart Report* were echoed in the 1892 New South Wales *Manning Commission*. Some deficiencies were noted; cases where people were sleeping in kitchens, where yards had been converted into kitchens, or where a cook was preparing food "in disgusting proximity to an open privy." Yet, it was suggested in the evidence that the Chinese were no worse than Europeans and, where deficiencies were noted, other causes should be sought. The evidence of Dr Ashburton Thompson, the Chief Medical Inspector to the Board of Health, suggested that the Chinese were:

seldom quite so dirty, so indifferent to comfort and decency or so squalid as some of our own poor are; while in point of personal cleanliness they are upon the whole very much better

#### He continued:

the faults to be pointed out are due neither to poor whites nor to poor Chinese, but to those of us who know what sanitary laws are necessary, and yet as a community either do not enact them or else, do not faithfully execute them.<sup>117</sup>

Another witness, a woman living with a Chinese male, told the Inquiry that the Chinese "like cleanliness. If you are dirty they will quickly tell you so."<sup>118</sup>

The findings of the *Manning Commission* reflected these views, namely that, where deficiencies were to be found, it was more the owners of the dwellings rather than their Chinese occupants who were to blame for the overcrowding and lack of ventilation (the most common defects in houses occupied by the Chinese.) In its recommendations to improve the sanitary conditions of the Chinese in Sydney, the Commission advocated a

<sup>115 1883-1884,</sup> New South Wales Brennan and Quong Tart Report, op cit: 2.

<sup>116 1892</sup> New South Wales, Manning Commission, op cit; 26.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid; q13539.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid; q15372.

new Common Lodging House Act to set minimum standards with which owners of premises should comply.<sup>119</sup> The Commissioners concluded that "as a rule the places were clean ... as far as it was in the power of the occupants to keep them clean."<sup>120</sup>

The recommendation that legislative control be directed to the owners of these places rather than their Chinese tenants suggests that the *Manning Commission* recognised the nature of the deficiencies - that they lay with the facilities available - rather than with their Chinese tenants.<sup>121</sup>

More general views about the Chinese as food vendors varied. Some claimed that as market gardeners they were important to the European domestic economy. A colonial edition of *Mrs Beeton* is said to have described them as the "best gardeners in the colony (Victoria)", and their produce was said to be cheap and reliable. Their activities were even claimed to have a public health importance on the basis that a regular supply of vegetables reduced the incidence of scurvy. The trade was also important to the Chinese community and, by the 1880's, a third of working Chinese were employed in the food industry.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid: 26.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid; 26. This confirmed earlier comments made by Dr Ashburton Thompson who had investigated Chinese living conditions. He noted: "in all these cases ... the blame rests chiefly not with the Chinese but with the owners of the property and with the municipal officers." (Kelly, op cit; unpaginated.) Similar views were also expressed by the press, at least that part of it that was not predictably and consistently anti-Chinese. During 1881, the *Sydney Morning Herald* went against the popular anti-Chinese trend when it reported that European conditions were easily as poor as the Chinese and that, in some areas, Chinese homes were in fact cleaner. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 June, 1881; 4.)

<sup>121</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 10 August, 1881; 526.

<sup>122</sup> Symons M. *One Continuous Picnic*. Adelaide: Duck Press, 1982; 76. They were also said to be industrious fishermen who "bountifully supplied" Melbourne by their labours (South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 24 September, 1861; 857.)

<sup>123</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 20 December, 1881; 1241. Some health professionals also wrote glowingly about the Chinese produce. In 1881, Henry Bradley claimed:

Happily however, our intercourse with the great kingdom of China has latterly introduced a few thousand of those patient plodding people, who now, throughout the arid plains of the interior, grow vegetables for the white man, and thus enable him to occupy with health and comfort, stations formerly unhealthful.

<sup>(</sup>Bradley H B. Domestic Economy: Sanitary Section. Twelve Lectures on the Subject of Health (Health Soc of NSW Pamphlet no 9). Sydney: Health Soc of NSW, 1881.) However, others complained about the limited variety and the high price of the Chinese produce. See, James G L. Shall I Try Australia? or Health, Business and Pleasure in New South Wales. London: Edward Howell and Simpkin Marshall Hamilton Kent & Co, 1892; 52.

<sup>124</sup> Cronin, op cit; 144 (table 9).

The assertion that the Chinese were a public health threat was not picked up as a consistent issue in public health legislation or the reports of officials administering that legislation, as might have been expected if they really stood out as a problem. The latter part of the 19th century saw the development and refinement of general public health laws designed to impose particular requirements for sanitation and hygiene. The development of these provisions occurred during the same period as the imposition of Chinese immigration restrictions. Sometimes these issues did come together and Chinese living conditions were made part of the wider public health debate. 125 Generally, however, the Chinese were not seen as providing a central case for increased general public health control. The link between the Chinese and public health was more typically restricted to "high profile horrors" such as leprosy or was part of the anti-Chinese debates rather than the public health debates. This process also provided an example where the "expert" evidence, as given by medical practitioners and public health officials, was generally, though not entirely, moving towards the idea that the Chinese communities did not present a major public health problem to the wider community while the views of the press and their anti-Chinese sentiment were moving towards the other view that filth and squalor was to be added to the list of complaints about the Chinaman.

It is also important to consider the way in which the anti-Chinese complaints were characterised and their significance for this thesis. There were circumstances in which the living conditions of some Chinese were substandard and unsatisfactory. This could be explained by poverty and social alienation that relegated them to the least desirable, and sometimes the least healthy areas. Yet, much of the debate about the apparent sanitary deficiencies of the Chinese operated from the premise that this was their fault: that they chose to live this way. There is no evidence to suggest that the Chinese cared less about their living standards or were less caring about hygiene than Europeans. However, they

<sup>125</sup> for example, see the South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 24 November, 1898; 946 and 947.

often had no choice over their living conditions and seemed simply accepting of them. To an outsider, or to those promoting the anti-Chinese case, this acceptance could be interpreted as indifference and any insanitary conditions resulting from their immediate environment could be interpreted as the "fault" of the Chinese. Finally, the responses to the living conditions of the Chinese in Australia outlined in this part of the Chapter were not isolated examples. Public health concerns were used to mark and isolate unpopular ethnic minorities in other countries where they were said to be dirty and living in squalor that made them dangerous to their European neighbours. 127

The complaints about Chinese food vendors were particularly significant: food was a vulnerable medium through which the Chinese body could enter into the European world and pollute European bodies. Despite the failure to demonstrate that their produce did constitute a public health risk, the concern became part of the conventional wisdom when dealing with produce touched by Asian hands. In 1924, the following advice was given by the Health Association of Australia:

The danger of infection, with typhoid for example, of foods that are eaten raw, such as salads is a real one, especially when one considers that the salads are often grown by Orientals and others under rather unclean conditions. In the far East it is said that Europeans make a practice of giving all vegetables and salads a bath of Condy's fluid. The principle is a sound one, and it is to be recommended that salads of "uncertain origin" should be carefully washed and then thoroughly wetted for an hour or so... Such a practice would certainly reduce the damage. 128

The idea that strangers contaminate or pollute food continues to have a strong place in the Australian mythology. There remains the pervasive view that Chinese eat cats

<sup>126</sup> Brisbane Courier, 1 March, 1888; 5. This view was also explicit in the case of the Chinese in the United States. One Californian congressman said of the Chinese living conditions in his country, that there were "thousands of Chinese herded together in small spaces, caring nothing for shelter beyond four walls and a roof." (Markus, op cit; XIX.)

<sup>127</sup> It was the case in California, (Markus, op cit.) and also with respect of the Indian population of South Africa at the turn of the 20th century. Kennedy B. A Tale of Two Mining Cities. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1984; 35, 43. This is a process that remains embedded in thought. In South Africa, the arguments to retain separate facilities were made by some Europeans quite explicitly on the basis that whites were clean and blacks were dirty, (ABC TV News, 16 October, 1990) The history of race relations and public health in South Africa has been examined by Lewis in Lewis M ed. Disease Medicine and Empire London: Routledge, 1988. See Chapter 13 and page 263, in particular.

<sup>128</sup> Dale J. Food Poisoning, 1924. Bulletin of the Health Association of Australasia, June; 27.

and that their restaurants serve cat. Here is a cautionary tale; if you deal with outsiders and eat their food, you risk pollution and illness.<sup>129</sup>

The fruit and vegetables of the Chinese hawker was the medium through which the barrier between the Chinese and the Europeans was breached. It was the way in which the latter could be contaminated by the various forms of "Chinese pollution" that came with the produce - the "Chinese" diseases, the opium, the Chinese smell and even the Chinese himself through the use of bodily wastes as fertilisers. This was a visible and forceful part of the general taboo that saw any dealings the Chinese might have with food as dangerous to the European community. It fitted into a more general issue, the pollution by outsiders. The Gypsy rules of purity and Bean's Egyptian fruit sellers discussed in Chapter 5 are other examples.

Views about the Chinese and their living conditions and food was a way of depicting the general idea that saw *all* Chinese as insanitary. This was the idea that "dirt is matter out of place." In essence, the dirty Chinaman had no place in Australia. He was out of place and dirt as a powerful metaphor for chaos, disorder and strangeness - at least in the eyes of many European beholders - emphasised the anomaly of the Chinese in Australia, as people who had crossed the boundary into the world claimed by the White man. The links between the Chinese and dirt and other markers of chaotic living were forged through this idea. Out of it came a dichotomy, the European world and the Chinese world. The two were seen as separate and necessarily apart in late 19th century Australia.<sup>131</sup> Dirt was the visual representation of the chaos that occurred when the Chinese breached the boundaries of White Australia.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>129</sup> For one explanation for this, see "The Kentucky Fried Rat and other Nasties" in Brunvand J H. *The Vanishing Hitchhiker: Urban Legends and their Meanings*. London: Pan, 1983; 69.

<sup>130</sup> The 1892 New South Wales *Manning Commission* illustrated a number of concerns about the transmission of disease through food. Syphilis was one example; q13589. In another case, the Commission was told that the Chinese stored the vegetables in places where they lived, as though this would transmit disease through the pollution of the produce; q13512. This conformed to the popular, though spurious, idea that leprosy could be to be transmitted by Chinese vegetables.

<sup>131</sup> Indeed, the *Bulletin*, so critical of the Chinese and other outsiders in Australia, was not racist in all contexts and was also critical of the "civilising" activities of missionaries and Imperial adventurers in China suggesting that the Chinese should best be left alone (*Bulletin*, 17 August, 1895; 6. - Report of the Ku Chen Massacre and *Bulletin*, 17 January 1891; 8 - a highly critical description of a violent attack on the native population of a South Pacific Island.) The paper was to some extent also sympathetic to the position of

The effect of these assertions that the Chinese were insanitary and a public health risk to the wider Australian community was once again to focus the anti-Chinese response in a public health context. In the most obvious sense, it became another plank that supported the immigration restriction campaigns and justified anti-Chinese sentiment. It provided anti-Chinese papers such as the *Bulletin* or *Truth* with more assertions about Chinese sanitary practices. The issue became another justification for the continuing campaigns against the Chinese.

aborigines as a dispossessed group. See the Phil May cartoon "A Curiosity in her own Country", Bulletin, 3 March, 1888. See also Docker J. The Nervous Nineties. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1991; 36.

<sup>132</sup> One example was a case where Queensland Mill workers complained about the food provided - it was fit only for "coloureds" - they sensed that they had crossed a boundary, they were being treated as though they were Chinese or Kanakas. Food hygiene and preparation were symbols of the way in which groups believed that they were being classified *The Worker 7* September, 1901. ("Dr Maxwell's Report.")

# 4 THE CHINESE AS A MORAL THREAT

To add to the charges that the Chinese were diseased and insanitary, there was a third charge levelled against them - that they were immoral. As with disease and living conditions, this assertion was framed in such a way as to represent a threat to the European community and the three charges were often run together so that the full weight of the Chinese menace could be presented and allegations of moral shortcomings could be focused within descriptions of public health shortcomings. For example, in a trial of two Chinese for the murder of a European woman in 1857, the defendants were described as "excessively dirty and presenting the appearance of having brought to the town all the dirt and filth they had contracted during their flight from justice."133

The moral threat always remained prominent. For example, there was the Bulletin's stereotypical Chinamen "Ah Sin" or Mr "Sin Fat", supposedly "corrupt, opium smoking and leprosy sodden", while newspapers reported that the Chinese were "moral and physical lepers armed with debauchery, foetid vegetables and cheap labour."134 This populist concern was also taken up in Government enquiries into the Chinese in Australia that examined this comprehensive idea of the alleged Chinese menace. The Rev. William Young's report into the Chinese in Victoria in 1868 looked at opium use and gambling as well as disease and living standards. The Brennan and Quong Tart survey of Chinese rural

<sup>133</sup> Star 14 August, 1857. Robert Thomson also drew the two issues together in 1888 when he described Chinese cooks as having "such a fund of filth and corruption in [their] heart[s] as would astonish many who stick up for their innocent looking cooks." (Thomson, op cit; 117.)

<sup>134</sup> The editorial of the Star, 12 November, 1867 made a link between leprosy and morals. It suggested that leprosy was a hereditary disease; that it would spread by intermarriage between European women and the Chinese who came to Australia "without wives and without the decency of Christian morals." See also the story by Edward Dyson *Mr and Mrs Sin Fat*, in the *Bulletin*, 14 April, 1888; 8 and Cronin, op cit; 76-78. This mixing of concepts was a common feature of the anti-Chinese rhetoric of the time. For example, William Lane, in one of his many tirades against the Chinese, linked physical and spiritual corruption. For him: "Leprosy was not so much a disease as an Asian vice." There was leprosy of the soul as well as leprosy of the body. (Markus, op cit; 203.) The external physical corruption of the disease became a badge

leprosy of the body. (Markus, op cit; 203.) The external physical corruption of the disease became a badge of moral degeneracy. (as indicated in Chapter 3, this idea conforms to the historical explanation of leprosy.)

More general links between the alleged disease and morals of the Chinese were commonly made:

Sir Henry Parkes, the NSW Premier, in supporting restrictions on Chinese immigration likened the Chinese to a "plague stalking our midst" and "a pestilence sweeping off our population" (Parkes H. Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History. London: Longmans, 1892; 479.)

Chinese premises were described by The Stockwhip (which considered itself to be a free thinking religious journal) as "celestial cesspools" (Cronin, op cit; 121); Chinese immigration was described by Cilento in terms of "pollution pouring in." (Cilento and Lack, op cit; 426); the Rev. J O Dykes, writing in the Presbyterian Review, brought together the themes of disease and vice when describing the Ballarat Chinese. (Bowden, op cit; 61): and the Illustrated Sydney News supported more restrictive immigration Chinese, (Bowden, op cit; 61); and the *Illustrated Sydney News* supported more restrictive immigration controls in order to save Australia from the "Mongolian virus". (Travers, op cit; 93.)

Committee appointed by the Sydney Board of Health in 1875 "to inquire into the state of crowded dwelling areas in the City of Sydney ... so far as it affects Public Health", emphasised this link; it took evidence of moral depravity of the Chinese and the European women living with them, considering it to come within its terms of reference. The Committee recommended that:

A special and very rigid inspection of all tenements occupied by Chinamen should be instituted. These people may be inoffensive as far as any overt breaching of the laws is concerned, but it is a question whether the state of moral and social degradation in which they live is not a greater offence to the well being of the community.<sup>135</sup>

Public health policing and surveillance was thus given a moral as well as a sanitary dimension. The 1892 New South Wales *Manning Commission* commented on a variety of issues: living standards, sanitation and morals (including the alleged bribery of police by Chinese.) The Commission also brought together and considered specific aspects of the general "immorality" assertion. These were: the seduction of European girls of tender ages; promiscuous intercourse with European women; and opium smoking.

These three issues that will be considered here; they were the central components of the "moral threat." Opium was particularly in issue; the drug was taken to be the medium through which seduction and promiscuity involving European women could be explained. It prompted a major public health response namely, the development of Opium legislation, the first laws in Australia designed to prohibit the use of a particular drug.

Prominent in this moral focus was the view that European women were centrally at risk as hapless objects of the Chinamens' lusts. This view had a strong following in 19th century Australia and was used to justify calls for the first round of anti-Chinese legislation. One of the earliest complaints was made by the prominent Victorian colonist J

<sup>135 1875,</sup> New South Wales Pell Report, op cit; para 16.

P Fawkner, then a member of parliament and stridently anti-Chinese. This theme came to be repeated regularly in the diggings and the towns. Reverend Young, relying on a report in the Ballarat *Star*, claimed that immorality among the Chinese was "deep and widespread." The report that Young appeared to be basing his conclusion upon was published in the *Star* on 24 March 1866. It was an opportunistic swipe at the Chinese community and described the young girls as "victims of outrage by the heathen debauchees." Yet the paper also admitted that the "Chinese headmen" had discouraged the girls from the camp and reserved its greatest criticism for the White procurers who established the traffic. Neither point was made by Young. The historian, Geoffrey Serle, has concluded that while there were cases of prostitution in Chinese camps and also, isolated cases of juvenile prostitution and rape, the extent of it was "wildly exaggerated by rumour." 138

However, it was assumed by most prominent male commentators of the period that Chinese relationships with white women could never be voluntary and where rape could not be demonstrated, other devices were suspected. Opium was believed by many to be the medium through which the Chinese achieved their capture and degradation of European women.

Opium use became a prominent concern linked with the Chinese. The drug's affect on Europeans who came under its influence and, by implication, under the influence of the Chinese was the central issue of concern. The Reverend Young (writing in 1868) provided the first detailed and critical comments on the use of opium among the Chinese in Australia, although evidence taken by Fawkner's Select Committee in 1857 did refer to opium use by the Chinese. Young's Report generally came down against the Chinese and

<sup>136</sup> Clark (1978), op cit; 115. Fawkner was an outspoken critic of Chinese immigration, see Cronin, op cit; 69.

<sup>137</sup> Young, op cit; 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>138</sup> Serle, op cit; 328. Any form of association between the Chinese and white women risked the categorisation of "debauchery." (see *Ararat and Pleasant Creek Advertiser*, 2 March, 1866; 2.)

was particularly critical of their opium use. He described the drug as leading to "countless evils" and as the root cause of "every wicked thing." He claimed that around the opium dens it was possible to find "abandoned European women" forced into prostitution in order to pay for the drug. Adopting a disease model, Young observed "there is every reason to fear that in the course of time the practice (opium use) will gradually spread among the European population."

This idea of the drug, with all its enslaving effects, spreading from the Chinese to European women and youths was a popular way of seeing the problem in the latter half of the 19th century and was taken up by many critics of the Chinese, particularly when commenting on the opium dens of the cities. It was as a problem of the cities that the Chinese and opium received the greatest publicity and the 1875 New South Wales *Pell Committee* and the 1875-1876 New South Wales *Cameron Committee* (on sanitation and lodging houses respectively) developed the threat to European women far more starkly than Rev Young. The *Cameron Committee* received graphic evidence from Richard Seymour (the Sydney City inspector of nuisances) about the moral as well as the sanitary state of Sydney. This moral concern focused principally on the Chinese and their relations with European women. Significantly, the women were not seen to be willing parties.

Describing one case of a woman in an opium den, Seymour claimed:

she was under the influence of opium, and he was using her - having connection with her - and seven or eight Chinamen waiting at the door to do the same to this same woman. 140

He continued that in another opium den, a woman had told him "They do what they like with us when we are under the influence" The *Pell Committee* also provided graphic scenes of European women, recumbent, drugged and at the mercy of any passing Chinaman.<sup>141</sup> These were powerful images that, in the short term, helped to drive the two

<sup>139</sup> Young, op cit; 24.

<sup>140 1875-1876,</sup> New South Wales Cameron Committee, op cit; para 261.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid; para 262. Pell Committee, op cit; 13.

Committees' calls for selective public health surveillance of the Chinese quarters. They also contributed to the long term view that Chinamen and their opium presented a threat to the colonial communities.

In the minds of many who spoke publicly about opium, no woman was safe from the drug, a concern that was heightened when it was respectable women that became its victims. The prominent Melbourne moralist Henry Varley, having completed a survey of the city's low life in 1888, claimed to have found young European girls, one of who admitted "to being of respectable Carlton parentage" in an opium den. This emphasis on respectability was again made during the Federal *Opium Tariff* debates (1901). Here, the colourful Tasmanian member King O'Malley described a visit to San Francisco, where he claimed to have seen even the daughters of wealthy men "stealing into the Chinese dens in great numbers." 143

However, the concern for women was not just restricted to the "respectable classes" or even to Europeans. In 1895, the South Australian Attorney General, supported a proposal to prohibit the sale of opium to aborigines, claiming that "young lubras, were enticed to the Chinese dens by the attraction of the drug, and their ruin was accomplished"; that they were "lured from their happy wurlies to become the victims of Chinamen." The Attorney warned "the case of the aborigines to-day might be the case with European women tomorrow." 144

The anti-Chinese stance of much of the popular press also focused strongly on opium use and the alleged corruption of European women. This was a powerful vehicle for aligning the community's fears against the Chinese. It was more powerful than just the idea of disease and insanitary conditions. It was also enduring. As late as 1927 the

<sup>142</sup> Davison G et al ed. *The Outcasts of Melbourne*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1985; 49. These descriptions seemed to appear opportunistically in the anti-Chinese writings of the time. The same year as Varley's discovery, John Potts provided his Queensland readers with the picture of a particularly mean and chaotic opium den, with recumbent Chinese lying "among streaks of oily fat bacon, dried fish and half rotten fruit." Inevitably, they were also accompanied by "young girls insensible with narcotics." (Potts, op cit; 28.)

<sup>143</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 14 December, 1901; 7317. See also the Adelaide *Advertiser*, 15 June, 1905; 4 where it was reported that "in Victoria there are at least 500 opium smokers and among these are many ladies of wealth." See also South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 18 October, 1905; 159.

<sup>144</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 19 December, 1895; 3022 and 3023.

Perth *Mirror* described the discovery of an alleged opium den in the city with the following headlines, reminiscent of the anti-Chinese sentiments of the 1880s: "Opium smoking in Perth - White girl victims and celestial lures." <sup>145</sup>

The press of the day played on these themes, calculated to isolate the Chinese in the public's opinion. The fear of opium was emphasised prominently, as can be seen in some of the more celebrated anti-Chinese pieces, such as the "Mongolian octopus" cartoon and the Edward Dyson short story Mr and Mrs Sin Fat, which appeared in a special Bulletin anti-Chinese number in April 1888. This was a grisly cautionary tale of the ruin that befell a Chinese opium den proprietor and his European wife, that used opium as a vehicle for the standard descriptions of vice, the corruption of young girls and the filth and pollution of the dens. 146

Opium was an important way through which much anti-Chinese sentiment was channelled. Perhaps it was for this reason that many leading Chinese took a public stand against opium use. Most prominent was the restaurateur and merchant Quong Tart a Commissioner on two New South Wales enquires into the Chinese and a supporter of legislation that would ban the import and sale of what he called "that detestable drug." Chinese attacks on the drug met with mixed reactions. The pleas of Quong Tart and others were quoted approvingly in the parliamentary debates. However, the prospect of the Chinese themselves seeking controls on opium discomforted those for whom the drug and its alleged threats to White society was a major plank of the anti-Chinese campaign. One was John Norton, the parliamentarian, populist and proprietor of the Sydney *Truth*,

<sup>145</sup> Reproduced in Davies S. Shooting Up! Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1986; 36.

<sup>146</sup> The "Mongolian Octopus" appeared in the *Bulletin* in 1886. It is reproduced in Hornadge, op cit; 24. The Dyson story appeared in the *Bulletin* on 14 April, 1888.

<sup>147 1883-1884,</sup> New South Wales Brennan and Quong Tart Report, op cit; 7. See also Travers, op cit; 105. There were other prominent Chinese opponents of the opium trade. One was Gee Wah, a Christian missionary. In 1905, he addressed an Adelaide audience on the matter and published a pamphlet. (Gee Wah. Reasons Why the Opium traffic Should be Abandoned. Adelaide: Chinese Anti-Opium Committee, 1905.) See also the biographical note on Cheong Cheok Hong, another missionary and social reformer (Pyke D ed. Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol 3, Melbourne: Melbourne Univ P, 1969.)

<sup>148</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 13 August, 1905; 1769. Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 26 October, 1893; 2632.

who derisively dismissed Quong Tart's plea for prohibition saying "we don't want an almond eyed messiah; in fact, we don't want the almond eyed men at all." Norton and his publication stood out as vehemently anti-Chinese. The idea that prominent Chinese might take what could be seen as a responsible stand on opium would complicate the negative and monochromatic image that he and others had painted of the Chinese and deprive the anti-Chinese cause of much of its strength.

## The Opium Laws

Restrictions on the use of opium, expressed in legislation passed at the turn of this century, were the most visible official responses to the anxieties prompted by the drug. They were public health responses, designed in the eyes of their creators to protect the community from the apparent menace of the drug and the Chinese who lurked behind it. These first drug controls also became the basis of the current law in Australia criminalising the misuse of drugs. Despite the earliest concerns about the Chinese, expressed in the 1860s, legislation to prohibit possession and use of opium did not come into force in Australia until the end of the century, coinciding with the second phase of Chinese restriction legislation. 150

Overwhelmingly, in the thinking of many who supported it, the legislation was the preventative measure against what was seen as the frank contagion of opium and the implied menace of the Chinese users. In the Victorian Parliament the supporters of an unsuccessful *Opium Bill* in 1893 said "the evil of opium smoking is spreading to the European population; it is getting among our own people" and degrading them to the level of "brute animals." <sup>151</sup>

<sup>149</sup> Travers, op cit; 111.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>150</sup> It was said in evidence to the 1856-1857, Victoria, *Fawkner Committee*, op cit, that Singapore had legislation in place in the 1830s, restricting the smoking of opium to a licensed shop - (evidence of R McMicking q 339.)

<sup>151</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 26 October, 1893; 2631, 2650.

The threat to Europeans was a constant theme in the Parliamentary Debates and reflected the general concern that European women in particular were in grave danger from opium. This was heightened by the view, repeated in a number of venues, that since the Chinese were less affected by opium than were Europeans, the sense of threat posed by the Chinamen would be all the greater.<sup>152</sup>

A graphic expression of this threat was a description of the interior of one opium den, said to have been in Melbourne. Here:

on one opium couch ... was a shrivelled-up, decrepit-looking old Oriental, resembling nothing so much as a revified Egyptian mummy, and a European woman of scarcely twenty, very scantily clad, who I was informed, was married to a well-to-do businessman<sup>153</sup>

The threat to White Australia could scarcely be put with greater clarity and menace - the contrast between the shrivelled up Chinaman, a revenant, menacing and anomalous, feeding vampire like on his European victim, a lovely young girl, the wife (and by implication a possession) of a respectable man of property. What was pictured in this vignette could be projected into the wider context, the threat that the Chinaman presented to all Europeans in Australia.

Scenes such as these gave opportunities for fertile imaginations to express the horrors of the opium dens. The Chinese were prominent in the arguments that succeeded in introducing Opium controls in Australia by the turn of the century; they were a reference point for most Parliamentarians who debated the legislation and the most significant justification for the opium laws was the protection of the European community from their whiles and schemes. The dangers of the drug were also equated strongly with the threat to national interest, even to national survival. The view that these enactments were anti-Chinese is strengthened by the realisation that they were not effective health

<sup>152</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 26 October, 1893; 2639. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 14 November, 1901; 7309 and 31 August, 1905; 1768.

<sup>153</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 31 August, 1905; 1768.

<sup>154</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 19 December, 1895; 3024.

measures against the problems of opium at the time, since they applied only to smoking opium. There were no equivalent prohibitionist controls over therapeutic preparations containing opium and morphine, though these were recognised as a problem at the time. The legislative controls over "therapeutic" products remained administrative rather than criminal in character until the development of more comprehensive and less specific drug laws in the 1920s and 1930s. The legislative controls over "therapeutic" products remained administrative rather than criminal in character until the development of more comprehensive and less specific drug laws in the 1920s and 1930s.

It is important to consider the extent of opium consumption in 19th century Australia. Centrally, it was characterised as a problem of smoking, that is "Chinese", opium. On the fields he visited, Young found 80 Opium shops and 48 gambling houses. He further estimated that between 50% and 90% of the Chinese on these fields used opium and that as many as 80% were gamblers. He made no comparison with the number of liquor outlets that might also have existed on these same fields but it is certain that many more than 80 licensed premises (and this would not include the, many, "sly grog" shops) would have flourished in the 8 goldfields that formed the most thriving parts of rural Victoria including Ballarat, Bendigo and Beechworth. 158

<sup>155</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 26 October, 1893; 2650 and 2657. See also Royal Commission into the Decline of the Birthrate. New South Wales Parliamentary Papers, 1904. No 83, Minutes of Evidence. Vol II; 119. Report of the Royal Commission on Secret Drugs Cures and Foods. Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, 1907-1908. XIX, vol 6; 61.

<sup>156</sup> For example, the South Australian Food and Drugs Act, 1908 was introduced into Parliament with more concern about food and few references to drugs. (South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 13 October, 1908; 205.) For the, later, criminal legislation see: Poisons Act 1928 (Vic); Police Offences (Drugs) Act 1934 (NSW); Div IV, Health Act, 1937 (Qld); Dangerous Drugs Act, 1934 (SA). One exception to this general scheme was the Victorian Select Committee into the Sales and Keeping of Poisons. Victorian Parliamentary Papers, 1856-1857, D10, - here the main area of concern focussed less on the drug but on their application in the drugging of women in brothels.

<sup>157 1868,</sup> Victorian Young Report, op cit; 23.

<sup>158</sup> A map of Ballarat, dating from 1861, shows 37 hotels in the less than 1/2 sq. km. that comprised part of the Town's commercial district - Bate, op cit; 108. By 1870, Strange, op cit, claimed that Ballarat had 477 hotels! (Strange, op cit; 42.) To consider Young's other gigantic evil - gambling: again, he did not measure his estimated Chinese gambling rate against the extent of European gambling at the time. However, O'Hara in his recent history of gambling in Australia suggests that around the diggings, European gambling was almost a "constant activity", with a wide variety of games to appeal to the diggers' tastes. (O'Hara J. A Mug's Game: A History of Gambling and Betting in Australia. Sydney: NSW Univ P, 1988; 66.). See also Robert Schachner's observations on the prolific gambling and drinking interests of the diggers on the Tarnagulla field in 1907. (Schachner, op cit; 49.)

Accepting that many Chinese were regular users of opium, the real focus for 19th century concern turned about its use by Europeans. Ascertaining the European use was difficult but it was central in the anti-opium debates. In 1893, it was alleged in the Parliament that there were 1,000 Europeans in Victoria addicted to opium, including it seemed two public servants! 159 This was an unsourced figure. The available data suggest differently; that smoking opium never got beyond the Chinese community to a significant extent. The New South Wales Colonial Government collected data on Chinese opium smokers and European women smokers. This suggested that European smokers were greatly outnumbered by the Chinese. Of the 9,616 Chinese resident in the Colony in 1878, 4,406 were reported as smokers. Only 46 European women were said to be smokers, while European males were not counted in this survey, possibly because they were less visible in the public imagination. Imports of opium into Victoria were also falling between 1881 and 1905.160 There is no evidence to suggest that many Europeans used smoking opium recreationally. This should be compared with the large quantities of "therapeutic" opium and alcohol consumed by the population at the time, the latter to the extent that it was recognised by some politicians as socially problematic. Yet, it was never the subject of equivalent legislative control.161

This selective approach to drug control is significant for this thesis; it was another aspect of the directing of public health controls towards the Chinese. It has not been the only time where drug laws appear to have been directed towards a minority group. The Opium legislation can be compared with the development of cannabis legislation in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s which was directed against the Mexican presence in the United States after World War I. The parallels between the early United States cannabis laws and the Australian opium legislation are striking. Both focused on the

<sup>159</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 26 October, 1893; 2646 and 2649.

<sup>160</sup> Yarwood A T. Attitudes to Non-European Immigration. Stanmore: Cassell, 1968; 84. South Australia, Royal Commission into the Non-Medical Use of Drugs. Research Paper No 8: A Social History of Drug Control. Adelaide: Royal Commission, 1978; 12.

<sup>161</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 31 August, 1905; 1774. Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 17 October, 1905; 2124. South Australia, Royal Commission into the Non-Medical Use of Drugs, op cit; 18. Powell K C. Drinking and Alcohol in Colonial Australia 1788-1901, NCADA Monograph Series No 3. Canberra: AGPS, 1988.

recreational use of the drug by a distinct and largely unwelcome immigrant group whose alien lifestyle and potential as cheap labour was thought to pose a threat to the established community. The effect of the laws were twofold: firstly, they created a means of control that could be used against the Chinese or Mexicans; and secondly, they constituted an official statement grounded in public health that the group with whom the drug was associated was a threat to the community, providing a legitimate basis from which further anti-Chinese or anti-Mexican campaigns could be directed. 162

As a simple public health response, the opium laws present a problem. There were more harmful drugs than opium in Australia at the time and they remained unregulated. It was the associations that the drug held for Australians - the image of the opium dens and the things believed to go on in them that shaped the legislation and influenced its supporters. Opium had the power to explain the otherwise inexplicable, that White women would willingly live with Chinamen. This could not be a product of free choice; rather, they had to be tricked and ensnared and enslaved. Opium was believed to do this; the laws were intended to prevent it and this idea drove the legislation. Speaking in support of the 1905 Victorian prohibition, one member said:

A few days ago, I went through the opium dens of Melbourne ... In every one of these dens where I found unfortunate victims - white men and white women - they all stated that they were anxious that the Bill should be passed.<sup>163</sup>

Concerns about opium therefore sat within general concerns about Chinese sexuality and the threat that this was said to pose to the White community. The idea that the Chinese were sexually threatening to the community took different and quite distinct

<sup>162</sup> See Helmer J. Drugs and Minority Oppression. New York: Seabury Press, 1975; chapter 4. In South Australia, the introduction of controls over cannabis came about only as a result of pressure on the States by the Commonwealth to adopt the League of Nations convention on Narcotic Drugs, of which one listed drug was Indian Hemp (Cannabis). There was little if any use of Cannabis recorded in the State. Cannabis was added to the Convention's list of controlled substances at the insistence of the United States.

<sup>163</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 17 October, 1905; 2125.

forms. It was said by some that they practiced homosexual or bestial acts. The truth of these claims is unclear (nor was the "offence" necessarily peculiar to the Chinese) but it was highlighted as a justification for the violence, a demonstration that the Chinese were barbarians, oblivious to established moral order. 164

The belief that the Chinese threatened White women was more significant and enduring. It became a metaphor for the idea of the Chinese as threatening to Australia. For example, one popular image was a cartoon showing a White girl (usually asleep) in peril from a Chinese or coloured assailant entering through her bedroom window. The literal threat to the woman's life and virtue was obvious enough. More significantly, the Chinaman's entry by stealth, while his victim slept, was a warning for those who were not ever vigilant in restricting Chinese immigrants. To make the point more obvious, the girl was sometimes represented as "Australia" or one of the colonies and the Chinaman as "the open immigration policy." There were variations of the theme but, the sexual overtones always remained prominent as a powerful and threatening metaphor and the more general warning to the community about the need for restrictive immigration policy always implicit.165

The notion that the Chinese were a threat to European women became a general theme in news reporting. Individual newspaper proprietors were often personally outspoken on this issue. 166 Disease was also made relevant in this context by the popular press. In 1892, the Labour publication, *Commonweal* warned its readers of the need for police to ensure that the Chinese did not advertise for domestics, as this must certainly

<sup>164</sup> Age, 11 July, 1857; 5. South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 7 May, 1861; 56. Westgarth W. The Colony of Victoria. London: Sampson Low, 1864; 165. Clark (1978), op cit; 117. Regarding homosexuality in colonial Australia generally, see the writings of J C Byrne (1848), cited in Ward R. The Australian Legend. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1958; 97. Manning Clark, among others has touched on these ideas. See Clark C M H. Henry Lawson: The Man and the Legend. Sydney: Macmillan, 1985; 48 and Manning Clark's Foreword to Settlers and Convicts. (the Immigrant Mechanic, op cit; xiv.)

<sup>165</sup> There are many examples, see Markus, op cit; similar cartoons are shown in Cronin, op cit and Hornadge op cit.

<sup>166</sup> Souter G. A Peculiar People: The Australians in Paraguay. Sydney: Sydney Univ P, 1981; 20, Hornadge, op cit; 32.

lead "to the defilement of the young girls in our community by the almond-eyed procurer or his leprous associates." 167

Stories such as these, added to the opium den stories discussed earlier, dwelt heavily on themes of defilement and sexual menace which touched a raw nerve in the Australian community. They were powerful expressions of the threat that the Chinaman represented to Australians. The alleged enslavement of European women was manifestly a threat to European males. However, the individual expressions of this threat were often highly coloured fictional accounts or simply cartoons and where "facts" were alleged, some were manifest fabrications. For example, in 1886, there was a report in the *Queensland Figaro* of the notorious Mount Rennie rape in Sydney. There were no Chinese involved, yet the paper managed to inject an anti-Chinese flavour when, on the same page, it generalised that many women might be suffering a similar fate at the hands of the Chinese. Accuracy was not the point in issue! The Chinese were sensed to be a threat and their various, imagined and hypothetical, assaults on White women were powerful components of the case that was constructed against them.

The most explicit sexual threat to White Australia presented by the Chinese was the prospect of their interbreeding with European women. The racial theories of the day expressed strongly the idea of the purity of the race. They emphasised the threat that coloureds were believed to present to the White man - particularly in a thinly populated and defenceless country like Australia. These ideas were reinforced at all levels, by the popular press, by social theorists and by Parliamentarians.

The idea that the Chinese would cohabit with Europeans challenged conventional values. It ran counter to the prevailing racial theories. To a community that took the inferiority of the Chinese as given, and which discriminated socially and legally against

<sup>167</sup> Cited in Hornadge, op cit; 20.

<sup>168</sup> Queensland Figaro 25 September, 1886; 445.

them as a matter of course, the thought of European women having relationships with inferior races was anomalous and disturbing, one that could only be explained through some force such the Chinaman's guile or the power of opium.

During the 19th century, White Australians responded to this particular threat in a number of ways. Most obviously in outbursts of violence. For example, accounts of the Buckland Valley riots in 1857 reported that one victim of the White's rampage was a European woman, the wife of a Chinese, that she was singled out for especially savage treatment. Here was a warning to other women. This victim was an anomaly, someone particularly threatening to the view that the Chinese should remain separate and apart. The popular press also reinforced this idea and provided savage warnings of the retribution which would come to European women who lived with Chinamen.

There was another concern, derived from these relationships. Any offspring would be "half castes", and half castes, perhaps reflecting their ambiguous state, were considered to be particularly dangerous and depraved. During the 1901 Federal Immigration Bill debates, H B Higgins gave this advice to his colleagues:

Have Honourable Members seen the vices of the mixed races as they appear in San Francisco? I have been through the dens in San Francisco and of all the sights I have ever seen, I have never witnessed any more degrading or filthy as those.<sup>171</sup>

This was a recurring theme: some forty years previously, the Victorian Parliamentarian John Fawkner, opposing the easing of entry restrictions on the Chinese, played on the idea of the monstrosity of half caste children, claiming that they were "more like ourang-outangs than human beings." <sup>172</sup>

<sup>169</sup> Age, 13 July, 1857; 6.

<sup>170</sup> Flesh and Blood an Edward Dyson short story, Bulletin, 22 July, 1893; 13. Also cited in Lawson S. The Archibald Paradox. Ringwood: Penguin, 1987; 147. See also Evans, et al, op cit; 262.

<sup>171</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 6 September, 1901; 4658. In 1896, the South Australian Attorney General described the mixed race population there as "our open self inflicted wound" (South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 10 November, 1896; 695 see also 706.) There was also the view that interbreeding would have the effect of dragging the European race down to the level of the Chinese. (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 6 September, 1901; 4665.)

<sup>172</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 9 June, 1863; 926.

The truth of all these assertions about sexual enslavement and opium was the subject of contemporary examination. The 1892, New South Wales *Manning Commission*, the most significant of the late 19th century investigations into the Chinese, obtained evidence that quite discredited the popular view that they ensnared and enslaved White women. On the basis of the evidence it concluded that where White women cohabited with Chinese males they were "kindly and liberally treated" and that they voluntarily sought the protection of the Chinese. The prostitutes with whom the Chinese consorted were, it was said, the "drudges of the larrikins" and the victims both of drink and the brutality of their own race.<sup>173</sup> They were not the hapless victims of opium: the Commission noted that, in many cases, the Chinese with whom the women lived did not use opium. The Report concluded that, "apart from their disposition to gamble", the Chinese were a "singularly peaceful and generally law abiding section of the community" and that "there is no ground for suspicion that our alien population is a danger to youthful virtue."<sup>174</sup>

The *Manning Commission* took evidence directly from European women cohabiting with Chinese who were users of opium. Even over the gap of one hundred years, the poignancy of their stories and the personal tragedies that brought them to the Chinese doors remains moving. Here are two cases: Ellen said she was seduced by a European on promise of marriage but was then deserted and exposed to her family and friends. With few options, she moved to Sydney as a domestic where she met and then lived with a Chinese vegetable seller, of whom she said; "he has always been very good to me. I could not wish for a better man." Pauline, originally from Brisbane, was married in Sydney to a man who deserted her. With no supports she found work in a circus and

<sup>173 1892,</sup> New South Wales Manning Commission, op cit; 21.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid; 22.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid; q14534.

then lived with a bricklayer who at first supported her, but who then told her "to go on the streets and keep him." She left the relationship and met a Chinese with whom she had lived for four years. She agreed that "it is better to have one Chinaman to live with than to go nightly on the street to solicit men." 176

Here were two women, for whom personal misfortune and lack of supports propelled them into the Chinese community. In better times this option would be unlikely to have crossed their minds but the Chinese provided an answer to their misfortunes. Another witness, Minnie, said: "I think fully half of them come to the Chinese when they have nowhere else to go."177 These women were a long way removed from the image of the scantily clad society voluptuaries enslaved to the opium habit that fuelled the imaginations of politicians. Even their attitude to the drug was banal and without sexual overtone. Ellen insisted that opium killed all lustful inclination and Pauline, that "you cannot be drugged by opium."178 They remarked that the idea that the Chinese would drug and seduce young women was outside their experiences.179 For these women, opium use seemed to be an addictive habit, entered into from a sense of "flashness"; one that they were eager to break.

The 1883-1884 New South Wales, *Brennan/Quong Tart Report* also considered the issues of prostitution and immorality. It concluded that the European prostitutes and the "disreputable" wives of the Chinese were the real causes of the disturbances and crimes that had "transformed the Chinese camps into dens of immorality." The Report claimed that this could be demonstrated by the fact that while the Chinese always remained a substantial majority in the areas examined, White defendants outnumbered Chinese by three to one in prosecutions arising out of alleged criminal activities in the camps. Regarding the Chinese seduction of White women, the Report stated that this

<sup>176</sup> Ibid; q15321.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid; qs 15198-15199.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid; qs 14651 and 15295.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid; q15337.

 $<sup>180</sup>_{\it Brennan}$  and  $\it Quong Tart Report$ , op cit; 7 and 3.

view, though frequently put forward by persons "not accurately informed on the subject", was unfounded and that the alleged victims, the women, when asked, "smile at the credulity of any person believing such." 181

The findings and evidence of these reports suggest that the Chinese were not a moral threat to the wider community in 19th century Australia. Not all Enquiries agreed: *Young* was most critical of the Chinese, their living conditions and their opium use. However, his report was relatively early in the history of the Chinese in Australia. As a missionary working with the Chinese he stood apart from them, identifying the shortcomings that, in his view, stood in the way of their salvation. He was also investigating an unstable population of diggers, rootless and living hard and with no family ties (a fact recognised in his Report.) Further, there is nothing that suggests Young took detailed evidence for his findings. In places, he relied upon newspaper reports where he might have gathered evidence directly. These reports had a potential for anti-Chinese bias.

The Report of the 1875-1876 New South Wales Cameron Committee into Common Lodging Houses, which gave quite salacious and damning accounts of the Chinese living conditions and their exploitation of European women, was coloured in two ways. Firstly, by the evidence of Richard Seymour, the Inspector of Nuisances. This focused on the single and questionable, though (to Europeans) horrifying proposition that opium had ensnared these women, robbed them of their reason and turned them into the supine objects of Chinese lust. Like Young, Seymour was an outsider, looking into the Chinese community and bringing a moral concern to bear on his sanitary observations. The urban historian Shirley Fitzgerald described him as "a law and order man, who exhibited very little understanding of the causes or solutions to the problems he dealt

<sup>181</sup> Ibid; 3.

with."<sup>182</sup> Secondly, it was coloured by the Chairman, Angus Cameron, himself. Cameron was a prominent Labour politician, a member of the carpenters' union and anti-Chinese. <sup>183</sup>

By contrast with both Young and Seymour, the 1883, New South Wales *Brennan | Quong Tart Report* and the 1892, New South Wales, *Manning Commission* were looking at relatively stable, if sometimes impoverished, settled communities of Chinese. Evidence was also taken first hand from the supposed White victims of the Chinese, which contrasted so starkly with the popular idea of enslavement and degradation.

The Parliamentary responses to these concerns lay centrally in opium controls. As both the failure of a number of the early Opium Bills and the opposition to the successful Bills suggests, parliamentarians were not all of the view that the Chinese posed a moral and public health menace to the European. For some, the ill lit opium dens were no worse for health and morals than that ubiquitous colonial phenomenon "the flaring gas lit gin palaces." 184 Yet, the image of "Ah Sin", the Chinaman, his opium pipe and all that went with it remained a persistent and permanent feature of popular representation and the "moral threat" became an important part of the stock in trade arguments that were used by many against the Chinese in the 19th century. To that extent, they joined the "disease" and "poor sanitation" arguments against them.

Collectively, these issues: disease, sanitation and morals constructed a case against the Chinese in Australia. From a public health perspective; that is - were they in fact a health risk - it was not a convincing case. What it did provide however, was a powerful and emotive argument against them. It claimed to enunciate a profound and many faceted threat to European society in 19th century Australia.

<sup>182</sup> Fitzgerald S. Rising Damp: Sydney 1870-1890. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1987; 78. See also the descriptions of Seymour and his methods in Mayne A. Representing the Slum: Popular Journalism in a late Nineteenth Century City. Melbourne: History Dept, Univ Melb, 1991; 48, 49 and 115.

<sup>183</sup> See Cameron's biographical note in Pyke D ed. Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol 3, Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1969.

<sup>184</sup> See the 1895, South Australian, *Opium Bill* Debates (South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 19 December, 1895; 3033, 3041.)

# 5 THE CHINESE AS SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY DISTANCED

The idea of disease, insanitary conditions and morals were joined to broader social and economic issues that distanced Chinese from Europeans. Firstly, there was the discourse rich with ideas that characterised the Chinese as an inferior race, inhuman, or closer to animals than humans. They were likened to or described as "animals", "reptiles", "monkeys", "dogs", "worms", "ants", "flies" and "rabbits." Their queue or platted hair was referred to as a "pig tail" or simply as a "tail", as though they were animals or perhaps relations of the tailed monsters described in Chapter Three. The opium dens were described as "pest houses" with the obvious implication that their occupants were pests. 188

This kind of imagery was a powerful way of distancing the Chinese; it emphasised their separateness, so separate as to be sub-human. Other ideas projected images of the Chinese as degenerate or heightened their physical differences to Europeans or spoke of the "ingrained (Chinese) habits of a thousand years." Even politicians with a pro-Chinese stance took the view that the Chinese would, quite simply, always remain alien. These views constructed and reinforced the idea that a profound, predetermined, fixed and

<sup>185</sup> See for example, the Sydney Morning Herald, 28 June, 1888; 6.

<sup>186</sup> Evans, et al, op cit; 286. Yarwood A T and Knowling M J. Race Relations in Australia: A History. Sydney: Methuen, 1982; 173 and 174. Mansfield B C. The Origins of "White Australia." The Australian Quarterly, Dec 1954: 61-68; 64. South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 10 October, 1888; 1308. Bulletin 24 March, 1888; 9 and 21 April, 1888; 9. Ararat and Pleasant Creek Advertiser, 16 October, 1863; 2 and Potts, op cit; 5.

<sup>187</sup> Argus, 16 March, 1860; 5.

<sup>188</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 26 October, 1893; 2651.

<sup>189</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 23 August, 1887; 589. See also Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 20 December; 1881; 1243. See also Henry Parkes' own view, expressed in Parkes H. Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History. London: Longmans, 1892; 474. One way in which the Chinese were marginalised was through their diet. Because the Chinese ate rice, they were said by Cilento, (op cit; 203,) to be more tasty to the cannibal aborigines in North Queensland than Europeans. Rice, probably because of its associations with the Chinese, was marked as nutritionally inadequate. In the words of one dietary guide published at the time: "we might expect to find rice-eaters everywhere a wretched, impotent and effeminate race, and such the case." (Harrington S. How When and What to Eat: A Guide to the Colonial Diet. Melbourne: W H Williams, 1883; 11.)

<sup>190</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 16 June, 1881; 112.

unbridgeable gulf existed between the Chinese and Europeans in Australia. They were views that fed off the eugenics theories and the ideas of the natural dominance of the White man that was prevalent in the late 19th century. They had wide circulation and were adhered to by prominent Australians. Alfred Deakin, supporting the *Immigration Restriction Bill* 1901, said this about Asiatics, whose immigration the provisions were designed to stop:

these people do differ from us in such essentials of race and character as to exclude the possibility of any advantageous admixture or intermarriage if we are to maintain the standards of civilisation to which we are accustomed ... Our civilisation belongs to us and we to it ... they [non-Whites] are separated from us by a gulf which we cannot bridge to the advantage of either. 192

These views implied a profound barrier between the Chinese and the European in Australia. It suggested that they were *naturally* different and inferior compared with Europeans. If the Chinese challenged the legitimacy of this - as they might by crossing boundaries, by adopting the guise of Europeans, by living with White women and demanding equal treatment - they were seen as both anomalous and threatening because they threw into doubt the validity of the European idea of the natural superiority of Europeans and blurred the categories that kept these groups apart. One way of dealing with this threat was to set the intruder into a comic, anomalous role, hence the stereotypical "Black Englishman" or, in the case of Quong Tart, the "Chinese Scotsman." So strong were these ideas that even when the press showed some sympathy to them, as it did to some extent in reporting the Buckland riots, the Chinese

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>191</sup> Evans, et al; 242, 243 and 293.

<sup>192</sup> Cited in Nairn N B. A Survey of the History of the White Australia Policy in The 19th Century. *The Australian Quarterly*, September 1956: 16-31; 31. See also South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 19 September, 1905; 289 and 31 October, 1905; 602. (debates on the *Shearers Accommodation Act*, 1905 - that required separate sleeping accommodation for Asian and European shearers.) In Queensland, there is also evidence that European workers objected to living in close proximity to Kanakas because the latter smelt. (Curthoys and Markus, op cit; 100.)

<sup>193</sup> Bulletin, 28 January, 1888; Banner page.

victims were cast as outlandish and comical figures, as naturally cowardly and defenceless, so they became comic victims of European violence.<sup>194</sup>

A central argument against the Chinese was that they were an economic threat to White Australians. This issue was so commonly presented as a reason for anti-Chinese sentiment that it has been highlighted and sometimes offered as a complete way of understanding the case for exclusion. This raises the question: was the economic factor the prime issue or was it an elaboration of an existing sense of difference which was articulated in economic terms? Many who have written about the Chinese in 19th century Australia and of racism more generally have debated this issue. No attempt to resolve it is presented here, other than to argue that the question of boundaries is significant either as a central legitimator of "economic racism" or as an *a priori* from which economic issues were constructed. 196

The first prominent example of organised anti-Chinese violence occurred in Queensland at an Ipswich boiling down works in early 1851. It was said to be prompted by the recruitment of Chinese as cheap labour and the objection to this by the local labour force. 197 The economic question remained central throughout the 19th century. By 1888 it was said in the Victorian legislature that 90% of Victorians supported the anti-Chinese Bill currently before Parliament and that economic concerns were the "real object" of these proposed restrictions. 198 This support was reflected in much of the public expression

<sup>194</sup> In this case, they were described as "subjects of the Son of the Sun and First cousin of the Moon" Age, 13 July, 1857; 6. There were many other examples of this derisive treatment. In a serious article about Chinese protests in London against restrictive legislation, the Chinese living in Australia were described as "former residents of the Flowery Land." (Sydney Morning Herald, 25 July, 1888; 7.)

<sup>195</sup> For example, see the Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 6 September, 1901; 4633 and 4637, 12 September, 1901; 4831. South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 3 November, 1896; 660.

<sup>196</sup> Evans, et al, op cit; 359. Varying views have been presented on this point. However most writers agree that racism cannot be seen simply as an epiphenomenon of economic issues, that the identification of people as outsiders and the consequence of this view is a central issue. See the articles in Rex J and Mason D. Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1986. See also Jackson P. Maps of Meaning. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989; 151-153.

<sup>197</sup> Cronin, op cit; 6. Burgmann V and Lee J, op cit; 179.

<sup>198</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 6 December, 1888; 2359 and 13 December, 1888; 2480.

of the period; directly in the form of demonstrations against the Chinese that focused on the economic issues and indirectly through the newspapers which concentrated on the view that the Chinaman was impoverishing European workmen. This concern was picked up in legislation that imposed additional burdens on Chinese workers.<sup>199</sup>

From their first arrival, and then throughout the 19th century, the Chinese were widely seen as unwelcome economic competition either for gold or wages. This was sometimes linked to violence or other expressions of anti-Chinese feeling. Soon after the Buckland riots of 1857, a public meeting at nearby Beechworth was supportive of the mayhem and maintained that gold was better left in the ground than taken back to China.<sup>200</sup> In the cities, resentment, sometimes backed up by legislative restrictions, was expressed at any Chinese activity that might conceivably be done by Europeans, including market gardening, furniture making, and crewing ships.<sup>201</sup>

The strongest indication that the economic issue was one of the most visible components of anti-Chinese feeling in Australia was the close association of the labour movement with the cause.<sup>202</sup> This could be seen both by implication and explicitly. By implication when, for example, one South Australian parliamentarian and opponent of Chinese restrictions blamed the labour movement for its introduction.<sup>203</sup> Explicitly, in the labour publications themselves, for there were many occasions when prominent labour identities or publications complained against all coloured immigration. For example, in 1901, the Labour *Worker* (the official journal of the Federated Workers of Queensland) warned against the hordes of: "Kanakas and Chows and Afghans coming into this country insulting your wives and daughters, and taking the bread out of white men's mouths."<sup>204</sup>

<sup>199</sup> Factories and Shops Act 1915 (Vic), section 38(1) and Part IV. Other restrictions included prohibitions on Victorian mining companies employing Chinese workers, or workers born of "a Chinese mother or father" In 1881, the Victorian Government cancelled fruit stall licences held by Chinese at railway stations, - Cronin, op cit; 127.

<sup>200</sup> Age, 18 July, 1857; 5.

<sup>201</sup> For example, see Sydney Morning Herald, 25 July, 1888; 7.

<sup>202</sup> Price, op cit; 76.

<sup>203</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 16 July, 1881; 291.

<sup>204</sup> Markus A and Ricklefs H C. Surrender Australia? Essays in the Study and Uses of History. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1985; 35. (The Worker was a staunchly anti-Chinese and anti-kanaka paper, whose

It is unclear to what extent the Chinese were driving down the labour market. Markus suggests that in the furniture trade at least, the Chinese stood to make reasonable livings and were not undercutting Europeans, while Chinese tin miners in New South Wales were said to receive rates of pay that were on a par with other miners.<sup>205</sup> Raymond Markey observed that while the idea that the Chinese presented an economic threat was a "constant theme" in the working class agitation against them, it was "not entirely justified" in most cases since the Chinese tended to concentrate in specific occupations that in many, though not all, cases were not in competition with Europeans. Whether or not they were justified, Markey suggests that the fears were firmly held by many workers since the importation by pastoralists of the first coolie labour in the 1830s.<sup>206</sup>

The Chinese were never more than a prominent minority in Australia; there were a host of new arrivals, competitors on the goldfields and in the towns, that the established labour movement might have objected to in addition to the Chinese. In fact, the colonial Governments all had active and successful immigration programmes in place to which there appears to have been no sustained objection by the labour movement.<sup>207</sup> British arrivals were stigmatised only in rare circumstances, for example, when it was believed that paupers were to be given assistance to immigrate.<sup>208</sup> This, uncharacteristic, objection was most likely based on the idea of the pauper as *naturally* demoralised and vicious, as a stigmatised outcast who, like the Chinese, would never change his spots.

cartoons frequently linked leprosy with non-European immigration.) For William Lane, the ejection of the Chinese from Australia, was "really and truly a big clang of the workman's hammer on the anvil of socialism" - Clark C M H. A History of Australia - Vol 5. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1981; 87. See also the report of the proceedings of the Fifth Trades and Labour Congress of Australasia, held in Brisbane, 1888. (Brisbane Courier, 3 March, 1888; 5.)

<sup>205</sup> Markus A. Divided we Fall: The Chinese and the Melbourne Furniture Trade Union, 1870-1900, 1974. Labour History, 26:1-13; 6 and 7. New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 3 November, 1881; 1804. Other studies (cited in Markus and Rickless, op cit) suggest that Chinese workers were reasonably treated by their Chinese employers and that there was no strong evidence to suggest that they were "unfair" competition for European workers, or that they caused significant unemployment in the industry. (;107.)

<sup>206</sup> Markey R. The Making of the Labour Party in New South Wales 1880-1900. Sydney: Univ NSW P, 1988; 290.

<sup>207</sup> Curthoys and Markus, op cit; 27.

<sup>208</sup> Holland Rose et al ed. *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1933; 265. Long G. The Case of the Democratic Gold-Digger. *The Australian Quarterly*, June 1955: 82-86; 82.

While economics may have played a significant part in the exclusionist debate. being Chinese was the a-priori issue that directed it and made it significant. Because of the way they were seen, there was little the Chinese could do to escape the charge that they undercut Europeans. Those who opposed them argued that it was inevitable that they would do so. In his anti-Chinese ramble around Queensland in 1888, Potts wrote "is it possible for the whitemen to complete against such plodding slavery without degrading themselves?" In other words, there was no way Europeans could compete; to do so would make them as degraded as the Chinese.<sup>209</sup> More particularly, complaints about unfair competition often built upon other ideas that were used to support and strengthen the anti-Chinese case. The views about the Chinese as an insanitary and an inferior race came together with the economic issues; the economic issues depended upon them. For example, insanitary and substandard living was said to provide the unfair advantage that allowed them to undercut Europeans.<sup>210</sup> Here, the alleged insanitary nature of these conditions was raised, both as an explanation of how the Chinese could work so cheaply and also in defence of these measures. Thus, in justifying restrictive legislation, it was said of the Chinese that:

They herded together like savages. They worked unearthly hours. One of their workers acted as a kind of rouseabout for them. If anyone went into one of their dens, he would find a place on the floor with no fireplace or chimney where the food was cooked.<sup>211</sup>

In other cases although the complaints about the Chinese appeared to be economically based, in the sense that they were about Chinese trading practices, they were

<sup>209</sup> Potts, op cit; 8. See also Brisbane Courier, 6 June, 1887; 4.

<sup>210</sup> The discriminatory provisions of the Victorian Factory legislation were justified on the basis of "fairness", an attempt to address what was said to be the natural advantage of the Chinese, "working long hours in little dens that a white man could not live in." Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 5 December; 1905; 3323.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid; 3330. There were other occasions when the opponents of the Chinese furniture manufacturers claimed that the Chinese lived in insanitary conditions: see South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 18 August, 1887; 560 and the Appendix to the 1892, New South Wales, *Manning Commission*. Intercolonial Trade Union Conferences also raised health issues in this context; calls were made for the strict enforcement of the Health Acts in Chinese premises. (Markus (1974), op cit; 3) See also, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 20 September, 1901; 5079.

grounded in the view that they were an economic threat *because* the Chinese were outsiders. These were complaints that described their trading activities as "Un-English" or that they worked on Sundays or had little respect for the ideal of the eight hour day.<sup>212</sup>

There were other ways in which racist assumptions drove the economic issue. Many who accepted the economic argument against the Chinese may not have stopped to consider how the inferior economic position of many Chinese deprived them more than it may have deprived the European labour force. As the victims of racist assumptions - that they would work for a pittance and were happy to live cheaply in poor conditions - the Chinese were then blamed for any adverse effect their conditions might have or was thought to have on the European work force. One example was presented in evidence to the 1892 New South Wales *Manning Commission*, where European market gardeners complained that the Chinese were unfairly taking their trade. The basis of this complaint was the assertion that Chinese produce was cheaper than theirs because European customers would haggle with the Chinese sellers and beat down their prices, something they did not do with Europeans sellers. So, the European assumption that the Chinese could be made to sell their produce more cheaply than their non-Chinese competitors provided the substance of other Europeans' complaints against them.<sup>213</sup>

Given the prominent anti-Chinese stand of so many labour publications, it is easy to see the whole immigration restriction movement in Australia as driven by labour interests and its perceived economic concerns. Such a view must be qualified in two ways. Firstly, the language of much of the labour based complaints against the Chinese suggested that economic concerns claimed their legitimacy from a more fundamental basis. William Lane premised his calls for restrictive controls on the need to protect the "species" and justified his anti-Chinese stance as "a prejudice founded on instinct, an

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>212</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 16 June, 1881; 113. Mansfield B C. The Origins of "White Australia". The Australian Quarterly December 1954: 61-68; 66. 1892, New South Wales, Manning Commission, op cit; q16406-16409.

<sup>213</sup> Manning Commission, op cit; q17115.

instinct which seeks to save us from an act fatal to us as a species."<sup>214</sup> Secondly, if the issue was simply economic, the object of the campaign might have been fair treatment for all rather than the exclusion of one group. Instead, the fact that the Chinese were, in most cases, paid less than Europeans doing the similar work seemed to be accepted as a given, the resulting unfairness was seen as not to the Chinese but to the Europeans who had to compete with them!<sup>215</sup>

Thus, while economics was a part of the anti-Chinese case in Australia, the economic arguments did not exist in isolation. They built on and emphasised the sense of difference and the ideas of the Chinese as outsiders, so powerfully expressed within a public health context, would have had no meaning without these ideas.

# 7 THE CHINESE AS OUTSIDERS

Neither the issues of public health or economics provide by themselves the substratum from which the anti-Chinese movement of the period can be understood. Rather, public health and economics were issues that articulated and justified the anti-Chinese campaign. There was a "deeper" issue and, in considering this, it is significant to consider the events of 2 June 1888, from the newspaper accounts and also from the immediate context in which they occurred.

In May 1888, the anti-Chinese movement in Australia seemed to have reached fever pitch and the "Chinese question" was a constant feature of press reporting. On 24 May, the *Sydney Morning Herald* described it as "the prominent topic of conversation throughout the City."<sup>216</sup> Saturday 2 June was the culmination of that anti-Chinese

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>214</sup> The Worker (Editorial), 19 March, 1891; 1. Brisbane Courier, 5 March, 1887; 4 (an anti-Chinese speaker in Brisbane claimed that it was a "national instinct" which warned against the arrival of the Chinese.) See also Brisbane Courier, 2 March, 1888; 4.

<sup>215</sup> In 1887, it was reported without comment that Chinese railway labourers in South Australia were paid 3 shillings and sixpence a day; their European counterparts, 5 to 6 shillings per day. (*Brisbane Courier* 15 December, 1887; 4.)

<sup>216</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 24 May, 1888; 5.

Sentiment. According to the newspaper report, some 40,000 people marched from Lower George Street to the Domain via the General Post Office. The demonstration seemed almost to have a festive appearance: the marchers were accompanied by bands, flags and banners. These included a painting of the *Afghan*, a ship that had become the centre of a storm over the landing of Chinese immigrants. The banners of various Sydney Unions were also prominent as were the flags of America, France and Belgium. Once at the Domain, the demonstrators made "a kind of picnic of the occasion" and heard a number of speakers refer to the "higher law" of self preservation, of the European race in Australia minus the Chinese, and the need to respond to the Chinese in the way they would to an epidemic of smallpox. Continuing this theme, the Chinese were likened to a plague and, as for their vegetables, it was said "if you cannot get vegetables ... without purchasing them from a Chinaman then go without."<sup>217</sup>

Many factors came together to make this demonstration so significant. By itself it was remarkable, it was the popular culmination of a period that Graeme Davison has described as "possibly the most concerted attack of xenophobia in Australia's colonial history." The context in which this demonstration occurred was also significant. 1888 was a milestone in White Australian history, being the centenary of the first settlement. For some newspapers such as the *Bulletin*, it also provided the opportunity to denounce the imperial control of Britain, a control that could be characterised as pro-Chinese in the sense that Westminster had disallowed some of the colonial anti-Chinese legislation. This was said by some Australians to have occurred because of the value of British trading interests in China. It also illustrated the subservient position of the Colonial governments. 1888 was a year in which Australians could look to and affirm their independent identity.

The Chinese became part of this process. Robert Thomson, writing in 1888, claimed that he took the Chinese question out of the "mere labour region to make it an

<sup>217</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 4 June, 1888; 5.

<sup>218</sup> Markus and Ricklefs, op cit; 103.

<sup>219</sup> Bulletin 16 June, 1888; 10, 11 "John Bull's fix." See also, Bulletin, 14 April, 1888; 10.

Australian National Matter." In presenting his anti-Chinese case, he claimed to be a champion of Australians, speaking for all of them "on this her hundredth birthday."<sup>220</sup> A recent historian, Charles Price, maintained that the "Chinese were the anvil on which the new young societies were slowly hammering out their national identity."<sup>221</sup>

More particularly, two things were also occurring within this broader picture. A number of ships containing prospective Chinese immigrants (who in terms of legislation restrictions could expect to land) appeared off the Australian coasts. In addition to the *Afghan*, there were other vessels, including the *Menmuir* and the *Tsinan*. The *Afghan* and her cargo of immigrants presented so much concern at the time, that the *Australasian* noted that "she was as much written and talked about as if she was a hostile cruiser."222 The Victorian response to the *Afghan* was to place the vessel in quarantine in Melbourne, on the allegation of smallpox aboard, though Europeans were seen going ashore. In Sydney, the *Afghan* was again placed in quarantine.<sup>223</sup>

The Chinese sought to exercise their rights to land and the courts, applying the provisions of the statutes, upheld this right. This application of the existing law was responded to by opponents of Chinese immigration such as Sir Henry Parkes with calls to a "higher law" of self preservation, a law of necessity, the sort of self preservation necessary to stave off an epidemic. He said "I care nothing about your cobweb of technical law; I am obeying a law far superior ... namely the law of the preservation of society in New South Wales." If this idea of the "higher law" could be said to have any meaning it was as a popular expression of the effervescence of the moment, an effervescence that came about in the context of the nationalism of the time. Its

<sup>220</sup> Thomson, op cit; 33.

<sup>221</sup> Price, op cit; 260. See also Yarwood and Knowling, op cit; 187.

<sup>222</sup> cited in Travers, op cit; 75.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid; 75 and 76.

<sup>224</sup> Parkes, op cit; 487 and 488.

them to breach the "great white walls", the margins of European Australia. The "monster" demonstration, explicitly and implicitly, was a ritual of solidarity in response to this threat.

The popular picture of the Chinese, that they were outlandish and anomalous, and the idea that they were a threat had been a feature of both official and popular debate for the 30 years prior to 1888. It was readily understood by the demonstrators and those who knew of the ships' presence off the coast. It was built upon by the newspaper reports of their movements. One of these accounts was written by a journalist from the *Sydney Morning Herald* who took time to visit the Chinese kept aboard the *Tsinan*. In a manner light hearted given the gravity of the issue he dwelt at some length upon their table manners. He assured readers accustomed to watching the ravenous antics of the great beasts at Sydney Zoo that it "was equally terrible to watch the Mongolian feeding." Having presented graphic accounts of the scene, he concluded that the Chinese at dinner "suggested a lower order of animals." 225

This article was simply the latest in a long tradition that extended back to the opening of the Buckland Valley Joss House in 1857 and earlier. It illustrated how the various complaints about the Chinese were drawn together as a threat, sometimes expressed in the metaphors of habits, disease or lifestyle but often expressed simply in the idea that they were just different and anomalous; people who had crossed the boundary into White society.<sup>226</sup> As the *Argus* put it at the time of the Victorian goldrushes: "[i]n the nationality of these people, in their language, dress and habits of life, there is enough to excite the suspicion of the diggers."<sup>227</sup> In other words, it was sufficient that they were

<sup>225</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 19 May, 1888; 9. For the readers of the Age, the report of the Sydney demonstration was complemented by another report on the same page, detailing one of the standard complaints against settled Chinese in Australia, about their living conditions at Ballarat. Here, the local Council was claiming that the settlement at Golden Point was substandard and that the Chinese were living like "pigs in their tin can huts" and were depreciating the value of the neighbouring property. (Age, 4 June, 1888; 5.) The idea that they lived with animals and by implication were animals was used in anti-Chinese publications. In the same year Potts went to some lengths to make this point; he wrote "at night the (Chinese) labourers sleep above a pen of stinking ill kept pigs with only a thin mat upon a few poles to separate man from beast." (Potts, op cit; 17.)

<sup>226</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 19 July, 1881; 290. Adverse comment was also made simply on the way that they dressed. Report of the Government Resident of the Northern Territory. South Australian Parliamentary Papers, 1887, No 53; 13. See also Parkes' quote in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 May, 1888; 8.

<sup>227</sup> Cronin, op cit; 42.

simply different. This difference fuelled the view that they were "highly dangerous" or "contaminating to Europeans" simply because they were Chinese in Australia.<sup>228</sup>

Spatial and visual chaos was another way of depicting the Chinese world as anomalous and removed from the European world. Beyond the scenes of language, dress and habit were also profound opposites that presented the Chinese world as the converse of the European world. They were said to prefer darkness to light, while opium was said to make night into day and day into night.<sup>229</sup> The Chinatowns were described as "underworlds", quite removed from the rest of the City.<sup>230</sup> This theme was developed in a *Bulletin* article (entitled *The Chinese Invasion of Australia*) that gave a graphic, if unlikely, account of the "subterranean galleries" that Chinese had allegedly dug between their houses. Here was another underworld, evoking images of the Chinese scuttling along the tunnels dug below the Sydney streets.<sup>231</sup> These were powerful ways of distancing the Chinese in Australia. Their effect was to emphasise the boundary around White Australia, to justify its preservation and to see the Chinese in Australia as anomalous, polluting and unwelcome.

# 8 CONCLUSION

Anti-Chinese discourse in 19th century Australia took a prominent public health focus and ideas about health formed a basis from which the Chinese were said to be a threat to the wider (European) community. Yet, while public health was an important part of the anti-Chinese campaign, the available evidence does not sustain the intensity with which the public health case was put. Where public health problems could be linked with

<sup>228</sup> Report of the Government Resident (1887), op cit; 15. South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 5 November, 1896; 690.

<sup>229 1875</sup> New South Wales, *Pell Committee*, op cit; para 255 and appendix. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 31 August, 1905; 1786. In an Appendix, Potts gave a graphic description of a Chinese opium den "at midnight." (Potts, op cit; 28.)

<sup>230</sup> Davison et al ed, op cit; 58.

<sup>231</sup> Bulletin 4 September, 1886; 4. See a discussion of this idea in Boyle T. Black Swine in the Sewers of Hampstead. London: Penguin, 1989: 204, 206.

some Chinese, this was more to do with their being poor or socially marginal rather than with their being Chinese.

However, there was a significant way in which these issues came together. The Chinese were seen by many as one problem in 19th century Australia. Public health was another problem; health was a central issue for the inhabitants of the Australian colonies at this time. Ill health and disease was a concrete expression of the Community's fears, with each arriving vessel potentially introducing another invading wave of disease.

Both the exotic diseases and the Chinese were outsiders, threatening invaders of Australia, though both "invasions" were, in their context, a small influx. However, the association of these two concerns was an obvious one, public health provided a way of substantiating the general fears expressed about the Chinese. The dirt and disorder associated with disease was also a visual representation of their anomalous status in Australia. They became more than "just different", they were linked with health fears and became threatening in a number of ways that were coherent and well understood.

The public health response to the imagined Chinese threat was complex.

Centrally, it comprised public health controls that focused on them as new arrivals and as residents in Australia. Some of these policed the margins of White Australia; quarantine laws became controls on entry and another way of keeping the new Chinese arrivals at bay. On the goldfields, the special controls and legislation served the similar purpose of distancing the Chinese, restricting them to protectorates and controlling their behaviour. In the cities, the calls, in the name of public health, for restrictions on the activities of the market gardeners and the opium dens were measures that also sought to distance and socially quarantine the Chinese. They were calls to protect those who would otherwise deal with them and become polluted, corrupted or enslaved as a result of crossing into this, Chinese, world of vice and vegetables.

It was a complex framework that constituted the anti-Chinese campaign in Australia. Issues of "public health", "economics" or "race" do not sit apart from each other. They interact and compound a complex case; so economic restrictions were sometimes justified on public health grounds, while public health restrictions received

their cogency from ideas about the *natural* proclivities of the Chinaman. The living standards of the Chinese, shown by the evidence to be a function of poverty rather than choice, (this was a real "economic issue") could also emphasise the public health case against them. Thus, to people who believed that the Chinese were insanitary, evidence of insanitary living conditions demonstrated the fact. It might have, though in their eyes did not, point to other issues such as poverty or their inability to deal with exploiting lodging house owners.

In the end, the prominent idea from which the public health issues took their substance was the idea of the Chinese as outsiders and out of place in a community that was constructing its idea of self, that was moving from colonial outpost to nation. The public health dimension of the history of the Chinese in 19th century Australia is important, both in terms of illustrating that process of exclusion and affirmation and also in the history of public health policy. As a narrative history of a marginalised group, it illustrates the way public health provisions and views about health have distanced groups and articulated boundaries between groups.

This story of the Chinese has many parallels in other countries. For Australia, it illustrates how the European community, as the entrenched and dominant group, relied on public health practice to police its boundaries and, particularly during the intensity of the centenary year, to help define that group and its place in the world, as an embryonic nation - free, white and in control of its destiny.

# CHAPTER 8 "WOGS AND REFFOS": SOUTHERN AND EASTERN EUROPEANS IN AUSTRALIA

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The experience of 19th century Chinese arrivals in Australia has important parallels with the cases of many arrivals in Australia in the 20th century. In particular, concern for the Public's health was a central issue in the justification of the legislative restrictions and in the wider public discourse about immigration during this century. The public health lens was to be applied with regularity to new and prospective Australians in order to ascertain their fitness and suitability as settlers. It was believed that the quality of the immigrants would determine the quality of the Australian gene pool and of the race itself. This was a matter of concern for a number of prominent public health practitioners. There were also the issues of disease and insanitary living - the twin threats of undesirable groups. Many non-British Australians were said to be a problem in both these respects and such views became a central way in which disquiet about non-British arrivals in Australia was expressed. Coupled with this was the idea that they were inferior and a threat to the idea of Australia being and remaining almost entirely British. These public health issues will be considered in this Chapter. They were underlying values, often linked with other issues of concern, by which new arrivals would be measured and they could prompt acute and well publicised anxieties, as the Misr case demonstrates.

On 14 April, 1947, the *West Australian* newspaper announced the arrival at Fremantle of the Egyptian passenger liner *Misr*, carrying 623 people who had left England and many other parts of Europe to make new homes permanently in Australia.<sup>1</sup> On disembarkation, many of these settlers provided a melancholy account of the conditions on board the ship, a view echoed by the port health

<sup>1</sup> West Australian, 14 April, 1947; 6.

authorities who refused to allow any person off the vessel until it had been cleaned thoroughly. It was said to be "in a filthy condition" and quite inadequate for its task. Passengers due to disembark at Fremantle were delayed for 5 hours while thorough quarantine and immunisation checks were performed. Those who were not of British nationality appear to have been subject to particularly stringent customs and health checks.

Despite these conditions, the focus of official and public concern shifted from the ship to its passengers. The *Misr* was found to be carrying 339 persons from a variety of Southern and Eastern European countries, or as they were to be described by the Victorian State president of the Returned Services League (the RSL), an "ill assorted bunch of migrants." These were not the type of new settlers that Australians had been promised by the post war Federal Labour government. They were not the "sturdy Britons" that were intended to comprise 90% of the total post war immigrants, nor were they the "sun-bronzed flaxen haired Balts" of Northern Europe whose arrival Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell hoped would herald a general public acceptance of non-British immigration.<sup>3</sup> In Federal parliament, the Minister for Immigration was asked a number of questions relating to the health and suitability of these new non-British settlers. Senator Herbert Collett, from Western Australia, focused on their general suitability, suggesting that this "extraordinary mixture of nationalities ... possess few of the qualities desirable in Australian citizens."4 In the House of Representatives, poor health was the issue. The Minister for Immigration assured the House that although one passenger, a Greek boy, travelling with his family was crippled, he was of "above

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Age, 15 April, 1947; 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 22 November, 1946; 502-511. The reference to the "Balts" was used by the Melbourne *Herald* to describe the first group of settlers from the Baltic States. (7 December, 1947.)

<sup>4</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 30 April, 1947; 1688. (Collett was a conservative, nationalist politician with strong links to the Returned Services League.)

average intelligence" and "it would be reasonable to expect that he would become a useful member of society."<sup>5</sup>

The "Misr episode" is a neglected but important window into the character of Australia's post war immigration policy. The fact that a press report of the insanitary and inadequate conditions on board the ship could, as a matter of course, be translated into a complaint about the nature and background of some of the persons obliged to endure those conditions illustrates how tentative the outstretched hand of welcome for many post war immigrants really was. For many Australians, the issue of concern was the cargo and not the state of the ship. This was not always the case: when the *Orbita*, arriving the year before and carrying only British immigrants, was found to be defective, complaints were directed only at the state of the vessel.6

The *Misr* suggests a number of things about the way the immigration programme was seen by the community in this period of immediate post war influx. There was the powerful stereotype of the British immigrant against which all new arrivals would be measured. The parliamentary questioning of the new arrivals' health and disability illustrates that the success of the programme would be gauged more by its manpower implications than by its humanitarian thrust.

Most remarkable of all was the fact that highly placed and influential figures could publicly debate the relative worth of nationalities only two years after the defeat of the NAZI regime and the exposure of the monumental brutalities done in aid of the same kind of thinking.

The public face of Australia's 20th century immigration policy was optimistic and compassionate. It was expressed in the pictures of cheerful British

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ibid, 2 May, 1947; 1904. See also a later reference to the *Misr*, (*Argus* 4 August, 1948; 3.)

<sup>6</sup> See the case of the immigrant ship *Orbita*, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 7 August, 1946; 3850. and the *Rena*, (*Argus* 30 November, 1948; 6.) Another case similar to the *Misr* was that of the *Luciano Manara*, an un-renovated ex grain freighter and described by its Melbourne agent as "a floating slum". Despite the deficiencies, he blamed the 400 Jewish immigrants on board for their plight claiming "they have no idea about hygiene." (*Argus* 17 May, 1949; 5.)

boys leaving their East End slums for the sunny Australian countryside or the comforting *Movietone News* images of bedraggled refugees from distant strife welcomed to a land of unlimited freedom and opportunity. The reality was different: the humanitarian aspect of immigration was secondary to other ideas. Firstly, there was the economic issue: immigrants were necessary to satisfy Australia's need for increased labour and population. Second, immigrants were graded according to their worth and potential as new Australians. Asians were barred, Britons were welcome, and other Europeans were second best. The rage against the *Afghan* and its cargo of totally unwelcome Chinese immigrants in the 1880s had been replaced by what, in the *Misr* case, seemed a frankly consumerist approach to new arrivals. This was an approach that focused on the quality of the immigrants "bought" by Australia under the immigration programme to meet its economic needs. The racial appearance of the new arrivals was the measure of this quality.

The best reconciliation of these two issues was to take British immigrants. It was hoped that arrivals from this source would satisfy both Australia's needs and a prevalent view was that Australia was to be an extension of Britain. Such a conclusion conformed with general opinion about immigration policy through the 19th and early 20th centuries which always favoured British immigrants. As W G Spence, the Scottish born Queensland labour leader, wrote in 1909, the great Australian national ideal should be "purity of the race and preservation of Greater Britain for the Anglo-Saxon stock." This ideal remained central to Australian immigration policy up to and including the post World War II influx.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> In August, 1945, the Federal Labour Government announced its post war assisted migration programme with the idea that Australia's future was to "populate or perish". Arthur Calwell said: "Our first requirement is additional population. We need it for reasons of defence and for further expansion of our economy" - Immigration was to be an important way of pursuing this goal. (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 2 August, 1945; 4911-4917.)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Cited in Cole D. The Crimson Thread of Kinship: Ethnic Ideas in Australia, 1971. *Historical Studies*, 14: 515-525; 516.

However desirable they might have been, British immigrants could not be recruited in sufficient numbers to meet economic needs and throughout the 20th century, many Europeans other than Britons came to Australia. Some arrived without official encouragement, others were the result of official immigration programmes. In the latter case, the arrivals were the visible results of the failure of the traditional, British, source of supply. The Australian community was simply obliged to accept the arrivals who were prepared to come. This was not always done without complaint. In 1952, the Federal Labour member for Port Adelaide described non-British arrivals as "average folk and a percentage who are not as good as we would like them to be."9

With this kind of judgement, prompted as it was by appearance and racial origin that differed from the British norm, came a series of complaints that drew on public health concerns of dirt and disease and on economic concerns not unlike those directed towards the Chinese in the 19th century. This Chapter considers: the view that many immigrants were genetically inferior to British Australians; the view that many immigrants had insanitary lifestyles and an increased prevalence of disease; the claims about immigrant crime and morals; and the explanations about occupational injuries suffered by immigrant workers.

Taken together, these considerations illustrate how health issues were used to devalue particular groups of new arrivals, particularly the Southern and Eastern European immigrants and refugees, ("wogs" and "reffos", as they were pejoratively known). In particular, ideas about hygiene were used to justify a hierarchy of worth that identified them as "second class" arrivals and emphasised the idea that, as unwelcome outsiders, they could be threatening to the Australian community. Their appearance and alleged moral and sanitary failings marked them as outsiders and provided a public health context for that threat. They also provided justifications for focusing issues such as poor living standards and occupational

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 2 September, 1952; 883.

injury on individual immigrants rather than on the wider circumstances in which they lived and worked.

While these were similar to the public health issues that were part of the 19th century anti-Chinese debates, there was one important difference: the Chinese were seen relatively simply - as quite unwelcome. European immigrants were never seen in such stark and simplistic terms. The Chinese were dismissed as hardly human: European immigrants were regarded as *relatively* rather than absolutely undesirable. They were graded and compared.

Finally, as with the Chinese, public health concerns about the undesirable new arrivals were only one part of a wider picture of "outsiders" that the Australian community was being exposed to at the time. For example, in the same copy of the *West Australian* that covered the *Misr's* arrival were a variety of other news items: a story about immigrant crime, (a gang of Melbourne shop-thieves described by police as "Gypsies"); a foreign report of the arrest of a notorious Jewish smuggler; and two updates on foreign epidemics, with the headlines "Cholera rages in Calcutta" and "Smallpox Scare in New York." These were stories about the outside world, that lay beyond the boundaries of the world of British heritage. For readers of the *West Australian* that day, the problems of the *Misr* and its undesirable cargo were one more example of an alien and unwanted intrusion from the outside world.

### 2 IMMIGRATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Throughout the 19th century, the non-aboriginal population of Australia was overwhelmingly British. By the end of the century, it was 95% British. The

 $<sup>^{10}</sup>$  Persons born in Germany and Scandinavia formed the largest group but were still only 1.9% of the total population. Italian born settlers comprised an insignificant 0.1% (Borrie W D. *Italians and Germans in Australia*, Melbourne: F W Cheshire, 1954; 36. Sherington G. *Australia's* 

Chinese were a visible and much reviled minority. However, other non-British minorities over this period met with mixed receptions from the dominant, Anglo-Australian community. Early German settlers were received well in Adelaide. In 1839, a local paper said "the visitor [to Klemzig, a German settlement] will be struck by the obliging dispositions and courteous manners of the people." Later, in 1881, a group of 200 displaced Italians arrived in Australia. They were the survivors of a failed attempt to colonise part of New Guinea and appear to have been reasonably well received and provided for and encouraged to settle in Australia. In contrast to its views towards the Chinese at the time, the Sydney press expressed considerable sympathy for the plight of these Italians, adding only by way of faint criticism that they did not have "the fresh, stout, vigorous appearance of the English, Scots or Irish." 12

The response to alien immigrants was equivocal however. Ten years later the *Bulletin* was warning of the threat to Australian wage earners of the "cheap Italian labourer", whose arrival in Australia was being encouraged by the Griffith government in Queensland as a substitute for non-European agricultural workers. Aliens from other parts of the world were also liable to attract public criticism on the basis that they were threats to the good order and safety of the community. In July 1898, for example, some anxieties were aired in the South Australian Parliament when the Attorney General responded to three questions about allegedly undesirable aliens: a Chinese, supposedly a leper; a band of "Greek Gypsies", said to be "begging about the country"; and "rascally Afghans"

Immigrants. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1980; 65, 71-82. Collins J. Migrant Hands in a Distant Land. Sydney: Pluto, 1988; table 1.3, p 11.)

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Schubert D. Kavel's People. Adelaide: Lutheran Pub House, 1985; 88.

<sup>12</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 9 April, 1881; 3. The Bulletin, whose pages at that time made continual reference to the Chinese peril and the threat of smallpox, made no reference to the Italian immigrants, other than to report what its journalist considered to be the amusing observation that many of them thought Barcelona (which was the European headquarters of the expedition) was in Italy. (23 April, 1881; 4.) See also Randazzo N and Cigler M. The Italians in Australia, Melbourne: A E Press, 1987; 41.

<sup>13</sup> Bulletin, 8 August, 1891; 7.

apparently occupying "snug billets" that might better be given to white men. Implicitly, these were calls for greater surveillance and control of potentially threatening elements in colonial society. 14 The next year, the Annual Report of the South Australian Inspector of Factories suggested that the Chinese and the "Assyrian" (Lebanese) hawkers were most responsible for the sweating of European women garment makers. 15 However, sweating has been argued to be a structural issue, it was not about being Lebanese and a subsequent Enquiry absolved them from any particular responsibility for this evil. 16

It was not only their employees that were believed to be exploited by these foreigners: prominent among the reasons for tightening the controls of the South Australian *Hawkers Act* in 1905 was the view that this "floating population of dusky individuals" were harassing their female customers. They were said to have been responsible for a variety of problems that ranged from making nuisances of themselves to committing outrages on isolated rural women and children. Such views were not always held; in Victoria in 1915, a Royal Commission was generally supportive of hawkers, recommending that they be encouraged as an economical way of selling produce to the community.<sup>17</sup>

The adverse response to aliens in Australia was not uniform: it was greatest in areas where the non-British immigrants stood out most visibly or in areas where they were believed to be most obviously in competition with Europeans. This was particularly the case in Northern Queensland and the Western Australian goldfields

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 5 July, 1898; 42.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Papers, 1900, No 64; 11. "Sweating", or the employment of workers (typically women garment workers) at piece rates, was simply a phenomenon that occurred during times of high labour supply when employers could hire and dispense with labour largely on their own terms. It has been characterised as "an entrepreneurial response to the opportunities offered by a growing reservoir of unskilled labour." (Frost L. *The New Urban Frontier*. Sydney: Univ of NSW P, 1991; 60.)

See also Sutcliffe A. *In Search of the Urban Variable* in Fraser D and Sutcliffe A. *The Pursuit of* 

Urban History. London: Edward Arnold, 1983; 251.

<sup>16</sup> Report on the Alleged Sweating Evil. South Australian Parliamentary Papers, 1904, no 71.

<sup>17</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 11 October, 1905; 458 and 1 November, 1905; 626. Victoria, Parliamentary papers. Report of the Royal Commission on Fruit, Vegetables and Jam, 1915, vol 2, No 35 (Second Progress Report) and No 40 (Final report); 11.

where the presence of Italian workers earlier this century prompted the establishment of committees of Inquiry into the Alien labour forces residing there.

These were regional concerns; the more general course of non-British immigration prior to World War II was not substantial. In the case of Italian immigration, it was largely family reunion, a process described by Borrie as "chain migration." By the late 1930s, Jewish refugees were also being accepted into Australia in significant numbers, grudgingly by many and only as a response to the international obligations imposed by the Evian Conference. In all, approximately 11,000 refugees were accepted, more per capita than any other country. However, this did not alter substantially the ethnic composition of Australia which, immediately after the end of World War II, remained quite overwhelmingly (90%) British in origin. The Italian born population was only 1%; the Eastern European population, 1%; the Northern European population, 6%.19

After World War II, Australia's immigration programme re-commenced and while, in 1946, the public's expectation was that the vast majority of the new settlers would be British, Southern European migration increased rapidly. By 1951, Italian immigration reached 20,000 per year. Throughout the 1950s, it averaged about 17,000 per year (most of it was unassisted by the Australian Governments). Italians were roughly 20% of the total number of immigrants arriving in the 1950s. However, British immigrants continued to dominate, amounting to nearly one third of the total.<sup>20</sup> Another visible and publicised group of post World War II arrivals were the Displaced Persons, the victims of the upheavals in Central and Eastern Europe. They were admitted under special arrangements as part of an agreement with the International Refugee Organisation.

<sup>18</sup> Borrie, op cit; 129.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Collins, op cit; table 1.4, page 13, Wilton J and Bosworth R. *Old Worlds and New Australia: The Post War Migrant Experience*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1984; 49. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 1 December, 1938; 2535.

<sup>20</sup> Sherington, op cit; 150. Randuzzo, op cit; 150.

In 1947, the Federal Government proposed to admit 12,000 of these people and indicated a willingness to increase the intake in later years.<sup>21</sup>

The non-British arrivals to Australia in the 20th century came for personal and humanitarian reasons or, if the product of official migration programmes, with the stigma that they were second best. By comparison, throughout the 20th century, British immigrants were never seen as outsiders in the Australian community, were always welcome and were the object of a number of public and private programmes designed to assist their settlement. Their virtues and values were extolled. In 1922, one group was greeted by the Melbourne Argus with headlines such as "Fine Types of British Manhood" and "Right Kind of Immigrants."22 This was an expression of the idea that welcomed the arrival of kith and kin and the view that the British immigrant was "better" than others. Support for this idea was expressed at both the academic and the popular level in the Australian community.<sup>23</sup> Even after 1945, when the immigration of non-Britons was expanding significantly, Arthur Calwell, the Federal Immigration Minister, stated, somewhat hopefully, that assisted British migration would remain in the "forefront of our entire immigration programme" and expressed his vision that 90% of future immigrants would be from Britain.<sup>24</sup>

One visible and highly significant component of the British immigration programme was the transplanting of British boys as workers on Australian farms.

A number of schemes were put in place to encourage as many British arrivals as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 28 November, 1947; 2922-2923. By 1948, Calwell had issued a press statement indicating Australia's willingness to take as many as 200,000 displaced persons. Some 170,000 arrived between 1948 and 1953. (Kunz E F. *Displaced Persons: Calwell's New Australians*. Canberra: ANU Press, 1988; 36, 43.)

<sup>22</sup> Broome R. The Victorians - Arriving. Melbourne: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon, 1984; 142.

<sup>23</sup> The ideas of academics such as Jens Lyng were widely publicised and supported the idea that traditional British immigrants would make the best settlers for Australia. Lyng's *Non Britishers in Australia* Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1935. (the book was first published in 1927 and reissued in 1935.) Public opinion was also in favour of an immigration policy that was restricted to "kith and kin" (Portus G V. *What the Census Reveals*. Adelaide: F W Preece, 1936; 122.)

<sup>24</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 22 November, 1946; 502-511.

possible and they highlighted the preferences of immigration policy. In the greater picture of British immigration however, these schemes were significant but not substantial programmes. In the 3 years between 1911 and 1914, the *Fairbridge* scheme had settled 1,787 boys in Western Australia. This was about 7% of the total immigrants arriving there at this time.<sup>25</sup> The South Australian *British Boys Farm Apprentices Scheme* managed to attract 1,400 boys (known as *Barwell Boys* after the scheme's originator, ex-premier Sir Henry Barwell) between 1922 and 1924.<sup>26</sup> These endeavours had a logical appeal for those who organised them. They were a linking of kith and kin, while the exacting rural conditions in which the boys worked were characterised as a healthy and productive life on the rural frontier, far removed from the city slums from which many of them had come. These were schemes whose expressed aims were to build "a new Britain in Australia."<sup>27</sup> They sustained the idea of desirability and acceptability that was to a large extent measured by the origins and the physical appearance of the immigrants.

However, the reality fell short of the ideal. The numbers of arriving Britons reduced throughout the 1930s in absolute terms and also as a percentage of immigrants overall. Britain remained the predominant source of immigrants but it had lost its monopoly. In 1938, only 3,000 British immigrants arrived. 39,000 arrived in 1927. This reality created a tension in Australian immigration policy between the need for immigrants for national development and security

<sup>25</sup> Sherington, op cit; 94.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Report of the Select Committee on the Boy Immigrant Scheme and Nomination Schemes of Immigration. South Australian Parliamentary Papers, 1924. No 60; evidence of V H Ryan, page 2. The aim, unfulfilled, was to recruit 6,000 boys to replace this number of South Australians killed in World War I. (See biographical note on *Barwell* in Nairn B and Serle G eds. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 7. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1979.)

<sup>27</sup> Lack J and Templeton J. Sources of Australian Immigration History. Melbourne: History Dept, Melb Univ, 1988; 9, 18, illus 83. The story of these schemes has been described by Philip Bean and Joy Melville. From the childrens' perspectives they seem often to have been unpleasant and brutalising experiences. However, they were generally supported by Governments and the children seen as "building blocks of Empire". Significantly, the programmes seemed most successful in Rhodesia, where the need for White settlers was most obvious. (Bean P and Melville J. Lost Children of the Empire. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989; chapters 6 and 8.)

(recognised as an issue throughout the 20th century) and the uncertainty about the future of British immigration.<sup>28</sup>

The central control that regulated the inflow of new arrivals into Australia was the Federal *Immigration Act* 1901. Its most publicised feature was its embodiment of the White Australia Policy. The debates associated with the initial passage of the Act in 1901 were focused largely on the restriction of non-Europeans. However, the exclusionist mechanisms of the legislation could be, and were, used to preclude any person deemed undesirable, whatever their racial origins. More significantly, subsequent amendments to the Act, particularly in 1925, were focused on undesirable classes of Europeans rather than on Asians. These amendments were in two parts. The first was designed explicitly to restrict classes of immigrants considered undesirable by imposing quotas. The second part allowed the deportation of any person born outside of Australia if the Government considered the person an industrial troublemaker. This second part was widely opposed by the Labour opposition who saw it as a direct attack on trade union leaders. By contrast, the first part was widely supported - to the extent that one Labour member complained that it was the "sugar coating" designed to make the deportation provisions more palatable.<sup>29</sup>

In the absence of quotas (and none appear to have been imposed) the formal restrictive mechanism for all immigrants deemed undesirable was the "dictation test" - a test of at least fifty words in any prescribed language.<sup>30</sup>
Generally, the dictation test remained a barrier only for non-Europeans. However,

<sup>28</sup> Lack and Templeton, op cit; 68.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 3 July, 1925; 730.

<sup>30</sup> Section 3(a).

there were calls for its use against Southern Europeans during the period of enquiry into Italian labourers in the Western Australia gold fields.<sup>31</sup>

With the few exceptions, aimed more at individuals than groups, the 1925 amendments were not used to restrict European immigrants.<sup>32</sup> Yet, they were supported and passed into law. As with the anti-Chinese legislation, the case for exclusion turned around possibilities rather than experience - about what *might* happen if the trickle turned into a flood of undesirable Europeans; about the need to preserve racial purity and the need for self preservation.<sup>33</sup> To that extent, the two parts of the 1925 Amendment were significant. Although they were separate in their thrust and degree of parliamentary support, they sat together as mechanisms for protecting Australians from foreign races and foreign ideas. Both threats could be expressed in the context of the perils of ill health; one Parliamentarian (Sir Elliot Johnson, a sometime Federal Labour politician) claimed that deporting undesirables was a necessary exercise in quarantine, lest, as with smallpox, their ideas might infect the rest of the community.<sup>34</sup> The social context in which this legislation occurred and its significance for public health is now considered.

# 3 THE PRESERVATION OF THE BRITISH RACE

The idea that "British Australia" stood to be threatened by outsiders has been important in both the 19th and the 20th centuries. In the case of the Chinese,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Western Australian Parliamentary Debates, 16 August, 1905; 697.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> In 1934, the Lyons Government sought to bar the entry of the Czechoslovakian antifascist Egon Kisch (considered an undesirable arrival). The test was in Gaelic, a language the authorities knew Kisch (who was a talented linguist) had no knowledge of. This was such an extreme and transparent use of the power that it was ruled invalid by the High Court on the basis that Gaelic was not a language for the purposes of the Act. (Clark C M H. *A History of Australia, Vol 6*. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1987; 474. Macintyre S. *The Oxford History of Australia, Vol 4*. Melbourne: Oxford U P, 1986; 310.)

<sup>33</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 25 June, 1925; 456, 460 and 459.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid; 14 July, 1925; 987.

this was perhaps most forcefully encapsulated in the fear that the Chinaman was luring, seducing and enslaving hapless white women. While the substance of the fear altered to some extent in the 20th century, the idea of the purity of the group remained central. The new century dawned with an enthusiasm of a new nation determined to keep its ties with Britain and its racial stock unpolluted.<sup>35</sup> The desirability of the Southern and Eastern European immigrants was an issue in this respect; one of the most persistent objections to their immigration was based on their alleged inferiority and the threat that this was said to present to the Australian community.

The prospect of race pollution was arguably more significant in the case of Southern and Eastern Europeans than it was for the Chinese. The Chinese were seen as "birds of passage" rather than settlers; only a small percent of the total influx remained by 1900 and they rarely intermarried with the European population. By comparison, European immigrants were generally permanent arrivals. It was to be expected that they would establish themselves, assimilate and intermarry with the existing population. Also, the 20th century saw the articulation of ideas about the purity of the race and genetic worth, put more forcefully than in the 19th century. These ideas also received considerable backing from scientific and public health sources.

In 1920, J H L Cumpston, the first Director of the Commonwealth Department of Health and the foremost public health advocate of his day, addressed a conference of medical practitioners on "The New Preventive Medicine", his vision for public health in Australia. His speech was in support of increased government intervention in health; it was a call for governments to take the public health process seriously, to exploit its potential to reduce illness. With this came another potential: in Cumpston's words, the public health process

<sup>35</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 1 January, 1901; 14.

provided the opportunity of "leading this young nation of ours to a paradise of physical perfection." His views in this regard were in no way atypical of his progressivist medical contemporaries. Others of similar views included J S C Elkington, Raphael Cilento and Harvey Sutton, all well placed and influential public health administrators. There were also organisations whose objectives were to preserve the health and vitality of the British stock. The Racial Hygiene Association (forerunner of the Family Planning Associations) was such an organisation.

For many of the post 1945 generations, this kind of thinking has uncomfortable associations with ideas of supermen and Aryan dominance. In Australia, during the first half of the 20th Century, the ideas of white racial supremacy and the creation of a fit and resilient nation were respectable and progressive. The public health practitioners who supported these views, their lives and interests, sat within an ideological framework that claimed to be socially progressive, positive and vital.<sup>37</sup> They belonged to a group that Michael Roe has called *Vitalists* and their ideology *Vitalism*. Vitalism had its roots in the tradition of the European writers Nietzsche and Bergson. It proclaimed the individual's potential to struggle for higher things. It was a celebration of the capacity of the "new man" against the traditional constraints of determinism and positivism.<sup>38</sup>

In its health context, vitalism was a reforming process that supported governmental intervention in social welfare and public health programmes. The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Medical Journal of Aust, 4 September, 1920; 218. See also Michael Roe's note on Cumpston in Nairn B and Serle G eds. Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol 8. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1981.

<sup>37</sup> Both Elkington and Sutton were athletes, the latter representing Australia at the 1908 Olympic Games, while Elkington was friendly with the Lindsays and became a contributor to the *Bulletin*. See entries in Nairn B and Serle G eds. *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol 8*. Melbourne: Melb Univ P. 1981 and Ritchie J ed. *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol 12*. Melbourne: Melb Univ P. 1990. See also, Powles J. *Naturalism and Hygiene: Fascist Affinities in Australian Public Health, 1910-1940*. Paper for the Conference on "Attractions of Fascism", Univ of NSW, July, 1987. For the application of these views within a public health and domestic context in Australia, see Reiger K. *The Disenchantment of the Home: Modernising the Australian Family 1840-1940*. Melbourne: Oxford U P, 1985.

<sup>38</sup> The dimensions of vitalism were vast, they were literary, artistic and political. See Roe M. *Nine Australian Progressives: Vitalism in Bourgeois Social Thought 1890-1960*. St Lucia: Univ Qld P, 1984; Introduction.

objects of these reforms were the betterment of the Australian community. In effect, they were implicitly nationalist or set within a nationalist context and in protecting and improving the community, the things that lay outside and which were taken as threatening, were the objects of the medical vitalists' concerns. Eugenics provided the scientific underpinning of these general views about racial undesirability. Eugenics theory came into prominence in the late 19th century. It was based on the belief that individuals contain a fixed measure of worth that is determined genetically and that careful breeding is more important in making improvements to the health and ability of populations than any other measures.<sup>39</sup> In this context, comparisons between the races was important and, as a view of the world, eugenics was claimed to provide a self contained, biological, basis from which racial discrimination could be practised. It emphasised the value of the defining group; it diminished the value of outgroups. Eugenics beliefs were very important in the period considered in this Chapter. They were also by no means short lived. In 1961, the Medical Journal of Australia published an article entitled the "Effect of Migration on the Genetic Pool" which conjectured that some immigrants were "selectively drawn from groups with less than average intelligence quotient ratings."40

Within the Australian context of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the threat of the "other" and "inferior" races was very apparent to Europeans. A prominent publicist of this threat was the influential academic and politician C H Pearson whose view of the future of the White man was expressed in terms of a stark and simple conflict, between the "higher" and the "lower" races of humankind.<sup>41</sup> British Australia, as an isolated outpost of the "higher" races, needed to be protected. This belief gave context and significance to scientific

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> See Allen G. Eugenics in Sills D L. International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Vol 5. New York: Macmillan and the Free Press, 1968.

<sup>40</sup> Walsh R J. Effect of Migration on the Genetic Pool. Med J Aust, 11 May, 1963: 700-702.

<sup>41</sup> Pearson C H. National Life and Character. London: Macmillan, 1893; 84-85.

statements about the relative worth of racial groups in, and beyond, Australia. The nature of the "worth" being measured was of course defined by its proponents. In England and Australia, these were the educated middle class Anglo Saxons. On their scale of measurement, immigrants to Australia with the background and appearance most closely resembling the eugenicists' own were most highly valued. (to quote Sutton: "the more Australian the child is the better the specimen.")42 Marked departures from this norm were devalued. As Mary Cawte has written:

Not only did the prosperous and professional classes see themselves as having the superior germplasm, but the professionals also, by virtue of their expertise, were ideally suited to assess, in terms of their particular science, the eugenic or dysgenic properties of others.43

The consequences of policies underpinned by eugenicist beliefs were two fold. The abilities, health and morals of whole populations of peoples - Jews, Negroes, Nordics - could be compared purely on the basis of their physical appearance (which served as a visual genetic marker). This legitimised stereotypes: all Jews could be said to share similar character traits - such as being unscrupulous in business. Further, distinctions could also be made within populations which correlated genetic worth with success. Thus criminals and paupers were shown to have a smaller genetic worth than the professional classes, while criminals would breed more criminals.44

To a significant extent, eugenic beliefs drove the arguments of some prominent progressivist Australian medical practitioners in favour of sterilisation,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Powles, op cit; 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Cawte M. Craniometry and Eugenics in Australia, 1986. *Historical Studies*, 22: 35-53; 38.

<sup>44</sup> See McKenzie D A. Statistics in Britain. Edinburgh: Edin Univ P, 1981; chapter 2. In a Fabian tract, Sydney Webb wrote of differential birthrates:

when half or perhaps two-thirds of all the married people are regulating their families, children are being freely born to the Irish Roman Catholics and the Polish, Russian and German Jews, on the one hand and the thriftless and irresponsible - largely the casual labourers and the other denizens of the one roomed tenements ... This can hardly result in envithing but national deterioration."

anything but national deterioration"

In complaining that the poor and undesirables had more children who where likely to carry on the trait, Webb ignored completely the environmental and economic issues relevant to the question. (cited in Kevles D J. In the Name of Eugenics. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986; 74.)

birth control and immigration restrictions.<sup>45</sup> They were also influential in framing Government policy. Stephen Garton has concluded that while not being regarded as a wholesale reform strategy, eugenics was assimilated into the ideas of national efficiency and that eugenics techniques and programmes became part of the public health policies of New South Wales early this century.<sup>46</sup> Yet, there was also a view that State interference impeded the natural application of eugenic principles. For all his vitalist views and his calls for public health policy, Cumpston ultimately speculated on whether State intervention was interfering with the process of nature's laws, the selection of the best genetic stock.<sup>47</sup>

The incorporation of eugenicist thought into progressivist public health thinking in Australia emphasised a major divergence of policy in the sense that, for some, it was incorporated into the idea that environmental issues were central determinants of better health. For others, it sat with the view that the environment mattered less than heredity, which was the prime determinant of health, morals and potential. Bacchi has explained this by suggesting that the deterministic view of eugenics thinking was modified by some of its Australian adherents, whose focus on environmental improvement reflected the idea that Australians could create a community free of the worst public health problems of Europe, 48

Progressives cared desperately for the health of the race ... enormous attention went into the health of mothers, babies and children. This stress on youth reinforced vitalism and complemented progressive education. Concern with racial welfare led on to (and, again, became synonymous with) eugenic beliefs.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Roe has written:

<sup>(</sup>Roe, op cit; 14.) As controls on point of entry, United States Immigration legislation of the early 20th century was influenced by eugenics beliefs. The *Immigration Act* of 1924 successfully reduced to a trickle the flow of Southern European immigrants into America by the imposition of a strict quota system. (Forsyth W D. *The Myth of Open Spaces*. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1942; 38. See also Kevles, op cit; 95.) In Australia, the *Immigration Act* 1925 was based on similar values. In introducing the Bill, the Prime Minister S M Bruce claimed that the US legislation was of "very great interest" to the Government since, like America, it shared the same needs to preserve the purity of the race. (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 25 June, 1925; 457.)

<sup>46</sup> Garton S. Sir Charles Mackellar: Psychiatry, Eugenics and Child Welfare in New South Wales, 1900-1914, 1986. *Historical Studies*, 22: 21-34; 34.

<sup>47</sup> Cumpston J H L. The Health of the People. Canberra: Roebuck, 1978; 130.

<sup>48</sup> These two ways of seeing health policy are set out in Bacchi C L. The Nature Nurture Debate in Australia 1900-1914, 1980. *Historical Studies*, 19: 199-212. Sutton, for example, appeared to believe that exposure to the Australian environment stood to improve the quality of foreign born children living in Australia. (Powles, op cit; 7.)

There was one area where the "nature/nurture" debate was reconcilable. This was in the case of outsiders, the "inferior races." Their status was never questioned by most of the vitalist improvers. Cumpston and Sutton largely adhered to deterministic ideas and with them the notion of superior and inferior races.<sup>49</sup> The latter were beyond the boundary of the respectable Anglo-Saxon Australian community and beyond improvement. They might lie physically within the community but, socially and morally, they were outsiders; most obviously, they were alien or lesser races and they joined the other social outcasts such as the "habitually drunken or vicious residuum of society." The distinction between the "higher" and the "lower" races was expressed clearly by Raphael Cilento in the conclusion of his *Blueprint for the Health of a Nation* (published in 1944):

The Australian of the present and the next generation has to make for himself and his descendants the deliberate physical and psychological choice between the status of the "commando" and the status of the coolie.<sup>51</sup>

The "coolies" were most obviously the servile Asian hordes into which, in Cilento's view, Australia must not degenerate. Keeping the race pure and Anglo Saxon was a way of ensuring that this did not happen.

In summary, eugenics, in its Australian manifestation, had its obvious application in the policy that wanted only desirable white races admitted since this was the way of retaining a homogeneous British community in Australia. As Roe has written "the White Australian Policy expressed and strengthened a passion for racial purity and social homogeneity." The supremacy of Britons in this country

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Ibid; 208. However, one prominent medical practitioner, Dr Richard Arthur, the founder of the Eugenics Society of New South Wales, was a strong supporter of Italian settlement in North Queensland. However, it has been said that he probably saw it as a buffer against the Japanese, who he believed were the real threat to white Australia. Bacchi, op cit; 205, 208. See also Bibliographical note on *Arthur*, in Nairn B and Serle G. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, *Vol 7*. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1979, vol 7.

<sup>50</sup> Garton, op cit; 30 and Cawte, op cit; 53.

<sup>51</sup> Cilento R. Blueprint for the Health of a Nation. Sydney: priv pub, 1944; 113.

<sup>52</sup> Roe, op cit; 19.

was a matter of much significance and concern.<sup>53</sup> Eugenics was a central part of the vitalist process that, while it saw environmental change as a central issue, also saw fixed hereditary issues as significant, particularly in the case of outgroups. This was reflected in immigration controls, aimed principally at non-Europeans as the most obvious and threatening inferiors and outsiders but also at the undesirable European races as well. Indeed, in justifying the terms of the 1925 legislation, (aimed at undesirable Europeans) the Prime Minister S M Bruce claimed that "the people of Australia are quite determined to maintain their racial purity."<sup>54</sup>

The specific application of ideas about the inferiority of the immigrant groups being considered in this Chapter will now be considered. In particular, they provided the cloak of scientific legitimacy for arguments designed to restrict the immigration of the "less desirable" Southern and Eastern Europeans. The more Southerly and Easterly the European immigrants, the more they departed from the Anglo Saxon physical caste, the less desirable they were. Immigrants from the South of Italy seemed to some Australians to be so distant from the British ideal that they were sometimes described as though they were not European. In 1891, they were described by the *Boomerang* as the "Chinese of Europe" (as opposed to Northern Italians who were described by the same paper as the Scotchmen of Italy.)55 These comments were based simply on physical appearance, the fact that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> The suitability of the "right kind" of Europeans as the natural masters and exploiters of Australia was a central issue in this respect. See for example, Elkington's investigation entitled *Tropical Australia: Is it Suitable for a Working White Race?* Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, 1905. No 59; 1389.

<sup>54</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 25 June, 1925; 457.

<sup>55</sup> The Boomerang, 17 January, 1891; 4. See also Evans R. et al. Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination: Race Relations in Colonial Queensland. Sydney: ANZ Book Coy, 1975; 6. See also Bulletin 8 August, 1891; 7 and 12 March, 1892; 7. Bonutto O. A Migrant's Story Brisbane: H Pole and Co, 1963; 62. (See also Lack and Templeton, op cit; 129,130,162.) In evidence to the Inquiry into Foreign Contract labour in Western Australia, a witness was asked "can you tell me if foreign (ie Italian) wood cutters get the same wages as the white people" (my emphasis) (Australia, Report of the Commissioner on Foreign Contract labour in Western Australia. Parliamentary Papers, 1901-1902, no 44;12.)

the Southern Italians looked different from the other Europeans who predominated in Australia at the time. They were marked as outsiders and subjected to the same broad range of social, economic and public health criticism as the Chinese, simply because they were seen as outsiders. Negative comments based on physical appearance continued through the 20th century. These opinions were focused in the areas where Italian immigrants were most closely settled.

In 1925, the Queensland Labour government appointed a career public servant Thomas Ferry, to enquire into the Italian population in Northern Queensland. Ferry was critical of the living conditions of many of the Southern European communities established there. Significantly, he shaped these criticisms by reference to gross categorisations, leading him to a process of grading and comparison. He concluded that if British sugar cane workers were the most efficient, Northern Italian workers were next best and were "much superior to Southern Italians and the Mediterranean races generally." Ferry's devaluing of the more Southerly workers was not an isolated view. Borrie claimed that Northern Italians were popularly regarded as "economically, socially and culturally more like Australians ... and therefore more desirable as immigrants."

The perception of Southern Italians as undesirable was expressed in the fear that they would introduce values that were not Australian. During the 1925 *Immigration Bill* debates, Dr Earle Page complained about Southern Italian immigrants, citing their urban preferences; he said they were a "type that congregates in cities." In contrast, Page believed that Northern Italians were "a type that loves the land."58

For some, undesirable immigrants stood to erode the purity of the Australian community itself. In 1937, a Member of the South Australian

<sup>56</sup> Royal Commission on Social and Economic Effect of Increase in Number of Aliens in North Queensland. (Ferry Report). Queensland Parliamentary Papers, 1925, A34; 10.

<sup>57</sup> Borrie, op cit; 149.

<sup>58</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 8 July, 1925; 782.

Parliament lamented that many "unsuitable" Southern Europeans were arriving and that "we shall not for long be able to boast of our pure British stock." Despite this fear, pragmatism held sway: the South Australian Government, aware of the shortage of British immigrants, saw the inevitability of non-British migration. It could only take consolation from the belief that the State had a greater percentage of British nationals than "any other part of the Empire" (sic).59 Two years later the theme was repeated, this time in the case of refugees. In the South Australian Legislative Council the Honourable Sir John Cowan said:

we have been getting a most undesirable type of refugee that can only be a menace to society and a burden to the taxpayer ... mainly the type has been bad.60

His comments were hearsay, they were based on information given to him by people "from the Old Country ... on their way to Australia." In reality, he may have been hard pressed to substantiate his claims, though he did not need to; they were accepted without query.61

The involvement of Italy in the Second World War as an AXIS power and the subsequent arrival in Australia of many Italian prisoners of war deepened the suspicion and dislike that already existed against Italians. Where they were employed as farm labourers, the Australian military prepared a leaflet for all potential employers. It included advice on how to deal with these workers that was an illuminating glimpse of the official view of the Italian character and bore a striking similarity with the way that American Negroes were stereotyped. The leaflet advised:

<sup>59</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 18 August, 1937; 336.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 19 July, 1939; 194. See also Pyke, op cit; 108.

<sup>61</sup> The *Misr* case also illustrated this general and unspecific disquiet about the suitability of the new arrivals, this time reflected in the concern that the immigrants possessed "few of the qualities desirable in Australian citizens". Beyond being British and having an ability to perform manual work, the nature of these qualities could only be guessed at! (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 30 April, 1947; 1688.)

1. He cannot be driven but he can be led.

2. Mentality is childlike; it is possible to gain his confidence by fairness and firmness.

3. Great care must be exercised for he can become sly and objectionable if badly handled 62

After 1945, Southern European immigrants arrived in Australia in sizeable numbers. Often they were not welcomed by the Australian community and were the subject of complaint from both official and private sources. These complaints drew on physical differences. In 1951, the Victorian State Secretary of the RSL, forgetting old differences, said that the League "would rather have an Afrika Corps ...than some who have come here from Mediterranean ports." It was the Nordic rather than the Latin types that found favour with the RSL. Indeed, G L Kristianson (a historian of the RSL) said that many sub-branches had wanted immigrants from South-East Europe excluded as a necessary extension of the White Australia policy. 64

At the level of implementing Government policy, there is also evidence that physical appearance was used by immigration officials to exclude some Southern Europeans. In 1955, one Australian officer based in Italy rejected a Sicilian applicant for migration with the comment "Looks like a cross between a Hottentot and a Fiji Islander. Certainly not 75 per cent European. Reject." Another rejected an applicant because he looked like a Gypsy and, the officer believed, would have been stared at in Martin Place. 66

Immigrants from Eastern Europe fared no better than those from Southern Europe. Before World War II, the most prominent were Jewish refugees, the victims of NAZI policies and German expansion in that region. Many Australians

<sup>62</sup> Fitzgerald A. The Italian Farming Soldiers. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1981; 33.

<sup>63</sup> Jupp J. Arrivals and Departures. Sydney: Cheshire Lansdowne, 1966; 12.

<sup>64</sup> Kristianson G L. *The Politics of Patriotism*, Canberra: ANU Press, 1966; 68. The RSL remained a prominent critic of what it regarded as alien immigration into Australia. See for example *Argus*, 24 February, 1947; 3 and 21 June, 1949; 5.

<sup>65</sup> Randazzo, op cit; 151.

<sup>66</sup> Martin H. Angels and Arrogant Gods: Migration Officers and Migrants Reminisce 1945-85. Canberra: AGPS, 1989; 35. (Martin Place is a central thoroughfare in Sydney.)

had no sympathy for these refugees, notwithstanding the harrowing circumstances of their arrival in Australia, and expressed their views in traditional anti-Jewish terms that focused prominently on their appearance and adverse Jewish stereotypes. In 1939, one prominent citizen, Sir Frank Clarke, President of the Victorian Legislative Council, described them as:

shrinking rat faced little men under five feet in height ... It was horrible to think that such people would want to marry Australian girls or even bring their own undernourished and underdeveloped women and breed a race within a race.<sup>67</sup>

Clarke justified the comment by saying that he was concerned to preserve Australia's standard of eugenics. Significantly, this view was not rejected by prominent Australians; rather, he was said to be raising an important issue. The Prime Minister replied that it warranted an immediate enquiry, while State politicians expanded on Clarke's assertions by pointing to cases of sweating and unfair labour practices that the refugees were said to be involved with.68 The Age agreed that alien immigrants "presented a menace to living and industrial standards."69 Clarke's description was subsequently refuted by the Federal Government but, this was based on the accuracy of the remark (that there were in fact no rat faced refugees in the intake) rather than on its general thrust, which seemed to attach like an external mark, a badge of physical deficiency that pointed to many inward defects.70 This hostility against Jews in Australia that focused on their physical appearance continued after the War. In 1946, Immigration Minister Calwell responded to concern about 275 Jewish refugees waiting at Shanghai en

<sup>67</sup> Age, 9 May, 1939; 11. Sydney Morning Herald, 9 May, 1939; 11. See also, Pearl C. The Dunera Scandal. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1983; 115.

<sup>68</sup> Age, 9 May, 1939; 11.

<sup>69 10</sup> May, 1939; 10.

<sup>70</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 23 May, 1939; 20 and 23 June, 1939; 11.

route to Australia with the light hearted inference that they were black rather than European.<sup>71</sup>

While some prevailing attitudes about Italians and Jews seemed to categorise them as non-Europeans, other views went further and dismissed them as not even human. The Chief President of the Australian Natives Association (a patriotic body and hospital insurer) degraded the post war Jewish arrivals to the status of animals and objects; they were he said "the refuse of Europe"; they were no better than "cattle, sheep or swine." By stark comparison, warm publicity was given to the first group of postwar refugees from the Baltic region. They were described by the press as "sun-bronzed, flaxen haired" and "ideal New Australians" as having "a fine appearance" and looking "bright and intelligent." They fitted the dominant image of physical worth. Indeed, it has been said that this first, prominently publicised, group of refugees were deliberately chosen by the Government in the hope-that their features would disarm criticism of the new non-British refugee programme. 73

The critical attitude toward Southern and Eastern European immigrants to Australia described here was premised on eugenics thinking in the sense that it adhered to ideas of worth and value which were determined by genetic origins. Thus, Southern Europeans were believed inferiors in the Australian community simply because they were Southern Europeans. Prominent public health practitioners of the time generally supported this view. They subscribed to the need to retain the purity of the Australian race from arrivals they considered inferior.

A strong healthy and virile population was the accepted object of these exclusionist endeavours; this was public health theory on its grandest scale.

<sup>71</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 6 August, 1946; 3727.

<sup>72</sup> Markus A and Ricklefs M C eds. Surrender Australia? Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1985; 23.

<sup>73</sup> Broome, op cit; 179. Kunz, op cit; 42.

Within this framework, eugenics beliefs emphasised the threat that the stranger posed to the community: the threat of interbreeding and pollution of the racial stock. By way of contrast, those who were believed to be the least threat to Australians were the British and then the Northern Europeans. These were less strangers and more kith and kin. Eugenics beliefs justified in public health terms an immigration policy that aimed to be quite frankly selective of the groups that were most desired as immigrants; they were those whose appearance proclaimed them to be the least strange.

## 4 HYGIENE, DISEASE AND ILL HEALTH

In addition to the Eugenicists' views, other public health criticisms were also focused on the activities and living conditions of immigrant outsiders to Australia in the 20th century. It was said by many that Southern and Eastern European immigrants had a greater burden of disease and had a poorer standard of hygiene than the Australian community generally, which further emphasised the threat they were said to present.

As Chapter 7 demonstrates, similar ideas were held about the Chinese in the 19th century. Some of these views returned in very similar forms, as criticisms of the 20th century arrivals. In 1961, the *Medical Journal of Australia* published an article about migrants and their lifestyle making the comment that:

the fertilisation of market gardens with human excreta ... (is) a common custom among some classes of immigrants, though it seems to lead to outbreaks of disease surprisingly infrequently 74

This was the same issue of pollution that was raised in 1892 in the case of the Sydney Chinese and in 1915 in the case of the Egyptian vegetable sellers in Cairo. However, there was an important difference, likely to strengthen the concerns. Unlike the Chinese in Australia or the colourful but treacherous fellaheen, the Southern and Eastern European arrivals were not regarded as transient figures in the Australian experience. They were permanent settlers and their dealings with the Australian community were therefore also permanent.

The power to exclude prospective immigrants on the basis of their health status formally existed as part of the *Immigration Act*. In 1912, the Act was amended to make disease and disability a more specific ground to deny entry to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Special Article. Culture, Society and the Migrant. *Med J of Aust*, 18 March, 1961: 420-424; 423.

Australia. The exclusion provisions were comprehensive and provided immigration officials with considerable latitude. The criteria and the diseases were not specified in the Act but precedents were established. One immigration officer recounted that in the late 1960s, applicants with skin diseases risked rejection because they might stand out in Australia "as objects of curiosity", causing resentment in the community. Like the leper, the immigrant's blemishes would be a visible badge of disease and defect. In the context of a prominent view of immigration, that arrivals were new stock to supplement the labour force and to assimilate into the community as "new Australians," the blemished immigrant was "faulty". However, the gate keeping potential of the *Immigration Act* was quite specific in its health and moral aspect and operated to exclude the exceptional applicant rather than an undesirable rump. European settlers were generally allowed to enter Australia and objections to their suitability were made in forums other than the Act and its administrators.

One forum was the popular press. In 1926, the nationalist Sydney paper *Smith's Weekly* gave a seemingly eccentric account of the poor living conditions of a recently arrived group of Italians. This saw altitude rather than latitude, as the determining factor. In the "higher isolated regions" where sanitation was non-existent, the article claimed, the inhabitants "know nothing of hygiene and show no desire to learn". By comparison, it credited coastal dwellers with "moderate cleanliness".<sup>77</sup> This view, that altitude was correlated with poor health, was contrary to most public health understanding. The evidence suggested the

<sup>75</sup> The definition of "prohibited immigrant" in section 3 was extended to include mental incapacity, persons suffering from a "serious transmissible disease or defect" or from tuberculosis, or any disease likely to make the immigrant a charge on the community. The power was also provided for the Commonwealth to prescribe diseases which could render the sufferer a prohibited immigrant. Section 3 also included a series of moral bases which could result in a person being prohibited. The debates suggest that these provisions were not put in place to selectively prohibit immigrants from particular areas; the dictation test did this. Debate focussed only on British immigrants, with many members expressing concern that the prohibitions would work unfairly against them. (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 10 December, 1912; 6739 and following.)

<sup>76</sup> Martin, op cit; 81.

<sup>77</sup> Smith's Weekly, 21 January, 1926; 11.

converse. For example, there was Farr's view of the British experience in the 1849 cholera epidemic - that the mortality in the lower regions was greater than in the higher regions. Where this was true the phenomenon could be explained by the dangers of seaports and the extent to which the respective water supplies were polluted. However, *Smith's Weekly* adhered to this phenomenon as a way of reinforcing its own views about a community of immigrants that it considered generally undesirable.

Latitude as a determinant of health and hygiene status was a more traditional yardstick than altitude. In 1951, at the end of what was described as a "fact finding" trip to Europe, the Queensland president of the RSL (Raymond Huish) reported that many aspiring Italian applicants "did not appear to be as clean, smart and intelligent as was the case in Holland and Germany". Huish was particularly concerned about Southerners and Sicilians who were mainly agriculturalists. He claimed that they had "a lower standard of living, hygiene and education." (presumably unlike Australian bushmen.) 79

While the *Smith's Weekly* and the Huish comments were about living standards in Italy, they were made significant for Australian immigration policy. Huish, consistent with the policy of the RSL, was seeking to give preference to a "better class" of (Northern European) immigrant. The *Smith's Weekly* excursus into public health geography appeared in an article entitled "Lithgow's Appalling Italians - Old World Conditions in NSW - Community that Revels in Filth."80

Both these accounts were generalisations, calculated to label all Italian immigrants. Neither *Smith's Weekly* nor Huish sought to use their observations to state a case for the importance of proper sanitation in remote areas. Rather, they

<sup>78</sup> Farr W. Vital Statistics. London: The Sanitary Institute, 1885. See also Smith F.B. The People's Health. London: Croom Helm; 1979; 230 - 237.

<sup>79</sup> Cited in Wilton J. and Bosworth R. Old Worlds and New Australia: The Post War Migrant Experience. Ringwood: Penguin, 1984; 20.

<sup>80</sup> Smith's Weekly, op cit. See also Thompson S L. Australia through Italian Eyes. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1980; 171.

were negative remarks made in order to support and justify broad exclusionist ideas. The *Smith's Weekly* article, in particular, was a blast (one of many) against a local Italian community that explained sanitary deficiencies by focusing on the assumed habits of Italians in parts of Italy: "the peasantry, [it argued] are content in their ignorance to breach every health law that has ever been enforced and thrive in filth". They were accused of living in "unspeakable degradation", their homes were "warrens" and they indulged in "filthy practices learned at home". Although sanitation was prominent, it was only one part of the complaint; the community was also accused of manufacturing sly grog and doing Australian workers out of jobs.<sup>81</sup>

Refugees from Eastern Europe were also subject to criticism about their standards of hygiene. H B Higgins' comment, made at the turn of the century, about Polish Jews in London; that they were "wretched and dirty" having habits "of the very worst kind", was a prominent example of anti-Jewishness in Australia. But Higgins' view was not isolated, in 1891, the *Bulletin* printed a diatribe against the Jews in London. Its criticisms drew heavily on ideas of public health. The new arrivals, it claimed, "were all dirty and penniless". They took English jobs and this threat was said to be real for Australia when these "dirty, flat chested" Jews were exported here. Views such as these were to be repeated on occasions when the community became sensitive to the refugee presence. In August 1940, under the prominent headline "Rising Incidence of Syphilis: Do Refugees Account for it?" *Smith's Weekly* prominently publicised a report to the Queensland Minister of Health from Sir Raphael Cilento suggesting that an

<sup>81</sup> The pages of Smith's Weekly were peppered with derogatory references to Italians, many of which included florid references to public health deficiencies, for example, to the "greasy flood of Mediterranean scum that seek to defile and debase Australia" or to the "dirty dago pests" that threaten to ruin Australian farmers. (Blaikie G. Remember Smith's Weekly? Adelaide: Rigby, 1966; 227, 228.)

<sup>82</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 6 September, 1901; 4657.

<sup>83</sup> Bulletin 17 January, 1891; 5. They were also depicted in characteristic occupations such as pawn broking and money lending with their physical features distorted into Jewish stereotypes. See Bulletin 28 April, 1888; 10 and 5 March, 1892; banner page.

increase of syphilis in that State may be the result of the influx of refugees, especially those from Vienna, since that city was "the most dangerous of the great capitals in the prevalence of venereal diseases." However, in its detail, the report was speculative, suggesting that the increase might simply be a cyclic increase: this possible explanation was grossly overshadowed by the sensationalist headline.84

Both during and after the war, anti-Jewish feeling was expressed from both sides of the Australian political system and was justified in both health and moral terms. In 1938, a member of the New South Wales Legislative Council called for tighter entry controls on Jewish arrivals on moral grounds. So In 1944, William Hutchinson, the Liberal Federal member for Deakin referred to Karl Marx as a "filthy Jew". Other parliamentarians also took an anti-Jewish stance. One was Albert Green, the long sitting Labour Federal Member for Kalgoorlie. In 1939, he suggested that Hitler may have had his reasons for expelling the Jews. The same year, he complained about the extent to which the Jews had colonised parts of the Capital cities, giving the Melbourne suburb of St Kilda as an example.

Sections of the press also took an anti-Jewish position. In 1938, a report in the *Catholic Freeman's Journal* claimed that it was not good to have "nests" of immigrants. The use of the term "nests" has obvious associations with vermin and insanitary conditions. Its language was also reminiscent of those other parts of the Australian cities inhabited by the Chinese who, in the public imagination, scuttled insect like through the narrow and oppressive alleys of the Chinatowns.<sup>88</sup> *Truth* 

<sup>84</sup> Smith's Weekly, 31 August, 1940; 1. See also Blakeney M. Australia and the Jewish Refugees 1933-1948. Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985; 59. Pearl, op cit; 115.

<sup>85</sup> Blakeney, op cit; 79. New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 8 November, 1938; 2512.

<sup>86</sup> Age, 8 September, 1944; 3.

<sup>87</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 15 June, 1939; 1966.

<sup>88</sup> Cited in Blakeney, op cit; 197. For similar references to the Chinese, see Davison G et al ed. *The Outcasts of Melbourne*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1985; 58. The Australian newspapers publicised cases where Jews were allegedly congregating together and said to be "causing anxiety to local residents." See *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 June, 1939; 13 (a reference to Kings Cross), or where they were reported to be buying up the local property. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 December, 1939; 13.

also took an anti-Jewish stance, which it claimed to justify in part by making public health based complaints about Jewish businessmen, suggesting that their businesses were not cleanly run.<sup>89</sup>

These comments about newly arrived immigrants blended in with the more long standing complaints that focused on settled communities of Southern and Eastern Europeans. By 1913 the Chinatowns of Australian cities had become the aliens' quarters. They were places inhabited, it was said, by Chinese, Indians, Syrians and Afghans. A report into the living conditions in Melbourne at the time provided the same examples of immigrant poverty and the stories of corrupted white women and prostitutes that had been a feature of the descriptions of the earlier Chinatowns. However, it was where non-British arrivals were most visibly congregated that official enquiries and reports ensued. This was the case in Western Australia and Queensland.

The view that Southern Europeans settled in Australia were unclean in their habits and appearances was highlighted in 1904 when the Western Australian Government established a Royal Commission to investigate non-British labour on the goldfields. The presence of alien (largely Italian) workers was of concern to miners for a number of reasons. They were said by some miners to be careless workers, particularly in their use of explosives. They were believed by many to be undercutting wages, in the sense that they were paid less than other European workers, though the Commission found no evidence of this as a widespread practice.<sup>91</sup> Public health complaints were added to the list; it was alleged by witnesses appearing before the Commission that the Italians were unhygienic. The

<sup>89</sup> Melbourne Truth, 30 December, 1939; 13 - "Refujews Digging in on Business Fronts."

<sup>90</sup> Joint Select Committee upon the Housing of the People in the Metropolis, Progress Report . Victoria, Parliamentary Papers, 1913, no 4; Evidence of Constable Scott, commencing page 18.

<sup>91</sup> Royal Commission on the Immigration of Non-British Labour. Western Australian Parliamentary Papers, 1904; 13.

Report concluded on the basis of evidence received that "some of them (Italians) are of uncleanly habits endangering the sanitary condition of the mine in which they work." In taking this evidence, there was no attempt to measure these habits against those of miners generally or to disentangle the general dislike expressed against the Italian workers by many witnesses. As with the Chinese miners before them, no account was taken of the environment in which the Italians were obliged to live and work. There was no publicly expressed argument that if they were paid less then this was discriminatory and should be rectified. Most importantly, there was no clear case stated against the Italians. The evidence of the witnesses was contradictory and unsubstantial. Within the broader framework of the dispute, it is likely that issues of health and safety were used to supplement the more immediate economic concerns of the Anglo-Australian labour force, who saw Italian workers as unwelcome competition.

The second major Inquiry to focus on Southern European living conditions was the 1925 Ferry Commission in Queensland. Ferry received evidence from representatives of the Australian Workers' Union that "the houses of new (Italian) settlers are pretty rough" and that their "standard of living is ... very low."93 Such a criticism, if accurate, did not seem generally substantiated. Poor living conditions adversely affect health status yet nothing in this Report pointed to the fact that the health or hygiene of the Italian settlers was significantly compromised by poor living standards. No recommendations were made on this point. Ferry was broadly supportive of Italians, particularly Northern Italians. By comparison, the Report was critical of Queensland's Greek community. Ferry complained that the Greek boarding houses and clubs were "generally in a filthy condition". However, this complaint nested with other complaints that touched on many areas of Greek life in Queensland, including their role as self employed persons potentially in

<sup>92</sup> Ibid: 13, Minutes of Evidence; 14, 38, 40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup> Ferry, op cit; 15.

competition with the local labour force. Ferry concluded, "they [Greeks] did not make good settlers". His complaints about health and living standards seemed to be overshadowed by this more general view.<sup>94</sup> Ferry also made critical comments about Maltese immigrants in Queensland. He considered them to be "inferior to ... the British or the Italian" and, describing his visit to a lodging house used by Maltese, he complained that "every room was crowded with bunks with just enough room between for the occupants to move about."<sup>95</sup>

Ferry's Report was sufficiently influential to be quoted during the 1925 immigration debates in Federal Parliament. Of his findings on the Maltese lodging houses, the Leader of the Labour Opposition, Matthew Charlton, complained that "foreigners [were] allowed to live in circumstances which are detrimental to health not only of themselves but also of other people of the district." Living in overcrowded boarding houses was more a matter of poverty than "being Maltese", yet this point was ignored by Charlton (it was as though they wanted to live this way and the health laws were at fault by allowing it). The issue was brought into the Immigration debate with the implication that the Maltese posed a public health threat not only to themselves but to the whole community.96

The living standards of Southern European immigrants also came under scrutiny after World War II. In 1948, N O P Pyke described the view that Italian immigrants had a low standard of living as partially correct while Borrie, writing in 1954, stated that Italians "tended to accept lower material standards of life than Australians". Subsequent reports from the 1960s, quoted by Broome, cite instances of overcrowding among Greeks and Italians in inner city terraces with inadequate sanitation while paying very high rents (in some cases, the report

<sup>94</sup> Ibid; 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> Ibid; 10, 11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 1 July, 1925; 565.

<sup>97</sup> Borrie, op cit; 30. See also Pyke N O P. An Outline History of Italian Immigration into Australia. *The Australian Quarterly*, September 1948: 99-109; 109.

added, to their own countrymen!) Broome cited a Melbourne study, done in 1966, which claimed that 33% of Greek families surveyed had to share bathrooms and toilets. 98 Like the Chinese immigrants before them, this want of sanitation and hygiene could have been used to demonstrate the parlous position of the recent arrivals. It was used to demonstrate the argument that Southern Europeans were naturally dirty. The latter view was more readily accepted by a community that felt an antipathy for these unwelcome arrivals.

The overcrowded circumstances in which many immigrants lived sometimes provided the basis for elaborate public health arguments against them that focused on the notion of them as outsiders. During the 1925 Immigration debates, it was claimed that Italian workers in South Australia shared beds, which were "never cold" but always warm from the various bodies using them.99

Although cast as a public health issue (this information was apparently given to the Federal member for Adelaide by a nurse,) the practice confronted established ideas of boundaries and space. The idea of sharing beds presented an anomalous and disturbing image of people who had no regard for personal space and order. It was a powerful metaphor of disorder, was readily associated with insanitary living and was repeated on a number of occasions in related themes: for example that Greeks would sleep in their clothes.100 The undesirable immigrant as a disordered person contrasted strongly with the sense of local order, what was described in the debates as the neat and orderly development of cities, towns and homes by the Anglo Saxon settlers of Australia.101 Reporting of this kind of anomalous

<sup>98</sup> Broome, op cit; 203.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 2 July, 1925; 668.

<sup>100</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 8 July, 1925; 772. The Western Australian Royal Commission (1904), op cit, heard evidence that characterised the Italian workers as chaotic and disordered and in breach of the normal rules of propriety. It was said that they slept with their clothes on (;44) and that they urinated in beer bottles (;68).

<sup>101</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 8 July, 1925; 785.

behaviour emphasised the view that certain immigrants were anomalous outsiders and out of place in the Australian community.

Finally, the Southern and Eastern European arrivals in Australia were simply categorised as a group who would accept diminished and unsatisfactory standards of living. This was seen in the "migrant hostel" complaints which were prominently and sympathetically aired on behalf of British immigrants in Federal Parliament in 1951 and 1952. Specifically, they related to the conditions in the South Australian hostels at Finsbury and Gepps Cross and they were based on the lack of individual kitchen facilities in huts and the barrack-like communal eating arrangements. It was said that these arrangements were designed for their predecessors, Eastern Europeans. Significantly, they were not considered suitable for British tradesmen. The British immigrants were so taken aback by the conditions that they threatened to write to the Queen and their case was taken up enthusiastically by both Liberal and Labour backbenchers. The point was that the unsatisfactory communal eating arrangements and lack of privacy, deemed unacceptable for Anglo-Australians, were considered quite acceptable for Eastern Europeans.

The hostels provided for refugees became a focus of concern in the years immediately following World War II. On occasions, they were seen by the local community as potential reservoirs of foreign infections. Northam Reception Centre in Western Australia was one example. Here, Mr Hugh Leslie, the local Federal parliamentarian, complained on behalf of the surrounding residents saying that:

Already there has been an outbreak of hookworm in the surrounding district, and although the suggestion that the disease may have come from the camp has been rejected, that cannot be proved to my satisfaction

<sup>102</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 2 September, 1952; 884-885.

<sup>103</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 14 May, 1952; 342-358. 30 October, 1951; 1297.

He continued that outbreaks of other diseases were possible, including gastroenteritis and unspecified "undetectable" diseases from overseas. It was not made clear where the fault lay. Partly, he believed, with the inadequate sanitary arrangements and overcrowded conditions of the camp but also, he added, with the fact that the immigrants came from countries "where [hygiene and sanitation] standards are not as high as they are here." 104

The standards of at least some of the camps do seem to have been very inadequate. When describing the Maribyrnong hostel (said to be better than many, including Finsbury in South Australia) Jupp wrote "had this particular hostel been run commercially ... it would probably have been condemned by the local council." Limited sanitation and a shortage of running water, together with overcrowding and communal living, were described as common to camp life and could have done little to prevent the spread of infection among the residents.<sup>105</sup>

These were problems with the facilities provided by the Commonwealth Government yet, it was easy to portray the culture and social values of the residents as accepting - or even creating - inadequate hygiene. Necessity could be interpreted as choice and the inadequate conditions could be described as the fault of the camp residents. The idea, identified by a number of inquiries and noted by Borrie, that Italian workers "tended to accept lower material standards of life than Australians" illustrates this point. Such a view ignores the marginal economic status of most immigrants and allows the health and welfare problems associated with that status or with the environment in which they lived to be recast as problems of the victim's own choosing. 106

Overall, the standard of living of the Southern and Eastern European immigrants was determined mainly by their options and their relatively low

<sup>104</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 30 March, 1950; 1482.

<sup>105</sup> Jupp, op cit; 27.

<sup>106</sup> Borrie, op cit; 30.

position in the social and economic hierarchy. It was easy to say that, because displaced people lived in conditions that were visibly worse than Australians, their needs were more limited. More particularly, what could be seen as the "naturalness" of their poor living conditions was also projected as a health threat.

These descriptions of the inadequacies of Southern and Eastern European arrivals implied a general belief that they were threatening outsiders to the Australian community. Their physical appearance, social difference and poverty advertised the presence of a new and separate class of potentially cut-rate workers. Allegations about their living conditions were expressed in public health terms, emphasising the threat to the wider community. It was also expressed as a moral issue, emphasising their disorder and disregard for traditional uses of space. As with the Chinese before them, these undesirable immigrants in poverty became a general symbol of threat to Anglo-Australians.

The medical literature in the 1950s and 1960s gave some indication of the way that the health problems of new arrivals were viewed and defined. There was some recognition of the fact that poor living conditions affected their health. A study by Saint in 1963 found "relatively high rates of morbidity (for all migrants) from acute and chronic infection", which he attributed to their past and present poor living standards. In the case of bowel infections he wrote that, generally, these patients "have lived in apartments and substandard houses ... where for cultural and economic reasons the recently arrived ... [tend to congregate.]"107

There were also a number of studies on the psychological issues of adjusting to a new life in Australia, published within the first 25 years after the end of World War II. These were generally sympathetic responses to the plight of the immigrant and the traumatic histories of many. Significantly, they failed to go beyond a personal level of explanation, one that focused on the individual patient.

<sup>107</sup> Saint E.G. The Medical Problems of Migrants, Med J Aust, 9 March, 1963: 335-338; 336.

Rarely was the Australian environment or way of life seen as the basis from which immigrant ill health might be explained. Rather, explanations, particularly in the case of mental illness, tended to emphasise the horrors of past experience, the concentration camps or the social dislocation inherent in leaving family and culture.<sup>108</sup>

Two case studies from an article written in 1960 by J M Last provide an example of this model of explanation. One involved a young woman from a "beautiful mountain valley in Northern Yugoslavia" for whom immigration meant depression - in a new home in a small attached house under the shadow of a gasometer and near a railway goods yard and iron foundry. The only suggested resolution of the depression was the prospect that the woman and her husband might, when out of debt, be able to move to the country at some future date.

The second example involved a young German male, leading a nomadic life working in rural areas. He contracted venereal disease, said to be the result of contact with a prostitute. The man was described as shy; at country dances he stayed mostly on the sidelines with the other men from the camp. He was given some "simple psychotherapy" in the hope that it might "help him adjust his personality." Granted, Last in his role as an Adelaide medical practitioner was limited in his options by the immediate needs of his patients. He was not hostile to their problems. He did not dismiss them as malingerers or as immoral or even ungrateful for the new start in life that Australia had given them. However, in his commentary, Last's analysis is firmly anchored in a view of the problems of these patients and the clinical resolution of those needs that was set within a context that saw them as outsiders, with problems that emphasised their alien status in Australia. He did not focus on the wider structural issues of poverty or the

<sup>108</sup> See for example, the following - Burgess J N. With the Migrants in Europe. *Med J Aust*, 27 September, 1952: 438-439. Ellard J. The Problems of the Migrant. *Med J Aust*, 22 November, 1969: 1039-1043. Listawan I A. Paranoid States: Social and Cultural Aspects. *Med J Aust*, 12 May, 1956: 776-778.

<sup>109</sup> Last J M. The Health of Immigrants: Some Observations From General Practice. *Med J Aust*, 30 January, 1960: 158-162.

economic system that saw immigrants as the lowest stratum of the work force. He did not explore the ethnocentricity that devalued foreign cultures and values or the inadequate planning controls that lumped the poor and unpleasant industries together. Rather, he turned the problems inward for the immigrants themselves to resolve, perhaps with some counselling.

These sympathetic medical treatments of the poor mental and physical health of particular immigrants are no less ethnocentric than other explanations. They are however cloaked with the authority of medical knowledge and a stated sympathy for the immigrant. So while this medical view may appear to be different from, for example, the denunciation of an RSL official, it is not necessarily less labelling or less coercive in its view that solutions to the problems of poor health lay with the immigrants themselves rather than with the environment into which they had arrived.

This analysis of hygiene, disease and ill health, illustrates the same ideas about the Southern and Eastern European arrivals that were presented in the case of the Chinese: that they introduced disease and lived in insanitary circumstances. It was easy to make the charge that the new arrivals were unsatisfactory and even threatening in public health terms, to say that this was their fault and to then use it as a way of articulating resentment against them and marginalising them. It was not so easy to demonstrate the charge however, and there rarely seemed to be a recognition of the significance of the environmental conditions and the cultural dislocation that played a major part in determining the health of Southern and Eastern Europeans.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>110</sup> The view that the immigrants simply had a free choice to move into the Australian community was very profound and it allowed their failure to do so to be used as a criticism of them. This was encapsulated in a question asked by a parliamentarian during the 1925 immigration debates: "do the immigrants who come here conform to the Australian standard of living?" Such a view was blind to the issues of structure and opportunity in which the immigrants found themselves. (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 3 July, 1925; 724.)

## 5. MIGRANTS, MORALS AND MAFIA

The stereotypical Chinaman "Ah Sin", corpulent, immoral and criminal, provided a popular and well publicised case against the Chinese in Australia. Similar pictures were presented against Southern and Eastern European arrivals and views relating to immigrant crime and their alleged moral conditions played a significant role in shaping the attitudes against them. Illegal activities and public health come together in areas of organised crime such as prostitution and drug trafficking. Prostitution is the subject of the sanctions of the criminal law and of moral judgement. It is also an area of considerable public health significance. As the history of public health control demonstrates, it is difficult to unravel these various concerns.<sup>111</sup> Section 3 of the Commonwealth *Immigration Act* 1901 also illustrates how the issues of crime, morals and public health were brought into the same focus: "prohibited immigrant" was a collective term that included persons with serious or loathsome diseases, criminals, prostitutes and persons living off the earnings of prostitution. Prostitution was further linked with immigration policy since convicted prostitutes and persons convicted of living off the earnings of prostitutes joined seditious revolutionaries as a relatively small class of persons who could be deported.112

A popular picture of recently arrived immigrants was one that emphasised actual and potential criminality. The image of the menacing Asian hawkers at the turn of the century was continued by the cartoon figures of disembarking Italians,

<sup>111</sup> See for example, Davenport-Hines R. Sex Death and Punishment: Attitudes to Sex and Sexuality in Britain since the Renaissance. London: Fontana, 1991. See also Prisoners Detention Act 1908 (New South Wales) and New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 5 November, 1908; 2226.

<sup>112</sup> Section 8A, inserted by amendment to the Act, 1920.

dressed as brigands with knifes in their belts.<sup>113</sup> The association of crime and character was strongly represented as a natural and expected consequence of being foreign. This was the case with the Chinese, it was also true of the Italians. In 1891, the *Boomerang* warned Queenslanders of prospective Southern Italian immigrants, likening their presumed hot blooded temper to the volcanic mountains of their native region. More specifically, it warned of the Mafia and of family disputes "being settled by the knife".<sup>114</sup> The theme was continued in Queensland: in 1934, Frank Dalby Davison described Southern Europeans as "worthless", "knife sticking" and "anti-fascists" (at that time a criticism).<sup>115</sup>

The picture of migrant crime was developed in the context of sinister overseas organisations and the threat that this brought to Australia. This emphasised the idea of the external menace to the Australian community. In particular, links with migration and criminal organisations in the migrants' home countries were often made. In the 1925 Immigration debates, several members emphasised this point and articulated the threat from outside that was introduced by undesirables. There is a strong parallel in the idea that, in the same way that immigrants from infectious areas were a threat, people from areas where organised crime was believed to exist were also threatening. 116

This theme continued during the period of substantial Southern European immigration after 1945. The spectre of organised and violent crime was often conjured up in Federal Parliament where it was claimed that many new arrivals "carried knives on their person and are a constant danger to decent citizens" while assaults that occurred in the vicinity of hostels generally resulted in immigrants being the prime suspects. 117 More outspoken backbenchers said that these

<sup>113</sup> Lack and Templeton, op cit; 221.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> The Boomerang, 17 January, 1891; 4.

<sup>115</sup> Davison F D and Nicholls B. Blue Coast Caravan. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1935; 225.

<sup>116</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 2 July, 1925; 666, 685.

<sup>117</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 6 May, 1952; 8. 27 November, 1951; 2765.

immigrants were "murderers and vicious criminals". 118 Others conjured up the idea of secret criminal societies. 119

These concerns were not sustained by the available crime statistics. In 1952, a Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry reported that crime involving immigrants as assailants was significantly below the crime rate overall suggesting that, contrary to the popular, knife-wielding stereotype, European immigrants were generally a law abiding group. 120 Notwithstanding this fact, migrant involvement in crime was presented by the media as a prominent issue. Migrants were seen either as victims or as suspect assailants: both roles emphasised their potential to disrupt and threaten the Australian community. In these cases, the facts were reported prominently and also, in a context that focused on the ethnicity of the victim or the assailant and its significance in the offence. The press coverage of the "Victoria Market" killings was one prominent example of this.

Over a period in 1963 and 1964, shootings at Melbourne's Victoria Market claimed a number of victims of Italian background. The media reports of these murders generated a "moral panic" within the Victorian community which amplified and broadened the issues, characterising the crimes as matters about Italian immigration and the alien threat generally. The reports described the offences as "Mafia type" and it was noted that they were similar to other alleged ethnic murders in America. Although the identity and motive of the assailants was unknown, the press provided its readers with considerable background on the Mafia organisation and its various rituals. The anti-immigrant context of the

 $<sup>^{118}</sup>$  See, for example, Daniel Mulcahy a Federal New South Wales back bencher, - Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 26 September, 1951; 40.

<sup>119</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 20 June, 1951; 124. See also 15 November, 1951; 2055 and 20 November, 1951; 2261.

<sup>120</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 4 June, 1952; 1308. 2 October, 1951; 175. See also, Bonutto, op cit; 18.

<sup>121</sup> For a full description of the significance of this process see Cohen S. Folk Devils and Moral Panics. London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1972; 191.

<sup>122</sup> See the Age 17 January, 1964; 3, 18 January; 3, 23 January; 1, 26 January; 3. See also White NR and PB. Immigrants and the Media. Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1983; 84, 85.

response was highlighted by the Leader of the Victorian Labour Opposition who described the shootings "as not being ordinary crimes, they are something evil and foreign in our community." 123

White and White, examined the press coverage of the shootings and conclude that the words most frequently used in the headlines were *Italian*, *Calabrian*, *Sicilian*, *Mafia* and *Migrant* - generalities that brought the whole Italian community into the spotlight of suspicion and blame. The Victoria Market killings, together with other high profile offences such as the apparent murder of Donald McKay at Griffith in 1977, were reported more prominently than usual and were kept current because of their presumed ethnic associations. The assailants were seen as outsiders in the Australian community.<sup>124</sup>

While the Victoria Market killings were a prominent example of the reporting of crime in Australia and its supposed links with an immigrant community, there were precedents. In the early 1930s, Queensland Italians were said to be associated with the secret "Black Hand" societies and the general association of foreigners with criminality remained a long standing idea. The reports reinforced prejudices and strengthened the idea that all Italian immigrants were linked with these organisations. It was also given public health significance. In 1960, an article on tuberculosis published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* emphasised the similarities between the need to screen immigrants for health and the need to screen for criminal activity. The latter process being described as "a

<sup>123</sup> Age, 22 January, 1964; 5.

<sup>124</sup> White and White, op cit, chapter 5 generally. See also Bonutto, op cit; 20. Another example of this occurred in 1960 with the kidnapping and murder of a Sydney boy, Graeme Thorne. It was a particularly revolting crime; the Sydney papers saw it as the work of an outsider and a hunt began for short, swarthy men who fitted the obvious foreigner stereotype. Fifteen months later, a member of the New South Wales Parliament said "the case in question has shocked us into the realisation that a crime ... prevalent in other parts of the world has stalked into our midst." (New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 28 November, 1961; 3161. Also, *Talking History*, *ABC Radio*, Interview with Stephen Garton, 5 July, 1992.)

<sup>125</sup> Bonutto, op cit; 126-127. Pyke, op cit; 108.

lesson learned from the large-scale importation of gangsters which took place in the United States."126

The process of emphasising immigrant crime has continued into the last two decades as the complaints about press coverage of crime lodged with the Federal Office of the Commissioner of Community Relations indicate. Drug offences, in particular, have been associated with immigrant groups, described in one newspaper report as "semi-literate peasant types who were well off if they once owned a dozen goats." These are examples from an apparently broad and notorious spectrum of ethnic wrongdoing that has received, and continues to receive, wide media coverage. 128

Despite the high profile treatment of ethnic crime, in the 1990s - as in the 1950s - immigrants are usually under-represented in criminal statistics and criminal drug statistics in particular. In South Australia for example, the data suggest that, other than New Zealanders, persons born overseas do not have a significantly higher than average crime rate overall. It is unlikely that the South Australian community would echo this view: the media tradition of characterising certain types of crime as "ethnic" has fashioned a popular notion of immigrants as drug dealers or as organised criminals.

Presenting Southern European immigrants as undesirable on the basis that they were involved with alien criminal organisations emphasised that they were

<sup>126</sup> Bolliger W. On the Incidence of Tuberculosis in Victoria. *Med J Aust*, 1 October, 1960: 528-532; 528.

<sup>127</sup> White and White, op cit; 5.

<sup>128</sup> See *Advertiser*, 27 December 1990; 1 - This involved a murder of an Indochinese man in Adelaide by other Asian men. It was described (without basis) in the paper as an "execution" with the overtones of organised crime and drugs. See also, *Advertiser*, 19 November, 1990; 1. This involved the (unsolved) murder of an Italian male. Both crimes received a disproportionate amount of publicity compared with most other murders in Adelaide.

<sup>129</sup> Personal conversation with statistician, Office of Crime Statistics, (South Australia) (1990). See also - South Australia, Attorney General's Department, *Crime and Justice in South Australia*, Adelaide: six-monthly reports and Francis R D. *Migrant Crime in Australia*. St Lucia: Univ Qld P, 1981; 79. The Study done by Reynolds et al into the client profile of drug offenders in South Australia showed a significant under-representation of overseas born offenders other than British born. (Reynolds C S et al. *The South Australian Drug Assessment and Aid Panels: An Alternative to the Criminal Justice System.* Paper presented to the Window of Opportunity Conference, Adelaide, December, 1991.)

threatening to the Australian community. It articulated and gave substance to the general idea that they were undesirable. It emphasised their links with a world beyond Australia highlighting them as outsiders. Popular representations of ethnic crime in the media both justified the idea of "undesirability" and were justified by it. Organised crime, in the sense that it was seen as a planned and concerted activity, was threatening as an intrusion into Australia from the outside.<sup>130</sup>

Overt criminal activity was only one issue in a more general context; there were other matters that either hinted at or were on the margins of criminal activity. These included suggestions that immigrants were immoral, that they were involved in vice or that they grouped together in enclaves. This was a common complaint in Australia as it was elsewhere. In the United States, a study claimed to show that low intelligence and immorality generally occurred together. This focused on the Southern and Eastern European immigrants since they had been measured by the ethnocentric "intelligence tests" used at the time to be of very low intelligence. By implication, they must also have been immoral. It also served as a further demonstration both of their genetic inferiority and the need to restrict their entry. 132

Once established, some immigrant communities were also subject to this general view that they were unsuitable. *The Ferry Commission*, dismissed Queensland's Greek settlers as being of an "undesirable type" apparently because they lived mainly in towns and carried on small businesses in "cafes, fish shops, boarding houses and other less reputable ways." Ferry added that these people

<sup>130</sup> This same process occurred within a public health focus in the reporting of the Bradford (England) smallpox outbreak in 1962, that without convincing evidence blamed a popular scapegoat, the Pakistani community, while heightening public concern over the epidemic and articulating the threat that this group was said to present. (Butterworth E., The 1962 Smallpox Outbreak and the British Press. 1966. *Race*, 7: 347-364.)

<sup>131</sup> Lack and Templeton, op cit; 149, 233.

<sup>132</sup> Chase A. The Legacy of Malthus. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1977; 271.

<sup>133</sup> Ferry, op cit; 12. See also Borrie, op cit; 109-110.

gave "nothing to the wealth or security of the country", presumably because the Greeks, as predominantly self-employed, were independent of the local labour market. This echoed the earlier complaints about the Chinese, who were also largely independent workers. Ferry goes so far as to describe the Greeks as the *new Chinese*, commenting that they were even occupying the old Chinatowns (that is the poor areas) of the towns in North Queensland.

Ferry's view gives some shape to the notion of "undesirability", illustrating the established assumptions about the role that immigrants were expected to play in Australia, namely as employed labour. Applied to people who did not conform in appearance or occupation to the paradigm of Anglo-Saxon farm boys, "immigrant" was a general term that encompassed both morals and living conditions. Further, the claimed undesirability of the few became a statement about the general undesirability of all unwelcome immigrants. Thus, in 1940, the Fitzroy (Melbourne) Council complained about the presence of foreign clubs in its area. Basing its comments on "personal observations", the Council reported that these places were undesirable. "Some [it said]... were nothing more than sly grog shops and clearing houses for drugs." Even if this was the case, it is arguable whether it made the clubs more "undesirable" than their Australian counterparts among whom breaches of the licensing and gaming laws were not unknown. Further, the Council's reported comments imply that all the clubs were undesirable, although only some were identified as being in breach of legislation. This generalisation led the Council to yet a wider generalisation: it wondered why non-naturalised Australians (that is all non-Britons) were allowed into Australia at all,134

When the idea of "undesirability" was articulated, a moral concern was prominent. Thus, in 1938, Graham Pratten, a New South Wales politician and critic of Jewish immigration, called for an amendment to entry controls in order to

<sup>134</sup> White NR and White PB. Evaluating the Immigrant Presence: Press Reporting of Immigrants to Australia, 1935-1977. 1983 Ethnic and Racial Studies, 6: 284-307; 290.

ensure the "moral character" of new arrivals as well as their "physical and occupational suitability." The Government's "open door" policy was, he said, encouraging "the wrong type." 135

This moral undesirability was also expressed more specifically in the idea that some of the new arrivals posed a threat to Australian women. Here, there are similarities to the fears directed against the Chinese in the 19th century. Ferry's Report noted that Southern Italians behaved poorly in trains "crowding out the carriages and jostling women and children", while Greek restaurant proprietors were said to be "constantly" making improper suggestions to the girls employed by them. This theme continued where pockets of Southern Europeans existed. There were complaints of jostling and obstructing made against the Italians in Kalgoorlie in 1934, 137 while in 1944, the Stanhope (Queensland) *Clarion*, under the headline "Dago Menace Again Threatens Stanhope District", complained among other things that the Italians living in the district before the war:

had become so cheeky, so arrogant and so devoid of common decency that women when approaching them were obliged to walk off the footpath to avoid some rude remark. 138

This imagined threat to European women was a particular issue when Italian prisoners of war were assigned as farm labourers. The idea that they might seduce the local women was considered to be one of the most dangerous aspects of the policy of employing the prisoners unguarded. Fitzgerald, in his study of Italian prisoners of war, described this as an example of the traditional fear of the "ruling caste that its women would be violated by the lower orders." After World War

<sup>135</sup> New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 8 November, 1938; 2512.

<sup>136</sup> Ferry, op cit; 12. See also Ellard J. The Problems of the Migrant. *Med J Aust*, 22 November, 1969: 1039-1043;1041.

<sup>137</sup> Casey G and Mayman T. The Mile that Midas Touched. Adelaide: Rigby, 1964; 188.

<sup>138</sup> Fitzgerald, op cit; 78.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid; 79.

II, the idea that immigrant males were a sexual risk to the community continued. In an intriguing update of the opium dens of Little Bourke street, a Melbourne television station in the 1960s reported the claim that "expresso bar" prostitution was flourishing in the inner suburbs. To support this, the station relied on the evidence of a woman who claimed to have had sex with 4,000 Italians within the past three years. While this quite improbable claim was later shown to be a hoax, the initial publicity was widespread and was likely to have done much to nourish and harden the pre-existing notions of many viewers. 140

The social circumstances in which many immigrants lived made it unrealistic to judge their moral behaviour against what was taken to be that of the established Australian family unit. For example, the Snowy Mountains hydro electric scheme predominantly employed young immigrant males, either unmarried or isolated from their families. Wilton and Bosworth suggest that while prostitution did flourish in some areas of high immigrant population, it was simply the expected result of the physical and social remoteness of the workers. This may have been the case but its consequences were that "nice Aussie girls" learned to stay away from towns like Cooma while the Australian newspapers "pontificated about the inevitability or the extent of the vice that came with migrant settlement." Thus, the critical observations and conclusions were directed towards the, largely migrant, workers on the Snowy Mountains Scheme, in a sense, its "victims", rather than the socially abnormal conditions in which so many of them worked and lived.

In the reception centres, there were similar concerns: Wilton and Bosworth cite a complaint made by a number of British immigrants seeking to be separated from "foreign migrants particularly single men." They claim to have been promised separate accommodation and, to an official Inquiry set up to investigate

<sup>140</sup> Jupp, op cit; 112-114.

<sup>141</sup> Wilton and Bosworth, op cit; 116.

this and other complaints, suggested that "the 'morals' of their children might have been affected by living too close to single foreigners." This concern was about what *might* happen. Its effect was to provide a justification for keeping British and Non-British arrivals separate, though it was never shown to be a realistic concern about the corrupting potential of Southern and Eastern European immigrants.

The moral threat presented by groups of allegedly undesirable immigrants should be viewed in the context of their expected role and function. In particular, many were required to undertake indentured labour assigned to them by the Government (this was a condition of assisted immigration). This arrangement imposed a "caste" status in the sense that it marked, socially distanced and isolated the immigrant from the mainstream of the Anglo-Australian community. They were social outsiders. In such cases, a central response by the community has been to see the "outgroup", in this case the immigrants, as highly visible outsiders, threatening and, in particular, as a sexual threat to the community. This was the case with the Chinese in the 19th century, while the Australian Army's concerns about the Italian prisoners of war were, in Fitzgerald's view, similar to the fears held in the United States about Negroes and the threats that they allegedly posed to White women. As late as 1961, the Medical Journal of Australia, in an article that considered immigrants and their culture, made the point that prejudice and sex were often linked in contemporary thinking about them, with the immigrant being considered to have "animal like sex appetites." Thus the idea that certain groups of new arrivals were immoral and threatening to the established order of the community underscored their status as outsiders. It emphasised more generally the threat that they presented to the Australian community as outsiders.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid: 113.

<sup>143</sup> Medical Journal of Australia, Special Article, op cit; 424. See also Fitzgerald, op cit; 80. See also Helmer J. *Drugs and Minority Oppression*, New York: Seabury Press, 1975; 47-48.

### 6. DANGEROUS, DIRTY AND DISABLED

The jog trotting Chinamen were a source of resentment because they were said by many to work too hard, to find too much gold and to threaten the livelihood of Australians. Generally, the Chinese were self employed or worked within Chinese enclaves; the Colonial legislation sought to distance them and marginalise them from the local labour force. Some immigrants in the 20th century were cast in a similar role and were branded as "sweaters" of local labour or "undesirable" because they were self employed (as was the case of the Greek community in Queensland).

The immigration policy of the 20th century was not designed to encourage independent operators. Rather, immigrants were intended as "fuel" for economic expansion and nation building programmes such as the Snowy Mountains Scheme. Hence, they were seen as a resource. The logic of immigration lay in its supply of workers; labour was expected and, in the cases of assisted immigrants, formally required in return for the opportunities to settle in Australia.

The value of immigrant labour and the occupational health issues affecting it were of prime importance to Australians. These issues formed another basis from which criticism of new arrivals occurred. In particular, immigrant workers in Australia have been linked with high levels of occupational injury. In many cases, they were blamed for these injuries and, in this process, it is possible to see another example of the use of health as a basis for justifying prejudice against specific immigrant groups and to emphasise the distinction between them and the rest of the community. To illustrate this, three examples are presented, relating to the

<sup>144</sup> Kunz, op cit; 143. Wigmore L. *The Struggle for the Snowy*. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1966; Chapter 8 - A Time to go Forward.

Kalgoorlie Mines, the Port Pirie Lead Smelter and the occurrence of a medical condition labelled as *Mediterranean back*.

The final great gold rush in Australia occurred in the Kalgoorlie area of Western Australia at the turn of the century. Much of the gold was buried deep underground and its extraction required substantial capital and the use of a large labour force. The labour attracted to these mines included a number of foreigners. whose presence was said to be of sufficient concern to warrant the setting up, in 1902, of a Commonwealth Commission into Foreign Contract Labour in Western Australia. This was prompted by the number of foreign workers and their rate of increase. However, the Commission found that the number of foreigners (mostly Italians) was, in most mines, a very small percentage of the total miners employed and their rate of arrival was likely to decrease rather than increase. Yet, Italians were singled out for particular criticism by other workers. So distant did they seem that, in the evidence of some witnesses, they were distinguished from White men. There were objections about their occupational health and safety practices, about their standards of living and also about their careless and over-enthusiastic use of explosives. 145 Two years later, the State government re-opened this issue in response, it was said, to a popular outcry. 146 This led to the creation of a second, State, Royal Commission whose Report also concluded that the number of non-British Europeans in the State was small. However, it claimed that it was its potential to grow that was of concern. Despite this concern, there seemed to be no basis for it; any annual increase in the Italian population of the area was small when compared with the increases of the British population over the same period.147

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>145</sup> Report of the Commission to Enquire into Foreign Contract Labour in Western Australia. Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, 1901-1902. A44.

<sup>146</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on the Immigration of Non-British Labour. Western Australian Parliamentary papers, 1904, vol 2, A7; 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>147</sup> Ibid, 19.

Some of the complaints of the witnesses to both of these Inquiries have been detailed elsewhere in this Chapter. Broadly, they were about living conditions and mining safety and hygiene. They claimed to justify policies of exclusion rather than betterment for all workers. The occupational health and safety context in which the calls for exclusion occurred were justifications of the wider and long standing anti-Italian feelings that existed in the Kalgoorlie community and which erupted into open violence, first in 1919 and then more forcibly during the Australia Day holiday of 1934.148

The issue of foreign labour in Kalgoorlie is complex and cannot be dealt with in detail here. However, it demonstrates that, at the turn of the century, another non-British group had joined the Chinese. The thrust of this local discontent was about excluding the Italians entirely; there was resentment that they were there at all. The complaints were similar to those made against the Chinese some decades before. In both cases, they were demonstrations of resentment against foreign workers that were partly articulated in terms of public health, occupational health, their alleged threatening behaviour and their presumed criminal activity.

The Port Pirie lead smelter is the largest in the world. Since 1889 it has refined ore from the Broken Hill mines, some 450 kilometres distant. While bringing much prosperity to the town, the lead industry also brought occupational and environmental problems of such dimensions as to warrant Government investigation and involvement which continues to the present day. The first significant health enquiry in Port Pirie was the *Royal Commission into Plumbism* in 1926 that examined the occupational lead exposures of workers at the smelter. Port Pirie had a substantial Greek and Italian population at the time. They were

<sup>148</sup> Round Table, June, 1934, 24: 651-655. (Cited in Crowley F K. Modern Australia in Documents 1901-1931 Vol 1. Melbourne: Wren, 1973; 537.) Gerritsen R. The 1934 Kalgoorlie Riots: A Western Australian Crowd, 1969. University Studies in History, 5, No 3:42-75.

first attracted by the fishing industry, though by 1926, 322 Greeks were employed at the smelters. 149 From their first arrival this immigrant population was objected to in terms that were grounded in public health. Nancy Robinson has written:

The single Italian men spent most of their time in boats, but while on shore shared cramped unhygienic conditions which invoked the wrath of neighbours and incurred the frustration of health officers.<sup>150</sup>

Evidence given to the Royal Commission also focused on the Greek and Italian employees. This was done with some justification; the plant was absorbing more non-British Europeans in the 1920s and reported cases of plumbism (lead poisoning) among these workers had risen disproportionately. This led the Commission to conclude that:

Greeks, Italians and Maltese, in particular, are much more susceptible to the hazards of the industry than are persons of British or Northern European origin.<sup>151</sup>

The use of the word "susceptible" suggests that it was simply the fact of being Greek or Italian that put these workers at risk and it was within this view that attempts to explain the over representation in plumbism were made by Smelter officials and others. It was suggested that the domestic habits of the Southern Europeans were deficient and that this was the main issue. It was said that they lived in crowded conditions, that they abused alcohol and that they were not too particular about their sanitary arrangements including washing before meals. 152

One witness concluded that "they have primitive ideas about hygiene and have to be taught a lot". 153 Here their personal habits - even the extent to which these workers ate tinned, as opposed to fresh, food came under scrutiny. 154

<sup>149</sup> Robinson N. Reluctant Harbour: The Romance of Pirie. Jamestown: Nadjuri Pub, 1976; 276. 150 Ibid; 273.

<sup>151</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on Plumbism. South Australian Parliamentary Papers, 1925. no 57; para 17.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid; qs 478, 588, 1073, 1079.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid; q1089.

These were issues about the Italian and Greek workers that built upon preexisting stereotypes, that they were dirty, that they lived differently from other
Europeans in the town. This view ignored other issues such as the extent to which
workers were even aware of the issue of lead poisoning and the extent to which
they were able to avoid it given their particular tasks within the smelter. These
issues were to some degree acknowledged by the Royal Commission and became
the subject of specific recommendations but for many of the witnesses, the issue
largely turned about the personal habits of the migrant workers.

Mediterranean Back is said to be an unspecific musculo-skeletal injury, believed common among immigrant workers. The term is a stigma; its immigrant sufferers were said to be malingering or perpetrating frauds on the workers compensation systems. Although any worker could be injured, it was the injuries of migrant workers that attracted the label Mediterranean back. The term and its stigma was specific in its application to Southern European workers. There is no local equivalent for injured Anglo-Australian workers. 155

The idea of *Mediterranean back* epitomised the unreliability of Southern European workers who ceased to labour productively. In 1987, the Victorian RSL president Bruce Ruxton said that immigrant workers intentionally defrauded the compensation system:

people who can't even speak English know the Workers' Compensation Act backwards ... and I believe they know it before they come to Australia ... they are able to work the Act for payments that are incredible yet offer nothing to Australia. 156

<sup>154</sup> Ibid; q1371.

<sup>155</sup> Alcorso C. Migrant Workers and Workers' Compensation in NSW. Sydney: Social Welfare Research Centre - Univ of NSW, 1988; 91.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid; 4.

His was not an isolated voice. Studies that have been conducted on migrant injury suggest that Ruxton's view has supporters within the medical and legal professions. In a study of the New South Wales workers compensation system, Nye found that the origin of an injured worker was often used in a derogatory way and accompanied by doubts regarding the genuine nature of the injury. These views, Nye concluded, were often generalised, so that:

while Australian/UK workers also attract adverse comments, these comments do not appear to stigmatise that group as a whole, whereas it does appear that Middle Eastern workers ... are often seen as a group all of whose members are suspect.<sup>157</sup>

Alcorso's study of workers compensation claims surveyed solicitors' attitudes to workers compensation. From these data, she identified the tendency for the creation of a "migrant claimant model" which was understood to fit *all* injured workers of that ethnic background. For example, one solicitor included in her study created an elaborate series of generalisations such as migrants "have a different concept of morality to us" or their political systems are corrupt and "everything works on a patronage system", thus linking the injuries of immigrant workers to a stereotypical view of their cultural system.<sup>158</sup>

Alcorso challenged this stereotype. She concluded that there were over-representations in claims by immigrants only for some occupations and not generally. 159 In particular, if the idea of *Mediterranean back* was to have any meaning beyond a misleading ethnic stereotype, it would need to demonstrate a consistent pattern of ethnic over-representation in work place injuries, for example, that Southern European medical practitioners or accountants had more work place injury than the general rate for medical practitioners and accountants. This is not the case. The type of industry in which the over-representation occurs and the

<sup>157</sup> Nye B. Some aspects of Workers' Compensation, Sydney: NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission, 1978. (cited in Alcorso, op cit; 18.)

<sup>158</sup> Alcorso, op cit; 92-93.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid: 133.

stratification of the work force within that industry provides a more telling picture of the issue of ethnic injury rates. By comparison, an explanation that seeks to focus on the mindfulness of the injured worker necessarily ignores or discounts environmental or social factors that offer alternative explanations as to why particular groups of workers are more at risk for occupational injury. 160 Two such factors discussed by Alcorso are the over representation of immigrants in dangerous occupations and the relatively powerless position of immigrants in the work place that makes them more susceptible to injury. However, explanations such as these which see environment and power as significant do not appear to have dispelled the idea of Mediterranean back. Arguably, one reason for this is the fear of malingering and the overuse of medical services that Pilowsky has suggested permeates Australian society at all levels. 161 Within this context, the natural response to injury is to direct a biomedical gaze on the victim in an effort to assess whether or not he or she is "really" injured. By comparison, the occasional media report of an injured litigant being exposed in court as a malingerer provides a simple explanation of immigrant occupational injury that can ignore the more complex factors that surround the issue and can be drawn into the general proposition that all injured immigrant workers are malingerers.

The metaphors of disease have been used for other arrivals. There was the term *British disease*, employed in 1977 by Ian Sinclair, then Federal Minister for Primary Industry. <sup>162</sup> In Sinclair's view, the symptoms of this ailment could be seen in the over-abundance of British trade union officials in the Australian work force. He postulated that the economic woes of the United Kingdom were caused by this "disease" and that the activities of trade unions and the presence of British

<sup>160</sup> See Minc S. Of New Australian Patients, Their Medical Lore and Major Anxieties. *Med J Aust*, 11 May, 1963: 681-687. Parker N. Malingering. *Med J Aust*, 2 December, 1972: 1308-1311; 1311 and Balla J I and Moraitis S. Knights in Armour. *Med J Aust*, 22 August, 1970: 355-361; 361.

<sup>161</sup> Pilowsky, interview in New Doctor, Issue 40, 1986: 6-11; 8.

<sup>162</sup> In a speech given at the opening of the Annual Conference of the National Country Party, Tanunda, 5 August 1977. (The *Australian*, 8 August, 1977; 6.)

unionists in Australia would lead to similar effects. This was a generalisation prompted by Sinclair's anti-labour views. It was based on premises of doubtful validity and made without any substantiating evidence.

The two concepts make an interesting comparison: while *Mediterranean* back appears largely to have passed into the Australian idiom without any serious popular challenge, the term *British disease* met widespread, though not total, opposition in the media at the time it was first aired. This demonstrates the relatively more powerful position of British immigrants within the Australian community. Yet, both concepts vividly express the expected role of immigrants within the Australian economy. Indeed, it could be seen to reflect the "price" of entry to Australia. This was to labour productively in a subservient and powerless position. To become injured and a charge on the system or to attempt to alter its established rules was to fall short of those expectations.

The experience of immigrant workers in Australia illustrates how their illness and injury has been explained in a way that directs responsibility for it at the worker. It illustrates how this has permitted the construction of generalisations and labels that questions the legitimacy of the illness or injury and diminishes the extent to which occupational structures and environments are responsible for it.

This used ideas about health and disability in a way that controlled and blamed.

Many writers have argued this to be unfair and inaccurate. More significantly, it is also another aspect of the general proposition charted in this thesis. Immigrants who do not fit into the expected stereotype, who "fail" through injury or who stand apart from the norm as independent workers were marginalised. They were labelled as undesirable outsiders and viewed as threatening to the Australian community.

## 7. THE RESPONSE TO IMMIGRATION, RACIAL OR ECONOMIC?

A prominent focus of opposition against immigrants considered undesirable was that they posed an economic threat to members of the Australian community. This was emphasised particularly when they moved beyond the constrained and closely defined role of wage labourers. The issue was a focus for opposition to the Chinese in the 19th century. However, it was argued that economic concern was not the central reason for anti-Chinese feeling. Similarly, the economic arguments against the unwelcome arrivals of the 20th century seemed driven more generally, by the general dislike towards them, of which public health was another expression. Nevertheless, the charge that these new arrivals were exploiting Australians and taking their jobs remained a prominent complaint.

At the turn of the century, the Assyrian (Lebanese) traders in Adelaide came under the scrutiny of the South Australian Factory Inspector. The Report for 1899 made two points: that these traders were attracting work that would otherwise have gone to Australians and that they exploited European women. A tone of moral indignation pervaded the document, suggesting the traditional concerns about white women in the clutches of Asiatics. For example: "young girl (European) working at a sewing machine in very untidy and dirty bedroom in Assyrian house. I think this kind of thing should be stopped" Here was a picture of dirt, disorder, economic and perhaps sexual exploitation. However, the extent to which the Lebanese exploited and replaced European workers was thrown into doubt in 1904, when a South Australian Select Committee investigated the "Alleged Sweating Evil" in the clothing industry and said of alien manufacturers:

We find that Assyrians from Mount Lebanon are the principal aliens engaged in clothing manufacture and the evidence shows that not only do they treat their employees well, but pay wages equal to those paid by

<sup>163</sup> South Australia. Parliamentary Papers, 1900, no 64; 9.

European factory-owners for similar work. As manufacturers, they are decreasing in number <sup>164</sup>

The Lebanese were only one of a number of groups of aliens that fell under suspicion in this way. The Western Australian and Queensland (*Ferry*) Inquiries were also concerned with the idea that Italian workers were monopolising local jobs. Borrie's description of the Italians in Queensland also included the belief of local labour groups that Italian migrants were prepared to undercut and displace the local work force. 165 Italian immigration into Australian cities provoked a similar response. In 1924, in the Victorian Parliament Mr G M Prendergast suggested that immigrant labour was cheaper than the standard rates and that Italians were "being brought here with a view of reducing ... wages." 166 The belief in economic competition appeared to play a significant part in precipitating ill feeling against some immigrants. Borrie, for example, indicated that where Italians followed occupations that did not bring them into competition with Australians, the process of acceptance was easier. 167

Jewish refugees were also accused of taking Australian jobs. The traditional Gentile apprehension of Jews as prominent and successful businessmen shaped many concerns about the refugees from Eastern Europe which drew pessimistic conclusions about the effect that they would have on the local community. For example, in 1939, a South Australian cabinet minister, concerned about the entry of Jewish refugees, described the unhappy case of a returned soldier with 9 children "who had been displaced in his employment by an Austrian Jew who came to this State not long ago." 168

<sup>164</sup> Report on the Alleged Sweating Evil, op cit; 8.

<sup>165</sup> Borrie, op cit; 20.

<sup>166</sup> Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 18 December, 1924; 2284.

<sup>167</sup> Borrie, op cit; 63.

<sup>168</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 12 October, 1937; 1061. Specific sectors of the community also opposed Jewish immigration for economic reasons. In the forefront was the medical profession, who Blakeney claims was "unquestionably the most ruthless opponent of the refugee" (Blakeney, op cit; 188 See generally Kunz E F. *The Intruders: Refugee Doctors in Australia*. Canberra: ANU, 1975.) Objection from this sector of the work force was not isolated to Australia. In Britain, the Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, recorded that he encountered

Adverse comments against Jewish immigration were also made in the Federal Parliament. Albert Green, the Labour member for Kalgoorlie, was a strong opponent of Jewish immigration. In 1939, he focused strongly on their apparent role as economic competitors, claiming "even little shops for the mending of stockings ... where a little Australian girl can be seen working, have behind them a Jew who controls the business." <sup>169</sup>

The media also presented the idea of the Jew as an unwelcome and unscrupulous businessman. Emphasising sharp business practices, traditionally a part of the Jewish stereotype, the Sydney *Catholic Weekly* remarked on the "aggressive" business methods of newly arrived Jews who, allegedly, were "breaching our industrial laws ... and using unfair methods to defect (sic)

Australian competitors." Populist papers such as *Truth* also complained about what it called the "Refujews", about how they were sweating and taking over Melbourne suburbs as they allegedly had in London (Prahan's Chapel Street, it warned, would become another Whitechapel Road.) As with the Chinese before them, the allegations of poor wages and arduous working conditions were given a public health perspective which could be calculated to raise the level of concern. In May 1939, it was said that the refugee employees of backyard factories in Carlton were in the "roughest living accommodation", inferring a threat to both their health and the health of the community. 172

These comments appear to have been ideologically, rather than empirically, driven. The Reports of the Victorian Inspector of Factories for the years 1937 to 1939 make no reference to sweating and gave no critical comment on outworking

<sup>&</sup>quot;massive resistance" from the medical profession in that country when he suggested the entry of refugee doctors fleeing the Anschluss. (Sherman A J. *Island Refuge: Britain and the Refugees from the Third Reich.* London: Paul Elek, 1973; 124 fn.)

<sup>169</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 15 June, 1939; 1966.

<sup>170</sup> Blakeney, op cit; 75-76.

<sup>171</sup> See Melbourne Truth 30 December, 1939; 13. Sydney Morning Herald, 14 June, 1939; 13 and 12 April, 1939; 20. See also Lack and Templeton, op cit; 179, 181.

<sup>172</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 9 May 1939; 11.

while, in July 1939, the assertion was formally denied by a Department of Labour Inspector, 173 In all three years, employment increased in Victoria, suggesting a buoyant labour market able to cope with the relatively small refugee intake. British migration had also fallen off sharply in the 1930s and although there was a significant increase in Jewish refugee arrivals, Australia wide, there were not more than 1,556 in 1938 and 5,080 in 1939. It was also significant that the positioning of Jews in the role of small businessmen was not simply the result of some natural proclivity. It was the product of Australia's own immigration policy that admitted only Jews of some means (having at least 3,000 pounds,) together with its refusal to accept any professional qualifications that they might have.<sup>174</sup> Yet, the point that some Jewish immigrants were wealthy was a source of continuing complaint in the press, raising the idea that they could not be *real* refugees.<sup>175</sup> By comparison, British arrivals, whose numbers stood to make a far greater impact on the local job market, were seldom the subject of these concerns. British immigration was generally welcomed despite its numbers and the fact that, because their professional and trade qualifications were generally recognised, British immigrants were not simply relegated to the lowest strata of jobs that could not otherwise be filled.

Economic issues were marshalled against Southern and Eastern Europeans in a number of contexts. By themselves, they were important issues, for example, the quotas in the 1925 *Immigration Act* were said by members of both Parties to be imposed in order to protect local jobs. 176 In this sense, the arguments for

<sup>173</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 13 July, 1939; 11. In contrast, there is some evidence to suggest that Jews were the victims rather than the perpetrators of unscrupulous practice. Sydney Morning Herald, 11 April, 1939; 11.

<sup>174</sup> Sherington, op cit; 105. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 6 March, 1947; 432. Markus A. Jewish Migration to Australia 1938-1949, 1983. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 13: 18-31; 23.

<sup>175</sup> On the same page as Sir Frank Clarke's "rat faced" outburst was a report that 130 Jewish refugees had arrived bringing some 200,000 pounds with them. See *Sydney Morning Herald* 9 May, 1939; 11 and also 12 June, 1939; 12.

<sup>176</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 1 July, 1925; 576 and 8 July, 1925; 802. Here, Albert Green claimed to be speaking for the Labour Party when he said:

immigration restriction paralleled the public health arguments. Both presented the idea that the immigrant was threatening to the established community. They also intertwined and were hard to separate. A prominent example was the view that *because* the Southern European arrivals lived poorly, they would undercut established wage rates. 177 Thus hygiene and poverty became part of the justification for the economic argument against them. Sometimes the two issues were dealt with in the same breath. Ferry provided very critical comments of the Greek community in Queensland concluding that "socially and economically, this type of immigrant is a menace to the community in which he settles." Together or apart, the issues of economics and public health widened the case against those arrivals believed to be undesirable outsiders: they were dirty, they were dangerous and they took local jobs. Their capacity to harm the Australian community could be presented as substantial.

#### 8. CONCLUSION

Like the Chinese before them, and unlike the British immigrants, the Southern and Eastern Europeans were strangers to the community into which they arrived. To many Australians they were unwelcome and their presence, when encouraged, the result of economic necessity, national insecurity or humanitarian obligations rather than choice. Most importantly, their presence was seen within narrow constraints. They were to perform the often arduous and isolated tasks

Our objection as a party to a large influx of southern Europeans or of persons from any other part of Europe is purely economic. We believe unrestricted immigration to be dangerous to the mass of the workers of Australia.

<sup>177</sup> Sugar Inquiry Committee Reports. Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers 1929-1931, Vol 3, No 240; 7, 9-13.

<sup>178</sup> Ferry, op cit; 12.

assigned to them in accordance with the national interests while adopting the local value systems as promptly as possible.

The marker of their outside status was their physical appearance. The significance of their outside status was the view that these unwelcome arrivals were potentially threatening to the Australian community. Health became a prominent aspect of that threat. It provided a persuasive reason for immigration controls and other discriminatory provisions.

As with the Chinese, these health threats were either largely undemonstrable or the product of their new found place in Australian society rather than their being Southern or Eastern European. Public health concerns - fears about dirt, disease and racial contamination - were expressions of the threat of the outsider; it was the context in which the threat was defined and articulated. The response, particularly the public health and racial concerns implicit in the Immigration Act and the thinking of its supporters and administrators, were ways of protecting the community from that threat.

# CHAPTER 9 AIDS, ASIANS AND DRUGS: AUSTRALIA AND PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES IN THE LATE 20TH CENTURY

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter considers outsiders and current public health policy. It is the third of the narrative chapters describing outsiders and public health in Australia. All three chapters rely upon the sociological distinction between the "sacred" and the "profane" to explain why dominant social groups have reacted against minorities whom they characterise as intrusive. These threatening intrusions were often associated with public health notions about dirt, disease and hygiene. Where social boundaries were breached, and the presence of strangers or other threatening groups was felt, their danger was articulated in terms of "pollution" - dirt, chaos and the menace of disease. Public health responses were part of the community's attempt to defend itself from threat, to protect the "sacred" from the "profane" and to articulate boundaries between the community and the outside. The issues - disease, poor living conditions and poor morals - considered in the Australian historical context in Chapter 7 (Chinese in the 19th century) and Chapter 8 (Southern and Eastern Europeans) remain with us and have been important in shaping contemporary public health policy.

In late January 1992, Adelaide newspaper readers were exposed to accounts of threat from outsiders and marginal groups. Substantial publicity was given to the arrival of a boatload of Chinese refugees. In one cartoon, which aimed to demonstrate the laxity of the Immigration policy, they were described as "pests." Their arrival prompted a series of articles about the defenceless and poorly watched Australian coastline. It prompted a plea from John Howard, a leading conservative politician, for Australia not to jettison its traditional (British) values in a quest for a relationship with Asia.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Australian 23 January, 1992; 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ibid and Advertiser, 25 January, 1992; 4.

Other threats, prominently reported at this time, centred around anxieties about AIDS. In particular, the South Australian Health Commission, responding to media and political pressure about the possibility that a dentist with AIDS had infected his patients, (a subsequent study showed that he had not) announced that it would create a register of health workers known to be infected by the disease. This proposal, largely unnecessary given the very small risk to patients and the existence of adequate precautions within each profession, was described by the Adelaide *Advertiser* (which was supportive of the proposal) as a "dob-in AIDS register." The disease prompted other anxieties; two days earlier, South Australian police had affirmed their right to a "shoot to kill" policy if threatened with a syringe said to be contaminated with the AIDS virus. A police spokesman subsequently said that being threatened with a syringe was more stressful than being threatened with a gun or a knife. Outsiders with AIDS were also a source of anxiety. Prominent publicity was given to the concern Australian basketball players were said to have had about competing against a Black American player carrying the virus.

In all these cases, the public health risks were small. The creation of an AIDS register would not provide the community with any greater protection than currently exists against the very small risk of patient infection. The risk of police encountering an infected syringe is extremely remote. Guns and knives are a far more significant risk.<sup>5</sup> The description of the boat people as "pests" had uncomfortable associations with vermin and disease and the way Chinese arrivals were described a hundred years ago. These were not public health problems, in the sense that they posed a significant health risk to the Australian community, though they were presented as public health problems. They were, more significantly, issues about outsiders and the threat of contamination. The fear of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Advertiser, 27 January, 1992; 1 This decision came in the wake of an intense period of media generated concern. See Advertiser, 22 January; 1, 23 January; 3 and 24 January; 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Advertiser, 25 January, 1992; 1. 27 January, 1992; 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The South Australian Police Commissioner's Report for 1990-1991 listed 1342 armed robberies as being reported to police over the period. Of these, 10 (0.7%) involved a syringe. Nevertheless, in the press report of this information, the South Australian Police Association singled out the syringes, describing them as "a bit of a worry". (*Advertiser*, 15 February, 1992; 8.) Syringes continued to receive prominent publicity: two weeks later, after an organised clean up of Adelaide which removed 60 tonnes of rubbish, the press focussed on the possible hazards of the 40 syringes found among this amount. *ABC News*, 1 March, 1992. See also *Advertiser*, 2 March, 1992; 8.

outsiders as dangerous and a threat remains an important part of contemporary views about public health.

This Chapter examines this theme of public health and outsiders in its current context through the focus of three contemporary social issues: Indochinese immigration; drugs; and AIDS. It contends that there are many similarities with the way these three areas have been viewed and characterised as public health problems in the late 20th century and the way issues involving minorities and outsiders, discussed in earlier chapters, were also seen and characterised as having public health significance.

The context in which public health is seen has changed over the past hundred years. In the late 19th century, the main public health issues were focused largely on the need for sanitation and controlling the waves of epidemic diseases. The Chinese as unwelcome outsiders were linked forcefully with these concerns. In the early 20th century, these issues were accompanied by the ideal of the virile nation and the need to protect the Anglo-Australian genetic stock from lesser races. This was reflected in the passage of legislation such as the Commonwealth *National Fitness Act* 1941 that, in the face of the potential menace from enemy outsiders, saw physical fitness as "a national question" and underpinned immigration controls that restricted the entry of the "less desirable" Southern and Eastern European immigrants.<sup>6</sup>

The late 20th century is also a significant period during which new themes about public health are developing, in both Australia and elsewhere. In particular, there has been a recognition amongst its practitioners of the need to define the interests of public health in more diverse and more sophisticated ways, recognising the role of many government agencies in determining the health status of their citizens. Public health it is said is not simply the business of health departments, but of the community and other governmental structures. The accepted meanings to phrases such as "intersectoral cooperation", "the new public health", "primary health care" and "healthy cities" emphasise

<sup>6</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 14 April, 1939; 13.

this role and are used in documents attempting to achieve better health for all Australians.<sup>7</sup> Important strategies in realising these goals have been the "empowering" of local residents and communities in ways that allow them to take responsibility for their collective health. These ideas have been entrenched in "right to know" legislation and in other administrative provisions in health legislation. The public health laws of both South Australia and Victoria contain such provisions.<sup>8</sup> The period between 1980 and 1992 also saw the extensive rewriting of public health legislation in almost every Australian jurisdiction. Laws, often dating from the turn of the century, were recast in ways that to some extent took account of the changed views of public health, that gave greater scope for community involvement and sought to be more than simply reactive to identified problems.<sup>9</sup>

The issues of concern to governments and public health practitioners have also changed from the earlier periods. In 1986, the *Better Health Commission* (a National Inquiry formed to report on major preventable health problems in Australia) identified cardiovascular disease, nutrition and injury as "priority areas" for better health. <sup>10</sup> They were the avoidable hazards of normalised behaviour, the risks of everyday lifestyles. They were not threats from the outside. However, two other issues have been important components of government policy making, though they were not part of the Commission's enquires. <sup>11</sup> AIDS and illicit drug use have been seen as significant public health issues, the subject of other governmental Inquiries and extensive legislative and policy review. Both areas have attracted more governmental funding than the broader public health

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> See for example, World Health Organisation. Declaration of Alma Ata. USSR: WHO, 1978. World Health Organisation. Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion. Ottawa, Canada, 1986. World Health Organisation. Report of the Adelaide Conference: Healthy Public Policy (2nd International Conference on Health promotion). Canberra: WHO / Department of Community Services and Health, 1988. South Australia. Primary Health Care Policy Statement. Adelaide: South Australian Health Commission, 1989.

<sup>8</sup> Health (General Amendment) Act 1988 (Vic). Public and Environmental Health Act, 1987 (SA).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Ibid; sections 5c (Vic) and 44 (SA).

 $<sup>^{10}</sup>$  Australia, National Better Health Commission. *Looking Forward to better Health* (Vol 1). Canberra: AGPS, 1986; 110.

<sup>11</sup> It is understood that this was because the Commission took the view that these issues were part of other governmental areas of review.

inquiries. While they presented fertile opportunities to focus on the traditional fear of the outsider as a public health threat (and this has often been a feature of the general public debate in this area) some reviews and critics of public policy about AIDS and illicit drug use have demonstrated an awareness of the way in which public health policies have focused on marginalised groups. For example, in 1987, John Cornwall, the South Australian Minister of Health, when introducing new public health controls for infectious disease said:

Throughout history, epidemic diseases have unfortunately brought with them a social aspect that has resulted in discrimination, victim blaming and outright oppression. In medieval Europe, people were persecuted because of their perceived associations with the Black Death. The moral outrage in some quarters against victims of the AIDS virus suggests that this phenomenon is still with us.

A responsible Government is obliged to ensure that it achieves an appropriate balance between ensuring that the community at large is protected from the spread of disease whilst ensuring that those with the disease are not persecuted or subject to repressive controls.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, there is another important issue that has affected public health responses to outsiders in the late 20th century. With perhaps the one exception (AIDS) the public fear of disease is less in the late 20th century than in the 19th century. Public confidence in the success of immunisation programmes and the ability of medical science to combat disease has lessened its potential to threaten. The view that outsiders introduce life threatening diseases has less impact now than it had 100 years ago. As the analysis of the "boat people" (the Indochinese refugees) suggests, outsiders can still be pictured as threatening to the Australian community but, the strength of the view that they are dirty and diseased appears to have been diminished by this confidence in medical progress.<sup>13</sup> By

<sup>12</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates 11 March, 1987; 3312. This historical awareness was demonstrated by bodies advising Australian Governments on the issue of AIDS legislation. See Intergovernmental Committee on AIDS, Legal Working Party. Legislative Approaches to Public Health Control of HIV Infection. Canberra: Dept of Community Services and Health, 1991; 15.

<sup>13</sup> This confidence may be misplaced and often, it wrongly attributes new medical technology and interventions with these improvements, further, it fails to take account of developing burdens of illness, the product of improved lifestyles. However, it does reflect the fact that mortality rates for traditional killers had reduced markedly in Australia and Britain over the 100 years to 1980. See McKeown T. The Role of Medicine. Oxford: Blackwell, 1979. Powles J. On the Limitations of Modern Medicine, 1973. Sci Med and Man, 1: 1-30.

comparison, AIDS (for which there is at this time no cure) and illicit drugs have remained central threats in the Australian public's consciousness.

# 2 WHITE AUSTRALIA AND THE "BOAT PEOPLE"

As a wholesale exclusion of Asians, the White Australia Policy ended in 1966, when the Liberal Government announced that persons with qualification "positively useful to Australia" would be considered as immigrants. This would be subject to their "suitability as settlers" and their ability to "integrate readily" into the Australian community.<sup>14</sup>

The end of the White Australia Policy and Australia's involvement in the Indochinese war as an ally of the subsequently defeated Government of South Vietnam emphasised the significance of Asia in Australian life. These two events came together when Australia became the refuge for many persons fleeing the aftermath of the Vietnam war. As a result, the last 15 years has seen distinct changes to entry patterns to Australia. For the first time since the 19th century, significant numbers of Asians arrived here. Many of these came as refugees under resettlement programmes. Others arrived at Northern Australia in small boats having sailed them directly from Indochina.

However, Asian immigrants remain a very small part of the Australian population overall and Indochinese born Australians represent less than 1% of the population and were never more than a significant minority of the total number of new settlers arriving during this period. Yet, their presence has received considerable publicity. Their visibility as non-Europeans, the sometimes spectacular manner of their arrival in small boats, their status as refugees and the economic downturns of the late 20th century has

<sup>14</sup> Palfreeman A C. The Administration of the White Australia Policy. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1967; 163. (text of Sir Hubert Opperman's speech to Parliament, 9 March, 1966.)

<sup>15</sup> At its highest between 1972 - 1984, the total Asian settler intake was never higher than 31% of the total annual intake. - Collins J. Why Blainey is Wrong, *Australian Society*, September 1984: 11-13; 13.

made the issue of Asian immigration prominent. It has promoted controversy and at least some degree of misgiving in the Australian community. Opposition was most obviously highlighted in the "Asian Immigration" debate sparked by the prominent Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey in March 1984. However, public expressions of concern about a permanent Asian presence in Australia preceded Blainey. In particular, the period between 1977 and 1978 provided Australians with the most graphic and memorable instances of Asian immigration. It saw small boats crammed with Vietnamese refugees, the "boat people", whose arrival along the Northern coastline was seemingly a daily event. The community's response to these events (as measured by the press reports and by surveys of public opinion) suggests significant reservations existed at that time about these new arrivals. 17

The Indochinese were a unique group of immigrants. Firstly, prominent publicity was directed to one particular group, the "boat people." The popular response to Indochinese immigration often focused on this relatively small group of arrivals, as though they symbolised all Indochinese arrivals. It was this group that was highlighted as a particular cause for concern. Their direct form of entry, avoiding the official channels, prompted the view that they were "queue jumpers." More particularly, the method of their arrival (independent of government control) and the fact that on occasions they entered Darwin harbour unnoticed emphasised starkly the vulnerability of the coastline. What the "boat people" represented was a loss of control over who could arrive in Australia. They gave substance to the fear of invasion and, by implication, raised the whole issue of Asian immigration. After nearly a century, the "Yellow Peril" had reappeared in a particularly forceful way.

<sup>16</sup> See Blainey G. All for Australia. Sydney: Methuen Haynes, 1984 and also The Appendix in Markus A and Ricklefs M C. Surrender Australia? Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1985.

<sup>17</sup> See the surveys cited in this Chapter (below).

<sup>18</sup> Generally, the vessels landed in Australia because they had been denied landfall in countries closer to Vietnam, and thus also denied a chance to join the queue of hopeful applicants seeking entry to Australia in those countries.

<sup>19</sup> See Grant B. The Boat People. Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1979.

This part of the Chapter examines the response to the Indochinese arrivals from the late 1970s and the extent to which public health concerns were a part of that response. It argues that there are both similarities and differences when compared with the way that the Chinese were seen a century before and that, within this general framework, the Indochinese experience of the last quarter of the 20th century provides insights into the continuing capacity of public health issues to give substance to the idea of the outsider as a threat.

There were substantial differences between the Indochinese arrivals, even in the case of the "boat people", and the Chinese arrivals of the 19th century. This was a different kind of "invasion": the widespread and intense opposition that characterised the Chinese presence in Australia did not greet the Indochinese arrivals. Since most of the Asian immigrants, and virtually all the "boat people", were refugees from the Communist governments of Indochina (particularly Vietnam), this provided what would otherwise have been unlikely allies to their cause including the RSL. However, this fact heightened the antipathy of some representatives of the labour movement. Adding to their traditional fear of immigrants as a source of cheap competitive labour, they painted them as parasites and opportunists unwilling to help reconstruct a new socialist Vietnam. <sup>20</sup>

The "boat people" were at most 4% of the Australian intake of Indochinese immigrants. <sup>21</sup> Even during the peak period for their arriving (1977-1978) they were less than 20% of the total Vietnamese refugees accepted by Australia in that year. <sup>22</sup> However, they were well publicised immigrants, particularly between May 1977 to May 1978, when 28 separate boats arrived carrying over 1000 people. Generally, these boats were very small and carried less than 50 people. The largest landed 181 refugees. <sup>23</sup> In November

<sup>20</sup> At least in the first instance, see Viviani N. The Long Journey. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1984; 71, 75, 77

<sup>21</sup> Lewins F and Ly J. The First Wave. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1985; 26.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid; 26, Table 2.1.

<sup>23</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 9 May, 1978; 2096.

1977, 11 boats, taking advantage of calm seas, were able to reach Australia. On one occasion during that month, 6 boats arrived over 2 days.

The reactions in Australia to the events of this November form an important part of the material discussed in this Part of the Chapter. The concerns generated by the prospect of what the *Australian* newspaper called a "Viet Armada" resonated with the traditional fears of invasion, disease, crime and economic threat.<sup>24</sup> With this came the concern, reported by the *Australian*, that the Communist Chinese government was sending "tens of thousands of its own people" disguised as Vietnamese refugees (presumably for the purpose of invading Australia by stealth).<sup>25</sup> However, the 500 boats that the *Age* predicted may be heading for the coast never materialised; Australia was not swamped by a sudden influx of "boat people."<sup>26</sup>

## Disease And Ill Health<sup>27</sup>

The idea that Indochinese refugees introduced disease into Australia was used as part of the arguments against them by those who objected to their arrival. Like the Chinese and the Southern Europeans before them, the arguments focused on the fear of exotic disease and, also, about their hygiene practices. To some extent, this was an easy charge to make. By Australian standards, the health status of the Indochinese refugees was and remains poor in a number of respects. In 1987, the Indochinese prevalence rate for tuberculosis was 220 times that of the general population. Other diseases, including

<sup>24</sup> The Australian, 25 November, 1977; 1. The idea that the refugees were "invaders" was often expressed by the press; it commonly reported the arrival of the "boat people" in critical terms, reflecting a strong sense of vulnerability and a concern that the Northern coasts could be so easily breached. In the Federal Parliament, the refugees were said to be "invading our shoreline". For one Queensland, Federal Member, (R A Braithwaite of the National Party) it was the beginnings of a "flood". Once "a foot is placed on Australian soil it is difficult to have it removed" and the refugees would tell their friends of their good fortune "Good news travels fast, particularly in South East Asia." Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 11 May, 1978; 2233-2234. See also, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 30 May, 1978; 2784.

<sup>25</sup> Age, 30 November, 1977; 4. The Australian, 1 August, 1979; 5.

 $<sup>^{26}</sup>$   $_{Age}$ ,  $^{26}$  November,  $^{1977}$ ;  $^{3}$  - at that time, the paper predicted the arrival of 60 boats. Four days later, the prediction had increased to 500.

<sup>27</sup> Disease as used here is intended to mean infectious disease.

syphilis and hepatitis B, were also vastly in excess of the Australian average. Exotic diseases such as leprosy and malaria have also been detected among the arrivals.<sup>28</sup> Poor health can be expected among refugees from areas of conflict or poverty. Similar findings have occurred among other (Indochinese and non-Indochinese) refugee settlers in the United States and Canada.<sup>29</sup>

However, as with the Chinese in the 19th century, the issue of disease among arriving Indochinese became focused on them as Indochinese and as threats to the Australian community, rather than as people who had undergone exacting and debilitating experiences in their journeys to Australia and whose standard of living made them more susceptible to disease than Australians. For example, in 1979, the conservative Queensland Health Minister, Sir William Knox, suggested that the Indochinese arrivals posed a threat to the community. He claimed that:

Hundreds of Vietnamese refugees suffering from TB were being allowed into Australia ... many more were arriving illegally and posed a grave health risk to the nation.<sup>30</sup>

Knox's view received support from members of the labour movement and, as occurred in the 19th century, some of its prominent representatives took a high profile in their opposition to the Indochinese arrivals and couched this opposition in public health terms. One was Clyde Cameron, the Federal member for Hindmarsh (South Australia) and shadow Minister for Immigration. In 1977, he called for the "boat people" to be "made an example of", suggesting that a few of the boats should be refused entry.<sup>31</sup>

Cameron made a series of complaints against the refugees including the assertion that they were wealthy racketeers attracted to Australia by its lucrative social security benefits. He also set his opposition to them within a health context when, the next year,

<sup>28</sup> Goldstein G B et al. A Review of Refugee Medical Screening in NSW, 1987. *Med J Aust*, 146: 9-12; 10. See also the Commonwealth Dept of Health Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence Inquiry into the Indochinese Refugees Situation (Reference: Indochinese Refugee Resettlement), Official Hansard Transcript, Canberra: AGPS, 1981; 1104-1114.

<sup>29</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence Inquiry, op cit; 1114.

<sup>30</sup> The Australian, 27 August, 1979; 3.

<sup>31</sup> The Australian, 25 November, 1977; 1.

he claimed that some of the arrivals were "riddled with a form of venereal disease that cannot be cured." This infection, which he said was known as "Saigon Rose", was virulent, highly infectious and, he claimed, had led one victim to attempt suicide. 32 Venereologists did not take such a bleak view. This particular type of venereal infection was regarded by the Director of the South Australian Sexually Transmitted Diseases Service as both curable and, in all respects, an exaggeration of the true status of the infection. 33 However, the prospect of an incurable disease, linked by name to a particular group by virtue of its being the ex-home of many Indochinese refugees (as has often been the case with venereal infections), could only be calculated to cause considerable apprehension in the public mind about further immigration and to strengthen the case against it.

Fringe, but active, racist organisations such as *National Action* have also used assertions about disease and social habits in their campaigns against Asian immigration. In 1979 it was said by the Federal Minister for Immigration that: "the racist groups claim the refugees we are taking are carrying untreatable VD, that they breed like flies and that they bring in contagious diseases." These views seem to have been of limited impact; the publications of these groups were sporadic and not widely available. However, they did emphasise the potential disharmonies and anxieties in the Australian community and the targeting of Asian outsiders as public health threats.

There is no evidence that the health of the Australian community was put at risk by the new refugees. In its submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Health in 1981, the Commonwealth Department of Health, while acknowledging the

<sup>32</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 30 May, 1978; 2784.

<sup>33</sup> Personal communication with Dr Gavin Hart, Director, Sexually Transmitted Diseases Services, South Australian Health Commission.

<sup>34</sup> National Times, 5 July, 1985; 3 and 9. These complaints have not been well documented (personal communication, with a research officer with the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission) However, The Annual Reports of the Commissioner for Community Relations for the period 1977 to 1981 illustrate a number of cases of racism that make references to disease, including a widely publicised forged letter from a mythical government department instructing the recipient to billet an Asian family. The letter highlighted health issues by stressing that "Free immunisation will be given ... against typhus, cholera, tuberculosis and leprosy." (Commissioner for Community Relations, 5th Annual Report, Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, 207/1980; 10 & 105.)

poor health status of the refugees, concluded that the problems were likely to represent "a personal rather than a disease (ie community) problem."<sup>35</sup> This opinion was reflected in other contexts. With reference to the "boat people", the Northern Territory Government told the Committee that, while malaria and certain parasitic diseases were a concern to the Territory, the health problems of refugees could be managed provided that sufficient money was available.<sup>36</sup>

These views raised important issues about screening prior to and immediately after entry to Australia and the extent of compliance with long term medication and treatment. Where Government policy on immigration has reflected public health concerns it has taken this view; it has used health as grounds to regulate rather than to deny entry.<sup>37</sup>

In many respects, the issues about the "boat people" were similar with the way that the Chinese were seen in 19th century Australia. There was the same issue of the "unclean" arrivals whose threat was expressed in the idea that they introduced disease. They were also seen as a significant threat because they were uninvited. They were breaching the protective barriers of Australia, they were demonstrating the old fear of the vulnerability of the Northern coast line. For this group, complaints and questioning about their legitimacy and health status proved greater than any other arriving refugee group.

However, there was also a major difference between the Chinese in the 19th century and the Indochinese in the late 20th century. The menace of disease was less threatening. Recent generations of White Australians, accustomed to improved living conditions and access to immunisations and antibiotics, could consider themselves immune from the diseases of other populations. Even the allegedly incurable "Saigon Rose" failed to gain widespread publicity and the detailed exposition of alleged diseases

<sup>35</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence Inquiry, op cit; 1111.

<sup>36</sup> Northern Territory Government submission, ibid; 485. Other than concerns relating to the fumigation and disposal of the refugee vessels, the Northern Territory Parliamentarians did not appear to have been particularly concerned about the health problems of the "boat people". See the Northern Territory Parliamentary Record, 23 November, 1977; 226-227, and questions no.128 & 130, 24 November, 1977.

<sup>37</sup> Reid J C et al. Refugee Medical Screening in NSW, 1986. Comm H Stud, 10: 265-274.

became the catchery of fringe racist organisations rather than the subject of constant publicity. Simply, disease in the 1970s, for a population that had relegated epidemics to the history books, did not have the potential to provoke the same concern and intensity as it had in the late 19th century.

#### Crime and Vice

Public health was part of a wide field of objection to the Indochinese refugees. As with the Chinese and the Southern and Eastern Europeans before them, those asserting the undesirability of the Indochinese probed the moral and criminal contexts in order to build their cases. Sometimes, and to emphasise the problem more generally, they were then linked with disease, particularly in the context of the vulnerability of the Northern coast. Thus, in the opinion of the Australian, the arrival of the "boat people" exposed the community to the two traditional Asian menaces "drug running and disease." 38 To the Darwin labour leader of the day "Curly" Nixon the refugees were "Blackmarketeers, dope runners and brothel keepers."<sup>39</sup> In one case, where the securing of a boat involved the overpowering of its Vietnamese guards, the vessel was referred to by the National press as a "pirate ship" and, by implication, its cargo of refugees as pirates who had overpowered the soldiers with "drugs and alcohol."40

journey. Of one well publicised arrival at Darwin, the National press reported a health official's claim that:

<sup>38</sup> The Australian, 25 November, 1977; 2. Eleven years later, Geoffrey Blainey was to repeat the same sentiments, expressing concern that the Northern coastline (not far from "teeming nations") lay unprotected from "drug smugglers, illegal migrants or an enemy intruder" (The Weekend Australian, 25-26 June, 1988;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> The Australian, 25 November, 1977; 4.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 29 November, 1977; 1, 30 November, 1977; 3. The amounts of gold that some refugees apparently 40 Ibid, 29 November, 1977; 1, 30 November, 1977; 3. The amounts of gold that some refugees apparently brought with them became a common feature of the press reports, even to the extent that an Australian journalist noted the "gleaming gold teeth" of one refugee as he expressed his gratitude at arriving. (Ibid) A woman who had concealed a number of diamonds in her uterus also received widespread publicity. (Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (Senate), 7 April, 1978; 1091.) Implicit in these stories was the notion that, if they were other than destitute, the refugees could not be "genuine" and were not deserving of any charity. Few refugees brought large amounts of wealth with them. The 1976 Senate Enquiry into Australia and the Refugee Problem concluded that "the great majority of Indochinese arrived in Australia without money, clothes or personal belongings" and were attempting to recreate their lives from nothing. (Australia, Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence. Report, Australia and the Refugee Problem, Canberra: AGPS, 1976; 76.)

Their genuineness was further questioned by comments which belittled the hazards of their journey. Of one well publicised arrival at Darwin, the National press reported a health official's claim that:

Since their initial and well publicised arrivals, Indochinese refugees have lived with assertions that they were involved in crime and racketeering. In 1978, the Secretary of the Wollongong Trades and Labour Council, echoing Curly Nixon, described the boat people as "former pimps and brothel keepers." News reports continued to make links between Indochinese and the drug trade. In June 1988, following a television report on Asian crime syndicates, the *Weekend Australian* ran the following headline prominently on page 1. It would have been more appropriate in a *Fu Man Chu* novel than a leading national paper: "Curse of the Triad: How Vietnamese gangsters will pave the way." This was conjecture - about what *might* happen. Beyond claiming in the detail of the story that some members of Vietnamese street gangs (only a "tiny minority of the Australian-Vietnamese population" it admitted) were addicted to drugs and were peddling them at a street level, the article was largely speculating what could occur *if* the "Chinese Triads" began to infiltrate the Australian community.

Concerns about Indochinese crime have continued to be reported in the media. Significantly, it was often expressed in the context of *foreign organised* crime and here the Triads were given a high profile. For example, in one headline in 1991: "Triad gangs milk shop customers' credit cards."

The view that Asians are significantly involved in drugs and crime is not borne out by studies of crime in Australia. In the case of drugs: a study of offenders reported under the South Australian drug legislation found that offenders of Indochinese origin were under-represented.<sup>44</sup> Considering crime generally, in 1981, the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence received evidence suggesting that although

<sup>&</sup>quot;they (refugees) look as if they've been on an excursion cruise ... I've seen people in much worse condition after the Sydney to Hobart yacht race " The Australian, 25 November, 1977; 4. See also Grant, op cit. and Hawthorne L ed. Refugee. Melbourne: Oxford U P, 1982; 242-255.

<sup>41</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, (Senate) 8 June, 1978; 2553.

<sup>42</sup> The Weekend Australian, 25-26 June, 1988; 1. See also, SBS. Dateline (current affairs programme), 18 June, 1988.

<sup>43</sup> Advertiser, 28 March, 1991; 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Reynolds C S et al. *The South Australian Drug Assessment and Aid Panels: An Alternative to the Criminal Justice System.* Paper presented to the Window of Opportunity Conference, Adelaide, December, 1991.

there was some violence and crime among the newly arrived Indochinese in Australia, it was not widespread and the crimes were minor, often related to boredom and the problems of adjustment in a strange community.<sup>45</sup> Evidence was also presented suggesting that press reports over-emphasised the crimes of Indochinese persons. A witness from a New South Wales voluntary welfare organisation expressed this point: "I think that there is only a very small number of trouble makers, who unfortunately get all the publicity."<sup>46</sup>

The data show that the Indochinese community, once settled in Australia, is under-represented in the crime statistics. In a study of crime among Asians and Pacific Islanders in Brisbane (published in 1990), Rolade Berthier concluded: "overall, the nature and extent of Asians and Pacific Islanders involvement in illegal offences is lower than that of native-born Australians living in Brisbane." Berthier claimed that other studies done in North America have made similar findings.<sup>47</sup>

There is no convincing evidence to suggest that the Indochinese community was involved in crime. Yet, disproving the link should not overshadow the significance of its being made and, more particularly, the context in which it was made. Indochinese criminal activity was typically presented as more than just random criminal activity. Its association with Asian based, Triad gangs was a link with outside, organised criminal activity, often said to involve the drug trade. This context emphasised the threat that Indochinese arrivals could be said to present to the Australian community at large. It was a threat from the outside. It was also the same issue used against the Southern Europeans earlier this century with their alleged association with foreign criminal organisations.

These kinds of links were not limited to Australia: in other countries, the issue of crime has also been used to articulate the threat of Asian arrivals as outsiders. Vietnamese

<sup>45</sup> Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence Enquiry, 1981 (Evidence given by Ass. Gen. Manager, Commonwealth Accommodation and Catering Services), op cit; 623-624. Petty violence, attributed to boredom, was also reported in a US refugee camp set up to house Cuban refugees - Bienia R A et al. Cuban Refugee Health Care, 1982. American J. Public Health, 72 (June): 594-596; 596.

<sup>46</sup> Evidence given to Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence Enquiry, 1981 by Baptist Union of NSW, op cit; 474.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Berthier R. The Nature of Illegal Offences Committed by Asians and Pacific Islanders in Brisbane. Criminology Australia, October/November, 1990: 16-18.

guest workers caught up in the changes in Eastern Europe in 1990 and 1991 found themselves a largely unwelcome group. Their presence was met with the charge, made by locals, that they were "criminals, smugglers and prostitutes." 48

Public opinion and media views are useful windows through which the significance of public health and the Indochinese refugees can be seen. They provide a "popular" context through which this issue is presented and discussed in the community. The popular expressions in the late 19th century against the Chinese, the "monster demonstrations" and the almost unremitting campaigns in many of the prominent papers were not present in the late 20th century. The press coverage of the Indochinese presence has often been positive though sometimes inconsistent. For example, in the same edition of the newspaper that carried the "Curse of the Triad" story, there was another article, entitled "Trapped - with a tragic future", that described in very sympathetic tones the plight of homeless "boat people" in Hong Kong. Significantly, they were not arrivals on Australian shores. However, the first boat people were even supported by the press. In February 1977, the *Age* wrote of the "humanitarian debt" owed by Australia to the refugees and urged the Government to take more of them. Later articles were also very supportive of the refugees, highlighting the racism that they have encountered, their problems of resettlement and the distress of family separation. Si

Having analysed the contents of four major Australian papers, White and White illustrated a high level of articles favourable to the Indochinese. They concluded: "it is surprising to see that the Indochinese immigration was viewed so positively." Yet there were also press reports about Indochinese health that could only intensify local feeling

<sup>48</sup> Correspondents Report. ABC Radio National 9 June, 1991.

<sup>49</sup> The Weekend Australian, 25 June, 1988; 2.

<sup>50</sup> Age, 17 February 1977; 9.

<sup>51</sup> For example, see the Adelaide Sunday Mail, 4 December, 1977; 2.

<sup>52</sup> White NR and White PB. Immigrants and the Media, Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1983; Chapter 7 and 131.

against the refugees. Reid et al, cite two such cases that focused on public health issues.

One, in the *Sun Herald*, was a report about the new arrivals, commencing with the assertion that: "dozens of Indochinese refugees afflicted with serious diseases are being allowed into Sydney each week." The other, unnamed, report was said to relate to some cases of leprosy found among Indochinese students at a Sydney school. In these cases, the authors concluded that the press firstly generated, and then reported on the anxieties of the non-Indochinese readers of the articles.<sup>53</sup>

The traditional fear that Asian arrivals would take Australian jobs was a more prominent media assertion. For example, there was the banner headline of the Melbourne *Sunday Observer* - "Viets grab Vic jobs." While, in an article on the refugees in June 1978, the *National Times* commented on what it said was the prevalent attitude towards the Indochinese in Sydney's Western suburbs: that the Indochinese should be sent back "(because) we have a high enough unemployment rate as it is." 55

The reporting of critical anecdotal public opinion about the Indochinese arrivals emphasised differences in lifestyles, often expressed in a health context. For example, some White residents of Marrickville, a Sydney working class suburb with a high Indochinese population, expressed their dislike of their new neighbours in traditional public health ways. One said: "a lot of people don't like the Vietnamese because they are dirty ... Australians won't go into their shops." Another complained: "they stink. They live five families to a unit. They spit in the street." In a television programme, made in the late 1980s, about the Australian national identity, one person interviewed complained that local health officers were too lenient with Vietnamese shopkeepers and that this leniency contrasted with their vigorous inspections of her father's shop, when they were recently arrived from Greece. No longer the immediate outsider, the interviewee,

<sup>53</sup> Reid et al, op cit; 269.

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in the National Times, 18 August, 1979; 3.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 10 June, 1979; 3.

<sup>56</sup> Mellor B and Ricketson M. Suburbanasia. Time, 8 April, 1991: 18-26; 19.

<sup>57</sup> One Australia, ABC Television.

arguably, was locating herself into the Australian community and reaffirming her position there by identifying this latest round of arrivals as deficient in sanitary practices and, by implication, threatening outsiders.

These were the highly publicised views of some residents whose daily lives brought them into contact with Australia's Asian community. More general surveys of public opinion about the Indochinese in Australia suggest that both positive and negative attitudes were held.<sup>58</sup> There were traditional concerns about job loss and the "Asianisation" of the cities and a high reliance on the media in forming views. Concerns about employment were issues that were raised and reported, focusing on the idea of Asians taking jobs and undercutting labour rates.<sup>59</sup> However, the surveys suggest no evidence that the particular issues of refugee disease and crime were pre-occupying general public opinion.

<sup>58</sup> An early survey, conducted in Victoria in 1978, concluded bluntly that almost half (49%) of persons sampled were either conscious or unconscious "bigots", while a further 29% "steered a middle path". (T Q Consultants. Attitudes of Victorians to Migrants, Melbourne: 1978, cited in D.I.E.A. report -see below).

In 1980, as part of a broad survey of attitudes towards refugees, MSJ Keys Young Planners conducted a survey in Western Sydney. The report concluded that 20% of those sampled held a racist position towards the Indochinese, while the majority were ambivalent and, while acknowledging humanitarian obligations, were also concerned about job competition. A further conclusion was that persons who were not in regular contact with the Indochinese were likely to hold the most stereotyped views about them, being most reliant on the media and other sources of information likely to simplify and generalise the issues. (MSJ Keys Young Planners, Attitudes towards Refugees and Migrants in Host Communities in Sydney and Melbourne, 1980, summarised in Evidence to Senate Standing Committee, 1981, op cit; 1238-1242.

A survey, conducted in June 1986, by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs measured attitudes towards established Indochinese born residents in Adelaide and Sydney. The findings suggested a generally positive attitude among Australians towards these residents and concluded that "Asian migrants were acquiring the status of good neighbours." The one area of concern expressed by respondents in this study related to increased Asian immigration. (Australia, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs.

Migrant Attitudes Survey, Canberra: AGPS, 1986; 4 (Vol 1).

In an attempt to identify where racial fears sit in the list of issues that worry the Australian community, it is interesting to consider an ANOP poll conducted in 3 Capital cities in 1981. This gave respondents the opportunity to express the issues of greatest concern to them. Unemployment was the most common response (33%) followed by immigration and racial tension (12%). (Courier Mail (Brisbane), 20 November, 1984; 12.)

<sup>59</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 26 July, 1977; 127.

In conclusion: the response to the Indochinese in the last quarter of the 20th century has many similarities to the response to the Chinese a hundred years before. Most significantly, both groups were potentially seen as "invaders." In particular the "boat people", that most highly publicised group of refugees, demonstrated the vulnerability of the coastline. This was a graphic embodiment of the historic fear - the "Yellow peril" - and the "Asianisation" of Australia. It was a modern variation of the Chinamen arriving at Port Darwin in 1888 or jog trotting through the Western District towards the diggings.

Like the Chinese, the Indochinese arrivals were greeted with some measure of resentment and complaint. Some of this received prominent publicity. Geoffrey Blainey in particular played a prominent part in articulating what he said was the expressions of resentment and apprehension felt by ordinary (White) Australians in response to Asian immigration. While these concerns were widely aired so were those of persons who opposed his view. Rejoinders to Blainey drew this debate into the broader context that saw the Indochinese arrivals as the latest in a long history of arriving. For some of Blainey's critics, the responses to the Chinese in the 19th century contained important lessons 100 years later.<sup>60</sup>

Yet, the fear of the Asian arrivals of the late 20th century seemed attenuated when compared with the earlier experience. There were no monster demonstrations, no restrictive legislation, the acts of violence were sporadic and associated with fringe groups and the media did not present as the bitter and remorseless antagonists of the Asian population. While crime remained a prominent issue, the public health context through which anti-Asian sentiments were expressed lacked the intensity of the 1880s.

Considering public health: there were similarities in the way both the Chinese and the Indochinese were presented as a threat to the Australian community. The public health issues associated with the Chinese in the 19th century - disease, dirt and smell - can all be identified in contemporary anti-Indochinese sentiment. They remained an expression of

<sup>60</sup> See generally Markus A and Ricklefs M C. Surrender Australia? Essays in the Study and Uses of History. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1985.

the threat that could be introduced by these uninvited strangers and, on occasions, traditional anxieties resurfaced. The cases of leprosy, reports of which were said by Reid et al to have provoked its traditional horror, and "Saigon Rose", the allegedly incurable venereal disease, were two examples of this. However, these were exceptions and they cannot compare with the constant linking of the Chinese arrivals with every disease that seemed handy and that was calculated to provoke fear in the minds of 19th century Australians.

Public health thus contributed its traditional core of issues that portrayed the Indochinese as outsiders, an alien threat and as an anomaly in Australia. However, it adopted a relatively subdued place in the wider tapestry of anti-Indochinese feeling. It was not the specific health fears that occupied a central position rather, it was the "sense of difference", expressed by habits and customs such as smells and spitting or the more general ideas, such as the anxieties which some white Australians aired about the changing faces of the inner suburbs. To some extent these fears were health related and they focused on "pollution", they were used to demonstrate the essential difference between "them" and "us", which was such a core issue in the anti-Chinese campaigns of a century before. Blainey, claiming to dissect those concerns, concluded that they stemmed in part from a sense of difference in manners and lifestyles, such as cooking smells and spitting in public.<sup>61</sup> Public health was part of this core, it elicited differences. However, it was not the central issue that it was in the anti-Chinese campaigns of the 19th century.

A prominent explanation for this must relate to a change in the nature of public health problems which made the late 1970s and the early 1980s so different from the previous century. Disease and epidemics as threats from the outside were no longer a central issue of concern, they had lost their power to galvanise and threaten the Australian community. Smallpox, leprosy and the plague were historical phenomena rather then real threats. AIDS did not present as an issue in Australia until 1982 to 1983 and while it has been characterised as a disease of outsiders, the initial images of AIDS as an "American

<sup>61</sup> Blainey, op cit; 132.

Gay disease" directed fears elsewhere. For the Australian community in the late 1970s, largely free of serious epidemic diseases and generally confident in the powers of medical science, disease had lost its potential to horrify and the central health threat presented by outsiders had gone. However, health issues were raised and remained significant ways of emphasising differences in habits and lifestyles and thus remained a part, albeit not a central part, of the complaints about the Indochinese arrivals.

# 3 "THE MENACE OF DRUGS" - DRUG POLICY SINCE 1965

The 10 years between 1965 and 1975 saw significant social uproar in Australia and considerable social change, seen by many as confusing and anxiety provoking; perhaps encapsulated in the popular Bob Dylan lyric of the time "there's something going on, but you don't know what it is, do you Mr Jones?" A central issue was the opposition to Australian and United States involvement in the Vietnam war. This led to a widespread and prolonged campaign of highly visible activities such as demonstrations and "sit ins", a process which the historian Ian Turner, among others, saw as having the effect of operating beyond its specific context and transforming political values. His description of the Melbourne Moratorium (a protest of some 75,000 people against the Vietnam War) pictures an effervescent period, a *counter culture* replacing the order of the established culture that was waging the conflict. Alternative values and symbols which focused on communal living and altered styles of dress were ostentatiously adopted by many young people and widely commented upon in the media. Closely associated with these changes

<sup>62</sup> Turner I. The Vietnam Moratorium, 1970. Meanjin, 29: 243-244. York B. Police, Students and Dissent: Melbourne, 1966-1972, 1984. J of Aust Studies, 14: 58-77. However, as Geoffrey Bolton pointed out, there were many Australians who supported the war and the demonstrators remained a significant and very visible minority of the population. Bolton G. The Oxford History of Australia, Vol 5: 1942-1988. Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1990; chapter 7, esp 173.

was drug use (generally cannabis and to a lesser extent, the hallucinogen LSD) which was seen by many as the vehicle through which much, perhaps all, of this process was occurring. Both these drugs were publicised widely as mediums through which other realities might be discovered and explored. This gave them a higher status among users than the more traditional recreational drugs such as alcohol.

Within this process, certain institutions were seen as particular foci of threatening change. Universities were accused of threatening established values. It was claimed that their students were vulnerable to radical social theories, often said to be the work of an "undesirable minority" influenced by "outside sources." These concerns were more than a traditional blast at student radicalism. It was feared by some that students, influenced by the writings of a variety of overseas thinkers, as diverse as the European theorist Herbert Marcuse and the United States student activist Jerry Rubin, were working for "the total destruction of Australian society." In this thinking, communists and drug takers were drawn together as seemingly natural bed fellows. For example, one New South Wales backbencher claimed that "highly skilled academics" were manufacturing hallucinogenic drugs. In this thinking, the "hallowed ground" of the University had been polluted; the enemy was within. It was in this context of change and threat that the drug laws - in the case of most States, enactments that had remained dormant for decades - were amended and strengthened in response to what was seen to be the menace of the time.

This Part of the Chapter considers the way in which Australian Parliamentary representatives responded to the believed threats of this period and the threat of drugs in particular. It illustrates how the drug laws of the Australian States over this period were strengthened considerably and that this process has continued into the 1990s. Most significantly, it illustrates how these laws were intended as ways of protecting the community from the believed threats of outsiders.

<sup>63</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 24 June, 1969; 179. 23 July, 1968; 160,161. Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 29 March, 1966; 4660; 7 May, 1969; 4695. New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 28 September, 1967; 1770, 11 March, 1970; 4136; 2 September, 1970; 5498, 15 September, 1970; 5830-5855.

Since 1965, narcotic drugs, amphetamines and, to a lesser extent, cannabis have been the subject of an increasingly complicated and detailed legislative regime, including widespread prohibitions on their possession and severe, almost unprecedented, penalties including mandatory imprisonment, and even life imprisonment, on persons selling or supplying them.<sup>64</sup> The remarkable thing about this legislative process is the broad bipartisan support it has received: only when legislation was suspected of being weakened, as occurred in South Australia with the decriminalisation of cannabis in 1986, was that support lost.

In many ways the politicians' views and their support for tougher laws were reflecting community opinion. A survey done on behalf of the Commonwealth Government in 1985 suggested that the majority of Australians felt bewildered by what they took to be the drug problem. They claimed to lack knowledge about drugs and felt that the Government should be doing more about drug treatment and drug education.

After unemployment; drugs were seen as the most significant social problem in Australia. For persons over 40, it was the most important problem. However, these concerns were very specific; they related to a range of substances - heroin and other narcotics, cannabis, cocaine and amphetamines - drugs which have been made the subject of the criminal law in Australia and in many other countries. They were not concerns about alcohol and tobacco, the two most widely used drugs in Australia. For most Australians, the "drug problem" has a very specific and directed meaning.

To the extent that this concern was based on the public health problems posed to the Australian community by drug use it was hugely misplaced. Considering mortality as one marker of the size of a public health problem: data gathered by the Commonwealth Department of Health in 1989 demonstrated that 97% of drug related deaths were attributable to alcohol and tobacco. Only 1% of drug related deaths were caused by the

<sup>64</sup> The Queensland *Drugs Misuse Act* 1986 represented the "high water mark" of criminal sanctions on illegal drugs. The supply of large quantities of these substances was punished by term of imprisonment for life which could not be varied or reduced by the court whatever the circumstances of the case. (section 6.)

<sup>65</sup> Reark Research. Social Issues in Australia, 1986. See also McAllister I et al. Drugs in Australian Society. Melbourne: Longman, Cheshire, 1991; chapter 9, Public Opinion and Drug Use.

illegal group of substances such as heroin and other narcotics and here, mortality is often associated not with the drug but with its cloak of illegality that leads to uncertain quality and deaths through accidental or deliberate overdosing. 66 On these data, Australians are clearly concerned about the wrong drugs. Furthermore, since the official purpose of Australian drug policy is to protect the public's health (an assumption based on the fact that drug control policy at State and Federal level generally comes within the Ministers of Health portfolio) and that this protection has been expressed in legislation, then Governments in Australia have simply been regulating the wrong drugs.

There is another way of looking at the "drug problem." As Chapter 7 argued, the early 20th century concern about drugs and the resulting laws focused on smoking opium rather than on the potentially more dangerous opiated medicines. Since 1965, Australian law has also focused selectively on certain drugs - heroin, cannabis, LSD etc - and has only recently imposed controls over tobacco marketing and has few controls designed to restrict the sale and marketing of alcohol.<sup>67</sup> The early opium laws were argued to be laws about outsiders, the Chinese suppliers and users, rather than laws about the drug. This theme continues: current drug laws have also been powerfully influenced by the idea of the "outsider" and the threat that they pose to the community, its youth and its values.

Parliamentary debates are used extensively in the following discussion. While the focus is mainly on South Australia and, to a lesser extent, Victoria and New South Wales, similar views were being expressed in all State Parliaments over the period and the process of tightening the laws and increasing the penalties was remarkably similar in all States. The many politicians who publicly supported these changes claimed that drugs were part of a deep social problem, finding evidence for their view in newspaper accounts

Australia, Department of Community Services and Health. Statistics on Drug Use in Australia, 1989 Canberra: Canberra: AGPS, 1990; 35-54. Mortality is the most serious measure of harm. To this figure should be added the very large burden of morbidity, from smoking and alcohol related diseases and also from the injuries arising out of drink driving and other alcohol related incidents.

<sup>67</sup> Four Australian States, the Australian Capital Territory and the Commonwealth Government have laws in place that impose some restrictions on the marketing of tobacco products. Most are the product of the late 1980s or 1990s; they are far from comprehensive and contain a number of exemptions. See for example the *Tobacco Act* 1987 (Victoria); *Tobacco Products Control Act*, 1988 (South Australia).

of the disturbing social changes of the period and reports of constituent's concerns about the issue. Australian politicians were both reporters of social anxieties and the creators of ostensible "solutions" to those anxieties. As such they played a pivotal role in heightening and directing community concern about these issues and the parliamentary debates are presented here as a relatively clear and easily available window into the Country's anxieties, not only about drugs but also about the other things occurring in Australia at the time.

In 1967, the South Australian Government amended its Police Offences legislation to prohibit the sale, supply, manufacture or use of hallucinogenic drug lysergic acid (LSD). This control came in the wake of overseas publicity concerning its use among young people though, in the relative backwater of South Australia, it is not clear that there was ever a significant use of the drug. Data from the State Drug and Alcohol Services Council indicate that for the financial year 1968/1969, 39 people were treated for all forms of drug addiction (other than alcohol or tobacco) and that 54 people sought general information relating to drugs and alcohol.<sup>68</sup> On these data, there was no epidemic. However, the reports of overseas use were significant because it was in the context of this imagined outside menace that the issue was debated.

From the first Bill, the "outsider" theme was prominent. Members taking part in this debate made frequent reference to the threat to South Australians from the regions beyond its borders and the threat to the young in particular. The Hon G C Pearson (representing the State's most remote rural electorate) supported urgent action in this matter, citing the effects that the drugs were having on overseas youth. <sup>69</sup> However, to the extent that the legislation was a response to the Government's concern about drug use by

<sup>68</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 19 November, 1969; 3116.

<sup>69</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 31 October, 1967; 3224.

young people, its concern was not uniform; the legal age for drinking alcohol was reduced in 1968 and reduced again in 1971.<sup>70</sup>

The association with other countries as the source of supply was also made in the parliamentary debates. In 1970, the places of origin of illicit drugs were linked with the traditional *betes noires* of Australians looking beyond their shorelines. As a source of cannabis and hashish, there was said to be the Middle East connection, from where the "long journey" to Australia began. Nearer to home, there was Mainland China, said to be a source of the opium poppy, whose product - heroin - was also said to be finding its way to Australian homes, adding a public health insult to the ideological injury of communism.<sup>71</sup> There was no evidence for this "communist connection", although assertions that it existed were a feature of cold war politics. The historian Alfred McCoy attributes the idea to the anti-communist sentiments of prominent United States law enforcers such as Harry Anslinger, of whom one of his Southeast Asian drug enforcement agents said in 1971.

Everytime Anslinger spoke anywhere he always said the same thing - "The Chicoms are flooding the world with dope to corrupt the youth of America." ... There was no evidence for Anslinger's accusations, but that never stopped him<sup>72</sup>

Like the objections to Italian immigration to Australia in the 1920s and 1930s, organised crime was presented as an issue. The Mafia was singled out as presenting a danger to Australians through its involvement in the drug trade in the 1970s. Publicity was also given to the Triads, claimed to be "a Chinese equivalent of the Mafia." It was said that these groups were responsible for the importing of drugs into Australia. 73 Sometimes the outsiders that posed a threat to South Australian youth came from other States. Typically, these were drug pedlars but included in this threat was a New South

<sup>70</sup> Licensing Act, 1968. Age of Majority (Reduction) Act, 1970-1971; part XXII.

<sup>71</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 11 November, 1970; 2549 and 31 October, 1967; 3228.

<sup>72</sup> McCoy A W. The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia. New York: Harper, 1972; 147.

<sup>73</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 11 November, 1970; 2459.

Wales university paper that was said to have published the formula for making LSD.<sup>74</sup> However, parliamentarians from that State chose to look overseas for the source of their threat.<sup>75</sup>

The threat from the outside was also expressed vividly for many Australians in the exotic names given to cannabis - *Budha Sticks*, *Lebanese Lightning* or *Acapulco Gold* - despite the fact that most of the drug was cultivated and prepared locally. As recently as 1986, South Australians were warned of the threat of "super dope" (this was thought to be a more potent variety of cannabis) which, it was said, would come to the State. There was never any evidence that super dope did arrive.

Significantly, the outside threat was often presented as broader than just that of the drug dealer; drugs were set into a tapestry of wider change and questioning of the "system" that, collectively, seemed threatening to many parliamentarians. Through this, cult figures from the period, such as the singers Mick Jagger and Marianne Faithful and the model "Twiggy", found their way into the debates about the drug laws as though they were evidence of this broader outside influence of change.<sup>78</sup>

If the threat was said to come from the outside, the objects of concern were young people, a group that symbolise the believed vulnerability of the community. They became the objects that the laws were intended to protect and the corrupting and degrading effects of drugs on their young victims were described graphically, in terms not unlike earlier references to the Chinese opium dens. In 1986, a Queensland Member of Parliament drew

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 31 October, 1967; 3228. 2 November, 1967; 3338. 11 November, 1970; 2549.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 14 September, 1965; 571, 29 March, 1965; 4655, 4660, 1 September, 1970; 5445, 19 September, 1967; 1261.

<sup>76</sup> Very little cannabis consumed in Australia is imported. Usually, it is domestically grown, though sometimes prepared and packaged in such a way as to look imported. (Personal communication - South Australian Police Drug Squad.)

<sup>77</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 28 October, 1986; 1553, Adelaide News, 28 October, 1986; 25. Personal communication with Mr Chris Pearman, Analyst, South Australian Department of Forensic Science and Sgt Jim McDonald, South Australian Police Department, 1990.

<sup>78</sup> New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 31 August, 1967; 1004, 19 September, 1967; 1265, 1 September, 1970; 5424, 2 September, 1970; 5483, 5484, 16 September, 1970; 5913.

on the traditional opium den theme of the degradation of young girls to justify his calls for higher penalties. He claimed:

I have seen a girl of nineteen years of age who obviously was formerly very attractive but who was so far stripped of pride in herself that ... her personal hygiene no longer mattered to her and there were cockroaches crawling through her hair.<sup>79</sup>

The, traditional, squalor and chaos of these place was also emphasised: describing a visit to one alleged dealer's "den" in Kings Cross, a New South Wales Parliamentarian claimed:

it was one of the filthiest, rottenest and most stinking hovels I have ever seen. ... I was sick when I came out of this pad. I vomited in the gutter after having been in this stinking rotten hole. ... Honourable members who have not seen these pads could have no conception of what goes on in them.<sup>80</sup>

The idea that children, and schoolchildren or children from "respectable homes" in particular, were the natural and expected victims of the drug dealer has been a consistent theme in the development of drug laws. In 1967, prohibitions on drugs were said to be necessary because youth was "an age of experimentation." Young people were also said to be the "unsuspecting" victims of the drug pedlars. For some, the fears of teenage violence and vandalism could be explained as the results of cannabis use. This concern has continued into the 1990s. In South Australia, the Minister of Health, when again strengthening the drug laws to increase penalties for persons convicted of being in possession of illicit drugs for the purposes of sale, justified the amendment by claiming

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 19 August, 1986; 363.

<sup>80</sup> New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 1 September, 1970; 5443.

<sup>81</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 31 October, 1967; 3224.

<sup>82</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 31 October, 1967; 3227.

<sup>83</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 11 November, 1970; 2551. See also New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 26 October, 1967; 2562, 31 October, 1967; 2643, 16 September, 1970; 5915 28 September, 1970; 1770.

that "young people today live in a world of uncertainty. Traditional values and extended family support systems have been shaken ... life's opportunities are uncertain.'84

Public concern about drug use by school children has been a particular issue of concern. This was illustrated in a highly publicised case involving the illegal expulsion of a student by his school principal for allegedly supplying cannabis at an Adelaide high school in 1991. The press reports of this event claimed that there was a popular "outcry" in favour of the principal. Despite acting contrary to Departmental policy (the boy could have been suspended but not expelled) the principal was cast by parents as something of a local hero. The *Advertiser* editorial explicitly justified the principal's action by distinguishing between the law of the "heart" and the law of procedures and guidelines, adding cannabis must remain "taboo" in the schools.<sup>85</sup>

Public anxieties about children and illegal drugs were so significant that they prompted quite unusual extensions of the drug laws. In the 1990 amendments to the South Australian drug laws, the Government created "drug free zones", or areas within 500 metres of a school. Its claimed object was to deal with the problems of drug trading to school children. Introducing the Bill, the Minister of Health said:

The Government will not tolerate people lurking in the vicinity of schools, seeking to recruit young people into drug use ... Children are any community's greatest resource. They must be protected from ... the many evils that are associated with drug use."<sup>86</sup>.

The "school zone" proposal made no sense in terms of public health need and it is difficult to find evidence that suggested children were particularly at risk from illicit drugs, either in the 1960s or in 1990. Surveys of drug use among school children done by the Drug and Alcohol Services Council had indicated that, beyond a small level of experimental

<sup>84</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 23 March, 1990; 788. This issue was also prominent in the justification for the extreme penalties in Queensland. (Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 19 August, 1986; 356, 392.)

<sup>85</sup> Advertiser, 11 April, 1991; 26.

<sup>86</sup> South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 22 March, 1990; 788, 789. These ideas built on the popular notion of the illicit drug dealer as outsider, "lurking" and dehumanised, notions expressed also in other States. (Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 29 March, 1966; 4657, New South Wales Parliamentary Debates 1 September, 1970; 5425, 5445.)

cannabis use, illegal drugs were virtually not an issue in South Australian schools.<sup>87</sup> By comparison, children have been very much at risk from both tobacco and alcohol yet, penalties for the sale of tobacco to children in particular remain insignificant and by comparison with the illicit drugs have been very poorly enforced.<sup>88</sup>

What is significant in this concern for children is not its health context but its social context. Firstly, the locating of the community's core in its youth was emphasised by the selective referencing to school children or children from "respectable families." The plight of the far more vulnerable, homeless, street children was not addressed at all in the first proposals for the legislation and then in a far less high profile way in the final Bill.<sup>89</sup> The symbolism of the legislation was quite explicit in its provisions. It involved the creation of the zone around the school and its students as "sacred", as an embodiment of worthwhile social values and the vulnerability of South Australian youth. The school and its students were to be protected by these special increased penalties from the threatening social outsider, the "profane" drug dealer. The amendment was responding to the powerful idea of threat from the outside. It was defining the "sacred" and the "profane" in accordance with the historical view of drug control that identified the threat as synonymous with the outsider. That this threat should largely be groundless did not diminish its power. The State Government did this not as a response to a problem but as a necessary populist gesture; necessary both to seek electoral support and also as an attempt to refute the charge, commonly made by conservative groups, that labour administrations are soft on crime and their policies contribute to the moral decay of the community. The Government knew that the community was anxious about illicit drugs and it built on this theme. As a populist gesture, the proposal extended and reinforced that anxiety in the

<sup>87</sup> South Australia, Drug and Alcohol Services Council. Survey of Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drug Use by South Australian Schoolchildren. Adelaide: DASC, 1987-1989.

<sup>88</sup> Hill D et al. Australian Patterns of Tobacco Smoking in 1989, 1991. *Med J Aust*, 154: 797-801. Penalties for sale to children throughout Australia are very minor. A typical example is the Tobacco Products Control Act, 1986 (South Australia). Section 11 of this Act imposes a maximum penalty of \$1,000 for persons in breach of the prohibition. In the first four years of operation of this Act there were two prosecutions. (Wakefield et al. Illegal Cigarette Sales to Children in South Australia, 1992. *Tobacco Control*, 1: 114-117.)

<sup>89</sup> Author's recollection as a policy adviser to the Minister of Health at the time.

place where it was greatest. It gave substance to the threat to respectable South Australian youth.90

In the case of the expelled schoolboy, the values that protected the school were more than just bureaucrat's rules and regulations. They were the collective values of the community whose interests were vested in the place. Within its specific context, this reference to a "higher" law (the law of the "heart" that transcended the law of procedures and guidelines) has similarities with Henry Parkes' illegal actions designed to restrict Chinese immigration in 1888.91 His was also a call to the "higher" law of preservation of the community and, if Parkes' references to the Chinese were translated into the particular context of cannabis in schools, the parents would recognise in the sentiment the call to protect the margins of their vulnerable school community from what the Advertiser referred to as the outside "demon" of drugs. More particularly, the idea that drugs in schools were "taboo" is significant. People who bring drugs into this zone have transgressed the boundary that separates the school from the "profane" aspects of the world beyond it. This is a form of ritual pollution. Within the zone, the illicit drug is "taboo", it contaminates the "sacred." If the substance in question had been the mainstream drug tobacco, rather than cannabis, expulsion would not have been an issue and the incident would have passed off as quite insignificant.

The fuss about drugs near schools extended to the more general idea that illicit drugs - the outside menace - were imperilling the community itself; that the laws were necessary to prevent moral decay. This has been a long-standing theme. In 1967, the New South Wales Labour opposition spokesman for drug policy supported increased penalties for the following reasons:

<sup>90</sup> At the time that the proposal was announced (September, 1989) the Labour Government was running up to an election. The proposal to amend the law was based on a model in New Jersey and a similar proposal from the New South Wales Labour Opposition. The argument that it was a pre-emptive exercise in the lead up to an election is strengthened by the fact that the announcement was made by the Premier's Office rather than the Minister of Health's and without any consultation with relevant health authorities. (Author's recollection.)

<sup>91</sup> Parkes H. Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History. London: Longmans Green and Co, 1892; 479.

[we] are fighting for the heritage of our country, because what is happening today with drugs and poisons has occurred in other countries - and they are second rate nations today, the land of hippies, the flower people and the drug addicts. We do not want these things to occur in Australia.<sup>92</sup>

This theme was repeated in other States as the final justification for these laws. During the debates on the Queensland legislation, a supporter of the increased penalties said:

It may well be that the combination of drug traffic and organised crime represents the most serious crime problem facing our nation today. Directly or indirectly it threatens each person and institution in this country. It threatens the fabric of society and the gown of public integrity.<sup>93</sup>

#### Conclusion

The reality of drug control policy in Australia is that over the past twenty five years, the least energy (both administratively and legislatively) has gone into the two drugs that cause the most health damage, both to the users themselves and, in the case of alcohol, often to third persons as well and with the greatest costs to the community. The most energy has gone into the drugs with the least history of harm. The public health problems of the various kinds of drug use in Australia has been eclipsed by the idea that the community was being threatened by certain drugs, those that, unlike alcohol and tobacco (used by approximately 60% and 30% of the community respectively), were not part of mainstream social use; that drugs such as cannabis and LSD were the currency of the social change occurring at the time; and that they were associated with outsiders, the things that lay beyond the Australian community in the late 1960s. The drug laws constructed the reality of the illicit drug dealer as a heavily penalised outcast, thus

<sup>92</sup> New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, 31 August, 1967; 1003. See also 28 September, 1967; 1770.

<sup>93</sup> Queensland Parliamentary Debates 19 August, 1986; 362 In the light of the findings of the *Fitzgerald* Inquiry (set up to consider cases of police corruption in the State) and the great public concern and anxiety that its findings of widespread corruption generated, it is apparent that it was, firstly the construction of illegal activities such as prostitution, drugs and gaming laws and then the police administration of those laws that came the closest to threatening the "gown of public integrity" See also South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 3 November, 1970; 2306.

protecting the centre, particularly its youth, from the corrupting influence of this now marginalised and shadowy figure. It located the boundary around the sacred, protecting it and positioning the dealer on the outside. In a Durkheimian sense, the exemplary punishment of the dealer reaffirmed the collective moral order of the centre. 94 By comparison, the use of alcohol and tobacco has always been well entrenched in Australian society; its manufacturers are of the centre, they are often prominent and seemingly benevolent corporate citizens.

The "demonising" of the illicit drug dealer provided a focus for communities to reinforce their own values in recent times of social change. However, the process has misdirected public health policy in the area of drugs. Government funding and policy formation had, until the late 1980s, been largely complacent about the need for alcohol and tobacco control. While the powerful lobbies for these two drugs made it more problematic for Government to control them, they were, more significantly, not seen by the community as part of the drug problem. The belated introduction of a comprehensive national drugs policy now does include alcohol and tobacco. However, the proposals in both areas are far from complete and in the case of alcohol are of questionable value in seriously reducing uptake and consumption. This distortion has had, and continues to have, significant public health consequences in terms of both the current and future deaths and costs attributable to drugs generally.

# 4 "NOBODY WANTS A WITCH HUNT BUT ..." AIDS AND PUBLIC

<sup>94</sup> Thompson K. Beliefs and Ideology, London: Ellis Horewood, Tavistock, 1986; 43.

<sup>95</sup> Australia. National Health Policy on Alcohol in Australia. Canberra: NCADA, 1990. Hawks D V. The Watering Down of Australia's Health Policy on Alcohol, 1990. Drug and Alcohol Review, 9: 91-95.

#### **HEALTH**

Nobody wants a witch-hunt but we have to accept that the people whose behaviour spreads AIDS are not just victims, they are a threat to the future generations (The chairman of the "Lower Murray Awareness Forum" - quoted in an Adelaide newspaper, 1988) <sup>96</sup>

In 1981, medical literature reported the occurrence of fatal conditions in young and otherwise healthy patients, all homosexual males, diagnosed as suffering from an acquired immune deficiency. As the cases increased, the first hints of the oncoming epidemic were apparent. For the initial reporting clinicians, the disease they labelled "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome" or AIDS98, presented an epidemiological "puzzle" and asked "tantalising" questions whose answers would "perhaps provide means to protect the persons most at risk" and would certainly extend their understanding of "host-parasite relations." This detached observation rapidly became overshadowed by an increasingly emotional debate that was most intense in the first four years of the disease. The debate focused predominantly on the sufferers of AIDS who were homosexuals and the threat that they were said to present to the wider community.

AIDS has been a central health issue in the 1980s and 1990s. It has had profound effects on the Australian community and upon the development of public health policy over this period. It is a disease through which social minorities have been stigmatised and labelled with as much vehemence as they were in earlier epidemics. While public health policy makers generally did not promote this process, (many argued against it) these issues have had substantial effects on public health administration in Australia. AIDS has also provided the impetus for the rewriting of much Australian public health legislation. The AIDS "White Paper" (a Federal Department of Health document that recommended

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> *Advertiser*, 9 February, 1988; 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup> Gottleib M S et al. "Pneumocystis Carinii" Pneumonia and Mucosal Candidiasis in Previously Healthy Homosexual Men, 1981. *New England J Med*, 305: 1425-1431.

 $<sup>^{98}</sup>$  AIDS is used here as a term that encompasses both asymptomatic infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and the various resulting diseases known collectively as AIDS.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> Durack D.T. Opportunistic Infections and Karposi's Sarcoma in Homosexual Men, 1981. *New England J Med*, 305: 1465-1467; 1467.

uniform national responses to the disease) led to the first detailed analysis of public health law in areas of infectious disease control in Australia since J H L Cumpston's, earlier this century. 100 This work has been done against an often hysterical backdrop of public vilification of sufferers, but also within a framework that, in many cases, showed itself to be informed by the knowledge of the historical context in which previous epidemics and episodes of victim blaming occurred. For example, a Government Discussion Paper that examined Australian public health legislation in response to AIDS accepted that "the potential for scapegoating and blaming unpopular minorities must be recognised as a part of the historical process of public health." 101

AIDS in Australia does not have expected mortality rates likely to make it the primary cause of premature mortality in the community. Yet, the disease has affected the public imagination to the extent that it has a central place in current Australian public health policy and practice. More particularly, its association with homosexuals and intravenous users of illicit drugs has fuelled the idea that AIDS is a disease of deviance.

The responses to AIDS have been shaped by this idea. Much of the publicity about the disease has been in association with the control of activity considered by many to be deviant. There have been occasional, but highly publicised, cases: prostitutes have been detained in the name of public health, or have been charged with endangering the lives of potential clients, while people with the disease have been accused of wilfully spreading it to others. Police and correctional services officers have donned extraordinary protective clothing when accompanying prisoners with the disease, emphasising quite unnecessarily the danger that the those with AIDS were said to present to the

<sup>100</sup> Australia. AIDS: A Time to Care, A Time to Act. Canberra: AGPS, 1988 and the Discussion Papers of the Legal Working Party of the Inter-governmental Committee on AIDS (cited variously in this Chapter.)

<sup>101</sup> Intergovernmental Committee on AIDS, Legal Working Party. Legislative Approaches to Public Health Control of HIV Infection. Canberra: Dept of Community Services and Health, 1991; Ch 2. See also, South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 11 March, 1987; 3312.

<sup>102</sup> By 30 June, 1992, the total cumulative deaths from AIDS in Australia amounted to 2,259. (National AIDS Register. *HIV Surveillance Report*) Deaths from tobacco are between 17,000 to 20,000 *per year*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 1 August, 1989; 1 and 3 August, 1989; 1. Age, 27 March, 1991; 24 and Canberra Times, 27 March, 1991; 15.

community.<sup>104</sup> Punitive legislation has been introduced in all Australian States as a result of fears about AIDS.

As a mysterious, fatal and incurable disease, AIDS had the potential to alarm. The fearful responses were, in part, a recognition of that fact. However, the social context of AIDS, the presumed characteristics of many of its victims, added another dimension to many of these responses. In particular these were informed by the idea that the person with AIDS was a threat since it was seen as an affliction of deviant people. Here, many views about AIDS (like the earlier views about leprosy) saw the disease as an outward sign, a badge that proclaimed its victim's deviance. In part, the public health laws about AIDS reinforced the view that persons with the disease could be a threat to the community, principally because they would seek to infect others. Many States highlighted and reinforced this view in their legislative programmes that dealt with AIDS.

However, not all people with AIDS contracted it through homosexual activity or drug use. Some received contaminated blood products. Significantly, this fact has emphasised the point made above. Infected blood recipients are generally described by media reports, and sometimes in prominent policy documents, as the "innocent" victims of AIDS. This reinforces the notion of the guilt of the "other"; it creates a dichotomy: those who are "innocent" and by implication - the word is never used directly - those who are "guilty." This distinction has been formalised in public policy to the extent that compensation and special financial help through trust funds is available only for the "innocent", the medically acquired category of victims. 106 By comparison, the presumed

<sup>104</sup> For example, see Brass A and Gold J. AIDS in Australia. Sydney: Bay Books, 1985; 107.

<sup>105</sup> The 1987 Statement of the Catholic Bishops of Australia on AIDS drew this distinction when it said: "by any criterion there are many innocent victims of the disease" (Australian Catholic Bishops. The AIDS Crisis. Sydney: St Pauls Pub, 1987 - pamphlet). In 1985, during debate on the South Australian Anatomy and Transplantation Bill, a Liberal member spoke of the need to protect the blood supply because of the "terrible prospect of an innocent person - perhaps a child-dying" (South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 14 May, 1985; 4206.) In 1991, a Sydney woman who contracted AIDS through artificial insemination (ie innocently) complained that when being treated she had to wait with addicts (ie the guilty victims) Advertiser, 19 March, 1991; 10. See also a report of the Mormon Church's view on AIDS, which divided its sufferers into "innocent" and "culpable" depending on the route of infection. (Age Extra, 7 March, 1992; 3.)

 $<sup>^{106}</sup>$  Much of this has been by way of out of court settlements relating to actions commenced against the Red Cross and hospitals. These were defendants with significant resources and the settlements were not directly about compensating the "innocent" but avoiding costly legal actions. However, the wide spread settlements for the "innocent" categories emphasised the distinction between this group and the "guilty". There was also

guilt of the homosexuals who contracted AIDS extended even to the idea of collective guilt, applying to all homosexuals. For example, when an infected blood donation led to the death of its recipients, the Anglican Dean of Sydney was reported as saying that "homosexuals have blood on their hands." From the newspaper report, the inference was that *all* homosexuals were involved. 107

This third study in contemporary public health policy considers the AIDS epidemic in Australia by bringing together a number of themes in the responses to the disease. These are: the idea that AIDS is a disease of outsiders; that these outsiders are threatening to the community and AIDS is an embodiment of that threat; and that the disease brought with it a wider social significance about moral failings and retribution. More generally, this discussion illustrates the importance of the social perspective in considering a modern epidemic. It illustrates that the power of diseases to threaten and alarm is significantly enhanced by its association with groups considered marginal and threatening. AIDS has been vested with most of its power to threaten because it has been characterised widely as a disease of deviant people. It is a public health expression of the threat that these people are taken to present to the Community.

AIDS has always been presented as a disease of the outside and the marginal. Soon after its initial reports, the disease prompted explanations that focused on the bizarre and exotic. Unrestrained sexual activity was given a prominent place in these explanations. Initially, the focus was on the use of "poppers" or amyl nitrites (volatile solvents believed to heighten sexual experience) by victims of the illness. Amyl nitrite was readily available and widely used at the time by homosexuals. The "poppers"

a trust fund, the Mark Fitzpatrick trust, established in Australia, whose objects were the assistance of the medically acquired cases of AIDS.

<sup>107</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 10 December, 1984; 9. This involved the death of 3 Queensland babies in late 1984. This incident is discussed below.

<sup>108</sup> Marmor M. et al. Risk Factors for Karposi's Sarcoma in Homosexual Men. *Lancet*. 15 May, 1982: 1083-1086.

explanation for the disease focused on AIDS as a side effect of a quest for intensified and "unnatural" sexual activity. Within this context, it was logical to conclude that the victims with their insatiable appetites brought the disease upon themselves. <sup>109</sup> It also placed the risk factor for AIDS firmly with the profligate minority who were assumed to use these drugs, implicitly suggesting that the vast majority of the community were protected from the fear of contagion.

Bizarre animal rituals allegedly occurring in Central Africa also served as explanations for the origins of AIDS. They were reported in both the scientific literature and the newspapers. An early (1983) report on the disease was published in the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* under the headline "Animal rituals 'origin of AIDS'. Disease spread by blood."<sup>110</sup> A similar report in the *Guardian Weekly* entitled "Black magic behind the spread of AIDS virus?" described the view of a Zaire doctor; that the disease was first introduced into humans by being transmitted from animals as part of a central African belief that the inoculation of monkey blood was a way of intensifying sexual activity. <sup>111</sup> These explanations, in the tradition of the "Dark Continent", conjured up ideas that followed Joseph Conrad's allegorical journey up the river Congo and into the "horrors" that lay within the heart of that "immense darkness." Such explanations could only cloak the disease with more mystery and fear. Its victims could be seen as ravenous participants in the horror and, deservedly, struck down by it. <sup>112</sup>

The idea that AIDS was a disease introduced by outsiders was also put about in the early descriptions. Some Americans believed that it had come to the Western hemisphere by communist Cuban troops returning from Africa. 113 By contrast, Altman claims that AIDS was under-reported and under-diagnosed in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

<sup>109</sup> Black D. The Plague Years: A Chronicle of AIDS, the Epidemic of our Times. London: Picador, 1986: 23.

<sup>110</sup> Daily Telegraph, 12 July, 1983.

<sup>111</sup> Guardian Weekly, 5 July, 1987; 6. See also Karpas A. Origin of the AIDS virus Explained? New Scientist, 16 July 1987; 67.

<sup>112</sup> Conrad J. The Heart of Darkness. New York: Norton, 1971.

<sup>113</sup> Black, op cit; 101, 102.

because of its association with "western decadence" and the denial that homosexuality could be widespread in communist countries. 114 Other Europeans held a similar view: a Paris newspaper ran the following headline to an article on AIDS - "the curse that came from America" while in Britain, the *Sunday Times* blamed the spread of the disease in that country on "homosexuals who have been on 'sex holidays' to America. 115 In Australia, the Rev. Fred Nile (an outspoken, evangelical churchman and New South Wales politician) called for the compulsory quarantine of all homosexuals returning from America and also for a ban on any further travel to that country by homosexuals. 116

Most significantly, AIDS has been associated with homosexuals, who in the first 10 years of the disease, remain the most significant European "at risk" group. The historical view of the homosexual was that of the outsider, an entity beyond the boundaries of humanity:

The line between acceptable and bad, deviant sex must be the possibility of issue. Otherwise where do you draw the line? If one pretends to justify sodomy, another will justify onanism, vampirism, rape of children, cannibalism etc. There is no reason to stop.

Sodomy was the last degree of human depravity, the foundation of crime, a monstrosity and may lead to cannibalism.

These were the views of two prominent French authors writing during the 19th century: the first was Paul Claudel (a leading Catholic dramatist), the second, Pierre Proudhon (a socialist reformer). These men had different social views but both were expressing what they saw as the alien and marginal nature of the homosexual and sodomy as one erotic expression of homosexuality. Both consigned the homosexual beyond the margins of society, to share the same generic identity with the cannibal and the vampire. While

<sup>114</sup> Altman D. AIDS and the New Puritanism. London: Pluto Press, 1986; 174.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> Ibid; 15.

<sup>116</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 17 November, 1984; 1.

<sup>117</sup> Cited in Greenberg D F. The Construction of Homosexuality. Chicago: Univ of Chicago, 1988; 367, 353.

these were by no means universal views, they were representative of mainstream European thought about homosexuality in the 19th century that, seemingly, went back thousands of years.

In *Leviticus*, homosexuals were said to be an "abomination" and a "violation of nature." This view was also reflected in New Testament writing and condemnation of homosexuals became tradition in the mainstream church. The proscription of homosexuality in *Leviticus* is significant since that book was concerned with the identification and prohibition of a range of anomalous behaviour. Within this frame, homosexuals were anomalies, human freaks whose existence challenged established social order. The idea of homosexuals as outsiders and marginal people was also a feature of secular thought. In Germany, effeminate homosexuals were identified with werewolves. The word *ragamuffin* was originally the name for a demon - derived from *ragr*, meaning effeminate. Parly Prohibitions on sodomy and buggery were accompanied by preambles that emphasised the outcast status of the perpetrator. Persons who practised these acts were described in Massachusetts legislation in 1697 as "contrary to the very light of nature." What was significant here was the way in which the preamble constructed the idea that these offences were committed by "unnatural" people - beyond the boundaries of nature itself. 121

The view of the homosexual as anomaly and freak remains prominent. In 1850, they were described by one investigating London journalist "monsters in the shape of men." Mid 20th century media reporting of homosexuals also played on the theme that characterises homosexuals as monsters and freaks, as women in men's bodies, as not truly human or as lacking the "manly" traits of courage and virility. They were presented as

<sup>118</sup> Coleman P. Christian Attitudes to Homosexuality. London: SPCK, 1980; 124.

<sup>119</sup> Leviticus 18, 22-23.

<sup>120</sup> Gersten M. In Larsen G J ed. Myth in Indo European Antiquity. Berkeley: Univ of California P, 1974; 145, 152. See also entry in the Oxford English Dictionary.

<sup>121</sup> Cited in Greenberg, op cit; 304,

<sup>122</sup> Yokels' Preceptor or More Sprees in London (1855), cited in Greenberg, op cit; 335.

anomalous beings. To a community that centres on reproduction and its own preservation, homosexuality seemed to challenge the natural order of things. 123

There was also the idea of homosexuals as physical outsiders. The origins of the English word "buggery" suggest this. In one view, it was a corruption of "Bulgarian", which had its origins in the belief that sodomy was practiced widely by a heretical Eastern European sect. 124 However opinions on the origin of the term differ: the 10th edition of Burn's Justice (1776) suggests that "buggery" comes from the Italian "buggarone" on account of the practice coming to England from Lombardy. Both explanations implicate foreigners in its reception into England. 125 The idea that sodomites were strangers was held by others. In 1709, the Anglican clergyman Thomas Bray warned that the sodomites are "invading our land." This was attributed by some to the French vices learned by Charles II and his entourage and brought back to England at the end of his exile. 126 During the same century, the author Tobias Smollet, in his novel The Adventures of Roderick Random, wrote "[e]ternal infamy to the wretch confound who planted first this vice on British ground."127 In other countries, sodomy was also seen as an alien vice; despite the view held by the English after the Restoration, the French community believed that the apparent increase in homosexuality in France during the mid 19th century was partially attributable "to French troops who had been contaminated by Arab vice while serving in Algeria."128

These views illustrate two strands of social thought that have characterised homosexuals and homosexuality as both foreign and inhuman (ie as monstrous) - both categories of outsiders. This was formalised in policy in both the ecclesiastical and the later secular views of homosexual offences which sought their justification from the idea

<sup>123</sup> Ref to Pearce in Cohen S and Young J ed. The Manufacture of News. London: Constable, 1973; 292.

<sup>124</sup> See the entry in the Oxford English Dictionary.

<sup>125</sup> Burn R. The Justice of the Peace and the Parish Officer (10 ed). London: H Woodfall and W Strahan printers, 1766; vol 1, 249.

<sup>126</sup> Bahlman D W R. The Moral Revolution of 1688. New Haven: Yale U P, 1957; 4.

<sup>127</sup> Cited in Greenberg, op cit; 338.

<sup>128</sup> Karlen A. Sexuality and Homosexuality. New York: Norton, 1971; 162.

that the proscribed act (sodomy) was a "detestable and abominable sin" that went against nature. 129

Contemporary public policy in Australia continues this discriminatory tradition against homosexuals to a significant extent. At the time of the first reports of AIDS infections, homosexual activities were illegal in four of the six Australian States. 130 However, over the past 10 years, Australian jurisdictions have moved to abolish discriminatory practices based on the denial of goods and services and to largely repeal the laws criminalising sodomy. Even in these cases, the process of removing discriminatory provisions is not complete and, where decriminalisation has occurred, other civil disabilities on homosexuals continue. For example, under legislation in Western Australia in 1989, the age of consent for homosexual acts is 3 years higher than that for heterosexuals. 131 The Act also made the "proselytising" of homosexual behaviour or its promotion in schools illegal. 132 Calls for discrimination against homosexuals have continued into the 1990s and a strong prejudice remains both in Australia and elsewhere. 133 In Australia, bashings and murders of homosexuals continue as a violent expression of social attitudes which seem unaffected by legislative reform.

AIDS has provided a context through which criticism of homosexuals has been directed. The conservative British weekly *The Spectator* saw AIDS as a natural intensification of the "disgust" felt by the community towards open homosexuality.

<sup>129</sup> Burns Justice op cit.

<sup>130</sup> See Intergovernmental Committee on AIDS. *HIV/AIDS Prevention Homosexuality and the Law*. Canberra: Dept of Health and Community Services, 1991; 10.

<sup>131</sup> Law Reform (Decriminalisation of Sodomy) Act 1989 (Western Australia.)

<sup>132</sup> Similar provisions exist in England; see *Education (No2) Act 1986*, section 46. See also the provisions of the *Local Government Bill* (England), cited in Jackson P. *Maps of Meaning*. London: Hyman Unwin, 1989; 121.

<sup>133</sup> Age, 18 July, 1992; 7 This was a report from the Vatican that declared its support for discrimination in a variety of areas, including housing, health, teaching and military service. Calls for specific restrictions continue, for example in the Australian armed forces, Australian 19-20 September, 1992; 1 - "Gay Ban must Stay says [Minister of Defence.]" In England (where the repeal of homosexual offences occurred in 1967) a poll conducted by a Sunday newspaper in the wake of a period of widespread publicity about the disease reported that 51% of its readership wanted homosexual activity outlawed, 54% wanted AIDS victims quarantined while 56% thought that they should also be sterilised. (Hewitt B. et al, An Ugly Anti-Gay Backlash, Bulletin 31 March, 1987; 118.)

"Flaunting" the journal claimed "breeds disgust. Flaunting a habit which spreads a fatal disease breeds rage." <sup>134</sup> In Australia, violence and forcible quarantine was openly recommended as a response to the disease. One prominent radio personality suggested that homosexuals should be boarded up in their Oxford St. haunts while another solution, offered by a radio "talk back" caller, was that they should be taken to a deserted island where they could be "as happy as pigs in mud." <sup>135</sup> In media reports, they were likened to lepers <sup>136</sup> and witches. <sup>137</sup>

These violent and punitive components of the response to homosexuals were accompanied by other components that seemed to cater to a public voyeurism and a fascination with the stereotypical homosexual. For example, Sydney newspaper readers were treated to a lurid account of the antics of patrons at the "Mineshaft", a New York gay bar, while the closure of bath houses, saunas and gay bars, (ostensibly they were venues of unsafe sex and thus health hazards), became a prominent issue in the United States, that was also reported in Australia. These descriptions of the places, of their steamy excesses and the hints of the unremitting orgies and the weird rites that they played host to were calculated to excite the imagination of the conventional suburbanite. They were

<sup>134</sup> Cited in Hewitt, op cit.

<sup>135</sup> Cited in Sydney Morning Herald, 10 December, 1984; 9.

<sup>136</sup> News (Adelaide), 24 February, 1988. See also Davenport-Hines, op cit; 341. There were interesting similarities. Like the homosexual, the leper was also stereotyped as excessively lustful and vicious. The leper's disfigurement's made them a marginal and anomalous person, part human part non-human. The AIDS victim as presumed homosexual also shared this anomalous and marginal status as freak, part male and part female.

<sup>137</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 10 December, 1984; 9 - reporting the claims of the Call to Australia Party that the spread of AIDS was "satanic". The witch analogy is significant: it focuses on the idea of threat from the margins; witchcraft was believed to be "contagious" in the sense that witches were believed to corrupt innocents in order to seek converts; they were believed to be in league with the devil and therefore also went against the ordained nature of society; and as with the homosexual, the witch was believed to be exceedingly lustful. According to the Malleus Mallificarum, a leading Dominican text on witchcraft published in 1486, "all witchcraft comes from carnal lust" (Kors A C and Peters E. Witchcraft in Europe. Philadelphia: Univ Penn P, 1972; 127. Scarre G. Witchcraft and Magic in 16 and 17 Century Europe. London: Macmillan, 1987.)

<sup>138</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 8 November, 1985; 11.

<sup>139</sup> For example, in 1987, the English paper the News of the World promised its readership that it would "probe the kinky twilight world of perverts" It promised that the Gay club it was investigating was "sheer hell". (Davenport-Hines R. Sex Death and Punishment. London: Fontana. 1991; 355.) See also the extract from The Sunday People, 1983 "What the Gay Plague did to handsome Kenny", cited in Mort F. Dangerous Sexualities. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987; 212.

pictures in a tradition of journalistic licence that, in many contexts, including the opium dens of 19th century Australia, have drawn upon the weird and fantastic "other worlds" of the margins. 140

Within this general context of the homosexual as a menacing outsider, AIDS became a particular embodiment of that menace to the community. This was given a specific shape in Australia when three Queensland babies died of the disease as a result of transfusions of blood found to be contaminated with the virus. While the babies were not the only recipients of blood who contracted AIDS, they were the most prominently reported at the time and their deaths led to particularly violent outbursts against homosexuals generally. Bashings, said to be associated with the incident, were reported by the press.<sup>141</sup> Prominent responses suggested that the infected blood donor was directly culpable for the deaths. Rev. Nile claimed that the donor was as guilty of murder "as if he had run over their prams with his car." Nile's analogy was telling; unwitting motorists are never charged with murder for the deaths they cause while other motorists are never bashed (as Sydney homosexuals allegedly were) because of a road death in another State. There was also some evidence that the donor in question was not aware that he was infected.<sup>143</sup> However, there were calls for new penal legislation to deal with this issue and also to use the existing law to charge the blood donor with homicide. The Queensland Government hastily drafted legislation that imposed severe penalties for prospective donors who failed to declare their sexuality. 144 Similar legislation was passed in other States, with the New South Wales premier Neville Wran threatening laws against

<sup>140</sup> In 1883, Harper's Monthly emphasised the hidden delights of a New York hashish house by way of drawing the stark contrast between the cold dreary "ordinary world" of the city that lay beyond its doors with the exotic magnificence within, (rivalled only it said, by scenes from the Arabian Nights) and its "heavily scented air" and "gaudily turbaned coloured servants". (Morgan H W. Yesterday's Addicts. Norman: Univ of Okalahoma P, 1974; 159.)

<sup>141</sup> Courier Mail (Brisbane), 19 November, 1984; 1.

<sup>142</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 17 November, 1984; 1.

<sup>143</sup> Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 15 November, 1984; 2583.

<sup>144</sup> Amendments to the *Transplantation and Anatomy Act* (Qld), introduced a penalty of up to 2 years imprisonment for false declarations regarding a blood donation. (*Transplantation and Anatomy Act* (No 2) 1984, section 48A.)

homosexual donors "twice as tough" as those in Queensland. This became a common theme. Political parties claimed to be in favour of tough measures; their opponents claimed that they were not; that they were shifting moral boundaries so as to admit marginal people into the community. In Queensland, the Labour opposition was vulnerable to this latter charge because its platform sought the repeal of laws that criminalised homosexual practices. The Federal Labor Government was held responsible by another, prominent, conservative politician (Ian Sinclair) for the babies' deaths on the basis that it had "downgraded the role of the family", "portrayed homosexuality as the norm" and "promoted de-facto relationships and free living." That Government's response was more positive; it provided the resources to allow the testing all of future blood donors. 147

Hysteria directed against homosexuals as a result of the babies' deaths highlighted the more general threat that all homosexuals were said by some to present to the community. The father of one of the babies was reported widely in the media as saying "[a]s far as I am concerned homosexuals are sick people and should be treated like lepers. They should be left on an island to die." 148

The idea that homosexuals were threatening to the community and that AIDS was the expression of that threat was well developed in the public imagination and also in legislative responses to the disease. This view was most clearly articulated in the idea that homosexuals with AIDS would intentionally seek to spread the virus to others, an idea that has become a central issue in contemporary AIDS policy. From 1984, legislative

<sup>145</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 17 November, 1984; 2.

<sup>146</sup> Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 20 and 21 November, 1984; 2752 (A question relating to ALP policies on the maintenance of the family unit.)

<sup>147</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 17 November, 1984; 1, Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 22 November, 1984; 2898. For a description of the Federal Government's response, see Ballard J in Gardner H ed. *The Politics of Health*. Melbourne: Churchill Livingstone, 1989; chapter 13 (The Politics of AIDS) especially page 358.

<sup>148</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 7 December, 1984; 3.

provisions were strengthened in order to punish and deter misleading statements by (homosexual) blood donors. For example, in South Australia, the *Transplantation and Anatomy Act* was amended in 1985 to impose a new offence (a \$10,000 penalty) for persons convicted of making a false statement in respect to blood donations. Similar provisions were imposed in all other States. Queensland imposed a 2 year gaol term. Offences for wilful or reckless infection, first drafted in the 19th century, were re-drafted with increased penalties and now retain a central place in Australian public health legislation.

These legislative provisions were a response to the idea, often aired, that people with AIDS (homosexuals and drug addicts) would seek to spread the virus. This view was given shape by a series of stories in Australia and overseas. News items about robberies and assaults with AIDS contaminated syringes have become part of the media reporting of the disease. There were a number of quite diverse stories, all making the same point, that AIDS victims were deliberately infecting others. For example, it was reported in the Australian media that, in Zimbabwe in 1990, a local Shona leader was saying that AIDS could be cured by its sufferers raping White girls. Three months later, in Sydney, the local residents of an inner suburb were said to be objecting to a proposed refuge for people with AIDS. Among other things, the residents claimed that these persons would "grab their kids to pay back the world for getting AIDS." A spokesperson for the group described the prospective residents of the refuge as "Aliens, paranoid and unstable ... they have got a set against average ordinary battlers like ourselves." In 1991, a Black American with the disease was reported as "wanting to take all the women with him that he can."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>149</sup> For a survey of these provisions, see South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 14 May, 1985; 4204.

<sup>150</sup> Advertiser, 31 July, 1990; 3.

<sup>151</sup> Correspondents' Report ABC Radio, 11 February 1990.

<sup>152 7.30</sup> Report ABC Television 9 May, 1990.

<sup>153</sup> Courier Mail, 3 May, 1991; 13.

These were complex stories, some were quite undemonstrable or cases where conjecture was reported as fact. They needed to be considered in their particular context. As "news", they were often wrenched from these backgrounds. They might have considered issues such as denial, which could prompt a person to expose others to the risks of infection. They might have considered the fact that powerless people such as prisoners will use the only weapons available to them, particularly if these weapons provoke the fear that a syringe said to be contaminated with the AIDS virus provokes. On other occasions, they were simply misleading. An example of this appeared in the Adelaide Advertiser in 1986, under the headline - "AIDS victim had sex 'to get back at the world'." The report suggested that a person with AIDS was taking revenge on the world by deliberately spreading the disease. It was based on an article in the Australian Family Physician written by two medical students who, as part of their course work, had sat in on a general practitioner's clinic. Significantly, in the original article it was not the patient who claimed he "wanted to get back at the world" but the student authors who raised this as one of a number of possibilities to explain the fact that they felt the patient would continue to engage in unprotected sexual activity. 154

On other occasions, the media generated, as potential threats, matters that were simply hypothetical. For example, one article, under the headline "AIDS lovers could face charge of murder", was a speculation by police and lawyers on the charge that might be laid if a case of wilful infection were proved. In 1991, the South Australian Government announced that it intended to abolish the traditional common law defence to homicide if the victim survived a year and a day from the initial assault. This initiative, first recommended in 1977, was intended to take account of serious injuries where the victims were kept alive only through life support systems. However, it was characterised as an "AIDS Murder Law" by the local press taking up the idea that it could apply to persons

<sup>154</sup> Advertiser, 21 January, 1986. and, Spencer J and Grey J. Aids: Two Case Histories, 1986. Australian Family Physician, 15: 36-38; 36. See also Advertiser, 24 June, 1992; 16. The headline was "Plans to Stop AIDS Vendetta". In the story, Doctors admitted they were not sure of the infected man's motives - a "vendetta" was only one possibility.

who deliberately infected others. This focus became central to the media treatment of the proposal. 155

The idea that people with AIDS will wilfully infect others sits within a more general frame of thought. It is the latest in a tradition that extends at least as far back as the lepers of medieval Europe. Sometimes this tendency was said to occur simply because the infected person was believed to be malevolent. This was alleged in the Edict of Edward III banishing the lepers from London. Sometimes there was a method in this process; it was said that a sufferer could be cured if they passed on the disease to another. This was a view that had some currency in Australia at the turn of the century when people with venereal disease in the Northern Territory were accused of infecting aboriginal women in order to cure themselves. The idea of "wilful infection" now presents people with AIDS as threatening and dangerous to the communities in which they live. Central to all of these ideas is the notion of the threatening stranger whose presence has prompted public health sanctions in the many contexts considered in this thesis.

However powerful it may be, the accuracy of this view is quite suspect. Cases of careless transmission of the disease will occur, while some robbers recognise the potential of the easily available syringe (contaminated or not) to strike fear into their victims. But the cases of vindictive and wilful infection in the way described by the media seem to be without much evidence. A study of the case law relating to the transmission offences generally, suggests that they have not been used in Australia, while British case law suggests that the equivalent sections have rarely been used there. <sup>159</sup> Despite this fact, the

<sup>155</sup> See two reports in the Adelaide press. *News*, 21 January, 1987; 3. *Advertiser*, 3 April; 1991; 3 ("AIDS Murder Law Now Planned")

<sup>156</sup> Bowsky W M ed. *The Black Death*. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1971; 73. See also Zappa P. *Unclean! Unclean!* London: Lovat Dickson, 1933; 136, 188.

<sup>157</sup> Brandt A M. No Magic Bullet. New York: Oxford U P, 1985; 20. Thomas K. Religion and the Decline of Magic. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973; 221. Skinsnes O K. Leprosy in Society, 1964. Leprosy Review, 35: 21-35; 23. Lewis G. A Lesson from Leviticus: Leprosy, 1987. Man, 22: 593-612; 603. Zappa, op cit; 191.

<sup>158</sup> Evidence of Mounted Constable Thorpe. Select Committee on the Aborigines Bill. South Australian Parliamentary Papers, 1899, no 77; Appendix to the minutes of Evidence.

<sup>159</sup> See Intergovernmental Committee on AIDS, Legal Working Party. Civil Liability for Transmission of HIV/AIDS. Canberra: Dept of Housing, Health and Community Services, 1992. There is little case law on the point. See R v Vantandillo [1815] 4 M and S, 835. Tunbridge Well Local Board v Bishopp [1877] 2 CPD, 187. Hunter v Malloch [1884] Scottish LR, 333.

view that persons with AIDS, or other infectious diseases, would wilfully seek to spread them to others is powerful and sustains the idea that these people are a threat to the community. Their marginal status, coming from the fact that victims of the disease (unless declared "innocent" by the media) were taken to be homosexual or illicit drug users, emphasised the sense of threat. The disease gave it a particular context.

The association of AIDS with homosexuals, the idea of homosexuals as threatening outsiders and the substantiation of that threat through AIDS have shaped the way that people have described the disease. There have been four contexts in which AIDS has been seen.

### 1 More than Just an Issue of Public Health

For many Australians, AIDS was more than just a disease, it was an issue about the moral behaviour of its victims, it was a symptom of the underlying problem of homosexuality and promiscuity. For example, in 1987, the Australian Roman Catholic Bishops said that AIDS was "a deeply moral issue and not simply a matter of public health" while a "moral re-awakening" should be the fundamental premise upon which any education programme was based. They took the view that "[p]romiscuity is the main cause of our problem. What has always been sinful is now becoming suicidal." 160

Here was the suggestion that disease prevention strategies were insufficient and that something *more* than just public health responses were required. Another church leader, the Anglican Dean of Sydney, took a similar position - that the disease was a *consequence* rather than the primary issue. He called AIDS the "inevitable consequence

<sup>160</sup> Australian Catholic Bishops, op cit. See also *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 March, 1987; 3 and Age, 25 March, 1987; 16.

of Australia's soft attitude to homosexuals." Some members of the medical profession have also taken this view. For example, a South Australian country doctor was reported as saying that "ordinary decent people are not at risk [from AIDS]." A Sydney doctor blamed "sexual promiscuity" for the spread of AIDS adding that "homosexuality remains a moral evil that requires supernatural intervention ... AIDS will not be solved by the provision of free condoms." The doctor's advice to health authorities was to discourage homosexuality and to encourage antibody positive persons to adopt "with supernatural aid, a chaste lifestyle." While these views were not mainstream, they were not exceptional and they received wide publicity among both the public and the medical profession. 164

## 2 Homosexuality as the Disease

The idea that AIDS was a symptom of a deeper malaise in its victims implies that their presumed homosexuality was the main issue of concern and that preventive measures at this level, that restricted the spread of homosexuality, was the required strategy.

This views homosexuality as though it was a disease in itself, to be curtailed and isolated in the interests of public health. This idea is not recent. In 1631, during the prosecution of the Earl of Castlehaven for sodomy, the prosecutor described his alleged crime as of a "pestiferous and pestilential nature" that is, the act itself was the

An earlier study, also American, measured attitudes of medical practitioners towards homosexuals. This found that 30% would favour barring their entry to medical schools, while 40% expressed discomfort in dealing with homosexual patients. (Cited in Dupree J D and Margo G. Homophobia, AIDS and the Health Care Professional. Focus: A Guide to AIDS Research, January 1988, 1-2; 1.)

<sup>161</sup> Courier Mail (Brisbane), 19 November, 1984; 1.

<sup>162</sup> Advertiser (Adelaide), 9 February, 1988; 4. So closely were homosexuals identified with AIDS that a reported change to Australia's immigration policy to allow the partners of homosexuals to enter Australia on compassionate grounds was immediately greeted by calls from the opposition, some church leaders and the RSL that the Government was "importing into Australia more carriers of the AIDS virus." The two issues were seen as synonymous. (Advertiser, 23 May, 1988; 15.)

<sup>163</sup> Hume K. AIDS: A Judeo Christian Approach, *Australian Family Physician*, 15: January 1986, 13-16; 16. This position does not reflect the views of major Australian medical organisations.

There is evidence to suggest that many medical practitioners hold negative and moralistic attitudes towards patients with AIDS, leading to the view that the presumed moral behaviour of the victims made the disease the expected and deserved consequence. (Kelly J A et al. Stigmatization of AIDS Patients by Physicians, 1987 American J. Public Health, 77: 789-791; 791.)

contagion.<sup>165</sup> This disease model is persistent; in 1928, a prominent English newspaper described homosexuality as "a plague, stalking shamelessly ... The contagion cannot be escaped, it pervades our social life."<sup>166</sup>

This has been an enduring way of seeing. The idea that "homosexuality" is spread through the community by its "sufferers" seeking to convert others remained a feature of media reports. More recently, in 1991, the Australian Defence Force justified its policy of excluding homosexuals on this basis. The Army's Director of Public Information was reported as saying:

Every parent expects us to protect particularly the younger members (of the forces) against a whole range of things, one of which is homosexual advances. 168

Within this framework AIDS was a badge of moral corruption betraying the real disease - the menacing and threatening nature of its homosexual victim. The physical and the moral disorders might be found together, one was simply the symptom of the other, a point illustrated in the report of a coronial enquiry into the events surrounding a prominent English mass murder in 1987. The coroner heard that tests were done on the dead gunman for "AIDS, hepatitis, drug abuse and evidence of homosexuality." <sup>169</sup>

### 3 AIDS as a Punishment.

Explanations about the cause of AIDS abounded. Most prominently though, AIDS was seen as the deserved punishment for homosexual practices. For some, this

<sup>165</sup> Cited in Greenberg, op cit; 302.

<sup>166</sup> Pearce, in Cohen and Young, op cit; 299.

<sup>167</sup> Pearce, in Cohen and Young, op cit; 298-299.

<sup>168</sup> Advertiser, 29 April, 1991; 1. The "contagion" idea has also driven public policy in the United States. In 1983, the Reagan administration sought to use public health quarantine restrictions to prevent homosexuals from entering the United States on the basis of "psychological grounds". Here was a restriction on homosexuals, fuelled by AIDS, but not directed by the disease as such but rather, by presumptions about the mind of the homosexual himself. (Greenberg, op cit; 466.)

<sup>169</sup> Advertiser, 26, September, 1987; 7.

punishment was imposed by a supernatural force: for others it was "nature striking back", the "natural" response to unnatural or anomalous behaviour. 170

The divine punishment idea found favour in Australia as elsewhere with the conservative Christian *Call to Australia Party* which described AIDS as "the Wrath of God disease." <sup>171</sup> In the United States, it was even accepted by a prominent United States medical journal. <sup>172</sup> The conservative *New York Post* described AIDS as nature's awful retribution against people who had declared war against nature. <sup>173</sup>

The idea of AIDS as a punishment affected some people's views about the search for a cure. One New South Wales member of Parliament, a prominent opponent of homosexual law reform, said of AIDS "I hope they don't find a cure for it." Presumably, a cure would spare the guilty their just punishment. A similar view can be detected in some of the early newspaper reports which, at the time AIDS seemed to be contained within the homosexual community, could speculate on the hidden messages of the disease, one paper suggesting that "perhaps we needed a situation like this to show us what we have known all along, depravity kills." 175

<sup>170</sup> Some unusual theories were presented - that it was a United States government plot to decimate the homosexual community, part of Tutankhamen's curse, or that it was linked to fluoride in the water supply. There were also bizarre and the sexually aberrant explanations that attracted the most media coverage. (Altman, op cit; 43, and Shilts R. And The Band Played On. London: Penguin, 1988; 268.)

<sup>171</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 10 December, 1984; 9.

<sup>172</sup> In 1984, an editorial in the Southern Medical Journal claimed that AIDS was the consequence of immorality and a "fulfilment" of St Paul's injunction against homosexuality in Romans I. Homosexual practices, the Journal maintained, could not be considered "alternative behaviour ... but as the old wisdom of the bible states, most certainly pathologic." It is not possible to gauge how widely the Journal's views were shared by its readership; the Editor subsequently claimed that most letters he received in response were positive to his view. (Homosexuality Kick and Kickback (Editorial), 1984. Southern Medical Journal, 77; 149-150, 1067.)

<sup>173</sup> Altman, op cit; 59.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid; 68. Indeed, while the victims of AIDS were all, predominantly homosexual, there was an argument, made by many gay rights activists that, initially at least, the medical authorities were not trying particularly hard to find a cure for the disease. One columnist wrote, relatively early in the history of the disease:

If KS (Karposi's sarcoma - one of the symptoms of AIDS) were a new form of cancer attacking straight people, it would be receiving constant media attention and ... research would be proceeding with great intensity

with great intensity
(Shilts R., op cit; 109.) This view was not restricted to AIDS. Brandt has written that some doctors were not supportive of cures for venereal disease (Brandt A M. *No Magic Bullet*. New York, Oxford U P, 1985; 172-173.) See also Davenport Hicks, op cit; 186-189.

<sup>175</sup> Cited in Cover story, Med J Aust, 11 July, 1983.

The "divine punishment / nature striking back" way of explaining AIDS is important - all the more so because it appears to fly in the face of scientific knowledge. Both were ways of emphasising heterosexual relationships and family values. AIDS was the risk for those who had departed from those values. Implicit in this thinking was the view that people with AIDS *ought* to be punished because they were presumed to be homosexuals who had transgressed the values of the centre.

### 4 AIDS and the End of the World

Many initial responses to AIDS were millenarian and bore similarities with the social upheavals of earlier epidemics. With the first reports of the disease, health authorities reported an upsurge of enquiries by many persons, concerned that they may have been infected with the virus. A New South Wales medical officer indicated that generally fleeting events in their past lives - a chance sexual encounter, or a casual contact with a homosexual person - became the basis of fears held by many that they had contracted AIDS. The publicity that sensationalised the disease was resurrecting the guilty secrets of persons fearful of death. This was one response to the disease that bore a similarity to the millenarianism identified by Cohn in his history of medieval Europe. 177

There were other millenarian responses that involved the whole community. The Adelaide *News* headline, - "It is the end of us all" - reflected this point. Other headlines were just as gloomy: "A time of deep despair and panic" and "No doubt SA toll will grow." There were also letters to editors predicting doom such as "the horror is among us and none of our loved ones are safe"; or stories which recounted the boom times that

<sup>176</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 7 December, 1984; 3.

<sup>177</sup> Cohn N. The Pursuit of the Millennium. London: Paladin, 1970; 128-130.

Sydney funeral parlours were experiencing, all of which seemed to be foretelling a devastation to Western society equal to that of the great plague.<sup>178</sup>

When prominent personalities, victims of the disease, died, newspapers had the opportunity to focus on their private lives and also on the indiscriminate way that the rich and influential were also struck down by AIDS. Thus, an article about the disease in the Adelaide *News* included photographs of some of these people under the headline "Fame and fortune can't buy cure to plague." This was the notion of "death as a leveller" that was present in earlier centuries. The statement in the newspaper article that "\$125 million fortune could not save [one particular victim] from his fate" is remarkably similar to a caption to the "Miser" one of the 1538 woodcuts by Hans Holbein the younger. This read:

This very night shalt though know death! To-morrow be encoffined fast! Then tell me, fool! while though hast breath, Who'll have the gold thou hast amassed? 180

Here, AIDS seemed the latest in a series of events that have been identified as threatening civilisation including wars of religion, coloured immigration and pollution. The point has been made that issues such as AIDS or nuclear war were "new vehicles for old fears" and that: "[t]he likely decline of the west seems to have been an endemic worry ever since "the west" emerged as a visible entity." 181

## Conclusion

<sup>178</sup> For example, Adelaide News, 12 August, 1985; 27, 28. 19 February, 1987; 13, 18 February 1987; 13. Letter to The Australian, 26 March, 1987. Hills B. Special Report in Sydney Morning Herald, 23 February, 1987.

<sup>179</sup> News, 19 February, 1987; 14.

<sup>180</sup> Holbein the Younger. *The Dance of Death.* New York: Dover, 1971; 133. The same theme is the subject of Shakespeare's poem "Fidele".

<sup>181</sup> Tindall G. New Fears for Old. *New Society*, 27 March, 1987, 16-17; 16. See also, Oswald Spengler, in the readings collected by Fleischer M P ed. *The Decline of the West?* New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1970.

The public responses to AIDS in Australia and elsewhere in many respects echoed the panic and vilification associated with earlier infectious epidemics. In Australia, this process was more heightened at the time of the death of the three babies, when the disease had clearly moved out into the general community and potentially all were at risk, and before the testing of blood donations was in place. Yet, the linking of AIDS with deviance and homosexuality has remained a central theme in the discourse about the disease into the 1990s. The popular picture of AIDS articulated and substantiated the more general threat that the homosexual as an outsider was said to present to the community. It justified the pre-existing hostilities about homosexuality and directed those fears in public health terms. Thus homosexuals, felt to be threatening as a marginal group, were shown to be threatening because they were presented as responsible for spreading the "gay plague" within the community. AIDS was the embodiment of the threat of the outsider. AIDS laws, particularly those that promised "tough approaches", showed the voters that their health authorities were policing the boundaries between the outside and the community, protecting the latter from contamination. In the case of the Transplantation and Anatomy Act, the amendments were effectively setting a protective cordon around the blood supply that distanced the homosexual by punitive legislation.

The issues about AIDS discussed in this Chapter have strong parallels with the earlier epidemics considered in this thesis and the marginal groups associated with them. The social course of the disease demonstrates that the process of blame and vilification - the ideas of disease as a danger from the margins and as a deserved punishment - has survived into the late 20th century. This point is all the more significant insofar as medical science can to some extent "explain" AIDS; the virus has been discovered and the route of transmission understood. This "divine punishment" notion cannot simply be dismissed as medieval superstition in want of a rational explanation. It was an expression of collective response against those on the outside who were threatening, both as homosexuals and people with an infectious disease.

There have been a number of separate but parallel debates going on about AIDS.

The anxiety that the disease provoked in the community has had a significant effect on the

development of public health policy in Australia, an effect out of proportion to the public health significance of the disease. Yet, the community, its politicians and health officials have responded to it in a different ways. Punitive legislation and penal sanctions were put in place in order to demonstrate that the community's elected representatives were responding to the threat. This was a public reinforcing of the vilification and stigmatising of the marginal groups associated with the disease. However, the rethinking of public health controls, done in the light of the experience of earlier epidemics, or the provision of resources for the uniform testing of blood donations, were considered and logical responses to the disease. They demonstrated that many politicians and public health policy makers were able to integrate the current issues of AIDS into a wider picture that incorporated the sociological, psychological and historical experiences gleaned from other epidemics. In particular, it was recognised and accepted that the participation of people with AIDS, rather than their objectification, was important for the development and maintenance of public health policy while over the first decade of the AIDS epidemic, laws and restrictions relating to intravenous drug users and homosexuals were reduced rather than made more stringent. The application of those lessons for the development and maintenance of a non-judgemental policy remains a current challenge for the administrators of public health controls.

### 5 OUTSIDERS AND CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY

Disease and public health threats remain a badge of outcast status in the late 20th century as they were in earlier historical periods. The case of the drug free community at Ashbourne (described in Chapter 1) suggests that ancient fears continue to affect public health policy making. Within the community, public health concerns remain markers of the threatening outcast. An advertisement in 1992 for an exclusive and securely protected

Adelaide housing development played on this theme; it contrasted the security within the estate from the outside jungle of drug related crime, AIDS and the destruction of social values beyond its walls. 182

This Chapter has examined three areas of public policy where health related issues became an expression of the kinds of threats to the Australian community that many believed existed from outsiders. The "boat people", suppliers of illicit drugs and homosexuals as presumed victims and transmitters of AIDS were presented as outsiders, threatening to the Australian community. The "Asianisation" of the suburbs, the belief that youth would be enslaved by drugs and reject established social values, the portrayal of the homosexual as a social anomaly, were threats that were articulated in public health terms.

The governmental response to these threats varied. In the case of Asian immigration, entry restrictions remain an ongoing issue; calls to restrict the arrival of Asian immigrants (usually formally on economic grounds but public health and lifestyle were also cited as reasons for the need) have been made frequently in Australia over the past decade. In the case of drugs, a selective and punitive approach has increasingly criminalised the suppliers of a range of "non-mainstream" drugs. Maximum penalties have been raised from small periods of imprisonment in the late 1960s to life imprisonment in a number of jurisdictions in the 1990s. The illicit drug dealer has been legally defined as an outcast and many have been subjected to lengthy terms of imprisonment by Australian courts.

In the case of AIDS, legislation was also made more punitive. New offences were created, old offences were strengthened. Here, the Australian governments were responding to anxieties that occurred at crucial times in the spread of the disease such as the contamination of the blood supply in 1984. Yet, in their effects, these provisions were not punitive. They have virtually never been used and Government public health advisers

<sup>182</sup> This has been a widely advertised claim for an Adelaide housing estate *Mira Monte* since 1990. It has not been a particularly successful venture, whether because of the high prices or the recessed economy of the time is not clear. However, this has not dampened the enthusiastic use of the "menacing outsider" theme in advertisements for properties located in the estate. (*Advertiser*, 18 July, 1992; 68.)

recommend quarantine as a last resort.<sup>183</sup> Here, the rhetoric of tough action, which has been a prominent face of Government policy - a demonstration that something was being done about AIDS - was not being carried through. Publicly, Governments were saying one thing to reassure an anxious community: their public health administrators were doing another; they were very seldom implementing the full rigour of those policies.

There is a common feature in the three policy areas considered in this Chapter. The point at which the boundary was drawn around the community as "sacred" - the thing to be protected from the threatening "profane" intruder - was defined in terms of the concerns and anxieties of the times and the legislation responded and gave substance to this. Thus certain drugs were defined as marginal and illegal by public health laws because they threatened and alarmed the Australian community. This was not based on any idea of public health need. More particularly, Governments seeing the need to win over a constituency anxious about drugs or AIDS were able to *define* the "sacred" and the "profane." The legislation located the object of control such as the illegal drug dealer or the prostitute with AIDS outside the boundary of the community thus formalising the idea that they were threatening. The legislative provisions constructed and shaped the "reality" of the threat that was expressed as a fear of outsiders. For example, the notion that illicit drug dealers lurk around South Australian schools at recess time is quite without foundation. Yet, the "school zone" legislation focused on the idea as though it was a reality and in doing so effectively created the reality.

The public health significance of governmental and community responses to the three areas considered in this Chapter are quite different. However, each demonstrates how to a greater or lesser extent the idea of the threatening outsider has been a significant component in contemporary public health policy as it has been in earlier public health policy. The cost of this process in terms of the public's health must be recognised.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>183</sup> Victoria, Health Department. Guidelines for the Management in Victoria of HIV Infected People who Knowingly or Recklessly Risk Infecting Others. September, 1989.

Punitive calls for isolating and reporting AIDS sufferers have been shown to lessen the extent to which they are prepared to trust and co-operate with public health workers. 184 Calls to use public health screening as a barrier to entry to Australia, or arguments for deportation that rely upon threatening diseases, must prompt hopeful refugees to falsify results and to avoid seeking treatment when arrived in Australia. The drug laws have had the effect of emphasising the dichotomy between illegal and legal drugs (alcohol and tobacco), normalising the latter and implicitly playing down their substantial public health problems.

Quite simply, and as these examples suggest, the process of allowing ideas about public health to emphasise the marginal nature of social groups or to focus on outsiders has been, and may continue to be, a significant obstacle in the development of public health policy and programmes that should always be aimed at maximising the community's health.

<sup>184</sup> Advertiser, 20 July, 1992; 12.

# CHAPTER 10 PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE COMMUNITY - THREE STRANDS FOR FUTURE ANALYSIS.

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is focused on the theme of public health and outsiders. It argues that outsiders - strangers, socially marginal groups and racial and ethnic minorities - have been described as threats to the communities into which they have come. The expression of these threats has often been to the community's health. Within this framework, it has been possible to see public health controls as ways of formalising and maintaining the separation of social intruders, drawing boundaries, and isolating and containing outsiders and marginal groups. However, despite the many examples described in earlier chapters, this focus on minorities in public health policy is not inevitable; communities do have the potential to reflect on their anxieties and to respond to them in ways that do not label outsiders as threats. Yet, it is a continuing process, with a continuing potential to distort public health policy, as the following article and commentary on it illustrates.

In April 1991, the *Medical Journal of Australia* published a short paper on the incidence of gonorrhoea among the clients of a Sydney sexually transmitted diseases clinic.<sup>1</sup> The article claimed a marked reduction of the disease among males and suggested a lessening of risk factors for all sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS, among this group. The gonorrhoea rates among female clients indicated an increase, providing a particular focus on Asian prostitutes who were 89% of all female cases. The authors speculated on the reason for the high representation among this group. It was said that the women were "practising unsafe sex in Sydney rather than in Asia" but acknowledged that their clients were not consistently using condoms and that "persecution" of the prostitutes would be counter-productive to the public health interventions in place.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Donovan B et al. Gonorrhoea and Asian Prostitution: The Sydney Sexual Health Centre Experience, 1991. *Med J Aust*, 154: 520-521.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ibid; 521.

The article was reported in the Australian media. The good news about the decline of the gonorrhoea rate overall was not reported. Instead, the focus was directed on the Asian prostitutes and this issue became the substance of the comments. It was alleged that the prostitutes "don't practice safe sex", that they "don't use condoms", that they "ought to practice safe sex."3 Here, important issues emerged in the metamorphosis of data about disease rates into a media report that was exclusively about Asian prostitution. More particularly, the report focused on the women as though they were effectively in control of the sexual relationship, that theirs was the power to insist that the client used a condom. Such a view of this particular client / prostitute relationship overlooked the circumstances of these women, on short stay visas and operating within a very different power and authority structure than their Australian counterparts. It was this fact that was significant in the transmission of disease rather than the nationality of the prostitute. Focusing on the latter was also calculated to stigmatise all Asian prostitutes as diseased, irrespective of their particular circumstances. Furthermore, from a public health perspective, the singling out of Asian prostitutes as static "reservoirs" of infection made no sense. It stood to overlook the dynamic nature of these diseases, that there are pathways of infection rather than foci; that the women were infected by clients and then infected other clients.

In the media report of this *Medical Journal of Australia* study, *being Asian* was presented as the central causative issue. The tragedy of reports that focus on this issue is that, while they may strictly be correct and Asian sex workers did have higher rates of disease than White sex workers, the reasons for it were not considered. Yet, if we are to reduce the rates of disease among sex workers and among powerless groups of sex workers in particular, we have to ask questions about what needs to be done to empower those workers, to enable them to take control over their working conditions. *Being Asian* was simply a marker of having a low level of power. Making *being Asian* the significant issue in a report is to lay a false trail which may be pursued to the detriment of the things

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Daybreak, Radio National, 15 April, 1991.

that could be done in the interests of public health. To return to the question of drug legislation raised in Chapter 1: it is possible for a rational drug policy to be constructed that focuses on the toxicity of the drugs rather than on the idea that some drugs are marginal and others are mainstream. However, as Chapter 9 suggests, the Australian experience over the past twenty years is that this may happen slowly and incompletely if it happens at all. This is also true of other public health issues. During the 1980s and 1990s, public health policy makers and administrators have addressed the legal and social control aspects of AIDS in a context that has been acutely aware of the issues of scapegoating and blame and their potentially damaging effects on AIDS policy. Yet, in a wider context, their advice, which was informed by this awareness, was questioned and rejected by some prominent politicians and public figures. 5

This thesis does not attempt to prescribe the conditions that might achieve the goal of ideal public health policy. However, it is worth isolating three strands of enquiry that would be significant in directing and continuing the ideas explored in this thesis. These issues are presented briefly as problematic areas within which further work should be done to understand the obstacles in refocusing public health thinking away from minorities as threatening outsiders. They can be encapsulated as three propositions. First, increased scientific knowledge about disease will not prevent the association of disease with minorities. Second, the community has selective views about risk that magnify some public health risks while diminishing others. Third, the popular presentation of public health issues through the media will tend to enhance community anxieties about these issues rather than diminish them.

<sup>4</sup> Neave M. AIDS and Women in the Sex Industry - Legal Approaches to Public Health, 1989. *Community Health Studies*, 13: 423-430.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> See the comments of Professor Fred Hollows a prominent Australian humanitarian and eye specialist (referenced below) and Wilson Tuckey, the Federal Opposition spokesperson for Health in 1988, who, at the Third national AIDS Conference, claimed, among other things, that AIDS resulted from "deliberate and very possibly unnatural sexual activity" (*Advertiser*, 8 August, 1988; 3, 10 August, 1988; 5 and 13 August, 1988; 25.)

#### 2 SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE AND PUBLIC HEALTH.

Over the past one hundred years, the disease process and the vulnerability of people to disease, increasingly, has been the subject of positivist scientific explanation. With this process has come the view that science reveals or uncovers "truths", that these "truths" necessarily will replace other views about the world which are demonstrably false. Positivistic science provides the stamp of authenticity. The application of such a view to the specific issues covered in this thesis, the association of minorities with disease, might be expected to resolve the matters considered in earlier chapters and exorcise the superstitions of an earlier age. However, there is another way of seeing scientific knowledge; that it is relative and located within its particular cultural context and is influenced by it. Such a view is a central counter to the persistent view of science as "correct" knowledge; it is also a prominent view.

There has been considerable revision of the nature of scientific knowledge since the early 1960s. Thomas Kuhn, a central figure in this process, argued that scientists work within a defined environment and that scientific knowledge is affected by the expectations and assumptions of that environment. Since scientists operate within these environments they are coloured by them. They cannot be said to be engaging in a free and unfettered enquiry about principles and ideas that are said to exist outside the social framework within which they are produced. The significance of that broad debate for this thesis is that the issues discussed here cannot now be dismissed by a late 20th century conclusion that the linking of minorities with disease simply displayed a lack of adequate scientific knowledge. Most importantly, it cannot be assumed that there will be no further cases where particular groups are blamed for public health problems because our scientific knowledge is now more complete than previously.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> This issue has been dealt with by a variety of authors. The major revision was made in 1962. See Kuhn T S. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chicago: Univ Chicago P, 1970. See also Feyerabend P. Against Method. London: Verso, 1978. For a summary of the fields of thought in this area see Charlesworth M. Science, Non-Science and Pseudo-Science. Melbourne: Deakin Univ P, 1982.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Chalmers A. F. What Is This Thing Called Science? St. Lucia: Univ Qld P,1976; chapter 8.

Certainly, scientific knowledge does extend our understanding of the spread of epidemics. For example, the 13th century view that the plague was spread by Jewish well poisoners is demonstrably false. However, granted this knowledge, there remains ample scope to focus on outsiders and to do so within the context of a scientific framework. In the *Donovan et al* study, the scientific findings pointed to Asian sex workers as a high risk group but were inadequate without being considered in the wider social context of the Asian prostitutes. Even "good", "modern" science is bound into its culture. In addition, it is argued that scientific statements are in themselves only partial explanations of events such as disease.<sup>8</sup>

The culture bound nature of the scientific process has been illustrated by some examples considered in this thesis. The investigations into witchcraft or the well poisoners were "scientific" in the sense that they were based on a process which claimed to arrive at the truth through the extraction and recording of accurate information. This was gathered through confessions and the observations that, for example, certain old women were marginalised and the subject of much suspicion by their neighbours or that Jewish communities seemed to be less affected by the plague. Other associations between disease and specific groups could be made with scientific accuracy. For example, it could also be demonstrated by observation that the 19th century poor were more at risk from cholera than the wealthy. Similarly, most of the AIDS cases in Australia to date have been homosexual males. In neither case could it be said that cholera is a disease of the poor or AIDS is a disease of homosexuals in the sense that these groups are responsible for it. Yet, both these ideas were prominent explanations for these two diseases.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Jurgen Habermas described the idea that scientific knowledge can remain detached as an "objectivist illusion". He claimed that it was not possible to see the world as: "a universe of facts independent of the knower, whose task is to describe them as they are in themselves." (McCarthy T. *The Critical Theory of Jurgen Habermas*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984; 59.) See also MacKenzie D A. *Statistics in Britain 1865-1930*. Edinburgh: Edin Univ P, 1981; 225.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Comments that AIDS was a disease of homosexuals were still being prominently reported 10 years after the first cases of AIDS in Australia (In particular, see Professor Fred Hollow's comments widely aired in the media. *Australian*, 7-8 March, 1992; 21. For a treatment of this issue more generally, see the commentary by Goodman M. Centre of the Storm, 1992. *Australian Left Review*, 136: 38-40.)

In addition to its being culturally specific, scientific knowledge is not a complete form of explanation. Its findings exist within a wider explanatory context and lead on to other enquiries. A graphic example of this is the collapsed granary described by Evans Prichard in his work Witchcraft Oracles and Magic among the Azande. Here a granary had collapsed, injuring a number of people sitting underneath. An explanation was available: the posts were being eaten away by termites and a critical point reached when the remaining, sound, posts became too few to support the weight of the structure. The Azande acknowledged this but, it was only a part of their enquiry into the event. Further questions were necessary - of all the people who might have been injured, why were those particular people injured; what fate brought them in place and time to the moment of collapse?<sup>10</sup> These are not questions for which scientific enquiry relating to the failure of structures can provide an answer. In the same way, those who considered AIDS a punishment were not necessarily denying the existence of the HIV virus or the process of transmission. Rather, this knowledge led to another question about why the person contracted the disease. Indeed, for many, this was the central question, one that formed the basis of the idea that there were "innocent" and "guilty" victims of the same disease process and linked it with the idea that the guilty were being punished. It was a view that some of the victims of AIDS ought to contract the disease because of what they do or are, while others ought not.

The popular idea that "doing science" involves a detached process of merely observing and reporting on those observations is philosophically unsound. In addition, as the account of AIDS in this thesis suggests, there can be no confidence in the application of scientific knowledge to rescue minorities and outsiders from the process of blaming described in this thesis. A fuller knowledge of the disease process is, in itself, no explanation. For example, the fact that AIDS is the result of a viral infection can be made

<sup>10</sup> Evans-Prichard E E. Witchcraft Oracles and Magic among the Azande. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1976; 22. A similar question was asked by the United States writer, Thornton Wilder, in his 1927 classic *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*.

consistent with the "God's will" explanation in the sense that the virus becomes the chosen medium of punishment. Here, biological explanation was contextualised within the social framework of the viewer. The willingness to recognise this point allows a more significant place for social theory in explaining the nature of statements about public health, that particular "ways of seeing" powerfully shape our interpretation of things taken to be fixed and independent "scientific" measurements. In particular, where outsiders are said to be an issue of public health concern, it allows ideas relating to groups and boundaries to be important ways of contextualising the positivist scientific knowledge that much public health policy is based upon.

#### 3 RISK AND PUBLIC HEALTH

One definition of risk is the likelihood of harm occurring. It is a central issue in approaching public health problems. Public health legislation imposes controls that attempt to safeguard the public's health through the reduction of risk, either by imposing general duties of care or specific exposure standards on manufacturing activities. The issues considered in this thesis raise questions of risk. The complaints about the Chinese in 19th century Australia were grounded in the idea that they were a risk to the wider community. More recently, there has also been a vigorous legislative endorsement of the view that illicit drugs pose a risk to late 20th century Australian society. The evidence suggests that the Chinese were not a risk to the health of the Australian public and that it is legal drugs, not illegal drugs, that amount to almost all of the drug deaths in the community but that evidence did not appear to influence greatly the course of public health responses to both issues.

Douglas and Wildavsky claimed that ideas about what constitutes a risk or threat varies among cultures and individuals: communities' measure of risk is a social process rather than one which relies on isolated, positivist "scientific" measurements and

statements. One issue is whether the risk is freely accepted or unwillingly imposed. 11 Such distinctions lead to a focussing on the *type* of risk rather than its likelihood of causing harm. The alien and imposed risk is magnified; the risks of everyday life are diminished. The public health risks linked with unpopular minorities, such as the Chinese in 19th century Australia, were magnified although they were associated with specific (exotic) diseases, responsible for relatively few deaths: at the same time, the risk of enteric diseases - the normal hazards of city living in Australia - seemed mainly to be construed as a fact of life rather than as an imposed risk.

The argument that the assessment of risk is a social process is illustrated by the occasional concerns about local clusterings of environmental cancers. Some rural communities in Australia appear to experience higher than expected rates of cancers and congenital malformation. These outbreaks are identified and publicised because the close knit nature of these small towns makes the presence of disease more apparent (people know each other's business) than in a large city or suburb where there are fewer social bonds. These outbreaks generally appear to be a statistically random over-representation, not the result of any specific causal agent (under-representations or "negative clusterings" also occur but are not remarked upon.) However, the identification of a disease cluster has prompted residents, the media, and local community leaders to focus on the presence of environmental carcinogens or mutagens in locally used pesticides or as additions to the water supply, as explanations for the disease. These issues have become highly charged and very prominent. The communities see themselves as "at risk" from an outside agent, something visited on them. Assurances to the contrary by public health officials have been branded as a "whitewash"; they have been dismissed as denying the issue. 12 The

<sup>11</sup> Douglas M and Wildavsky A. Risk and Culture. Berkeley: Univ Calif P, 1982; 17.

<sup>12</sup> See for example, Hyams J. The Towns United by Fear. Australian Women's Weekly, October 1988: 36-39. (a story about leukemia clusters in Minlaton in South Australia and Emerald in Queensland - both small country towns) Rait N. The Small Victims of Eighth Street. New Idea, 1 June, 1985: 10-11. (another story about Minlaton). See also Advertiser, 23 October, 1986; 1. 28 November, 1986; 3. (stories about Windsor and Dublin, small settlements North of Adelaide whose residents believed that the incidence of a series of cancer cases had a common cause in the water supply.)

public health statements about risk were rejected because they did not accord with community belief that a risk existed.

In these cases, the communities were focusing strongly on particular "outside" issues such as chemical pesticides or additives to the water supply and entrenching their ideas about that threat. Statements by public health officials to the contrary simply generated new rounds of critical speculation, for example, whether the government experts were deliberately down playing the risks, whether tests were done with sufficient accuracy, or whether conflicting data exist.<sup>13</sup>

Issues about risk have been important in this thesis. They continue to be important in public health. The risks of some events occurring (death through heroin use, being assaulted with an AIDS contaminated syringe) are very remote. In a "scientific" sense they have little public health significance but this has not prevented them from receiving much publicity as areas for which remedial legislation is required.

Overall, two points must be acknowledged when considering risk. Firstly, there is not a consistent "scientific" scale against which it can be measured. Ideas of risk shift according to context and the community in which the risk occurs. Secondly, some risks are normalised while others are magnified. Risks that are imposed on communities such as those from the outside are seen as alien and are heightened in the public imagination. Those that are part of normalised behaviour are diminished.

Both points emphasise the problems of dealing with public health issues merely in proportion to the measure of the risk that public health professionals believe they present to the public. Fears about disease cannot always be dismissed by reference to some scale of risk. Rather, they require a process of explanation and negotiation within a social framework that considers the way that the particular issues that are the subject of risk are created by or seen in the community. In particular, the risk that marginal people are taken

<sup>13</sup> Reynolds C S and Baker C C. Cancer in a Small Community, 1987, unpublished report of the South Australian Health Commission's investigations and the media and community response in two South Australian country towns following reports of the presence of environmental carcinogens in the water supply and in pesticide spray drift.

to present through their being diseased or unhygienic is magnified because they are outsiders and presumed "dangerous" to the community and public health threats are a central expression of that danger.

Such conclusions do not leave public health practitioners powerless to make changes to ideas about disease and its causes, particularly where outsiders are involved. However, it does call into question the idea that a focused and frank application of the positivist "scientific" process of risk assessment on its own will provide communities with reassuring and believable statements about public health. This does not deny the significance and persuasive authority of public health practitioners but, it does require them to employ a broader explanatory repertoire for risk assessment. In particular, they must operate within a broader explanatory context that is conversant with the idea that risk is centrally a social phenomenon.<sup>14</sup>

## 4 PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE MEDIA

Historical examples of the relationship between contemporary anxieties and the presentment of risks by the media have been discussed several times in this thesis. The significance of those examples can be underlined by another, recent, example. In February 1991, a suburban Adelaide newspaper carried the compelling headline "Urine test demand after fox barbecue horror." It was a story about some local youths (nearly 100, some said to be carrying baseball bats) in a particularly poor part of Adelaide's Northwestern suburbs, some of whom had apparently cooked a fox in a local park and then urinated on the barbecue plate within sight of horrified residents. Responding, the local Mayor demanded that the plate be "analysed to see if it was a health hazard." 15

<sup>14</sup> This point has significance for current environmental health policy, in areas where residents' views about health problems are at odds with traditional scientific approaches to environmental control. See, Auer J. Assessing Environmental Health: Some Problems and Strategies, 1989. Community Health Studies, 13: 441-447. Reynolds C S. Editorial: Legislation and the New Public Health, 1989. Community Health Studies, 13: 397-402; 401. Tassie J. Le Fevre Peninsula Environment Health Management Plan. Adelaide: Steering Committee Pub, 1992; Section 3.

<sup>15</sup> Standard Messenger, 6 February, 1991; 1.

Within a few weeks, the story sank into oblivion, a short follow up reassured residents that the plate was not contaminated with anything the analysts could detect and made no mention of the fox. The debate refocused on the desirability of providing toilets and recreational facilities in a suburb whose residents, by most social and health markers, struggle against substantial adversity and deprivation. For a brief period however, the residents of much of Adelaide were offered, through the local paper, a stage for an urban horror that played on "pollution" and the threat of barbarism. Public health was the process through which the perpetrators were marked and positioned socially as outsiders and their actions examined.<sup>16</sup>

Trying to make sense of a story like the "fox barbecue horror" is difficult; it offers only a series of loose ends that seem to frustrate analysis. Was it really a fox? Who were the shadowy and unidentified perpetrators of this outrage - were they just vandals or something worse? Was the outrage contained to the hapless fox or did it pose a wider threat to established social order? Did the perpetrators urinate on the plate and if so what would the tests show, would they identify some internal and possibly contagious disorder that might explain it all?

The power of the media to convey images and ideas to the community has become significant, especially with the increase of literacy in the 19th and 20th centuries and then the development of ever more accessible forms of media. Newspapers were a powerful vehicle in the 19th century and the press treatment of foreigners tended to reinforce their outsider status. For example, Sydney press coverage of criminal offences in the mid 19th century appear to have constructed boundaries which identified foreigners, emphasised

<sup>16</sup> There are many other examples of this kind of media reporting. See the media analysis of the 1964 "mods and rockers" riots in Britain (Cohen S. Folk Devils and Moral Panics. London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1972); the reports of the Bathurst Motorcycle racing riots in the late 1970s (Cuneen C et al. Dynamics of Collective Conflict: Riots at the Bathurst 'Bike Races. Sydney: Law Book Coy, 1989.) See also, the media treatment of "Bodgie and Widgie" gangs in the 1950s. (Wilson P R and Braithwaite J. Two Faces of Deviance. St. Lucia: Univ Qld P, 1978; chapter 2, "Bodgies and Widgies: Folk Devils of the Fifties".)

<sup>17</sup> Commenting on the newspaper coverage of the Paris Commune (1871), Karl Marx, said: The daily press and the telegraph ... fabricate more myths ... in one day than could have formerly been done in a century (Quoted in Cohen S. and Young J. *The Manufacture of News*. London: Constable, 1973; preface.)

and ridiculed their racial or class origins and emphasised their threat to moral order. <sup>18</sup> More specific examples of this kind of press reporting, directed to the Chinese in Australia, were discussed in Chapter 7. <sup>19</sup> A number of populist newspaper proprietors, including John Norton of *Truth*, William Lane of the *Boomerang* and J F Archibald of the *Bulletin*, held highly charged and very negative views about some foreigners and about the Chinese in particular. The *Bulletin*, for example, focused vehemently on the Chinese outsider with a nationalist passion. Lawson concluded that the *Bulletin*:

with its expressive power, had magnified, distorted and reinforced the feelings of the diggers and the unionists; the articles and, far more potently, the cartoons and stories threw back the image of the Chinese wildly and viciously, with the grotesquerie of mirrors in a funfair.<sup>20</sup>

Media treatment of public health issues remains a significant problem in the late 20th century. For example, in January 1992, wide publicity was given to the death of an Adelaide dentist from AIDS. Here, the media highlighted the very remote risk that his patients might have become infected, creating an issue vastly out of proportion to the risks involved. This publicity forced the South Australian Health Commission to announce that it would create a register to keep track of infected health workers, a decision that was against all public health advice, including its own. It was simply a product of the critical publicity generated by the media.<sup>21</sup>

Questions about the relationship between "news" and newspapers and other forms of media bear upon the potential to change this type of reporting. Studies of the role of the media in Australia emphasise the point that reporting news is not merely a mirroring of the things going on in the world. Rather, Windschuttle, among others, argues that news is a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Sturma M. Crime News in Colonial New South Wales. *Media Information Australia*. May, 1984: 7-13; 9.

<sup>19</sup> Cronin K. Colonial Casualties. Melbourne: Melb Univ P, 1982; 74.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Lawson S. *The Archibald Paradox*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1987; 145. See also Rolfe P. *The Journalistic Javelin 1880-1980: An Illustrated History of "The Bulletin"*. Sydney: Wildcat Press, 1979; 26-27 and 66-67.

<sup>21</sup> Advertiser, 23, 24 January, 1992.

product for profit, an object of consumption. The need to create a "good", that is marketable, story is central in this process. "Good" news, so constructed, is stories that resonate with community opinions, amplifying and heightening the things seen as problematic. In this analysis, the media therefore has a dual role - influencing and being influenced by the community within which it operates.<sup>22</sup>

There are two consequences to this. Firstly, the use of the popular media to change ideas and to challenge public beliefs is limited and always constrained by whether the issues are sufficiently popular to sell the media product. Secondly, the presentation of news within this framework requires a generalisation and simplification of people and things presented as "news". Pearce's descriptions of British press reports about homosexuals emphasised this point. He noted that the terminology used by the mass media emphasised the separation of homosexuals from the rest of the community and enhanced the idea that they were outsiders by the creation of a number of derogatory categories. They were described as "freaks", "perverts" or "degenerates". Even among media reports that were "supportive", in the sense of their being opposed to the continuing illegality of homosexual acts, medicalised categories were used, such as "sick", "ill" or "unfortunate", which enhanced pre-existing social views about the marginal nature of homosexuals.<sup>23</sup>

Australian press reporting of immigrants reviewed in Chapters 8 and 9 demonstrated a similar theme, emphasising the separation between the new arrival and the rest of the community and the "un-Australianness" of much of immigrant behaviour, including personal violence and organised crime. The immigrant was rarely shown simply as another inhabitant of Australia but was distanced and objectified, either as an outsider and a threat or as a figure of fun.<sup>24</sup>

Windschuttle K. *The Media*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1984; chapter 10. See also Windschuttle K and Windschuttle E ed. *Fixing the News*. Sydney: Cassell, 1981; 48-53. This characterisation of news as a commodity has been made by a number of writers. Cohen claimed the process of reporting and presenting news was "a deliberate creation" or a "manufacture".- Cohen, op cit; 44. See also Tuchman G. *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: The Free Press, 1978.

<sup>23</sup> Pearce F. Mass Media and the Homosexual, in Cohen and Young, op cit; 290.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> White N R and White P B. Evaluating the Immigrant Presence: Press Reporting of Immigrants to Australia, 1935-77, 1983. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 6: 284-307.

The obvious meaning and significance of this "commodity" view is that news as presented bears no necessary relationship to the accuracy of the events reported. Cohen's detailed study of the press reports of the "Mods" and "Rockers" disturbances on the English South coast in 1964 illustrate this point. Here, sensationalist reporting was out of proportion to the events as they occurred but had the effect of heightening public fear and expectation, setting the scene for an increasing spiral of hostility. Cohen concluded: "[t]he Mods and Rockers didn't become news because they were new; they were presented as new to justify their creation as news."<sup>25</sup>

"News as a commodity" presents potential problems for the promotion of public health information. It suggests that what is represented as news will be measured against populist standards. This is significant: Jock Young has claimed that bad news is more popular than good news because it reflects the general sense of disillusion and injustice about the world that readers seek and respond to.<sup>26</sup> In this view, the idea of Indochinese youths terrorising old ladies or spitting in the street makes a more acceptable news item than a story about Indochinese immigrants as responsible neighbours and citizens. Stories about health hazards and minorities are also "good stories". Reports that describe the opulent lifestyles of drug dealers, publicise the plight of the "innocent" victims of AIDS (innocent in the sense that they acquired the disease through blood transfusion), or portray refugees as wealthy opportunists, all make good news and popular reading. They can also be read to indicate the failure of society to conduct its affairs justly.

The potential of the media to present public health information that does not sensationalise, does not play on the exotic and the threatening and does not reinforce the traditional fears of threat from marginalised groups is limited it seems.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Cohen, op cit; 46.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Windschuttle, op cit; 276. - Cohen and Young's contention was that people feel this way because of the manifest contradictions in the society in which they live which publicly emphasises equality of opportunity and fairness, while really promoting exploitation and inequality. For persons living with these inconsistencies, bad news, emphasising threats, caprice, random violence and violations of the system - all subjects that to some extent have been considered in this thesis - seems a more accurate reflection of reality than other views of the world. See also Katz J. What Makes Crime "News"?, 1987. Media Culture and Society, 9: 47-75.

Little has been written in Australia that addresses this problem in its public health context. What has been written has not addressed centrally the issue that the need to manufacture news may not be compatible with presenting the story in the way public health workers consider most appropriate. The *Better Health Commission* sought a bureaucratic solution to the issue of how scientific information might be presented in the media. It recommended the creation of a "Health and Media Council" as a first step towards the:

commencement of a proper dialogue between the health authorities, media operators, advertising agencies, advertisers and those responsible for the various industry standards<sup>27</sup>

Such recommendations wrongly imply that the interests of media and scientists are common or could be made common by the creation of such a committee.<sup>28</sup> Often, the media, pursuing commercial interests or other values, has aligned itself against public health interests. This can be illustrated for example by the prominent stance of Adelaide papers against increasing the restrictions in relation to tobacco and alcohol advertising.<sup>29</sup>

However, the view that the media owners have control over the issues that are presented as "news" does allow some prospect for negotiation and change. It allows public health workers to approach media proprietors in the hope that their outlets will present news in a way that focuses less on minorities and the threats that they might be seen to present to the community and more on the more serious, but normalised, risks of

<sup>27</sup> Better Health Commission, *Looking Forward to Better Health*, Vol 1. Canberra: AGPS, 1986; 94. One prominent commentator, Norman Swan, a journalist and a medical practitioner, restricted his advice to scientific colleagues dealing with the media to outlining survival skills for those imparting scientific information. This may assist scientists to put their case; it will not ensure that the media will publicise information in a way calculated not to exacerbate problems when doing so forms the basis of a good story. (Swan N. Conveying Scientific Information to the Non-Scientific Public, 1986. *J Occup Health and Safety - Aust NZ*, 2: 359-362.)

<sup>28</sup> For example, in the attempt to construct a new voluntary code for cigarette advertising in 1988, there was a total failure of the public sector members of a Media Council Committee - health workers, consumers etc - to agree with almost every argument presented by the industry representatives of that committee - media representatives, advertising executives, manufacturers etc - (Minority Report to the Media Council of Australia from the Public Sector Members of the Cigarette Advertising Code Council, 20 July, 1988.)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> See for example, the response of Australian papers on this point: *Australian*, 19-20 December, 1987; 18 *Advertiser*, 5 March, 1988; 26, Adelaide *News*, 22 February, 1988; 38, 29 February, 1988; 58. See also, the very negative headline ("Outrage on Drink Ads ban bid") to a public health options paper that suggested a partial ban on alcohol advertising. *News* 12 March, 1991; 1.

everyday life. However, to expect that this will happen without considerable argument, public debate and even regulation is to miss the essential point about the media as the producer of a commodity for profit. Telling a good story is, realistically, the media's first priority; playing on outside threats is always a good story.

#### 5 CONCLUSION

This thesis has shown that issues about public health and disease must be examined in a broader context if useful lessons are to be got from the historical narratives described both in this thesis and elsewhere in the historical literature. More particularly, public health policy has always been far from the application of a solitary and isolated "scientific" process that simply investigates and reports public health facts. The notion that public health policy is merely the rational application of science is reinforced by the idea of the disinterested process of science, the idea that risks are neutral statements about scientific facts and the view that the media simply reports the world as it is. Those issues are central pillars of a fallacy about the world in which public health is practised, that suggests a neutrality, fairness and objectivity but in fact fails to provide them. Public health policy makers need to be sensitive to other issues, particularly the social context - the realities of boundaries and outsiders - and the way public health has been brought into this context if they are to understand the nature of many of the things that have been labelled as "health problems".

There is some optimism that this is occurring and that we have learned from the historical narrative. If we see AIDS and drugs as two central public health issues in the latter part of the 20th century, we can see that, together with the stigmatising and marginalising of the victims, there is also a parallel strand, a body of critical social theory, that has reflected on the issues, set them within their historical context and has sought to

understand and comment on them. It is as though we still hunt witches yet are also able to use our sociological imaginations to be critical of witch hunts.

## **POSTSCRIPT**

As this thesis is being completed, it is impossible not to reflect on the events now occurring in some towns in what was East Germany. It has been reported widely that many youths (labelled *neo-Nazis* by the media) have been attacking the homes of immigrants from the East and Vietnam. Gypsies from Romania were singled out for particular violence and criticism, both by the youths and many of the older residents that tacitly supported them. It was said that they were illegal residents, that they stole from the local supermarkets, that they defecated on local gardens and in telephone boxes, that they were dirty and smelt.<sup>1</sup>

In the turmoil of change in Eastern Europe, with high unemployment and rising prices, the tensions in communities such as these is obvious enough and the need to blame outsiders for social or economic woes is a response with many precedents. The characterisation of the Romanian Gypsies in 1992 as polluting and a threat to health is one more representation of the threatening outsider. They join the Jews of Medieval Europe, earlier communities of Gypsies, the Jews of the 19th and 20th centuries, the Irish immigrants to England and Australia, and the Chinese and Southern and Eastern Europeans in Australia as the latest companions in the misfortune of being outsiders. If these European crises widen, it is likely that other racial and ethnic minorities in Europe will, increasingly, risk the same treatment. The Romanian Gypsies may be the latest victims of this process; they are unlikely to be the last.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Age, 5 September 1992; 14, Correspondents' Report, ABC Radio National, 6 September, 1992 Australian, 8 September, 1992; 7, Daybreak, ABC Radio National, 9 September, 1992 and Age 19 September, 1992; 7. BBC World Service News, 2 November, 1992.

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