



**THE EPIC CONFRONTATION
AUSTRALIAN EXPLORATION AND THE CENTRE
1813 - 1900
A LITERARY STUDY**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY
OF ADELAIDE JANUARY 1973**

CONTENTS

	Page
SUMMARY	111
STATEMENT	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
ABBREVIATIONS	viii
INTRODUCTION	ix
CHAPTER 1 Exploration and the World of Fact	1
2 Motivation: Exploration and Exploit	57
3 Towards an Australian Epic	114
4 Noble Savage or Rural Pest?	188
5 The Explorer as Hero	254
6 Leichhardt and Legend	299
7 Burke and Wills: The Lonely Death of the Hero	353
CONCLUSION	412
APPENDIX	419
BIBLIOGRAPHY	515

SUMMARY.

The exploration of Australia has long been of interest to the historian, and his approach has been generally a utilitarian one. The explorer's achievements have been gauged by practical standards and his journals and diaries valued chiefly as factual records. But the explorer's writings have more to offer than this; they are also important for the way in which they recreate the experience of exploration and discovery - the response to an unknown environment. Because the journals are the records of men who were able and eager to shape their responses in an imaginative way, it is possible to approach them as literature.

What the explorers hoped to find and what they recorded was conditioned by the instructions they received. These reveal the assumptions and expectations which both the explorers and the public had of exploration. At first they were visionary in nature; people looked for material rewards and hoped for future prosperity, and the explorer thought of himself as the herald of change and the agent of Providence. But as exploration extended into the interior of the continent such material expectations were increasingly challenged by a landscape which offered no easy entry. The concept of exploration changed and explorers began to seek other, spiritual rewards.

Since the change in the notion of exploration became increasingly apparent as explorers moved towards the centre, it is the travellers who followed this path who are important in this thesis. When their journeys are taken together, as a sequence, what emerges is something akin to epic. The journey itself provides one pattern basic to epic and there is another in the notion of a struggle against a landscape which appeared to oppose the explorers' progress.

It was the landscape which was accepted as the opponent in an epic struggle and not the aborigines, as happened in other lands. Although the explorers' initial reactions to them were favourable, as contact between the races increased the aborigines seemed to have nothing to recommend them as worthy opponents. Not only did they offer little resistance to the white intruders, but they also appeared to lack the physical, moral and artistic characteristics necessary for the role. They were seen not as "noble savages" but as nuisances.

An identifiable hero is necessary for epic and the colonial imagination was convinced it had found one in the figure of the explorer. Colonial poets saw him as the revealer of the new land and they also found a landscape of an appropriately heroic scale in the explorer's accounts of the harsh, forbidding region of the centre.

The explorer-hero was opposed by a hostile landscape

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and this seemed to set him apart from heroes of other lands and other times. Poets accepted the landscape's heroic scale but its quality of loneliness was difficult to accommodate in their heroic formula, especially when it was linked with the hero's death. They therefore posited another landscape, based on nostalgia and dream, as a fitting resting place for the dead hero.

This leaves us wandering in a world of paradox. The explorer was a hero because he unveiled the land but he also reinforced the colonial notion of an alien environment. And the poets' hopes that exploration would provide associations in the new land were dashed by the realities of the centre and the explorer's lonely death.

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 and belief) no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text or notes.

The thesis does, however, contain some original material which has been published. The relationship between explorer and hero received its first tentative examination in a note published in Australian Literary Studies, v, 2 (October, 1971), 180 - 189.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish particularly to acknowledge my debt to Professor John Colmer of the University of Adelaide for his generous assistance throughout the protracted labour of this thesis, and to Dr. Brian Elliott for his encouragement at every stage. I should also like to thank the librarians and staff of the various libraries upon whose resources I drew.

ABBREVIATIONS.

A.N.L.	Australian National Library, Canberra.
H.S.A.N.Z.	<u>Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand.</u>
J.R.G.S.L.	<u>Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London.</u>
M.L.	Mitchell Library, Sydney.
P.R.G.S.A. (S. Aust)	<u>Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (South Australian Branch).</u>
R.A.H.S.	Royal Australian Historical Society.
S.A. Archives	South Australian Archives, Adelaide.
S.A.P.P.	South Australian Parliamentary Paper.
V.P.P.	Victorian Parliamentary Paper.

Journals and Documents

Journals and documents of individual Australian explorers are cited in some bibliographical detail in a footnote on their first occurrence in the text and thereafter referred to by an abbreviated title appropriate in each case. For the full description see bibliography.

INTRODUCTION

The field of Australian exploration has been well served by the historian. There are the standard histories such as the History of the Discovery and Exploration of Australia, written by Tanison Woods in 1865, and Ernest Favenc's centenary publication The History of Australian Exploration from 1788 to 1888. There are more recent surveys such as The Discovery and Exploration of Australia by Edwin and Gerda Feeken, published in 1970. These are major works and they attempt a comprehensive view of the subject while the more specific questions and issues are examined in a variety of articles in learned journals. Taken as a whole, this represents an extensive body of writing; nevertheless there is a unity of approach which establishes it all as historical. It is the approach which identifies exploration almost as an adjunct to cartography: the explorer is a person who, through his journeys, helps to complete the details of a terrestrial map. Many will remember school texts which presented the progress of exploration through a series of maps of the continent, each with a decreasing, a slowly diminishing area of black at the centre, often with an emphatic question mark superimposed on it. Such representations helped to explain the explorers' task in specifically utilitarian terms: the solution of a geographical mystery, the search for good land, well-watered, the quest for minerals. The acceptance of such an explanation meant that the explorers' journals were

primarily the record of such practical pursuits and their chief value, therefore, consisted in the light they shed on the contracting darkness: their ability to reveal the hidden features of the map.

But it is possible to draw other maps - non-terrestrial ones - maps of the minds of the explorers and even of the society which sent them forth. To plot charts such as these it is necessary to approach the journals in another way; to see them not as utilitarian records solely but as records of men who found themselves in an unfamiliar environment where what they saw was conditioned by the assumptions and expectations they brought with them from outside. The journals become a significant body of writing, remarkable not only for the wealth of practical information they convey but also for the way they recreate the experience of exploration and discovery. Behind this recreation there is a shaping and ordering, an imaginative power at work. It might not be "imaginative" in the sense in which the word is commonly used by literary theorists to describe works which have reference to a world of the imagination, but it does suggest the quality of mind necessary to mould reaction and response to serve consciously literary ends. And this is surely sufficient to justify our acceptance of the journals of the explorers as literature.

What explorers looked for in their travels and what they recorded was largely conditioned by the instructions they received before their departure. This is true of the official expeditions but it applies to others as well, since there is evidence of cross-fertilization operating here. Such instructions are therefore important, as is the history of their modification. Although exploration began with the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, the first major undertakings followed the crossing the Blue Mountains in 1813 and this date has consequently been taken as marking the earlier limit of this thesis. The first detailed instructions were handed to Oxley in 1817 and these are therefore examined in detail; they are also important because they provided the model which was to guide later expeditions.

Instructions were significant in defining the scope of the observations explorers were expected to make, but they also provide an insight into the expectations which both the public and the explorers themselves had of exploration. At first these were visionary: visions of great rivers, of inland seas, of immense tracts of fertile land. There were visions, too, of future prosperity, of progress, of civilization, of national expansion. Little wonder, then, that explorers sometimes thought of themselves as agents of change and as necessary instruments in a divine plan. But such expectations were tenable only while discovery of good land was a

possibility. Once the fertile regions of the coastal fringe were behind them and explorers moved into the less favoured areas of the interior the concept of exploration changed. The centre imposed its own conditions and visionary motives withered. What was left was a desire for fame, a compulsion to be first, and such spiritual motives were independent of the type of country which the explorer discovered. He now felt himself to be engaged in a contest with the land itself and his success was measured not in fertile acres but in the intangibles of hardship, privation and endurance. He would measure his journeys not in acres but in achievements of a less material kind: in endurance, in perseverance, in strength of will. Exploration had become exploit.

Because this change in expectations and motives occurred as explorers moved beyond the littoral towards the centre, it is those men whose travels took them in this direction who are important in this study. Evans and Oxley pointed the way and they were followed by Sturt and Mitchell along the rivers of the interior. Grey opened the way from the west, and Leichhardt on his first journey, and Eyre in his great trek to the west, marked the northern and southern limits. Now began the movement towards the centre from a variety of points: Sturt and Gregory, Leichhardt in his attempt to traverse the continent, the great overland crossings of Stuart and Burke and Wills, the travels of Giles and Forrest,

Warburton and Tietkens. Giles claimed for himself the title of "the last of the Australian explorers" but others came after him: Winnecke, Wells, Lindsay. Nevertheless the great period of Australian exploration could with justice be said to close with Giles.

When the travels of these men are seen not as individual journeys, but as a sequence, as variations on the one theme, then it is clear that the narrative of exploration assumes the scale of epic. The individual identities of the explorers merge, the explorers become "the explorer"; their separate journeys become one journey and slowly at first, but with a gathering force Australia's first and perhaps only epic takes shape.

Professor Spate, in his introduction to Feeken's book, presents an opposing view. Of Australian exploration he writes:

It is a magnificent and a fascinating story; hardly an epic, for it lacks the simplicity and consistency of epic, although it has the epical qualities of courage, endurance, imagination, and devoted friendship. Rather is it a cycle of sagas, since a saga is 'a story of heroic achievement or marvellous adventure'.¹

1

O.H.K. Spate, "The Nature of Australian Exploration".
E.H.J. Feeken and Gerda E.E. Feeken, The Discovery and Exploration of Australia (Melbourne and Sydney, 1970), p. 32.

This view will only stand when each explorer and his individual journeys are closed between covers of dates and distances travelled. When these barriers - and they are historian's barriers - are removed the simplicity and consistency which Spate feels to be missing is clearly seen. The narrative of Australian exploration then conforms to the dictionary definition of epic as "a continuous narrative celebrating the achievements of one or more heroes". But there are additional reasons for preferring to regard it as suggestive of epic. One of the larger patterns of epic is the journey and this is an essential part of the narrative of exploration. As well, the region into which the hero moves must conform to a certain type: it must be a region of evil, or death; and the hero must undergo a series of ordeals and then return. That the body of exploration narratives satisfies these desiderata becomes particularly evident when the travellers' reactions to landscape are examined. While there were times, especially while they were traversing fertile regions, when explorers sought and found landscapes which corresponded to accepted standards of European landscape beauty or reminded them of landscapes they had known, as the centre of the continent was approached explorers wrote of it as a region that was hostile, a landscape which was characterized by their experiences of difficulty and distress - a landscape from which God appeared to have withdrawn. Such a landscape was suitable only for epic, for the struggle between the explorer and the land itself.

A different epic might have been possible if another opponent had appeared, if the aborigines had seemed to offer opposition to the entry of the Europeans on a sufficient scale. Explorers of other lands found their easy entry thwarted by hostile natives but the Australian newcomer found his opponent in the land. At first it had seemed that the aborigines might have become worthy opponents - there were times when explorers were reminded of the "noble savage" - but as the exploration of the continent proceeded they came to be despised as little more than a nuisance. In effect they exercised little influence on the explorer's task. The aborigines were not the opponents in an epic struggle; that role was reserved for the land itself.

To talk of epics and epic struggles implies an identifiable hero and the colonial imagination was quick to see one in the figure of the explorer. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the considerable quantity of verse which was inspired by the deeds and achievements of the explorers of Australia. Although it is verse of often indifferent quality it nevertheless represents the first poetic stirrings in the new land. This poetry, an extensive sample of which is collected in the Appendix at the end of this thesis, is first and foremost "Public" poetry in the sense that it first appeared in the columns of newspapers and periodicals. Of the forty-six poems examined in the body of the thesis, at least twenty were to

my knowledge first published in this way. The remainder (with the exception of several which were located in manuscript) are to be found in slim volumes, but there is reason to believe that a significant number of these also announced their birth in a similar fashion.

Of the poets, relatively few are still known. And the reputations of these few - Kendall, Gordon, "Orion" Horne, O'Hara - do not rest on the examples which have been included in this study. About some, nothing beyond their one poetic effort is remembered; others appear in bibliographies credited with one or two volumes of verse which are securely immured in the research collections of various libraries - to be given a brief licence to walk abroad in theses such as this. Others perhaps deserve a better fate. Henry Halloran, one of the more prolific writers of explorer verse, warrants inclusion in any history of Australian literature for his commemorative odes, but he is better remembered for his friendship with and support of writers such as Kendall. John Neilson's immortality is guaranteed not by his poetry but by his having fathered a more famous son and Catherine Martin is remembered more for her novels (published either anonymously or under pseudonyms) than for her lengthy volume The Explorers and Other Poems.

But not all the poets represented here sought literary fame. There were some who gained a modest recognition in other fields. Adelaide Ironside, included for her "Death of Leichhardt", established herself as a painter; she earns her place in Australia's cultural annals as the first Australian-born artist to study abroad. Margaret Thomas, too, is remembered rather as a sculptor and portrait painter than as a poet. There is, however, an interesting if tenuous link with Australian exploration. In Melbourne she studied under Charles Summers, the artist who created the Burke and Wills monument which now stands witness to that expedition. Edward Booth Loughran appears in earlier biographical compilations as a public-school teacher and journalist, a member and then chief of the Melbourne Hansard staff for twenty years. Frederick Charles Urquart, whose poetic output was limited to one volume, served in the North Queensland Mounted Police and rose eventually to the rank of Commissioner. He completed his public career as Administrator of the Northern Territory.

The verse produced by such diverse talents was "public" in the sense that it appeared first in newspapers and periodicals. It was also public in tone. It was commemorative verse, written in many cases in immediate response to a significant event, by people who felt that it was necessary to record their reactions to such portentous happenings in a literary way. Because it is public commemorative verse it

relies on stock literary formulas; it is only rarely that one finds evidence of originality. The vein is thin and the outcrops rare. But there is value in the overburden of automatic response for there are times when its very weight is a measure of the public reaction. It is therefore possible to find in verse such as this sufficient that is real and valuable; to find evidence of responses to the achievements of the explorers sufficient to indicate colonial assumptions and reactions. And paramount among these was the certainty that the explorers of Australia were heroes.

The discovery by colonial poets of the explorer-hero satisfied two needs: the need to prove that heroes were possible in Australia and the need to find in the colonial situation a landscape appropriate to heroic action. In their quest for heroes, colonial poets were giving a local expression to a preoccupation which was significant in nineteenth century British and European thought. It was, without doubt, one of the dominant preoccupations of the age. Poets saw in the explorer a lineal descendant of past heroes, whether they were classical, military or patriotic, but they were also eager to establish their own catalogue of heroic deeds. The explorer achieved his apotheosis as the revealer of the continent, as the one whose task it was to lift the veil, and his heroic labours were set in a landscape drawn from the model conceived by the explorers themselves: a landscape of aridity and

xx

silence - hostile to the entry of the outsider and to life itself. The explorer's struggle appeared to epitomise the colonial struggle against a strange environment, and the setting for this confrontation was transformed into a legendary one. Thus the explorer and his landscape opponent have assumed heroic proportions.

It is this opponent, this legendary landscape, which sets the Australian explorer-hero apart from heroes of other lands and other times. This is the landscape which emerges in the poetry written around the disappearance of Leichhardt. Poets sought to account for the lost explorer and they constructed a landscape model which they felt to be appropriate for his final confrontation and death. But they postulated another landscape as well, an ideal one in which it was hoped the explorer might find perpetual peace. It was a cool, green landscape, compounded of vision and nostalgia, based not on the observed Australian landscape but on dreams and memories of Europe, and perhaps harking back to the early days of exploration when explorers moved securely through regions of fertility and promise. The traveller's loss and death had denied the validity of these glowing expectations, replacing them with a harsh and bitter reality. Exploration which had been conceived in hope was stillborn.

A similar process is revealed in the poetry written in response to the Burke and Wills expedition. Again, the landscape of the expedition's closing stages is the legendary one of the centre, but poets now focussed on those qualities which marked the heroes' deaths as lonely. The landscape was rejected as hostile and poets supported the public demand that the explorers' bones must not be allowed to remain in such a region. At this point one enters a world of paradox. The explorer, whose task it had been to reveal the land came in the end to reinforce the concept of an alien environment. Poets turned from the harsh landscape of the centre towards the security of the coastal fringe where at least there were scenes that fed memories of Europe. And, finally, the hope that exploration would provide associations in the new land was shattered by the reality of the explorer's lonely death. Poets were left with heroes who rested either in a spot which existed only in dream, or safe in the settled landscape which skirted an alien core.



CHAPTER 1

EXPLORATION AND THE WORLD OF FACT

There have been few attempts to assess the journals of the Australian explorers as literature. Even when the attempt has been made critics and literary historians have been divided in their approach; some have accepted them as literature but have found them deficient as literary works; others have been prepared to accept some, but not all. Still others have rejected the notion that they can be regarded as literature at all.

G. B. Barton, in one of the earliest surveys of Australian literature published in 1866, was prepared to include the journals, even to the extent of setting aside a separate section for them under the heading of "Voyages and Travels". Not that this inclusion need imply any special generosity on the part of the compiler, as the survey is sufficiently wide to include newspapers and magazines as well. Barton is able to see some literary merit in the journals, even though he is also forced to draw attention to their limitations.

Few books are more attractive than these journals of our explorers, notwithstanding the want of polish in their style, and too often the monotony of their contents. There is no absence of dramatic incident, while the scenes described are frequently interesting in the extreme. 1

The explorers, unfortunately, lack the "power of word-painting" and consequently their writings are "by no means so graphic as they might have been".² It is a mixed reaction, implying both a definition of what constitutes literature and an evaluation of them as literature. Barton seems to have in mind a definition which involves the dramatic presentation of incident and the transmission of interest in the scenes described, and the journals appear to satisfy both of these requirements.

Some thirty years later a more damaging judgement was handed down when Turner and Sutherland, in their publication The Development of Australian Literature, dismissed the journals with the following comment:

1
G.B. Barton, Literature in New South Wales (Sydney, 1866), p.146. In another compilation Barton is prepared to include a passage from one of Mitchell's published journals. See G.B. Barton (ed), The Poets and Prose Writers of New South Wales (Sydney, 1866), pp.215-218.

2
Barton, Literature in New South Wales, p.148.

Few of these intrepid veterans had the art of dressing their narratives in vivid, picturesque language. As a rule, while full of valuable information for the geographer, they are only expanded diaries of daily trials and hourly hardships. 3

Provided that the word "vivid" can bear the weight required, it seems that Turner and Sutherland are being guided by a definition that sees a literary work as one which demonstrates an ability to bring to life scenes and events. If this reading is too precise then the journals are being judged mainly on a question of a polished style.

Neither of these surveys, however, attempts to account for its inclusions and exclusions through a definition of literature as such. Later compilations and histories were more explicit. Macartney, in the preface to E. Morris Miller's revised and expanded bibliography, offers the following one :

As to what is and is not literature, the word is here used to denote writings intentionally imaginative in substance or treatment or stimulating an aesthetic response by qualities of style, as distinct from writing which presents ideas or matters of fact without that effect. 4

3

H.G. Turner and A. Sutherland, The Development of Australian Literature (London, 1898), pp.119-120.

4

E. Morris Miller and F.T. Macartney, Australian Literature: a bibliography to 1938; extended to 1950 (Sydney, 1956), p. vii.

Macartney, like Turner and Sutherland, adheres to the notion of a literary language but this is only part of his definition, since he introduces the condition that literary works need to be "intentionally imaginative in substance or treatment". Without examining the relevance of the word "intentionally", there are still difficulties in accepting the difference between "substance" and "treatment", since it is presumably possible to have an imaginative treatment of a factual event. However, when Macartney comes to apply his definition to the earliest writings produced in the infant settlement of Sydney, he feels justified in excluding a journal such as Watkin Tench's which, although he finds it lively, "hardly has the quality whereby such journals sometimes pass definitely into literature, and takes its place instead with the various accounts of discovery and exploration".⁵ His argument that writing which is concerned with "ideas" is outside the scope of literature unless the style stimulates an aesthetic response also needs to be qualified by recent discussions of the relationship between literature and ideas such as the one to be found in the chapter "The Meaning of a Literary Idea" in Lionel Trilling's The Liberal Imagination.

⁵
ibid., p. 2

The most comprehensive assessment to date of the literature of exploration is to be found in H.M. Green's A History of Australian Literature. Since Green's approach is essentially historical, one would be reluctant to assign a normative role to his criticism, but the very size of his survey suggests an authority and significance that is difficult to ignore. While he is prepared to admit that there are explorers who possess "some literary gift", he is not prepared to extend the concession to all, and he consigns their writings collectively to the category of descriptive prose.

The outline and main bulk of Australian exploration was almost completed by 1850, and since it happens that Australia's greatest explorers have mostly possessed, in various degrees and kinds, some literary gift, between them they contributed to the literature of the Period (1789-1850) a considerable body of descriptive prose.⁶

Green appears to suggest that whatever literary value the writings possess is due largely to accident, but his doubts about the validity of such a judgement are evident in his following comment :

⁶
H.M. Green, A History of Australian Literature (Sydney, 1961), i, p. 36.

Or perhaps it does not merely happen; it may be that the urge to find out what lies beyond the ranges and across the deserts implies imagination, and when this exists in an alert and trained observer, such as a capable explorer must be, and when also he is obliged to keep a journal, it will be scarcely surprising if his experiences find sometimes appropriate expression.⁷

Not that this completely removes the accidental achievement of literary status, but it at least grants the explorer the facility of imagination.

On the other hand Green maintains that those explorers whose journals are nothing more than "mere matter of fact" have left nothing "that deserves record in a History" such as his. Having dismissed such journals he then advances a definition of literature: works which demonstrate the ability "at times not merely to record but to re-create fact and event, to appreciate the humorous and to rise to the height of strange and hard and sometimes tragic adventures".⁸ Green takes as his example the account from the journal of Gregory Blaxland describing the difficulties which had to be overcome in the crossing of the Blue Mountains in 1813.

⁷
ibid., i, p. 36

⁸
ibid., i, pp. 36-37.

While he concedes that this record is "extremely terse and matter-of-fact", he feels that he can perceive a "glimpse" of the "sense of mystery and apprehension" with which some of the party responded to the barrier which the mountains represented.

Essentially, then, Green's definition depends on the re-creation of fact and event; to decide the success or otherwise of the re-creation requires evaluation, and is another matter. A similar definition is advanced by Kathleen Fitzpatrick in the introduction to her Australian Explorers, a collection of extracts taken from the writings of a number of explorers. Although her task is not primarily a literary one she offers the observation that :

The journals of the Australian explorers cannot be classed as works of art, but most of them are well written. Sturt wrote well, but his descriptions are often rather general and lack the examples and details which bring men and places to life in a reader's mind. ⁹

She offers no definition of a work of art (and one would hardly expect that she should) but a concept of literature is certainly implied. Moreover, she is prepared to rank the explorers according to their literary skill: Grey is the "most polished writer" and Giles is the "most naturally gifted".

⁹
K. Fitzpatrick (ed), Australian Explorers (London, 1958), p. 28

The particular qualities which Kathleen Fitzpatrick finds in Giles's journals are used to justify her estimation and he is held up as "the closest observer among the Australian explorers and a vivid reporter of what he saw. He also had a strong sense of drama and was a first-rate story-teller".¹⁰

Undoubtedly the journals of the explorers have created difficulties for all of the people attempting to cover the field of Australian literature. While there is not apparent unanimity in their judgements there is enough common ground on which to construct a literary edifice with the journals appearing, if not as a pillar, at least as a part of the fabric. In almost all definitions advanced attention has been drawn to the writer's ability to re-create fact and event. In some cases this is expressed as a form of dramatic presentation while in others it is described as an ability to bring men and scenes to life - presumably in the mind of the reader. On only one occasion is reference made to the necessity of imagination. It is this insistence on imagination as an essential quality of a literary work that now needs to be examined.

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ibid., p.28.

Rene Wellek, in his Theory of Literature, deals with a number of possible definitions of literature: one inclines to the view that "everything in print" is literature, while another asserts that the study of literature is properly the study of "great books". He discards these in preference for one which sees literature as essentially imaginative. Here it becomes necessary to distinguish between the literary, everyday and scientific uses of language. Scientific language will, "ideally", be purely denotative; it will tend towards a system of signs. Literary language, on the other hand, has an expressive function :

it conveys the tone and attitude of the speaker or writer. And it does not merely state and express what it says; it also wants to influence the attitude of the reader, persuade him, and ultimately change him. ¹¹

The distinction is not as clear as one would like, a point that is apparent to Wellek, one would suggest, from the tentative nature of the account of scientific language. The division can hardly be as absolute as this; it is rather a matter of degree.

11

Rene Wellek and W. Austin, Theory of Literature (London, 1949), p.12.

While scientific language may strive for the ideal, its achievement is doubtful, except in those situations where science employs the language of signs, as in mathematics or physics.

It is also doubtful whether the language used by the explorers can be classified as scientific, although they were certainly called upon to exercise a scientific function, as will be shown later. Wellek is also aware of the difficulties of achieving a clear demarcation since he is prepared to recognise the existence of transitional forms such as "the essay, biography, and much rhetorical literature".¹²

But Wellek holds out for the definition which he had advanced earlier: the term "literature" is confined to those works where reference is made to a world of fiction, a world of the imagination. But what then is to happen to those works, normally regarded as "imaginative", where reference is made to a world of fact? To works for example which are based on the records of Australian exploration such as Francis Webb's poem "Leichhardt in Theatre" or Bill Reed's play Burke's Company which draws its

12

ibid., p.14.

inspiration from the Burke and Willis tragedy? Or are these to be catalogued as examples of still other transitional forms?

Wellek is not alone among literary theorists in seeking to base a definition of literature on the notion of imagination, to regard a literary work as an imaginative thing. Graham Hough, in his book An Essay on Criticism, is as assertive in his claims.

An imaginative work remains an imaginative work even on a very low level; but a work of scholarship, philosophy or what not only becomes an imaginative work by exhibiting the literary qualities in an exceptionally high degree - qualities that may, strictly regarded, be irrelevant to its main purpose. 13

Graham Hough has in mind a different sort of imagination: there is no appeal to a world of fiction as an essential ingredient. And Hough, like Wellek, is prepared to admit that there are transitional forms, or what he calls "forms of mixed intentions", such as biographies and autobiographies. He admits, for example, that biography owes an allegiance to fact, and autobiography deserves to be considered as literature because here the material is more

malleable, since it is more dependant on recollection and subjective impression.¹⁴ If one accepts the implication that the process being described here is an imaginative one, then it seems to share an affinity with the process which was discussed earlier: the re-creation of event. The term "malleable" implies a moulding and shaping of material, an ordering of experience so that it is brought to life in the mind of the reader.

It seems possible, then, to construct a definition of literature which will adequately account for the inclusion of the explorers' journals in a literary study. A literary work could then be held to be a work which makes reference to either a world of fiction or of fact; when reference is made to a world of fact, events will be shaped and ordered by the imagination, through recollection and subjective impression. The language will not confine itself to statement but will seek to influence and condition the reader, to impart reactions and responses important to the writer. Such a definition seems to present an adequate account of the journals of the Australian explorers, and justifies an examination of them as literature.

¹⁴

ibid., pp. 54-55.

Earlier commentators were faced with a number of difficulties in assigning an adequate definition to the writings of the explorers. It was difficult to decide whether or not they were literature when they reflected the variety of functions the explorer was called upon to perform. The journals were not only the personal records of men, who, for whatever reason, ranged beyond the known limits of settlement; they were also records of specific scientific observation. This is especially true of those explorers who were officially appointed to undertake expeditions.

Exploration began almost as soon as the first arrivals stepped ashore, but these early expeditions were random, unconcerted affairs. Even the crossing of the Blue Mountains in 1813 was a privately sponsored undertaking. Governor Macquarie despatched George Evans to follow up the work of Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth, but the report which he submitted on his return aroused so much embarrassment when it was received in London because of its simple, almost naive observations that a set of instructions to guide future explorers was drawn.

up by the Colonial Office and forwarded to Macquarie.¹⁵

These instructions were drafted in the form of a memorandum to the colonial governor with the intention that he should issue them to the leaders of future exploring parties. They are important for two reasons: they throw considerable light on the manifold functions which the records of the explorers were intended to serve, and they became the model for future official reports.

It is most desirable that any person travelling into the interior should keep a detailed Journal of his proceedings. In this Journal all Observations and occurrences of every kind, with all their circumstances, however minute, and however familiar they may have been rendered by custom, should be carefully noted down; and it is also desirable that he should be as circumstantial as possible in describing the general appearance of the country, its surface, soil, animals, vegetables and minerals, every thing that relates to the population, the peculiar manners,

When Evans's journal was read in London it prompted the following comment from Bathurst:

Although Mr. Evans is entitled to great praise for the perseverance with which he overcame the Natural Obstacles opposed to the Progress of his Discoveries, and the Activity with which he afterwards pursued his course to the Westward, yet he does not appear from the Style of his Journal to be qualified by his Education for the task of giving the Information respecting this New Country, which it is so desirable to obtain.

customs, language, &c., of the individual natives, or the tribes of them that he may meet with. 16

The traveller was allowed little leeway in his account; it was to be detailed and comprehensive, and mere familiarity was to be no excuse. This part of the memorandum, however, was really in the nature of a preamble, the warp of the fabric. More detailed instructions then followed, until the final pattern of the journal was fully woven. For example, under the general heading Climate the explorer was required to observe and record details of the region's

heat, cold, moisture, winds, rains, &c.; the temperature regularly registered from Fahrenheit's thermometer, as observed at two or three periods of the day.

This was only one of a number of scientific tasks which the explorer was asked to perform and record. Other sections of the instructions directed his attention to the mountains, rivers, minerals, and the animal and vegetable productions of the country. Some of these observations could be best recorded in a series of tables and to this extent they fall outside the scope of literature, but others could only be implemented and recorded in a literary form. Both were required of the traveller.

But scientific observation and recording were to form only part of the explorer's occupation. Britain's economic interests were not to be neglected and so the traveller's attention was directed towards the botanical productions of the country,

and particularly those that are applicable to any useful purpose, whether in medicine, dyeing, &c.; any scented woods, or such as may be adapted for cabinet work, or furniture, and more particularly such woods as may appear to be useful in ship building; of all which it would be desirable to procure small specimens, labelled and numbered, so that an easy reference may be made to them in the Journal, to ascertain the quantities in which they are found, and the situations in which they grow.

The old precepts of Mercantilism still exerted an influence on Britain's government: the twin pillars of trade and the navy had to be maintained. The need to advance the economic interests of the State had long been a fundamental reason for exploration, predating the interest in scientific investigation as such.

Not that everything that the explorer was required to do was "seared with trade", this was also the age of the dilettante, the gifted amateur, which encouraged the establishment of great collections in the natural sciences. Consequently the interest in the exotic and the unusual was not forgotten.

With respect to the animals, vegetables, and minerals, it is desirable that specimens of the most remarkable should be preserved as far as the means of the traveller will admit, and especially the seeds of any plants not hitherto known: when the preservation of specimens is impossible, drawings or detailed accounts of them are most desirable.

Nor were the original inhabitants of the region neglected. The list of "most important subjects" to which the explorer's attention was directed included the natives' "means of subsistence", their vocabulary, their form of government and their religion.

It has already been pointed out that the explorer is being asked to record his observations in a variety of ways. On the one hand, he is to record scientific information of the type that most readily admits of tabulation. On the other hand, there are observations that can be only set down in a more literary way. Nor is the demarcation always as clear-cut as this suggests. The despatch which set out the pattern of observations was issued for the first time by Macquarie in 1817, to the explorer John Oxley on his expedition to the interior. It is therefore possible to examine Oxley's journal in the light of these requirements.

We know that Oxley was aware of the Colonial Office's Memorandum because it is bound in with his published

journal as an appendix. But his awareness can also be traced directly in the journal itself. Many of the scientific observations that Oxley was asked to make could be best expressed in tabular form, and he does precisely this. The readings of the thermometer taken on the requisite three occasions each day, together with notes on the wind and general weather conditions, appear as tables. Some geographical information is recorded on maps. But the scientific information is not restricted to these tables and maps; as Oxley's journal entry for April 22, 1817 indicates :

April 22 - A clear and frosty morning. Last night was the coldest we had yet experienced, the thermometer being at six o'clock as low as 26. We felt the cold most severely, being far beyond what we had been accustomed to on the coast; the difference of temperature in twelve hours being upwards of twenty degrees of cold. 17

The table also records the low temperature reading of that particular day, but the entry in the journal goes beyond the bare scientific note. There is a personal response to the intense cold which lifts the account above mere matter-of-fact. What he is evoking is the experience of another world, the

world beyond the mountains, where the coastal expectations no longer hold. He is, incidentally, pointing to a fact of Australian exploration which was to receive comment again and again in later expeditions. The extreme daily range of temperature became the cause of great hardship, especially in the inland towards the centre.

These methods of recording temperature, the impersonal tabulation and the evoking of a personal response, were not the only ones which Oxley followed in presenting the climate of the new region. At times he prefaced his entry for the day with a bare note : "the weather cold and frosty" or "during the night there was light rain".

Oxley was thorough in his adherence to his instructions; and, since the chief reason for the expedition was the investigation of the Lachlan River beyond the point where Evans had left it in 1813, one would expect that a considerable amount of attention would be given to this feature of the landscape. The explorer is especially careful to record its sinuosities.

We were obliged to keep at a small distance from the river, owing to large lagoons, partly full of water, which would have otherwise interrupted our course, or rather our multitude of courses; for I never saw a stream with such opposite windings, and no

one reach was a quarter of a mile long, so that it may be said to resemble a collar of SS. (83)

Even this apparently bald statement carries with it a note of annoyance at having to alter his plans, a note which is suggested by the reference to a world beyond the journal, to the world of Oxley's memories. There are times when the party's success in tracing the river is reflected in the explorer's reactions to the landscape and to this extent the description takes its colour from the writer's mood.

Nothing can be more irksome than the tedious days' journeys we are obliged to make through a country in which there is not the smallest variety, each day's occurrences and scenes being but a recapitulation of the former: our patience would frequently be exhausted, were we not daily reanimating ourselves with the hopes that the morrow will bring us to a better country, and render a journey, the labour of which has hitherto been ill repaid, of some service to the colony, and of some satisfaction to the expectations which have been formed of its result. (65)

Such a description could hardly be classified as objective. The entire passage oscillates between what is, and what might have been. The words which define Oxley's reactions become associated with the landscape itself: the inner and outer worlds fuse. It is only when his hopes of discovering

fertile land materialise as the party nears the township of Bathurst that Oxley reacts with sympathy to the landscape through which he is moving. Admittedly there are several influences at work in his response, apart from the relief that the task is almost completed.

A mile and a half brought us into the valley which we had seen on our first descending into the glen: imagination cannot fancy anything more beautifully picturesque than the scene which burst upon us. The breadth of the valley to the base of the opposite gently rising hills was, between three and four miles, studded with fine trees, upon a soil which for richness can nowhere be excelled; its extent north and south we could not see; to the west it was bounded by the lofty rocky ranges by which we had entered it; this was covered to the summit by cypresses and acacia in full bloom: a few trees of the *sterculia heterophylla*, with their bright green foliage, gave additional beauty to the scene. In the centre of this charming valley ran a strong and beautiful stream, its bright transparent waters dashing over a gravelly bottom, intermingled with large stones, forming at short intervals considerable pools, in which the rays of the sun were reflected with a brilliancy equal to that of the most polished mirror. (184)

It could be argued that much of the attraction of the scene is due to the contrast between it and the level country through which Oxley had passed, and there would be some justification for this, even though some of the landscape

elements recur, especially the cypresses and the acacia, and something of the excitement of the contrast is brought to life in Oxley's describing how the scene "burst" upon them. In part, the attraction would seem to reside in the greater economic value of the land, with its fertile soil and apparently more useful timber. If this is so then the explorer's hopes have been reanimated and this too emerges in the account. But the most significant feature of the passage emerges from the way in which Oxley is drawing on another, ideal, landscape: a picturesque landscape which is the only possible standard for him. He is judging the landscape by established European standards of beauty and in this valley the ideal and the actual merge. This fusion is sufficient to release his enthusiastic response and to this extent the explorer goes beyond the requirements of his instructions and calls in outside criteria, and grafts onto the description his own response. The force of this response, which is an essentially imaginative one, shapes and orders the factual elements of the experience and justifies the explorer's journal as a work of literature.

Although the dependence of the explorer on European standards of landscape beauty will be discussed in some detail in a later chapter it is worth noting, at this point, that the Australian explorers were not alone in their inability

to see the landscape through other than European eyes. Mungo Park, whose travels in Africa were prosecuted in the closing years of the eighteenth century, was as conditioned as Oxley by his European preconceptions. On his expedition to trace the course of the Niger he spent some time in the village of Pisanía on the Gambia River, and he found little to attract him in the surrounding countryside.

The country itself being an immense level, and very generally covered with wood, presents a tiresome and gloomy uniformity to the eye; but although nature has denied to the inhabitants the beauties of romantic landscapes, she has bestowed on them, with a liberal hand, the more important blessings of fertility and abundance.¹⁸

Park's initial comment could as easily have come from Oxley's pen. Another explorer of the same region, Richard Lander, had his desires for romantic scenery abundantly fulfilled, as the entry in his journal for April 25, 1830 demonstrates.

The scenery of today has been more interesting and lovely than any we have heretofore beheld. The path circled around a magnificent cultivated valley, hemmed in almost on every side with mountains of granite of the most grotesque and irregular shapes, the summits of which are covered with stunted trees, and the hollows in their slopes occupied by clusters of huts,

whose inmates have fled thither as a place of security against the ravages of the war-men that infest the plains. A number of strange birds resort to this valley, many of whose notes were rich, full, and melodious, while others were harsh and disagreeable; but, generally speaking, the plumage was various, splendid, and beautiful. ...It is the contemplation of such beautiful objects as these, all so playful and so happy - or the more sublime ones of dark waving forests, plains of vast extent, or stupendous mountains, that gives the mind the most sensible emotions of delight and grandeur, leading it insensibly

'To look from nature up to
Nature's God'. 19

The various elements which were to dominate European taste in landscape beauty are present in this description of Lander's: the picturesque, with its lateral growths of the irregular and the grotesque, and the romantic and the sublime. Explorers could find examples that satisfied their expectations in Africa more frequently than was possible in Australia but observers in the southern continent continued to seek them. Not only the explorers such as Oxley, but other observers were as unresponsive to, or as repelled by, the monotony that seemed to prevail. William Haygarth recorded his antipodean experiences in his Recollections of Bush Life in Australia, published in 1861, and warned his

English readers of the dearth of variety in the landscape.

From his first few days' journey in the interior the traveller would be apt to form a very unfavourable opinion of the Australian scenery. Shortly after leaving the capital he plunges into a vast mass of forest, through which the route is very uninviting: the trees, which are nearly all of the eucalyptus or gum species (amongst the least picturesque of the forest tribes), present little or no variety, either in trunk or foliage, except where the bark, hanging in tattered festoons from the branches, reminds him that he is in the land of contrarities; the sun shines with a ceaseless glare, and, gaining its full power soon after its rise, abates not a jot in its vigour, until, with seeming reluctance and an evident promise of another warm visit on the morrow, it sinks below the horizon. Not a bird is to be seen, not a note enlivens the ear; the awful silence is broken only by the dreary cry of the locust, which from somewhere or other (for, as we are told of deceased postboys and donkeys, nobody ever sees one) keeps up the same sing-song chirp, which rings in one's ears long after the sound itself has died away. ²⁰

This description, with its accent on monotony and contrariety and the "awful silence" of the Australian landscape, is as near to an average response as one could find. Haygarth is unable to respond to the scenery because it fails to

measure up to the standards he is applying. When it does, when the monotony gives way to variety, he is prepared to concede its charms.

Yet Australia has many beauties; and though its wood-scenery is monotonous, its plains and "open forest" can boast a delightful variety. Many spots are to be met with which are truly picturesque, and these, like oases in the desert, are doubly agreeable, from the contrast.²¹

But these "spots" were not limited to open country; many observers found examples of picturesque or romantic scenery in the mountainous regions. Thus the author of Settlers and Convicts found his European tastes satisfied in the Shoalhaven Gorges.

No description can convey an idea of the savage grandeur of the district of the Shoalhaven River and its gullies. Blocks of country many miles in extent stand up square and wall sided from the level around, their bleak flat table-tops among the clouds, and you wander among their bases as if along the streets of some forsaken giants' city. In other places the descent from the higher land into the gullies is so far, so wood shadowed and obscure, so steep, that it seems, as you go down, down, down, as if you were travelling to the darksome depths of a nether world. But then again this descent once effected you find yourself among romantic flats of

21

ibid., p.6.

the richest soil covered with ferns and rank grass, amidst which meander fine broad streams of crystal water, icy cold, overhung and bordered by magnificent trees; the vast gum-tree ages old, and hollowed at the butt by the bush fires of centuries long past, so that a whole party might camp within. 22

The European imagination has found something which approaches the ideal and the response is immediate and complete. For Harris, as for Oxley, this is the standard.

When Oxley comes to deal specifically with the vegetation he encounters, his own standards and those implied in his instructions merge. The officials who framed his instructions had economic benefits in mind. There could be little attraction in trees which offered no obvious practical uses :

Within one hundred yards of the bank of the river, and there alone, were seen the only timber trees we had met with in the country; if huge unshapen eucalypti, which could not afford a straight plank ten feet long, may be so denominated. (83)

And it is not only that they appear without utility; they are beyond any possibility of beauty: they are "unshapen". To have been able to describe them as "misshapen" would have allowed Oxley to have at least admitted that they were

grotesque, since even here standards might be said to apply. One Australian tree, the acacia pendula, seems to be an exception:

The soil of these plains is a light clayey loam, very wet in many places; they were fringed round with that beautiful tree, the acacia pendula, which here seems to perform the part of the willow in Europe;... (27)

But it is only seen as beautiful because it conforms to a European standard.

While there are frequent references in the journal to plants which the expedition encountered, Oxley seems to have left the collection of specimens of new varieties to his botanist, Cunningham. But remarkable and exotic specimens were not restricted to botany; when oddities from other areas of the natural sciences were discovered Oxley takes it upon himself to give an account of them. There does not seem to have been many of them, but the most noteworthy was an immense fish caught in the Lachlan, which he describes.

One man in less than an hour caught eighteen large fish, one of which was a curiosity from its immense size, and the beauty of its colours. In shape and general form it most resembled a cod, but was speckled over with brown, blue, and yellow spots, like a leopard's skin; its gills and belly a clear white, the tail and fins a dark brown. It weighed entire seventy pounds, and

without the entrails sixty-six
pounds:... (24)

Although Oxley doesn't succeed in breaking through the restrictive demands of his instructions in his description, he does make an attempt with some disappointingly unimaginative comparisons. And as though the oddity of the catch hadn't been sufficiently brought to the reader's attention, the description is followed by a table of measurements, including everything that would yield a figure or a fraction to the explorer's rule from the length of the fish to the depth of its swallow!

Oxley's instructions had also directed his attention to the native inhabitants, but unfortunately few were sighted during the course of the journey. In place of account and description, the reader is offered an explanation.

I am by no means surprised at the paucity of natives that have been seen: it would be impossible in wet seasons to inhabit these marshes [of the Lachlan], and equally so for them to retreat in times of flood. (32)

Despite the paucity he makes every effort to complete his programme. There are several attempts to compile a vocabulary of the natives' language, but they are unsuccessful. In the absence of observation the explorer is forced back onto deduction.

The inhabitants of these wilds must be very few, and I think it impossible for more than a family to subsist together; a greater number would only starve each other; indeed their deserted fires and camps which we occasionally saw, never appeared to have been occupied by more than six or eight persons. The scarcity of food must also prevent the raising of many children, from the absolute impossibility of supporting them until of an age to provide for themselves. (46)

The entire argument here is built upon a number of assumptions about the natives' way of life. These assumptions derive from Oxley's European experience and they are imposed on the present evidence. It is a straightforward example, but it does indicate the way in which the mind of the observer is re-structuring his factual world.

Throughout the compilation of the journal Oxley appears to have kept his instructions clearly in mind. At no stage does he depart from the practice of recording the expedition's progress by means of daily entries, as a quick perusal will show. Indeed, it is difficult to see what other form the writing could have taken; the injunction which opens the Memorandum would itself indicate this. The detailed instructions and the journal form together provide the framework but the result transcends them both, because it is the mind of the author which selects and shapes. At no stage is there a simple recounting of every event which transpired on a given day; what emerges is the preoccupation

of the author at that point. When Oxley is concerned to trace the Lachlan to its termination it is this which is emphasised; when the party is labouring under extreme deprivation of water it is this which underlies the selection of incident. At very few points is there a mere record of fact. The instructions issued by the Colonial Office serve obviously as guide lines, but their effect is not to limit the re-creation of event. It is still possible for the explorer to satisfy them and to transcend them.

3

While the instructions issued by the Colonial Office allowed the explorer sufficient freedom to move beyond mere scientific tabulation, they undoubtedly exerted a considerable influence on the type and the scope of the observations which Oxley made. For this reason it is important that some account be given of the background of these instructions - that some attempt be made to indicate their origins.

The Royal Society of London, in the first volume of its Philosophical Transactions which appeared in 1666, published a list of "Directions for Sea-men, bound for far Voyages". The preamble to these directions stressed the importance of direct observation, since the Society was

committed to the study of "Nature rather than Books".

The advantage which England enjoyed "of making Voyages into all parts of the World" could be utilised in the collection of data and so the Society asked one of its Fellows

to think upon and set down some Directions for Sea-men going into the East & West-Indies, the better to capacitate them for making such observations abroad, as may be pertinent and suitable for their purpose; of which the said Sea-men should be desired to keep an exact Diary, delivering at their return a fair Copy thereof to the Lord High Admiral of England, his Royal Highness the Duke of York, and another to Trinity-house to be preserved by the R. Society. 23

Such a diary was to be as comprehensive as possible. It was to include observations of "the Declination of the Compass, or its variation from the Meridian", details of the "Ebbings and Flowings of the Sea", "Plotts and Draughts of prospect of Coasts" and soundings and details of the sea bed. Events beyond the ordinary were also to be noted and recorded :

all Extraordinary Meteors, Lightnings, Thunders, Ignes fatui, Comets, &c. marking still the places and times of their appearing, continuance.&c.

The scientific purpose behind these instructions is clear. Even the interest in the unusual is in line with the Royal Society's early preoccupations.²⁴ While the directions were primarily framed to meet the needs of a burgeoning scientific curiosity, England's trade was not neglected. Voyagers were directed to "keep a Register of all changes of Wind and Weather at all houres" and were further enjoined

above all to take exact care to observe the Trade-Winds, about what degrees of Latitude and Longitude they first begin, where and when they cease, or change, or grow stronger or weaker, and how much, as near and exact as may be.

These directions, as their title indicates, were intended for mariners only and so no provision was made for observations that might be made on land. Even though seamen were instructed to make "Plotts and Draughts" of prospect of Coasts" it was assumed that these would be sketched from the sea, since they were intended to act as guides for later navigators.

The "exact Diary" which the Royal Society hoped its directions would produce would be an obvious scientific

24

Early numbers of the Society's Transactions include reports of monstrous heads, the presence of milk in veins, etc.

document since it would comprise little more than tables of readings and calculations. But the collection of the material must have proved more difficult than had been thought initially, because the Society found it necessary to reissue the directions in greater detail in the following year, and tables were included which were designed to facilitate the computations involved.

The directions are important for the encouragement they gave to the collection of scientific data, but they were even more significant in that they initiated a tradition of recording observations. Not that the records needed to be literary in any sense: the observer, while he might be highly trained, needed to be little more than a sophisticated recording instrument.

The issuing of these directions in 1666 was only the beginning of the Royal Society's direct interest in the promotion of exploration. During the eighteenth century there were several occasions when the Society initiated arrangements to observe the transit of the planet Venus. In both 1760 and 1769 the Council of the Society was responsible for the selection of observers and the provision of instruments as well as the drafting of instructions. When it was decided in 1773 that an expedition to the Arctic should be undertaken it was again left to the Society to prepare

the necessary instructions and directions for the party.²⁵

None of these expeditions, of course, have any connection with Australia, but they do show the Society's continuing interest in exploration and they also demonstrate the influence it exerted over the tasks the explorer was expected to perform and the observations he was asked to make and record. So great was the Society's control that even when the Government was directly involved in the promotion of an expedition the drafting of the instructions was left to it.

In June, 1776, the Royal Society began to discuss yet another expedition to observe the transit of Venus, scheduled for 1769. Throughout that year and the next various proposals were examined and in February 1768 the following entry appears in the Society's transactions :

A Memorial to the King was signed & sealed petitioning for money to defray the charges of different Observations about £4000 & recommending an Obs in Southern Lat.²⁶

²⁵ H. Lyons, The Royal Society 1660-1940 (Cambridge, 1944), p. 190.

²⁶ Quoted in J.C. Beaglehole, The Journals of Captain James Cook (Cambridge, 1955), i, p.512.

The memorial was successful and plans were put in hand for the expedition. While the scientific results of the expedition were disappointing (it had been hoped that the transit would help to achieve an accurate figure for the distance of the sun from the earth) its practical consequences were not: it led to the European penetration of the Pacific and to the discovery of the east coast of Australia.

As every Australian school child knows, the command of the expedition was given to Lieutenant James Cook. He was also appointed one of the two official observers by the Royal Society. His initial instructions, those covering the actual transit, were drawn up by the Astronomer Royal, but it is certain that the Society played a part, and a prominent one, as well. The Astronomer Royal, Maskelyne, was a member of the Society and the instructions are recorded in the Council's minutes.²⁷ There is additional evidence of the Society's involvement in the fact that, in 1765, it had been granted a Royal Warrant which conferred on certain of its officers the right to act as Visitors to the Royal Observatory.²⁸

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C.R. Weld, A History of the Royal Society (London, 1848), ii, p.35.

28

ibid., p. 39.

Once the transit had been observed additional instructions came into force and again it is likely, because of the previous history of co-operation between the Society and the Government, that its help was sought and secured in framing them. By these additional instructions Cook was ordered to seek out the great southern continent, the existence of which had long been maintained by European geographers. If the continent were discovered he was to make a number of observations.

If you discover the Continent above-mentioned either in your Run to the Southward or to the Westward as above directed, You are to employ yourself diligently in exploring as great an Extent of the Coast as you can; carefully observing the true situation thereof both in Latitude and Longitude, the Variation of the Needle, bearings of Head Lands, direction and Course of the Tides and Currents, Depths and Soundings of the Sea, Shoals, Rocks &c and also surveying and making Charts, and taking Views of such Bays, Harbours and Parts of the Coast as may be useful to Navigation.²⁹

The influence of the Royal Society's earlier Directions is obvious. However, Cook's instructions did not stop at this point. He was also required to

²⁹

Quoted in Beaglehole, The Journals, i, p. cclxxxii.

observe the Nature of the Soil,
 and the Products thereof; the
 Beasts and Fowls that inhabit or frequent
 it, the fishes that are to be found in
 the Rivers and upon the Coast and in
 what Plenty; and in case you find any
 Mines, Minerals or valuable stones you
 are to bring home Specimens of each,
 as also such Specimens of the Seeds of
 the Trees, Fruits and Grains as you may
 be able to collect, and Transmit them
 to our Secretary that We may cause
 proper Examination and Experiments to
 be made of them.³⁰

The explorer is being asked literally to break new ground; he is being called upon to make observations which require skills substantially different from those demanded previously. It is no longer possible to accumulate the information in a series of tables; some form of written record is essential. Still another dimension was added when the then President of the Royal Society, the Earl of Moreton, drew up a series of Hints designed to guide Cook and the other observers in their tasks. These hints were made as comprehensive as possible and they are especially interesting in the awareness they show of the need to safeguard the rights and promote the welfare of the native peoples Cook might be expected to encounter. He is advised against needless killings and is therefore given alternative methods of convincing the natives of the "superiority of Europeans". The natives' right to

their land is explicitly stated :_

They are the natural, and in the strictest sense of the word, the legal possessors of the several Regions they inhabit.³¹

This did not mean that they were not to be subjected to a close and detailed examination. The hints were comprehensive in the information that was sought and Cook was to be guided by a series of headings under which his findings could be arranged. He was asked to note the natives' features, complexion, dress, habitations, food, weapons, currency; he was also asked to observe and comment on their religion, their morals, government and so on. The list is a formidable one, but then Cook was expected to make contact with the inhabitants of a large continent. And it is fascinating to read the premises which would enable the explorer to decide "whether land descried" was "an Island or a part of a large Continent".

Very high Mountains within Land,
at a great distance from the Shore,
give strong symptoms of a large
Continent.

The mouths of large Rivers, with
Bars of Sand, unequally disposed;
and at a considerable distance
from the Shore, give likewise the
presumption of a Continent.

31

ibid., 1, p. 514

The most populous Nations are generally found on large Continents. Populous Nations are commonly the most civilized.

It wasn't the fault of the framers that none of these conditions were to be satisfied in Australia; it was, however, a logical attempt to anticipate a novel problem.

The bones of the Royal Society's "exact Diary" still support these hints, but the instructions have put on considerable flesh over the years. The range of the explorer's investigations has been widened considerably, a reflection of the more diversified scientific interests his observations were intended to serve. Most importantly, with the traveller's attention now directed towards the native peoples of a region, sociological observations have to be made and these will hardly admit of mere tabulation or even simple objective statement. Increasingly there is scope for personal evaluation of the data collected; the explorer is more and more committed to a personal response.

The instructions issued were now sufficiently comprehensive to allow explorers to face almost any eventuality but they were still framed with the sea traveller in mind. Once the Australian continent was settled in 1788 there were new problems, the problems of land exploration. However, the Royal Society continued to exert an influence

on the pattern of observation and recording. The connection with the Society might be less clearly marked, but there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the tradition of issuing instructions was continued, at least to the extent that the earlier directives were regarded as models. But the most effective link appears to have been a personal one, through the influence of Sir Joseph Banks.

Banks was a member of the Royal Society when the expedition to the Pacific was planned and he travelled with Cook on this great voyage of discovery. In 1788 he was elected President of the Society and he was to hold office for a record period until 1820. During this period of some forty years he maintained a continuing interest in the continent he had helped discover. He recommended the formation of the settlement at Botany Bay to a Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1779 and he maintained an extensive correspondence with each of the early governors, Phillip, Hunter, King and Bligh.³² So great was his influence that he was frequently consulted by the British Government on matters affecting the colony and he even seems to have had the position of governor in his gift. When King asked to be

³²

H.C. Cameron, Sir Joseph Banks (Sydney, 1952), p. 184.

recalled, Banks wrote to Bligh:

An opportunity has occurred this day which seems to me to lay open an opportunity of being of service to you. As I hope I never omit any chance of being useful to a friend whom I esteem as I do you, I lose not a moment of apprising you of it.

I have always since the first institution of the new Colony at New South Wales taken a deep interest in its success and have been constantly consulted by His Majesty's Ministers, through all the changes there have been in the department which directs it, relative to the more important concerns of the colonists. ...

I can therefore, if you choose it, place you in the Government of the new colony with an income of £2,000 a year and with the whole of the Government power and stores at your disposal.... 33

That Bank's interest extended directly to exploration is clear from a letter written to the Under Secretary of State to the Colonies in May 1798, suggesting the employment of the African explorer Mungo Park in investigating the interior of the new continent.

We have now possessed the country of New South Wales more than ten years, and so much has the discovery of the interior been neglected that no one article has hitherto been discovered by the importation of which the mother

country can receive any degree of return for the cost of founding and hitherto maintaining the colony,

It is impossible to conceive that such a body of land, as large as all Europe, does not produce vast rivers, capable of being navigated into the heart of the interior; or, if properly investigated, that such a country, situate in a most fruitful climate, should not produce some native raw material of importance to a manufacturing country as England is.

Mr. Mungo Park, - lately returned from a journey in Africa, where he penetrated farther into the inland than any European before has done by several hundred miles, and discovered an immense navigable river running westward, which offers the means of penetrating into the center of that vast continent, ... offers himself as a volunteer to be employ'd in exploring the interior of New Holland, by its rivers or otherwise, as may in the event be found most expedient.³⁴

Banks may not have been successful in his attempts to gain the services of Mungo Park but he was able to gain the assistance of the Government in sending a number of botanical collectors to New South Wales to secure specimens for the Royal Gardens at Kew. Among these was George Caley, who became something of an explorer himself apart from his collecting activities, and Allan Cunningham. W.T. Aiton at Kew had written to Banks asking for his support in the

34

Historical Records of New South Wales,
iii, pp. 382-3.

despatch of collectors and Banks replied :

Should you be allowed to send to the Cape of Good Hope and to New South Wales, I have no doubt of being able to give such instructions to the Governors of those countries as will enable His Majesty's collectors to visit, at a very reasonable expense, countries hitherto unexplored, and they will add to the Royal collection riches beyond the most sanguine expectations of those who have had less experience in the produce of those countries than has fallen to my lot.³⁵

Allan Cunningham was appointed King's Botanist on Bank's nomination and arrived in Sydney towards the end of 1816. The following year he was listed as a member of the expedition which, under the command of Oxley, was sent to explore the western interior.

Given Banks's interest in Australia and Australian exploration it seems more than likely that his advice would have been sought in framing the Memorandum sent by Lord Bathurst to Macquarie in 1816. Since Banks was also President of the Royal Society there is every reason to infer that the experience of that body in framing instructions would have been utilised, and the tradition commenced with the "Directions for Sea-men" in 1666 carried on into the nineteenth century to meet the needs of Australian land exploration.

That the instructions issued to Oxley became the pattern for later exploration is clear from an examination of those issued to Charles Sturt when, in 1829, he was sent to follow up Oxley's discoveries and determine the fate of the Macquaria River.

You are to keep a detailed account of your proceedings in a journal, in which all observations and occurrences of every kind, with all their circumstances, however minute, are to be carefully noted down. You are to be particular in describing the general face of all the country through which you pass, the direction and shape of the mountains, whether detached or in ranges, together with the bearings and estimated distances of the several mountains, hills, or eminences from each other. You are likewise to note the nature of the climate, as to heat, cold, moisture, winds, rains, &c, and to keep a register of the temperature from Fahrenheit's thermometer, as observed at two or three periods of each day. The rivers, with all their several branches, their direction, is [sic] velocity, breadth, and depth, are carefully to be noted. It further [sic] expected that you will, as far as may be in your power, attend to the animal, vegetable, and mineral productions of the country, noting down every thing that may occur to you, and preserving specimens as far as your means will admit, especially some of all the ripe seeds which you may discover; when the preservation of specimens is impossible, drawings or

detailed accounts of them, are very desirable.³⁶

The connection between these instructions and those issued to Oxley is immediately apparent; the parentage is obvious. While there has been some pruning of the particular observations required, the list is only marginally less comprehensive. The traveller is no longer called upon to obtain information on those natural products which might have value as raw materials for industry or shipbuilding; nor is his attention directed towards those articles which might "be advantageously imported into Great Britain". One wonders if the dream of great commercial wealth had been dissipated by the depressing account of the interior given by Oxley. Also, there is no longer any interest in the influence of the natives' religious ceremonies on their "moral character and conduct", although the explorer is still asked to take note of their "objects of worship" and their "religious ceremonies". Had continued contact with the natives on the fringes of European settlement removed any hope that their morality could be improved, or that they possessed moral standards at all?

36

C. Sturt, Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia (London, 1833), 1, p.187.

Sturt apparently fulfilled the requirements of his instructions to the satisfaction of the local authorities and the Colonial Office for when he was about to set out on his final expedition into Central Australia in 1844 the South Australian Colonial Secretary wrote to him in these terms :

You have already been made so fully acquainted with the views with which Her Majesty's Government have fitted out this expedition, and your past experience in the conduct of explorations in this country has been so great, that any detailed instructions regarding the conduct of the expedition would be superfluous; and the same reasons render it unnecessary to furnish you with any directions regarding geographical or scientific observations.³⁷

Later explorers were not so generously treated, and their instructions varied from the extremely elaborate to the merely cursory. Those which were issued to Sir Thomas Mitchell for his expedition to Port Essington in 1845 were as thorough as those which had guided Oxley and were clearly inspired by them.

You are to keep a Journal in which shall be given a detailed account of all your proceedings with such observations as you may deem important

or interesting. The general face and geographical structure of the country through which you pass and the nature of its productions animal, vegetable, and mineral are to be carefully noted together with the character of the Climate as to heat, cold, moisture, winds, rains &c., A register being kept of the temperature by Fahrenheit's Thermometer as observed at two or three periods of the day and of the atmospheric pressure shewn by the Barometer whenever circumstances will permit. The height of any mountains you may ascend and the direction, velocity, breadth, and depth of any rivers or streams you may discover are also to be carefully given. 38

All of this is by now quite familiar; the Memorandum of 1816 still exerts an influence. Consequently there is no surprise in the realisation that Mitchell is also directed to make observations of the natives: their "subsistence", their "character and disposition", their "diseases and remedies", and so on. One particular requirement, however, is spelled out. Mitchell is instructed to use every effort to gain the natives' goodwill; if they persist in being hostile then he is to use the "utmost forbearance" in his dealings with them. He is forbidden the use of "fire arms or force of any kind", "unless the safety of the party should absolutely require it".

There are two possible explanations for the change in attitude here, and the inclusion of the new demand. The hostility of the natives to European intrusion had grown to the stage where attacks on white settlers, particularly parties who were overlanding stock from the eastern settlements to South Australia, were increasing in frequency. The instructions could represent an attempt to prevent further trouble. On the other hand, Mitchell's past history would also explain the demand for caution. In each of his three expeditions before 1845 there had been clashes with the natives, the most serious during the expedition of 1836, near the junction of the Murray and Darling Rivers.

Mitchell's instructions for his final expedition mark a return almost to the "directions" issued by the Royal Society in 1666, with their interest in the unusual. The explorer is required to keep a meteorological journal; it is to include "the dip and variation of the needle" and also "all the phenomena magnetic or electrical which may present themselves, meteors, luminous appearances in the heavens and falling stars, whenever they may occur in unusual numbers".

With Mitchell's instructions of 1845 the pattern had been set; what followed differed mainly in accent. As the interior became better known, and the arid nature of the country better realised, there was an increasing emphasis

on the importance of water; not on the great river systems such as had lured Mitchell to the north both in his first expedition in 1831-2 and again in 1845, and Sturt with his visions of an inland sea, but on the discovery of permanent water sufficient to allow the country to be opened up to settlement. In a draft memorandum of instructions to be given to Colonel Warburton in 1872, before his almost disastrous crossing of the continent from the Overland Telegraph Line to the western coast, the emphasis is clear :

The object of the expedition is to explore and define the natural features of the country, the permanent and other waters, the general and particular character of the Country for Pastoral, Mineral or Agricultural purposes, the character of its aboriginal inhabitants, its climate, ... 39

The instructions reflect a change, too, in the attitude to the natives.

In case of any hostile demonstrations by the natives of the country travelling over you cannot too strongly impress upon him the necessity of peaceful demonstrations and an attempt should be persevered in to shew that our objects are not hostile, and that whilst he shews a bold and determined front, a resort to violence should be carefully guarded against.

Perhaps this indicates no more than a process of cross fertilization; what earlier explorers had encountered is now being used to prepare later travellers for what lay ahead.

5

The instructions, then, continued to provide guidelines of varying rigidity both for the form of the explorer's account and its content. The explorer either followed them closely or adapted them to better serve his purpose. The way in which the form of the journal could be adapted is demonstrated in Sturt's published account of his first expedition. Since the object of the journey was to trace the course of the Macquarie River beyond the point where Oxley had lost it among marshes, it is worthwhile taking up the account at the point where the river appeared to terminate. Sturt found that it apparently ended in a marsh as Oxley had stated and sent Hume, his second-in-command, to investigate to the north. His report indicated that the river reformed, but was again checked by swamps, and Sturt was eager to settle the question.

On the morning of the 28th therefore we broke up the camp, and proceeded to the northward, under Mr. Hume's guidance, moving over ground wholly subject to flood, and extensively covered with reeds; the great body of the marsh

lying upon our left. After passing the angle of the wood, upon our right, from which Mount Foster was distant about fourteen miles, we got upon a small plain, on which there was a new species of tortuous box. This plain was clear of reeds, and the soil upon it was very rich.⁴⁰

In this one passage it is possible to see the way in which Sturt is able to fuse the account of the journey with the details that he was asked to notice: the soil, the mountains, the vegetation. The narrative achieves an additional flow from the breaking down of the day-by-day entries. It is apparent that Sturt's field diary formed only the core of the published account.

Sturt's investigations were inconclusive and he again sent Hume to the north while he himself explored west. This excursion, which took only six days, is presented as a connected narrative: dates are provided only at the commencement and conclusion of the journey. There is no doubt that this was a substantial reworking of the original diary entries, and thus, while it is true that Sturt relies on the journal form for the basis of his account, he is able to go further in his departure from it than Oxley. His reshaping

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Sturt, Two Expeditions, 1, p.40.

results in a smoother, more interesting account.

Although Sturt reworks his diary entries, there are nevertheless techniques which he employs to indicate the passage of time since it is in the nature of a journey to move through time as it is to move through space. Most of the devices are obvious: the party moved off "on the last day of the year" and proceeded throughout the day until a creek was discovered and the expedition "halted on its banks for the night". The journey continued "on the following morning" and they travelled until the shortage of water forced them "to pull up at sunset on the outskirts of a larger plain". The formula is varied for the following morning: "a dense bush of acacia succeeded to the plain on which we had slept". Devices such as these effectively mark the narrative off into periods, but they are not as restrictive as the formal diary entry.

In his attention to the specific requirements of his instructions Sturt is as meticulous as Oxley. Unlike Oxley, however, he does not give the impression that he is mentally checking items off from a list; the description arises naturally from the account of the progress of the expedition.

On leaving the last-mentioned creek,
we found a gently rising country
before us; and about three or four
miles from it we crossed some stony

ridges, covered with a new species of acacia so thickly as to prevent our obtaining any view from them. ⁴¹

Mitchell, in his published account of his expedition to Port Essington, makes use of the journal form by confining himself to specific entries for each day. At the same time, it is clear that he intends the form to be the vehicle for more than a dull and uninteresting catalogue of fact. The quotation of part of one day's entry will indicate this.

24th April. - Set off early, travelling along the bank. The direction was N.N.W. and N.W. For the first few miles, the scenery was wild and very fine. Masses of rock, lofty trees, shining sands and patches of water, in wild confusion, afforded evidence of the powerful current that sometimes moved there and overwhelmed all. At this time, the outlines were wild, the tints sublimely beautiful. Mighty trees of Casaurinae, still inclined as they had been made to bend before the waters, contrasted finely with erect Mimosae, with prostrate masses of driftwood, and with perpendicular rocks. Then the hues of the Anthistiria grass, of a red-brown, contrasted most harmoniously with the light green bushes, grey driftwood, blue water, and verdure by its margin; all these again - grass, verdure, driftwood, and water - were so opposed to the dark hues of the Casaurinae, Mimosae, and rifted rocks, that a Ruysdael, or a Gainsborough, might have found an

inexhaustible stock of subjects for their pencil. It was, indeed, one continuous Ruysdaël.

"That artist lov'd the sternly savage air,
And scarce a human image plac'd he there".⁴²

Much of the information his instructions had demanded of him is to be found in this account: the direction of his course, details of the vegetation, the effects of previous flooding. But all these details are consciously manipulated by the explorer and transformed by his highly literate mind. He does not only wish to present a detailed description of the scene before him; he is as concerned to demonstrate his imaginative perception and the quality of his learning and culture. The scene is deliberately modified by the literary effect Mitchell wishes to create; it is not the factual content that really interests him. That the total effect is too stilted, too elaborate, tells the reader more of Mitchell the man than of the country through which he is travelling.

With examples such as these it is clear that the reader is faced with a body of writing which demands to be considered as literature. The instructions which were issued to explorers may have dictated much of the scientific content

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T.L. Mitchell, Journal of an Expedition into the Interior of Tropical Australia (London, 1848), p. 135.

of the published journals (and to this extent be responsible for the reluctance to accept them as works of literature), but they also gave them an established form, which was modified and adapted in a number of ways. What is important is the realisation that, despite the limitations on content and form, the explorers were still able to produce works which went beyond such limitations and rightly deserve to be regarded as literature.

CHAPTER 2.MOTIVATION: EXPLORATION AND EXPLOIT

The instructions which were issued to official exploring parties throughout the nineteenth century determined the basic form and content of the traveller's journal and the pattern of his observations while in the field, even though individual explorers might vary both to suit their particular purposes. This was the chief importance of the instructions, especially as their influence was not restricted to official undertakings but also extended beyond to those expeditions sponsored by individuals or groups, since it was usual for one party to carry with it the journals and reports of those men who had gone before. Edward Eyre, for example, throughout his struggle to round the Great Australian Bight in 1841, was guided by observations which had been made by Flinders in 1802. It was the report of the earlier maritime explorer which directed him in his search for water.

We were now pushing on for some sand-hills, marked down in Captain Flinders' chart at about 62½° of east longitude; I did not expect to procure water until we reached

these, but I felt sure we should obtain it on our arrival there. ¹

But the instructions have another value as well, in that they give some indication of the expectations which were held in official circles; they show, however imperfectly, what it was that the British and colonial governments hoped to achieve from the exploration of the newly settled continent. Earl Bathurst's Memorandum of 1816 established these goals in detail, and some reference has already been made to them. The Memorandum itself falls into two parts: an introduction or preamble, and a detailed listing of the "most important subjects, on which it will be more immediately the province of a traveller to endeavour to obtain information".² These more important subjects themselves divide into a number of categories. There are a number which could be designated scientific: details of climate, mountains, rivers, animals, anthropological observations about the natives. But there are others which the explorer was asked to make which have no connection with scientific enquiries at all. These bear directly on Great Britain's economy, and to a lesser extent her political aspirations. The explorer, for example,

¹ E.J. Eyre, Journals of Expeditions of Discovery (London, 1845), i, p. 355.

² J. Oxley, Journals (London, 1820), Appendix A, pp. 360-361.

was asked to gather information about the vegetable productions of the country

and particularly those that are applicable to any useful purposes, whether in medicine, dyeing, &c.; any scented woods, or such as may be adapted for cabinet work, or furniture, and more particularly such woods as may appear to be useful in ship building.

At a later stage in the Memorandum the economic bias is even more clearly revealed. The explorer was required to give "A circumstantial account of such articles, if any, as might be advantageously imported into Great Britain".

These were the instructions which were given to Oxley in 1817. When Mitchell received his before his expedition to tropical Australia in 1845 these references to trade had been deleted and the more obviously scientific ones alone remained. An even more drastic truncation occurred in 1872, when Warburton commenced his expedition across the western half of the continent to the shores of the Indian Ocean; here even the scientific tasks were severely and tersely outlined :

The object of the expedition is to explore and define the natural features of the country, the permanent and other waters, the general and particular character of the country for Pastoral, Mineral or Agricultural purposes, the

character of its aboriginal
inhabitants, its climate, ... 3

Even the earlier detailed interest in the aborigines had been replaced with a warning of possible native hostility, and the explorer was given clear instructions to engage in "peaceful demonstrations" whenever possible.

This altered emphasis in the instructions reflects the impact of greater knowledge on official visions of the interior of the island continent of Australia. No doubt the vision was a severely practical one, firmly anchored in national self-interest, but it was a vision nevertheless and it was forced to give way before the harsh reality of the interior. Dreams of abundant supplies of raw materials to support the growing industrial power of the mother country, and dreams of extensive and profitable native markets for her exports, were dissipated by tracts of country which could barely support clumps of spinifex and a native people who seemed to belong at the very base of the evolutionary ladder.

The same sort of transition from vision to reality can be traced in the motivations of the explorers, especially

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Memo of instructions to be issued to Colonel Warburton (unsigned and Undated). S.A. Archives: 262/7.

as this motivation is bodied forth in their journals. Although the desire to explore had its origins in idealism and vision, as the goal of the centre was approached the interior became a place where visions were measured against reality and deeper motives revealed. The exploration of the interior became an exploration of self, and the very meaning of "exploration" shifted from a desire to observe and learn, to stand herald to the future, and became instead a bare struggle for survival in and against a hostile land, until the measure of the explorer's achievement became a matter of hardships endured - of exploit.

Visions and dreams have always been of importance in the history of the discovery and exploration of Australia. The very concept of a "terra incognita" which dominated the thinking of European geographers in the centuries preceding its discovery was a visionary one, while the earliest "settlers", the convicts, warmed their exile with dreams of what lay beyond the imprisoning ridges and ravines of the Blue Mountains. There, so the persistent rumour ran, would be found

a Colony of White People at no very great distance in the Back Country 150 or 200 miles where there was abundance of every sort of Provision

without the necessity of so much
Labor.⁴

Those who attempted to reach it perished but this did not deter others. It was a simple dream, a "whimsical and ludicrous supposition"⁵ no doubt, and certainly not as sophisticated as those dreams which visited the early officials of the penal colony, and the explorers not least of all. These were visions of a geographical nature: of rivers which flowed across the continent, of an immense inland sea, of vast areas of land obedient to the plough or prepared for man's flocks and herds. Such dreams were to influence European and colonial expectations of the undiscovered interior until well past the middle of the nineteenth century and, limited though the explorer's material baggage might be, included in his mental luggage were anticipations of the country he would find and assumptions about the role he was called upon to play. Such anticipations and assumptions were no less visionary than the convicts' dreams of a fabulous city and they, too, were to be modified in their turn by harsh reality.

To a settlement corsetted by the Blue Mountains - their successful crossing in 1813 and the subsequent discovery

⁴ Banks Papers, Brabourne Collection, vol. 3, p.188.
ML 78⁻².

⁵ Sydney Gazette, March 8, 1804.

by George Evans of fertile land beyond seemed the prelude to a new and prosperous era. The Surveyor-General Oxley, sent to follow up Evans's work in 1817, could delight in the future promise of the new township of Bathurst and its surrounding areas.

The mind dwelt with pleasure on the idea that at no very distant period these secluded plains would be covered with flocks bearing the richest fleeces, and contribute to no small degree to the prosperity of the eastern settlements.⁶

Oxley's dream is a materialistic one and the benefits of discovery seem imminent. There is no place here for the conservationist since the explorer endorses the view that prosperity is better than "secluded plains". The practicality is no doubt conditioned by the pressing needs of the initial settlement at Sydney and this perhaps explains the limited imaginative response that Oxley makes to the scene. He is content to rely on accepted notions of progress and casts his vision in equally accepted terms: "secluded plains", "richest fleeces".

The discovery of such areas seemed to answer the needs of the continent's eastern settlement, but the vision it produced was not limited to one region alone. On the

⁶
Oxley, Journals, P.2.

western shores George Grey recorded a similar response to his discovery of a region of great promise during his first expedition in 1838. This region he named the "Province of Victoria", and it was pleasant to rest with the view before him and indulge his fancy.

Whilst I stretched my weary length along under the pleasant shade, I saw in fancy busy crowds throng the scenes I was then amongst. I pictured to myself the bleating sheep and lowing herds, wandering over these fertile hills; and I chose the very spot on which my house should stand, surrounded with as fine an amphitheatre of verdant land as the eye of man has ever gazed on. The view was backed by the Victoria Range, whilst seaward you looked through a romantic glen upon the great Indian Ocean. I knew that within four or five years civilization would have followed my tracks, and that rude nature and the savage would no longer reign supreme over so fine a territory.

It is an idyllic scene and the vision the prospect produces is again one of material prosperity. Compared with Oxley's, Grey's is a more imaginative response, principally because the explorer himself is included in the vision. Again there is a preference for an inhabited rather than an unoccupied landscape, but the rhetoric is only marginally less

conventional, with its "bleating sheep and lowing herds", and "verdant land". But Grey's account is interesting because it makes explicit two points which are only subsumed in Oxley. The explorer is clearly regarded as the forerunner of change and progress, and the discovery of valuable land is an essential reward to him, and consequently such an achievement gives a particular edge to his response. Also, the view that an occupied landscape is to be preferred to an unoccupied one in Grey's account is extended to include the notion of a scale of human development, with civilized man at a point higher than the savage.

Grey was blessed with a similar vision on his second expedition along the western coast of Australia. He came upon a rich district bordering the Gascoyne River and again the outlook is a reward and a release from the fatigues of travelling.

I was so won by the discovery of this rich district, that I wandered on unconscious of the fatigue of the party, roaming from rising ground to rising ground, and hoping from each eminence to gain a view of high land to the eastward, but on all sides I could see nothing but the same low fertile country. I however felt conscious that within a few years of the moment at which I stood there, a British population, rich in civilization, and the means of transforming an unoccupied country to one teeming with inhabitants and produce, would have followed my steps, and be eagerly and anxiously

examining my charts; and this reflection imparted a high degree of interest and importance to our present position and operations. ⁸

The similarities between these two reactions are obvious, but here the sense of being a forerunner is specifically linked with a consciousness of nationality: the explorer is the agent not only of European progress but also of national expansion. No allowance is made for the original occupiers of the region; instead there is a conviction that the land is waiting, ordained and set aside for the entry of a chosen people.

But it would be unfair to Grey to suggest that he was unaware of the effect his entry must have on the aborigines. There is concern for their fate in, for example, his comments on the discovery of cave paintings near the upper reaches of the Glenelg River, on a site now known as Wandjina.

I sat in the fading light, looking at the beautiful scenery around me, which now for the first time gladdened the eyes of Europeans; and I wondered that so fair a land should only be the abode of savage men; and then I thought of the curious paintings we had this day seen, - of the timid character of the natives, - of their anomalous position in so fertile a

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Grey, Journals, 1, p. 359.

country, - and wondered how long
these things were to be. ⁹

There is certainly an awareness of the changes his presence must initiate - there is even sympathy for the natives' plight - but it fades as the light fades, diminished by the stronger vision of the inevitable march of mankind. Grey was not the only explorer caught in this paradox of reconciling a commitment to European progress with an unwillingness to see the aborigines dispossessed. John Gilbert, the ornithological collector who travelled with Leichhardt in 1844, was also aware of the impact of European penetration. He visualised the explorer as the initiator of change, the first actor in a drama the conclusion of which seemed inevitable. After the explorer would come the settler with his flocks and herds, the natives' game would be alarmed

and then the poor native would begin to deplore his loss of sport and food, and probably soon commence attacking the settler and his flocks, and thus like most other parts of Australia when first settled, frequent scenes of Bloodshed with all its horrors would ensue, till the whole tribe would become dispersed from their grounds, or succumb to the new occupant. If such a country as this of the Lakes could be settled by the European without harm to the Native and rightful owner of the soil, one cannot but help wishing

⁹
Grey, Journals, i, p. 207.

that so fine a country may soon be
peopled with our industrious and
persevering countrymen. 10

Gilbert's insight was to prove to be remarkably clear and prophetic (tragically so in his own case, since he was to meet his death by a native spear), but he is caught between his desire to recognise the natives' prior claims and the assumption that progress, and especially that of his own countrymen, is its own justification. Gilbert is unable to mediate between the two, and so the solution is left conditional upon a pious wish.

To Oxley the explorer was someone who was justified through good works, and the good works involved the discovery of areas of land that promoted mankind's material prosperity. Grey's motives were as practical, but the explorer was also the catalyst. He was the agent of cultural change and the bearer of the gifts of civilisation. A later explorer, Sir Thomas Mitchell, further defined the role to take in aspects other than the material: the explorer was also the agent of science and the "intelligent man". When he was about to leave on his first expedition - which had its impetus in a

convict's stories of a great river Kindur¹¹ - Mitchell recorded his feelings and his motivations at some length.

I felt the ardour of my early youth, when I first sought distinction in the crowded camp and battlefield, revive, as I gave loose to my reflections and considered the nature of the enterprise. But, in comparing the feelings I then experienced with those which excited my youthful ambition, it seemed that even war and victory, with all their glory, were far less alluring than the pursuit of researches such as these; the objects of which were to spread the light of civilization over a portion of the globe yet unknown, though rich, perhaps, in the luxuriance of uncultivated nature, and where science might accomplish new and unthought-of discoveries; while intelligent man would find a region teeming with useful vegetation, abounding with rivers, hills, and vallies, and waiting only for his enterprising spirit and improving hand to turn to account the native bounty of the soil.¹²

There is some reason to doubt Mitchell's sincerity here. His claim that he prefers the disinterested service of exploration to the glories of "war and victory" needs to be measured against his practice of mounting what could be only described as para-military expeditions.¹³ Despite Mitchell's insertion

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See D. Boyce, Clark of the Kindur (Carlton, Vic., 1970).

12

T.L. Mitchell, Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia (London, 1839), 1, p. 5.

13

Mitchell describes his encampment on tour as "a sort of field-work" and provides a plan of the layout for the reader. Mitchell, Three Expeditions, 1, pp. 338-339.

of the trite image of the "light" of civilization and the nod in the direction of science, the weight of the passage is tipped in favour of the material benefits which he expects from his researches. It is the assumption that he will discover a region useful to civilized man, a country dormant and wanting only the vivifying touch of the explorer that underlies his ardour. His responses are moulded by similar assumptions about "uncultivated nature", "useful vegetation" and "native bounty" but they are framed as public statements, as the voice of the passage reveals. Because of this there is a need to approach his motives cautiously.

Mitchell returns again and again in his writings to the notion of the explorer as the agent of cultural change. The act of exploration marks a beginning, implied in that most fundamental of all exploring rites, the scattering of names. It is not surprising that these responses should be particularly evident at that point in a journey when the expedition stands poised between the known and the unknown.

We advanced with feelings of intense interest into the country before us, and impressed with the responsibility of commencing the first chapter of its history. All was still new and nameless, but by this beginning, we were to open a way for the many other beginnings of civilized man, and thus extend his dominion over some of the last holds of barbarism.¹⁴

¹⁴Mitchell, Three Expeditions, i, p. 36.

Despite his claim that he finds exploring more attractive than military pursuits, Mitchell is unable to escape the reactions of the soldier. He relies on an established order, with a clear distinction between civilized man and other races and it devolves on the one to advance, to "open the way", to mount an attack against "the last holds of barbarism". There is no doubt, no questioning of these assumptions; while he is conscious of the importance of the role he plays, he is supported by the knowledge that he is fulfilling a plan. He is the agent of a higher reality than the mere extension of flocks and herds, although he does not deny their importance. And for Mitchell all his expectations seemed realised with his discovery in 1836 of the region to which he gave the name "Australia Felix". All of the surprise, the pleasure, all the expectations so marvellously fulfilled emerge in his reaction to the first view.

A land so inviting, and still without inhabitants! As I stood, the first European intruder on the sublime solitude of these verdant plains, as yet untouched by flocks or herds; I felt conscious of being the harbinger of mighty changes; and that our steps would soon be followed by the men and the animals for which it seemed to have been prepared. 15

There is an immediacy in the opening response which is belied by the studied, and empty, phrases of the remainder.

Nevertheless the initial excitement remains. This is what exploration for Mitchell was all about; such a discovery was sufficient justification for the trials of the journey, it "sweetened the toils and inconveniences of travelling through such houseless regions".¹⁶ Discoveries such as these are the explorer's reward.

The explorer, because he is the initiator, stands at a unique moment in time, poised between past and present. And yet there is no past until it is filtered by the European consciousness and the explorer is himself the creator of what is still to come. He stands, Janus-like, and his shadow is thrown in both directions.

The concept of exploration which moved men such as these, or the public expression they gave to their motivation (and the distinction is vital), assumed that the progress which they heralded was beyond doubt, inevitable, pre-ordained. Basic to such an assumption was the premise that mankind could be ranged along a scale of development, with the European, and more particularly the British, at the

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Mitchell, Three Expeditions, ii, p. 174.

higher level. It was therefore not only inevitable but also desirable that savage races should give way before higher claims. Similarly uncultivated nature achieved its proper function only when occupied and developed by the "enterprising spirit and useful hand" of the intruders. The explorer was the vanguard of this cultural change and the satisfaction he derived from this, and the delight in seeing a vision achieved, were the rewards which he sought.

Since some of the explorers regarded their intrusion on unoccupied land as both desirable and inevitable, it is not surprising that they should have felt that they were implementing a divine plan. There was certainly nothing new in the assumption that discovery should march under the twin banners of Caesar and God, but explorers such as Leichhardt particularly went on from this to postulate a particular relationship between themselves and the divine, a relationship which presented the explorer as consecrated to the service of God. Leichhardt set out the nature of this relationship in a letter to his sister Auguste in 1844.

Du erfreust Dich der schönen Blumen
und ihres Duftes, Du erfreust Dich des
grünenden Baumes und seines Schattens,
Du blickst über Wald und Flur der Erde
zum gestirnten Himmel, und Du fühlst
Dich von höhern Gefühlen bewegt, indem
so viele Stimmen [Dich] von einem
unendlichen Wesen, Dir unbewusst,
sprechen. Wenn Dich die Natur so
freundlich bewegt, wie viel mehr muss

sie es mir thun, der ich es mir zur
 Aufgabe mache, in ihre tiefsten
 Geheimnisse zu dringen und die ewigen
 Gesetzen zu entdecken, nach welchen sie
 so herrlich, so grossartig wirkt.
 Wäre es nicht Sünde, wenn ich nicht
 die Antwort gäbe, welche unser Erlöser
 seiner besorgten Mutter gab, als sie
 ihn im Tempel fand? Lasst mich!
 Ich bin in Diensten meines Vaters! 17

Here the explorer is one who reveals Nature's secrets and displays her glories; he is the one who elucidates her laws. It is a task supremely religious in nature: "Lasst mich! Ich bin in Diensten meines Vaters!" This claim is possible for Leichhardt because to him the natural world is evidence of the divine, of an "unendlichen Wesen" and he is consecrated to the service of God as much as any priest. So consecrated is the service on which he is engaged that he has no hesitation in equating his "ministry" with Christ's;

17

May 15, 1844. M. Arousseau (ed), The letters of F.W. Ludwig Leichhardt (Cambridge, 1968), ii, p. 759. Arousseau translates the letter as follows :

You say that you love the beauty and smell of the flowers; that you rejoice to see the trees coming into leaf and casting shade; that when you gaze across the woods and the fields, or look up from the ground to the starry sky, you are deeply moved, because you are receiving so many intimations of a hidden but infinite Being. If Nature stirs you to such pleasure, just think how she must stir me, in my chosen task of penetrating her secrets and discovering the laws that govern the everlasting might and splendour of her workings! Would it not be a sin in me to give you any other answer but that of our Redeemer to his anxious Mother when she found him in the Temple? 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?'

no other answer is possible. Even the disaster of his first attempt to cross the continent could not shake his certainty. In October, 1847, he wrote:

I can however not help thinking, that it will turn out good after all, for I have been such a favourite of Providence or fortune (call it as you like) that I cannot think, I should have been forsaken by it.¹⁸

Sturt too was motivated by the belief that what he was doing was in accordance with divine plans. His final expedition into the centre of Australia, however, did much to shake his confidence. When he found his path blocked and his attempts frustrated, his earlier certainty seemed something that had been left far behind, like the excitement and fervour of the departure: "At that time I hoped with God's blessing we should have raised the veil that had so long hung over [the interior], more effectually than we did".¹⁹ Yet when he came to review his explorations during the years of his retirement in England he remained convinced that his journeys had been the working of Providence. But to some extent it was a negative view in that he felt that they were

18

Leichhardt to William Macarthur, October 10, 1847. Aurousseau, The Letters, iii, p. 941.

19

C. Sturt, Narrative of an Expedition into Central Australia (London, 1849), 1, p. 207.

designed to offer "a lesson of caution to those who should engage in similar undertakings, and to facilitate their endeavours to cross the pathless wilds on which I well nigh perished".²⁰

Mitchell was never a man plagued by doubts and uncertainties; he was assured in his utterances and his actions and did not hesitate to assign a religious significance to the work of the explorer, especially when he succeeded. There is a striking passage in his account of his final expedition where this relationship is made plain. Mitchell was convinced that he had found the river which would lead him to the northern coast and he surveyed its course from a nearby eminence.

The height of these ponds above the sea was 861 feet. Young, I think, has said, that a situation might be imagined between earth and heaven, where a man should hear nothing but the thoughts of the Almighty; but such a sublime position seems almost attained by him who is the first permitted to traverse extensive portions of earth, as yet unoccupied by man; to witness in solitude and silence regions well adapted to his use, brings a man into more immediate converse with the

Author both of his being, and of all other combinations of matter than any other imaginable position he can attain. With nothing but nature around him; his few wants supplied almost miraculously; living on from day to day, just as he falls in with water; his existence is felt to be in the hands of Providence alone; and this feeling pervades even the minds of the least susceptible, in journeys like these. 21

It is unlikely that Mitchell intends any special theological significance to be read into the height of his vantage point, but he certainly insists that the explorer's work confers a particular advantage in that it brings him into a close personal relationship with God. He doesn't dismiss the material advantages which can be expected to follow from his discoveries; indeed this is made a prime condition of the experience. He is also drawn by the attractions of the simple life, but his comments imply a degree of acceptance which sits awkwardly with his habit of mounting large and elaborate expeditions. But of particular interest is the attributing an almost sacramental value to the work of the explorer: it is more than the revelation of Divine creation; it is an avenue whereby an individual can come to a greater knowledge of the Almighty, it is a journey which is both spiritual and religious,

a pilgrimage. Finally, though, it is difficult to decide from Mitchell's response whether this is a motivation for exploration or a bonus for the explorer who has met with success.

Although one cannot be certain of Mitchell's reference to Young in the passage quoted, it is likely that he had in mind the poet Edward Young (1683-1765) and his poem "Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality". In "Night VIII. Virtue's Apology" the poet attempts a delineation of the "man immortal" - the man "who lives as such".

With aspect mild, and elevated eye,
Behold him seated on a mount serene,
Above the fogs of Sense, and Passion's storm:
All the black cares and tumults of this life,
Like harmless thunders breaking at his feet,
Excite his pity, not impair his peace. ²²

Young's concern with immortality and Mitchell's own concern with fame make the point of the allusion even more significant, and the explorer's position on the eminence a double opportunity for immortality. There are frequent occasions throughout Mitchell's writings where he calls in literary authority. In the previous chapter (pp. 54-55) his comments on the picturesque quality of a landscape are given an additional,

22

Edward Young, The Complete Works, ed. James Nichols (London, 1854), 11 1083-1088 (Facsimile edition, Hildesheim, 1968).

literary, dimension by the quoted lines on Ruysdael. His allusion to Young serves a similar end here: even such a brief reference serves the function of a simile, almost, and moreover establishes a connexion between the Australian experience and the European mind.

When, at the conclusion of his expedition into southern Australia, Mitchell celebrates the success of his journey, he also enlists the aid of the poet the better to describe his elation.

Brightly shone the sun, the sky was dressed in blue and gold, and "the fields were full of starlike flowers, and overgrown with joy", on the first day of my ride homeward along the green banks of the Murrumbidgee, having crossed the river in a small canoe that morning. Seven months had elapsed, since I had seen either a road or a bridge, although during that time, I had travelled over two thousand four hundred miles. Right glad was I, like Gilpin's horse, "at length to miss the lumber of the wheels", - the boats, carts, specimens, and, last but not least, Kater's compasses. ²³

One quotation here hardly needs attribution and Mitchell indicates his source for the other in a footnote: "Remains of Peter Corcoran. Blackwood's Magazine", but the review printed in the number for June, 1820, appears not to contain

23

Mitchell, Three Expeditions, ii, pp. 313-314.

the line.²⁴ It is perhaps a minor point; what is important is Mitchell's desire to extend the horizons of his journey to include the literary ones of Europe - and also to demonstrate his own cultural descent.

The way in which these men viewed their role as explorer and the explanation they gave of their actions was conditioned by their expectations of the country before them. When these expectations were high they expressed their motives in terms of one vision or another. Vision answered vision. Their excitement at the possibility of success suffuses their accounts; it comes through so strongly at times that the reader is left with the impression that it was the discovery of "good land, well watered" that was the real motive after all and that all other explanations were no more than an elaborate public structure, a concession not to their own, but to the public's expectations.

Evans was a noticeably unsophisticated reporter and yet his excitement at the discovery of fertile regions was such that he found it difficult to describe his reactions

24

Blackwood's Magazine, vii (June, 1820), pp. 294-306. "Peter Corcoran" is the pseudonym for J.H. Reynolds, remembered more for his friendship with Keats and his parody on Wordsworth in "Peter Bell".

adequately. He is forced back onto vague and conventional descriptive terms.

From the period of coming first upon the Fish Stream till the termination of my Survey 45 miles further down the Macquarie River, the whole country may be called truly Picturesque, chiefly abounding in fertile Plains the richness of whose soil and verdure cannot be exceeded, no part of New South Wales, or Van Diemen's Land which I have seen can, in my opinion bear a comparison with it, ... 25

Grey's hopes of discovering fertile land are evident even before the vessel which was to carry him to Australia had cleared the harbour at Table Bay.

Great then was my joy, when all my preparations were completed, and I felt the vessel gliding swiftly from Table Bay into that vast ocean, at the other extremity of which lay the land I so longed to see, and to which I was now bound, with the ardent hope of opening the way for the conversion of a barren wilderness into a fertile garden. 26

Most travellers were aware of the practical benefits which could be expected from their exploration. Indeed, at times they had emphatic evidence of their success with the first settlers moving in literally in their wheel tracks.

25

G. Evans, "Sketch of a Tour on Discovery".

ML Ae3.

26

Grey, Journals, i, p. 35.

The explanations which explorers gave of their motives, whether they were expressed in terms of a vision of Australia's future with the explorer as forerunner or were linked with concepts of divine or national purpose, were in response to, and in turn responded to, the expectations they held of the land. They were public explanations. But there were other reasons behind their compulsions to explore, less public-spirited, less altruistic in nature, and perhaps more relevant because of that. It is clear they were often driven by a desire to achieve fame, a name for themselves - to assure that some memorial of their passage through life would remain. They were impelled to seek what can best be described as psychic goals.

Sturt was one explorer who adopted a consistently ambivalent attitude towards the pursuit of fame through exploration. He ascribes his compulsion to a desire to serve the public good in some way but it is also apparent that, with the chances of fame in the Army sealed off during his period of service in Australia, exploration offered an attractive alternative.

The field of Ambition, professionally speaking, is closed upon the soldier during the period of his service in New South Wales. Had it been otherwise, however, no more honourable a one could have been open to me, when I landed on its shores in 1826, than the field of Discovery. I sought and entered upon it, not without a feeling of ambition

I am ready to admit, for that feeling should ever pervade the breast of a soldier, but also with an earnest desire to promote the public good, and certainly without the hope of any other reward than the credit due to successful enterprise. I pretend not to science, but I am a lover of it; and to my own exertions, during past years of military repose, I owe the little knowledge I possess of those branches of it, which have since been so useful to me. ²⁷

Despite the nod in the direction of the "public good" the chief driving force which emerges both in this comment and in Sturt's entire career is ambition. One is forced to regard his disclaimer of "any other reward" with considerable caution in the light of his protracted attempts to gain a position of public importance through his travels. The need to reconcile the twin claims of public good and private ambition is made apparent in another comment of Sturt's where he asserts

I am not jealous in disposition, but I confess I should envy him who accomplishes a task, than which there are few greater of a geographical nature left on the world's surface to perform. A task which it would be an equal credit to the Government to countenance as to the individual

undertaker to carry through with success. ²⁸

To Sturt exploration was something which was performed for the sake of geography and the colony" and a means whereby he might be "of use to Mankind", but he was also conscious of the credit that his efforts could bring. Both sorts of reward acted as spurs and there is evidence that Sturt never effectively separated them. And both of these rewards were possible of achievement when an expedition was crowned with success.

Grey, too, was aware that the path of the explorer led to a degree of fame and immortality. His own narrow escape in an attack by the natives was sufficient reminder of this and he saw himself as one of a group of men whose graves would be remembered as "sacred spots" where

the future settlers will sometimes shed a tear over the remains of the first explorer, and tell their children how much they are indebted to the enthusiasm, perseverance, and courage of him who lies buried there.²⁹

Eyre was prepared to admit, although it might be in an unpublished autobiography, that he was urged on by the

²⁸

Microfilm of Sturt Papers held at Rhodes House, Oxford. MS p. 97, S.A. Archives: PRG2.

²⁹

Grey, Journals, 1, p. 155.

desire to achieve fame, not only for its own sake but for the more tangible results which would accrue. To a junior and poor member of an old family exploration offered a means of repairing "fallen fortunes" and a method whereby the "respect which attaches to the name" could be preserved.³⁰

The importance and interest attached to the solution of the geographical problem connected with the interior of Australia, would, I well knew, engage the observation of the scientific world. If I were successful, the accomplishment of what I had undertaken would more than repay me in gratification for the toil and hazard of the enterprise - but if otherwise I could not help feeling that, however far the few friends who knew me might give me credit for exertion or perseverance, the world at large would be apt to reason from the result, and to make too little allowance for difficulties and impediments, of the magnitude of which from circumstances they could be but incompetent judges.³¹

The important thing is to succeed. It is not the desire to settle the geographical problem which is the impelling force, but the need for recognition and the fear of failure. He is certain that if the world was aware of the difficulties then success would become irrelevant; a hazardous enterprise

30

E.J. Eyre, MS autobiography, p. 2. ML A1806.

31

Eyre, Journals, 1, p. 24.

would itself bring fame, but it would be fame through exploit, not through exploration.

Sturt did not claim recognition as a scientist and Eyre saw the solution of a geographical problem as a means to an end. One explorer, Leichhardt, deserves to be remembered as a scientist, but even he conceded that he was attracted by the desire to leave something, as he says, "that may speak for me when my ashes are driving in the wind". On his return from Port Essington, Leichhardt was asked to sit for his bust and although he finally agreed, he regarded the offer with some hesitation.

I had formerly expressed my great reluctance when the same proposal was made, but the motive of that reluctance was not a foolish prudism (?) or that I despised the honour but it was the fear, that people might say, I made use of the momentary popular emotion in my favour to obtain an honour, which I did not yet deserve, for I think it to be the greatest honour a man can obtain, to have his image placed in a publick institution to become the silent preacher of great and noble actions to the present and to future generations. ³²

Leichhardt was prepared to set great store by the provision of a statue; Mitchell on the other hand was able

to see a more immediate memorial in the journal he would publish at the end of an expedition. This future publication he seems to have kept constantly before him. Incidents and events which caught his attention did so because they were materials out of which he would construct his literary monument. It could be a river in flood:

We witnessed a sublime spectacle in the bed of the Macquarie below Mount Harris - a flood coming down its dry channel by moonlight, a magnificent subject for a plate. ³³

Or it could be the sight of a small bird fascinated and immobilised by a snake; this, he told his wife, was a "fine subject" for his book. ³⁴

The explorer's need for fame and recognition could be met directly through the most basic of exploration drives, the desire to be first. This desire existed beyond the explorer's wish to be remembered as a forerunner; it did not need the support of any particular vision. It was enough for the explorer to know that there was a region ahead of him which had yet to be entered by Europeans and that his would be the first eye to see and his journal the first to record what

33

Mitchell to his son Roderick, March 4, 1846.
Mitchell Papers, vii, pp. 91-98. ML 295.

34

Mitchell to his wife, Lachlan River, 1836.
Mitchell Papers, vi, pp. 147-150. ML A295.

was there. The realisation that such was the case gave a particular edge to his anticipation, as it did for Sturt at the commencement of his expedition to trace the course of the Murrumbidgee River. The excitement is apparent in Sturt's account and overrides the seemingly obligatory reference to the distress of departure.

I found myself at 5 a.m. of that delightful morning leading my horses through the gates of those barracks whose precincts I might never again enter, and whose inmates I might never again behold assembled in military array. Yet, although the chance of misfortune flashed across my mind, I was never lighter at heart, or more joyous in spirit. It appeared to me that the stillness and harmony of nature influenced my feelings on the occasion, and my mind forgot the storms of life, as nature at that moment seemed to have forgotten the tempests that sometimes agitate her. 35

Sturt presents a romantic explanation for his feelings at the outset of the adventure, but it is the prospect of what lies ahead that dictates his mood. The initial departures such as the one described here were not the only times during an expedition when such feelings emerged. In almost every expedition it is the point at which the party passes from the

known into the unknown which invests the undertaking with a new and dramatic interest. Different explorers, however, use different images to describe the feelings that such a point generated. For Leichhardt the process of exploration can be likened to the continuing challenge of "blue distant hills"; when these are crossed new ranges appear which excite "only new desire".³⁶ Mitchell, of a more literary turn of mind, sought for parallels in myth or legend. When, on his expedition of 1836, Mitchell had taken part of his company along the Murray to its confluence with the Darling, he considered that he had given sufficient time to retracing the work of Sturt and could now turn his attention to new discoveries.

We had now got through the most unpromising part of our task. We had penetrated the Australian Hesperides - although the golden fruit was still to be sought. We had accomplished so much, however, with only half the party, that nothing seemed impossible with the whole; and to trace the Murray upwards and explore the unknown regions beyond it, was a charming undertaking, when we had at length bid adieu, for ever, to the dreary banks of the Darling. ³⁷

36

Leichhardt to Robert Lynd, January, 16, 1843.
Arousseau, The Letters, ii, p. 626.

37

Mitchell, Three Expeditions, ii, p. 127.

Generally, however, Mitchell tends to describe the feeling induced on such occasions as "the irresistible attraction of a perfectly unknown region".³⁸

The strength of this desire to be first to enter a region can be gauged by the frequency with which various travellers were to insist on their rights and the attitude they adopted towards any apparent threats of trespass. This sense of rivalry, this jealousy, could at times manifest itself within the membership of a single party. This seems to have been the case with Grey's first expedition to Western Australia in 1837; it is difficult to account for the leader's reaction to his second-in-command, Lushington, in any other way. Grey had sent Lushington on a forced march to the east before the party returned to the ship, but there is little praise in Grey's account for his achievement. He distrusts the distances they claim to have travelled; he considers them "overrated" and recalls previous inaccurate estimates of the day's march. These he asserts were "very erroneous, and sometimes more than doubled".³⁹

There is even greater evidence of jealousy on those occasions when more than one expedition was in the field

38

Mitchell, Three Expeditions, i, p. 92.

39

Grey, Journals, i, p. 224.

at the same time. This happened during the years 1845-46 when three parties were exploring towards the centre of the continent: Leichhardt had set out on his expedition to Port Essington, Sturt was making his final attempt to reach the centre and Mitchell was searching for a possible overland route to the northern coasts. Mitchell seems to be the only leader infected; he makes no attempt to hide his feelings in letters to his family and seeks to belittle his rivals by referring to them as "Dr. Hunger" and "Capt. Thirst".⁴⁰ He is even prepared to suggest that a fault with the expedition's chronometer can only be explained by the watchmaker's friendship with Sturt! He is cautious with details of his progress "lest by notices in the papers - Sturt may be enlightened too soon".⁴¹ He is conscious that his achievements will be measured against those of his rival and when things seem to be going against him he is quick to blame his subordinates.

My progress should have presented a brilliant contrast to that of Sturt had I not been so weak as to have altered my original own plan to

40

Mitchell to his son Livy, December 18, 1845. Mitchell Papers, vii, pp. 83-86. ML A295.

41

Mitchell to his son Roderick, March 4, 1846. Mitchell Papers, vii, pp. 91-98. ML A295.

please a woodenheaded ass- 42

The animosity outlived this expedition and followed Mitchell on his next leave to England. When Leichhardt's publishers sent him a copy of Leichhardt's journal he found it impossible to say a good word about it, dismissing it with the comment that "a more useless mass of rubbish never was bound up in the form of a book".⁴³

Mitchell's animosity seems to have been directed largely at Sturt and Leichhardt. On his journey through south-eastern Australia in 1836 he praises the maps of Hume and Hovell as "wonderfully correct", but such commendations are not frequent. A partial explanation of his hostility towards Sturt can be found in the fact that his first three expeditions forced him to traverse ground earlier visited by his rival, while his expedition to the north was anticipated by Leichhardt's successful journey.

All of these compulsions to explore reflect a particular view of what the act of exploration involved. For men like Grey, Mitchell, and the other early travellers, the explorer was someone who ventured out and returned with

42

Mitchell to his son Roderick, March 12, 1846.
Mitchell Papers, vii, pp. 103-106. ML A295⁻².

43

Mitchell to his son Livy, August 18, 1847.
Mitchell Papers, vii, pp. 107-109. ML A295⁻².

vast areas of valuable land safely in his pockets. To this extent it was supremely practical in intent, even though, paradoxically, the explorer was impelled by visions of the future.

But the fertile areas of the continent were limited and were largely known by the middle of the nineteenth century, once Sturt and Eyre had done their work. The picture they painted was a monochrome of barrenness and aridity and these were not the colours of dreams. Sand and salt scoured the scales from dreamers' eyes and visions of future prosperity were buried beneath gibber plains and wind-carved waves of sand.

It was no sudden change. As early as 1817 with Oxley's expedition, and a decade later with Sturt's discovery of the Darling, doubts were beginning to form. Sturt himself was inclined to be pessimistic when he reflected on the future of the country to the west of the Macquarie Marshes.

Yet, upon the whole, the space I traversed is unlikely to become the haunt of civilized man, or will only become so in isolated spots, as a chain of connection to a more fertile country; if such a country exist to the westward. ⁴⁴

But the links of the chain dissolved one by one as exploration continued, and the vision gave way before the reality of barren plains and interminable sand. Fertile regions and important rivers seemed no more than mirages in a land without water. Even visions of colonization and the march of civilization could not germinate in an environment that was "arid and barren in the extreme". And yet Eyre remained faithful to the earlier view of exploration when he came to write a summary of his walk to Albany.

In making this summary, I have no important rivers to enumerate, no fertile regions to point out for the future spread of colonization and civilization, or no noble ranges to describe from which are washed the debris that might form a rich and fertile district beneath them; on the contrary, all has been arid and barren in the extreme. ⁴⁵

The rewards had eluded him; all he can offer at the end of his journey is an apology and the aridity of reality.

But the hope of finding valuable tracts of land continued to flicker throughout the century. Even Giles, the man who considered himself to be the last of the Australian explorers, did not dismiss the possibility and he advanced it as justification for his expedition from South Australia

to Perth in 1875, even though he knew that his predecessors into the region, Eyre and later John Forrest, had failed to discover any. Nevertheless Giles was convinced, as he said, that

it was evident that there was still a space of enormous extent, from the 26th parallel (where my last travels were prosecuted, and where Forrest's track joined onto mine) to the shores of the Great Australian Bight, averaging over 400 miles in width, that might repay the toils, dangers, and expense of exploration by the discovery of some new and valuable tracts of watered pastoral lands. 46

But Giles's expectations were to remain unfulfilled. He was able to salvage some satisfaction from the completion of the undertaking and his final comments on the expedition indicate an appreciation of the difficulties of Australian exploration.

In concluding the tale of a long exploration, a few remarks are perhaps necessary. In the first place, I travelled during the expedition 2,500 miles, and unfortunately no areas of country available for settlement were found. The explorer does not make the country, he must take it as he finds it; and though to the discoverer of the finest regions the

greatest applause is awarded, yet it should be borne in mind that the difficulties of traversing such a country cannot be nearly so great as those which confront the less fortunate traveller, who finds himself surrounded by heartless deserts. Still, the successful penetration of such a region has its value, both in a commercial and scientific sense, as it points out to the future emigrant or settler those portions of our continent which he should most religiously shun. ⁴⁷

Giles is aware of the earlier concept of exploration with its reliance on good land but he makes a plea for an alternative definition. In one sense it is negative, but it does make a claim for the explorer who fails to make such discoveries and asserts his right to be judged by the difficulties he encounters. With such a definition the whole focus of exploration shifts from the results achieved to the journey itself, a shift forced by the very nature of the land.

But in spite of his claim Giles is caught between both definitions. If he cannot achieve recognition through the discovery of favourable regions, then some share might come his way if he is at least able to chart some remarkable natural feature. But natural features were as elusive as good land, and so Giles seized what came to hand, avidly.

47

South Australia, Parliament, Giles's Explorations, 1875, p. 15.

Geographical features have been most terribly scarce upon this expedition, and this spring is the first permanent water I have found. I have ventured to dedicate it to our Most Gracious Queen, and the great desert in which I found it, and which will doubtless extend as far to the west of it as it does to the east - I have honoured with Her Majesty's mighty name, and called it the "Great Victorian Desert", and the spring "Queen Victoria's Spring", which, if not now, will be celebrated localities in the English Monarch's dominions. I have no Victoria and Albert Nyanzas, no Tanganikas, Suatabas, or Chambizes, like the Great African travellers, to honour with Her Majesty's name, but the humble offering of a little spring in a hideous desert, which, if it surrounded the great geographical features named above, might well have kept it concealed for ever, will not, I trust, be deemed unacceptable in Her eyes, when offered by a loyal and most faithful subject.⁴⁸

48

Giles's Explorations, 1875, p. 8. It is fortunate that Giles's claims for recognition do not rest on this spring above. A later visitor, guided by Giles's assessment, found it to be anything but "a veritable oasis in the desert".

Thursday, September 24th - Mr. Giles discovered Queen Victoria's Springs on the 25th of September, 1875, on the seventeenth day of travel, his camels having done 325 miles with one bucket of water apiece on the twelfth day. He found a veritable oasis in the desert, abundance of water and some game. We on the 23rd of September, 1891, after a journey of 375 miles, with one bucket of water each for the camels, in twenty-three days reach the same spot to find that the spring had dried up.

David Lindsay, Journal of the Elder Scientific Exploring Expedition, 1891-2 (Adelaide, 1893), p. 108.

Giles is unable to hide his disappointment at the poverty of his gift, and his failure to measure up to the standards exemplified in the work of the African explorers he refers to. He is accurate in his assessment of the public response to the discoveries in Africa, to the great discoveries of immense lakes and waterways and the solution of the age-old riddle of the sources of the Nile. He was only too acutely aware that he was no Livingstone who, more than any other explorer, caught and fired the public admiration. That the missionary traveller stood supreme in Britons' eyes is clear from the statements made when news of his death reached England. One obituary placed him at the "head of English explorers"⁴⁹ and another supported a proposal that his body should be placed in Westminster Abbey.

The position which Livingstone occupied in the public estimation is remarkable. Other travellers have been the heroes of a season; their reputation then waned, and they became almost forgotten. Not so with Livingstone. On his return from Africa in 1856 he captivated the public admiration; and though it cannot be said that his subsequent efforts equalled his first great achievement, he continued to hold his place in the estimation of the public; and when the news of his death reached England, and that his body was being brought down to Zanzibar, and would be brought to

49

The Athenaeum, January 31, 1874, p. 165.

England, the proposal that he should be buried in Westminster Abbey gave expression to the national feeling.⁵⁰

Neither Giles nor any other Australian explorer was to find a place in that national shrine but he had some right to make a special plea that what he had achieved deserved recognition. His lack of success was not due to his unwillingness, but to the reluctance of the land itself to deliver up its secrets; the men who ventured into Africa would have had as much difficulty too if they had been forced to contend with equal hostility.

Giles may have felt himself unable to compete with the great figures of African exploration, but he was prepared to claim a connexion with the great literary traveller of the century, Childs Harold. On his second expedition Giles and Tietkens set out on independent surveys of the country. Giles came upon a native well and rock pool and decided to make camp, despite the fact that there were signs that the natives had been there recently and were probably not far off.

As night descended, I lay me down by my bright fire in peace to sleep; though doubtless there are many of my readers who would scarcely like to do the

same. Such a situation might naturally lead one's thoughts to consider how many people have laid them down at night in fancied security, to be awakened only by the enemy's tomahawk crashing through their skulls. Such thoughts, however, did not intrude themselves upon my mind. My thoughts wandered away to different scenes and distant friends and relations; for this

Childe Harold had a mother not forgot,
And sisters whom he loved, but saw them not
Ere yet his weary pilgrimage begun.⁵¹

But Giles is not content with claiming for the explorer the romantic associations of Byron's hero, for during the night he is visited by dreams;

Dreams that the soul of youth engage
Ere its passions have been quelled -
Old legends of the monkish page,
Traditions of the saint and sage,
Tales that have the rime of age,
And chronicles of old.

The need to see the Australian explorer as one of a line of legendary heroes is an important one, and will be examined in detail in a later chapter. Here, though, Giles is choosing to account for the explorer's task in terms that are literary and in so doing he is insisting on a literary as well as an historical continuity.

51

South Australia, Parliament, Mr. E. Giles's Explorations, 1873-4, p. 7.



Giles, even more than Mitchell, is given to literary allusions in his writings. There are times, however, when one is uncertain of the author. Giles himself is not above breaking his canter in prose to trot awhile in verse.

The point in Giles's travels at which he compares himself with Childe Harold has still more interest at this point. We left him dreaming of legends, traditions and tales and he goes on to give specific details of the content of his dreams.

Then in my lonely sleep I had real
dreams - sweet, fanciful, and pleasant
dreams, mostly connected with the
enterprise I have in hand - dreams
that I had wandered into and was
passing through tracts of fabulously
valuable plains, watered by never-
failing supplies of the purest of
crystal, dotted with clusters of
magnificent palm trees, and having
groves - charming groves - of the
fairest pines. On awakening, however,
I was forced to reflect, how

Mysterious are these laws:
The vision's finer than the view:
Her landscape Nature never draws
As fair as fancy drew. 52

If Giles had had these to offer he would not have needed to come like a mendicant before Victoria's throne.

If the dearth of fertile land forced the explorer to abandon his visions of a wonderful future it also

made it impossible for him to regard himself as an instrument of divine will. Such a notion became increasingly difficult to sustain as expeditions pushed beyond the favoured regions. As the landscape changed from green to brown so the relationship between the explorer and his god altered. When the land was verdant, Nature and God seemed bountiful and the explorer felt confident that the discoveries he was making were pre-ordained; when no such regions were found the land became hostile and the explorer was able to survive its malice only through divine intervention. The harmony that had existed between the land, the explorer and God was altered with aridity, and the explorer found himself ranged, with God's help, against an environment that was inimical to his progress. He now moved through a landscape from which God appeared to have withdrawn.

The one thing the Australian explorers had to have was water; without it progress was impossible. When it could not be found it was taken as evidence of the land's hostility, while its sudden and seemingly miraculous appearance indicated the hand of Providence. Explorers now came to speak of Providence's "guiding and protecting hand" and this is worlds away from the earlier acceptance and submission. This faith in the "guiding and protecting hand", if it is faith at all, was one that needed frequent miracles to sustain it. There was no throwing oneself on God's bounty. Or, in

place of faith there was an insistence on the will of the explorer; not a divine plan but this drove him on, drawn either to a safe arrival and success, or to death. In a landscape devoid of God this became part of the gamble. Eyre, before his journey around the Bight, knew that these were the odds and his description of the trial makes the doubt and the uncertainty plain.

Our situation was in fact critical - and if I should live far beyond the age usually allotted to man I shall never forget the painful and anxious scenes in which I had to bear a part in my late journey to the Westward - they may only be imagined - not described - for days and weeks we were in doubt and uncertainty as to our eventual fate - we had advanced into a country thro' which we could never retreat and we were never sure when we once left water that we should ever see water again - but by God's blessing I got safely thro' all with a single native boy. 53

Warburton's incredible struggle to cross the continent from the centre to the Western coast in 1872 provides a similar instance. When progress for the party seemed impossible through the loss of one camel after another, Warburton seems to make his future movements conditional upon divine assistance.

Our situation is so critical that I am determined, should it please God to give us once more water, so that we may not be compelled to go farther back, to risk everything and make a final push....⁵⁴

If success could be taken as evidence of divine protection, so too could defeat. Or so it seemed to Ernest Giles when, on his second exploration of the interior, he was struggling to reach the distant Alfred and Marie Range. He was eventually forced to retreat, but not before he lost his companion Gibson in the desert which now bears his name. After his later and successful crossing he returned by a route which linked up with his earlier tracks, and the nature of the country which had halted his progress was revealed to him.

I could not help believing that the guiding hand of a gracious Providence had, upon that occasion, prevented me from obtaining my heart's desire to reach [the ranges]; had I then done so (having now proved what kind of country lay beyond) neither I nor any other of my party ever would have returned. Assuredly there is a Providence that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will.⁵⁵

54

P. Egerton Warburton, Journey Across the Interior of Australia (London, 1875), p. 225.

55

South Australia, Parliament, E. Giles's Explorations, 1875-6, p. 13.

These later explorers were pitted against a landscape which tolerated their entry only through the intervention of a superior power. Nevertheless there is a need for considerable caution in accepting the explorers' pronouncements on their debt to Heaven. It has been noted that most of these statements are public utterances, designed particularly for the English reading public which had already indicated a taste which sought in the lives of public figures just such evidences of the hand of God. The explorers' journals could serve the same purpose as any of the flood of moral biographies or works such as Samuel Smiles's Self Help, which were so popular during the second half of the century.

The explorers' confrontation with a hostile landscape burned away the visionary motives which had sustained earlier travellers and exposed more basic drives, such as the compulsion to achieve fame and recognition, and the pleasure of being first. Giles was aware of the attraction of an unexplored region and the knowledge that he was about to enter one untraversed by white men becomes for him a "happiness, most ecstatic",⁵⁶ and he speaks of himself as someone

56

E. Giles, Geographic Travels in Central Australia (Melbourne, 1875), p. 83.

"consumed with the fire or frenzy of renown for opening unknown lands",⁵⁷ a fire which is not dampened by the experience but only fanned into greater flame.

So long as there are new regions to explore, the burning charm to seek for something new will still possess me, and I am also actuated to aspire and endeavour, if I cannot make my life sublime, at least to leave behind me some everlasting "footprints on the sands of time".⁵⁸

Even his incorrigible love of rhyme does not vitiate the strength of Giles's statement. Other explorers were certainly more direct in admitting that they were motivated by personal needs, and Warburton was one. Even the most appalling hardships did not impair his directness.

Let no self-reproaches afflict any one respecting me. I undertook the journey for the benefit of my family, and I was quite equal to it under all the circumstances that could be reasonably anticipated, but difficulties and losses have come upon us so thickly for the last few months that we have not been able to move ...⁵⁹

57
ibid., p. 184.

58
Giles, Journal of a Forgotten Expedition, p. 19.

59
Warburton, Journey, p. 258.

Motives as strongly held and as directly stated as these could give rise to expressions of jealousy as strong as those which Mitchell was unable to suppress. Not all later explorers experienced the pangs, or at least not all of them gave outward expression to them, but Giles certainly did, and at some considerable length. Again, it was at a time in 1872 when there were several expeditions in the field simultaneously: those of Gosse and Warburton under the aegis of the South Australian Government, and Giles's privately sponsored undertaking. There was an agreement whereby the territory to be explored was to be divided and it was this understanding that caused Giles to be "perfectly dumbfounded" at his discovery of Gosse's tracks. He makes no attempt to hide his astonishment and disappointment in his journal entry for September 14, 1873.

I was not only astonished - I had reason to be annoyed as well - because, as the Government Expedition had come down to [Mount Olga], and was now travelling in advance of me, on the only line of country that seemed traversable - that is to say - along the line of range now lying south and south-westward from here, having probably more than a month's start of me. I was compelled to reflect, of what earthly use was it for me to continue in the same region as another explorer? I had thoughts of returning immediately, and throwing up my expedition at once.⁶⁰

Giles implies that his chief reason for undertaking the journey has been thwarted; certainly his annoyance is a direct response to Gosse's being in front of him. The strength of the compulsion to be first has led to a change in the notion of exploration, which now comes to have all the characteristics of a race, with the rewards, the fame and the recognition, going to the winner.

Personal motives such as this are independent of the country through which the explorer moved. The quest for fame no longer depends on the discovery of fertile land, nor does it depend on the solution of a particular scientific or geographic problem. Indeed, whatever scientific purpose had been behind earlier explorations has completely evaporated. Once this is accepted then it becomes apparent that the notion of exploration which had guided earlier men has been replaced with something else again.

Although the search for psychic rewards is independent of the country through which these men journey, the nature of the land begins to impose its own conditions on the men who seek to traverse it. Exploration becomes increasingly a contest between the explorer and his environment. Giles himself describes exploration in just these terms, when he comments on a journey he made from Fowler's Bay in the far west of South Australia to Beltana in 1875 -

a journey he describes as a "forgotten expedition".

This journey I suppose I must not entirely consider an exploration, as many parts at which I touched had been visited previously, and I only performed this journey to take command of and fit out a thorough exploring expedition for Perth; but, considering the whole three of us nearly perished, I think I may put this trip down as a very close approximation to real exploration.⁶¹

Giles's definition of what constitutes exploration deserves close examination. He still asserts his earlier notion, where the stress is placed on the primacy of the explorer's contact with a region (a point made forcibly in his reaction to Gosse's intrusion), to be true, but this is displaced by a new consideration, whereby the hardship experienced becomes the gauge. The nearer the hardship comes to the ultimate experience, which is death, the nearer the undertaking approaches the ideal of exploration.

Reference has already been made to Giles's second expedition which he had been forced to abandon because of the extreme demands the country made on the party, and which also cost his companion Gibson his life. Despite all this, however, Giles was reluctant to turn back although he was

61

Giles, Journal of a Forgotten Expedition, p. 19.

aware that to say that he "was sorry to abandon such a work in such a region, though true, may seem absurd".⁶² It is not absurd given Giles's definition of what it meant to be an explorer. There is evidence of a greater determination during the successful crossing of the desert to Perth in 1875. Here Giles speaks of himself as being pitted "against Nature", and even the knowledge that he is moving through "the worst desert probably upon the face of the earth"⁶³ does nothing to daunt him, but rather gives him the greater pleasure in conquering it. His assistant on that Expedition, Jesse Young, is convinced that it is this sense of a contest between man and nature, and the leader's refusal to accept even the possibility of defeat, which accounts for the success of the expedition.

To the enterprise shown by Mr. Giles, in thus risking the fate of the party upon the chances of finding water, may be attributed the success of the expedition. Had we proceeded in the same manner as the other explorers, we should never have got 200 miles from home. Had we never left one camp until we found water to justify moving to another, we should have stopped at the first depot and

62

E. Giles, Australia Twice Traversed (London, 1889), ii, p. 52.

63

Giles's Explorations, 1875, p. 5.

returned home from there.⁶⁴

The abandonment of the earlier, tried practice of moving only when supplies of water were assured also meant that the earlier concept of the explorer was discarded as well. To follow the programme adumbrated in Young's comment there could be no place for surveys of the land or the prosecution of scientific experiment or observation. Young realises this when he comments on the expedition's limited knowledge of the interior of the continent.

It must be borne in mind, however, that all the knowledge of the waste has been obtained hurriedly, and that every expedition has been simply a wild race for life across the sands.⁶⁵

Other expeditions, motivated by the same quest for psychic rewards, were equally unproductive of material results, if scientific or geographical knowledge can be so described. Certainly this was the case with Warburton's expedition, where a measure of the hardships endured is suggested by the loss of one camel after another. When Warburton lost his master bull camel he was forced to admit

64

J. Young, "Recent Journey of Exploration across the Continent of Australia; ...", Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York, x (1878), pp. 116-141.

65

ibid., p. 141.

that even the token attempt at scientific observation would have to be abandoned. This involved even that most basic of scientific tasks, the fixing of the expedition's position. On one occasion two readings were taken and while Warburton is prepared to admit that they were reasonably close in agreement and that "their mean may approximate the truth", he still dismisses them: "if they don't, no great harm is done".⁶⁶

No other expedition epitomises the changed nature of exploration better than the Burke and Wills expedition of 1860. It was conceived as an exercise in colonial self-aggrandisement, as a race across the continent from south to north. Even the diligence of the second-in-command, Wills, in persevering with his diary could not invest the undertaking with even the pretence of scientific enquiry. Some measure of its achievements in this field can be got from the failure of the leader, Burke, to keep a written record at all, if one excepts the disconnected jottings in a small notebook. Even the route to the Gulf of Carpentaria which the expedition pioneered was of little use to later settlers, as the facility of the crossing was due to the exceptionally good season in which the attempt was made.

And yet, despite all this, the expedition came to enshrine all that the Australian colonists expected from exploration. Here were the hall marks of hardship and privation: the lonely death of the sailor Gray, the struggles of the survivors to escape from Cooper's Creek, the noble death of Burke and the quiet self-sacrifice of Wills. And above all the irony of the near-rescue, when the depot party resigned their post a mere seven hours before the advance party returned. Nevertheless this could only be called exploration if the very nature of exploration had changed - if exploration had become exploit.

If Australian exploration is seen as the impact on vision of reality, as the substitution of exploit for exploration, then the journals of the explorers take on a larger significance. They can no longer be held to be the records of individual achievements; they become instead the composite record of the struggle between man and his environment. The travellers merge into one single hero, and the same tale is recounted again and again. It is a story of battles measured by lonely and often unknown graves. It becomes, in short, Australia's only epic.

CHAPTER 3

TOWARDS AN AUSTRALIAN EPIC.

There was no doubt in the minds of contemporary observers that many of the individual journeys of Australia's explorers were truly heroic undertakings. Henry Kingsley, writing of Eyre's trek along the southern margin of the continent, for example, didn't hesitate to acclaim him a hero for his "almost unexampled valour".¹ There was even less doubt in the minds of the citizens of Melbourne when a statue was unveiled to the memory of Burke and Wills in April, 1865.

Their undaunted courage, and the heroism with which they faced death in one of its most horrible forms while in the prosecution of a great and noble enterprise, would never have been forgotten in our own day; and the national monument erected to their fame will perpetuate the memory of their deeds to generations yet unborn.²

¹ Henry Kingsley, "Eyre, The South Australian Explorer", Macmillan's Magazine, xii (May-October, 1865), p.502

² The Australasian, April 28, 1865.

But while particular men and their individual expeditions were, and still are, regarded as heroic, it is only when their journeys are seen in sequence that they achieve their full scope and significance. Once explorers are seen, as Leichhardt suggested, as Banquo's progeny,³ their achievements and the accounts they gave of their travels deserve acceptance as Australia's only epic.

Approached in this way the age of exploration becomes an heroic age; as Jan de Vries, in his study Heroic Song and Heroic Legend, comments: an heroic age is "an age in which historical figures who have appealed to the imagination of contemporaries and descendants can become heroes".⁴ The presence of heroes and the narration of their exploits is one indication only of epic. The fact that the continuing story of exploration feeds a national rather than an individual interest is additional evidence. Indeed, the one essential feature of exploration, the journey, is something which is common to all epics. It is, as one

³ Leichhardt to William Macarthur, June 18, 1846. Arousseau, The Letters, iii, p. 880.

⁴ Jan de Vries, Heroic Song and Heroic Legend (London, 1963), p. 208.

commentator, Wilkie, suggests, one of the larger epic patterns.⁵

The journey as an epic pattern is woven from several important strands. The hero must travel beyond the limits of the known world into a region which is inimical to life, the domain of evil and death. He must suffer and survive a variety of ordeals and, triumphant, return. The region itself will conform to a number of expectations: it will be a region abandoned by life and deserted by God, a forbidding and hostile landscape. Such a pattern emerges from the journals of Australia's explorers, especially as one traces their reactions to the landscape of the centre of the continent.

Their reactions to other landscapes are of a different order. In the more favoured areas explorers were able to give descriptive accounts of the country; they were able to record their pleasure at coming upon scenes which reminded them of England or satisfied the accepted notions of landscape beauty. But once these areas were behind them description altered and the explorer became increasingly

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B. Wilkie, Romantic Poets and Epic Tradition (Madison and Milwaukee, 1965), p. 15.

involved with the landscape he encountered. It ceased to be something to observe and became in fact an opponent. It is the record of this struggle which is Australia's epic.

1

It is impossible to speak of explorers' "reaction" to landscape without implying some degree of involvement of the observer in the thing observed, and this is true generally of passages in the journals which describe the country travellers encountered. However, there is one type of description which attempts to eliminate the observer's response as much as possible. To achieve this, the landscape is subjected to a disinterested scrutiny and its features are noted and recorded from a distance which is not physical but mental.

On one occasion, during his journey from Moreton Bay to Port Essington, Leichhardt made the following observation on the landscape through which he was moving:

The whole country I have travelled over, is composed of sandstone, with probably occasional outbreaks of igneous rocks, as indicated by the rich black soil. The plains and creeks abound in fossil wood, changed into iron-ore and silica. The soil is generally good, but some of the sandy flats are rotten: and the

ridges are covered with pebbles.⁶

There is no doubt that Leichhardt is describing the landscape which is before him, but it is a specialised description indeed. It is the product of observation, but an observation that is unhindered by considerations other than the desire to convey information. The language itself makes this obvious, since there is no relief from the search for structure and the investigation of cause and effect. Even the escape apparently promised by the one term "rotten" slams shut with the realisation that it is in no sense an evaluative term, that its connotations are as rigid as those of "igneous" or "iron-ore" or "silica". In one sense Leichhardt is not observing the landscape at all; he is rather dissecting it, exposing its bones, stripping it bare. Yet such an approach is demanded of him; he is fulfilling one of his functions as an explorer in carrying out such a minute examination of the land which is under the observation of European eyes for the first time.

But not all Leichhardt's descriptions concentrate so exclusively on the bones of the landscape; there are times when his attention is directed towards the flesh. On the

⁶ Leichhardt, Journal of an Overland Expedition
(London, 1847), p.119.

same expedition he made a summary of the country traversed during the day:

We travelled about ten miles north-west by west, to latitude $16^{\circ} 31'$. The first and last parts of the stage were scrubby, or covered with a dense underwood of several species of *Acacia*, *Grevillea chrysodendrum* and a species of *Fultenaea* with leafless compressed stem. The intervening part of our journey was through a stringy-bark forest, with sandy, and frequently rotten soil, on sandstone ridges or undulations.⁷

The description here is no less detailed, no less clearly focussed, and the specialised language establishes the intention behind the account. In both of these reports, however, the emphasis is on the components of the landscape, rather than the total scene. The explorer is making a particular type of description and a highly specialised one at that.

Passages such as these are not restricted to Leichhardt. They are to be found in every traveller's diary and they occur even at times when one might expect that the excitement of discovery would have supplanted the desire to convey scientific information. Mitchell clearly regarded his

⁷
ibid., pp. 393-4.

discovery of Australia Felix as his crowning achievement as an explorer and yet this is the account he gives of the ascent of a mountain in the Grampians from which he hopes to survey the way ahead.

The surface at the summit of the cliffs was broad, and consisted of large blocks of sandstone, separated by wide fissures, full of dwarf bushes of banksia and casuarinae. These rocks were inclined but slightly towards the north-west, and the bushes being also wet and curiously encrusted with heavy icicles, it was by no means a pleasant part of our journey to travel nearly half a mile upwards, either on the slippery rock or between fissures among wet bushes. At length however we reached the highest point, and found that it consisted of naked sandstone. The top block was encrusted with icicles; and had become hoary under the beating of innumerable storms. At the very summit I found a small heath-like, bushy Leucopogen, from six inches to a foot high. It was in flower, although covered with ice.⁸

The mists closed in and the party was forced to spend the night on the summit, but it is not until later that their privations are described. Mitchell's attention is engaged by the scientific details of the scene, the details of geology and vegetation. But while the overriding impression is one of scientific impersonality it would be unfair to Mitchell to

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Mitchell, Three Expeditions, ii, pp. 174-5.

see only this in the account. The description recreates the experience of the climb, moving, as the party moves, from the broad sandstone base to the small, heath-like plant that crowns the summit, so paradoxically in flower. And although the function of the description is clear, there are times when it permits a glimpse of some personal response on Mitchell's part: some suggestion of the physical discomfort of the climb, and, even more interesting, a momentary realisation of the immense age of the landscape, bearing the scars of "innumerable storms".

Such scientific landscapes as these are the result of a particularly close examination of the environment, but there are occasions when they can be incorporated into wider vistas, and made to serve other purposes. This is true of the description which Sturt gives of Depot Glen, the rocky gully which was to be both goal and refuge to his party in 1845. Here alone was there sufficient water: the beautiful sheet on which they camped, a small lagoon to the south-east and the "numerous waterholes in the rocky gully".

The creek was marked by a line of gum-trees, from the mouth of the glen to its junction with the main branch, in which, excepting in isolated spots, water was no longer to be found. The Red Hill (afterwards called Mount Poole), bore N.W. from us, distant $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles; between us and it there were undulating plains, covered with stones or salsolaceous herbage, excepting in the hollows,

wherein there was a little grass. Behind us were level stony plains, with small sandy undulations, bounded by brush, over which the black Hill, bearing S.S.E. from the Red Hill, was visible, distant 10 miles. To the eastward the country was, as I have described it, hilly. Westward at a quarter of a mile the low range, through which Depot Creek forces itself, shut out from our view the extensive plains on which it rises. This range extended longitudinally nearly north and south, but it was nowhere more than a mile and a half in breadth. The geological formation of the range was slate, traversed by veins of quartz, its interstices being filled with magnesium limestone.⁹

Although the need to convey information predominates, the passage nevertheless is shaped and ordered to serve a purpose beyond this. Sturt first establishes the presence of that all-important element, water; he then sets up his cardinal points and the general features of the scene are sketched in. It is only after this has been done that the focus is altered and we are drawn in for a closer and more detailed examination of the geology of the area. Most importantly, the handling of the description stresses the atmosphere of a prison: the "level stony plains" are "bounded" by brush and the creek must force its way through the confining hills.

⁹ Sturt, Narrative, i, pp. 265-6.

Even the names assigned to the natural features, the Red Hill and the Black Hill, suggest more than a mere accident of colour; they evoke images of a chessboard and chess pieces, with all the connotations of move and countermove, of restrictions and chance, that were to be distinguishing features of this expedition.

Many of the descriptions which the explorers give of landscape are of this type: objective comments on soil and vegetation, geology and natural features. They are primarily intended to satisfy scientific curiosity but they do more; they bear witness to an individual response as well, a shaping intelligence that seeks to serve artistic ends beyond the utilitarian functions of the account. Nevertheless they are landscapes which are observed rather than experienced, and nothing stands between the observer and what he sees; he becomes, to a limited degree, a human recording instrument. This judgement is in no sense a condemnation of the explorer. In adopting such methods of description he was fulfilling a particular requirement that his position demanded. Nevertheless, it is possible to see the distance which exists between the explorer and the landscape in such accounts.

There are other occasions, too, where the explorer's reaction to the landscape was dictated by the tasks

he was required to perform. When one of his functions was the discovery of land suitable for settlement then his descriptions were adapted to serve that end. Indeed, when he regarded such a function as a compulsion to explore, he found it difficult to react to the landscape in any other way. In such a case motivation and observation met, and the explorer's eye was closed to other aspects of the scene before him. No explorer better exemplifies such a situation than John McDouall Stuart. His first journeys, in 1858 and 1859, were undertaken with the support of the South Australian pastoralists Chambers and Finke. These, as well as the later expeditions into the centre of the continent, were dominated by the search for grazing runs. Stuart's first expeditions were in the vicinity of Lake Gairdiner, in the western regions of South Australia; in the second of these he made the following assessment of the country he was investigating:

The country travelled over to-day
has been very well grassed, with
salt-bush; take it all together
I have not seen better runs in the
colony, and in the driest summer
the furthest distance from water
will not be above five miles at
the most, but the feed is so abundant
that [the cattle] would not require
to go so far.¹⁰

Nothing other than water and feed impinges on the observer's consciousness; it is worth noting the changed reaction, too, to salt bush, which has come to suggest land suitable for stock, rather than an indication of aridity. On his final, and successful attempt to reach the northern shores of the continent in 1863 Stuart made a similar assessment of the country along the Roper River:

The water in this river is most excellent; the soil is also of the first description; and the grass, although dry, most abundant, from two to five feet high. This is certainly the finest country I have seen in Australia. ¹¹

This is a highly selective vision of the landscape. Stuart was so preoccupied with the suitability of the land for settlement that it dominates his reaction to the achievement of his goal. It is the knowledge that he has discovered immense tracts of fertile land which gives particular zest to the sight of the sea at Van Diemen's Gulf. He has succeeded "through the instrumentality of Divine Providence" after penetrating "one of the finest countries men would wish to pass."¹²

¹¹

John McDouall Stuart, Explorations Across the Continent of Australia (Melbourne, 1863), p. 40.

¹²

ibid., p. 57.

Although the descriptions Stuart gives are also intended to convey information, they differ in an important way from those already noted. Stuart is concerned with something more than the prospect immediately before him. Even though it is at a rudimentary level, there is an appeal to something beyond the scene under observation. Behind the description there is an implied standard; there is an appeal to other regions the explorer has encountered, a comparison with other landscapes. Because of this reference to something outside the scene itself small whiffs of memory adhere to the account and blur the otherwise objective reportage.

2

Evans, like Stuart, was receptive to landscapes which promised future prosperity and when he found them he was quick to call them beautiful. Such was his estimation of the country he discovered beyond the Blue Mountains in 1813.

My Progress is through an exceeding good Track of Country: it is the handsomest I have yet seen with gentle rising hills and dales well watered... 13

13

G. Evans, "Assistant-Surveyor Evans's Journal 1813-1814". In George Mackaness (ed), Fourteen Journeys Over the Blue Mountains (Sydney, 1965), p. 23.

Faced with the task of describing such a scene Evans at first settles for a vague superlative. Then, as if aware of the limitations of the comparison, he continues: "the distant hills, which are about 5 Miles South, appear as grounds laid out divided into fields by edges [sic]". In an attempt to establish the appearance of the landscape beyond doubt Evans searches his memory for scenes which are comparable, and settles on the image of an English gentleman's park. The landscape is not merely being observed and described; it is being measured and evaluated by acceptable standards of landscape beauty.

In making such a comparison Evans is following a tradition that was established in the initial discovery of the continent. Cook, after he had made a brief excursion along the foreshores of Botany Bay, commented that he found the country

diversified with woods, Lawns and Marshes; the woods are free from under wood of every kind and the trees are at such a distance from one another that the whole Country or at least great part of it might be cultivated without being oblig'd to cut down a single tree; ...¹⁴

All the components of the comparison are present in Cook's account but a more direct antecedent is to be found in the comment of the expedition's draftsman, Sydney Parkinson:

The country looked very pleasant and fertile, and the trees, quite free from underwood, appeared like plantations in a gentleman's park.¹⁵

The comparison was also made by members of the First Fleet, and the similarity was observed and noted by later visitors to the infant settlement. It became, in fact, a commonplace observation on the Australian landscape.

Evans was the first to point the comparison beyond the Blue Mountains, but the observation recurs in the journals of the explorers who followed him into the interior. Mitchell noted the similarity both in the north of New South Wales and in many parts of his "Australia Felix".¹⁶ Nor was such "park-like" scenery confined to the eastern seaboard; explorers were to find it in widely scattered regions of the continent. Sturt, for example, thought that the country on the western shores of Lake Alexandrina resembled a "pleasure ground".

¹⁵

Sidney Parkinson, A Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas (London, 1773), p. 134.

¹⁶

Mitchell, Three Expeditions, II, p. 168.

It would have been impossible for the most tasteful individual to have laid out pleasure ground [sic] to more advantage, than Nature had done in planting and disposing the various groups of trees along the spine, and upon the sides of the elevations that confined the river, and bounded the low ground that intervened between it and their base. ¹⁷

Sturt's description is a statement of evident approval but there is something else of interest in his account. The reference to the gentleman's park (although it is here a "pleasure ground") emerges as the only concrete element in the entire scene as Sturt records it. There are no specific or graphic details beyond this one image. It is almost as though the bare evocation of the image, the pointing of the comparison, renders any more detailed description superfluous. There is the feeling that the discovery of a parallel and its statement is adequate. This is certainly the case with a later explorer, Warburton. He is able to establish his response to, and approval of, a fertile pocket of the McDonnell Ranges with a simple statement: "the country to-day has been beautiful, with park-like scenery and splendid grass".¹⁸

17

Sturt, Two Expeditions, 11, p. 152.

18

Warburton, Journey, p. 148.

There is a rather neat dove-tailing of two standards of approval - the practical and the aesthetic. That Warburton is able to make use of the comparison in the 1870's and in such an unlikely region of Australia is a measure of its persistence and its wide application.

The leaders of expeditions were not alone in finding similarities between one type of Australian landscape and an Englishman's park. The ornithologist with Leichhardt's first expedition, Gilbert, noted the likeness, as did Leichhardt's companions on his second expedition, Hely and Mann.¹⁹ The image continued to be used by one visitor after another, and its wide currency is apparent from the comment by one traveller who reported that

the general appearance of the country in Australia, is, as generally represented in books, of a very park-like nature, and exceedingly inviting in aspect, only more thickly timbered than we should like in England.²⁰

Explorers such as Mitchell and Sturt, Evans and Warburton, at least had similar landscapes in mind when they

19

Gilbert, MS diary, entry for November 12, 1844.
H. Hely, MS diary, entry for December 15, 1846. John Mann, Eight Months with Dr. Leichhardt (Sydney, 1888), p. 51.

20

H. Berkeley Jones, Adventures in Australia (London, 1853), p. 134.

likened them to English parks. For the comparison to be valid there would have to be trees of some size, little or no undergrowth, and extensive areas of grass to give a suggestion of fertility. But this was not so with all the explorers who made use of the image. Gilbert, for example, claimed the likeness on the evidence of "small clumps of Brigolo" scrub, while Eyre applied the phrase to a landscape which appears to have little in common with the remembered ideal. During his journey along the southern coast of the continent Eyre and his aboriginal companion had been forced onto the beach to escape the scrubs. Eventually these diminished and they were able to move farther inland. It was at this point in the journey that Eyre came upon a scene that appeared to share something of the qualities of an English park.

The soil was light and sandy, but tolerably fertile. In places we found low brush, in others very handsome clumps of tea-tree scattered at intervals over some grassy tracts of country, giving a pleasing and park-like appearance we had long been strangers to. The grass was green, and afforded a most grateful relief to the eye, accustomed heretofore to rest only upon the naked sands or the gloomy scrubs we had so long been travelling amongst.²¹

21

Eyre, Journals, ii, p. 43.

Trees and a green sward have been replaced by tea-tree and brush but are enough to cause a rush of recognition. Other factors undoubtedly helped, not least the visual relief that Eyre experienced. Something, too, of the explorer's relief at the greater chance of success now that Albany is nearer and the worst of the journey past informs the description as well. It is interesting that, for Eyre, the comparison is so firmly established that it can be made, not in relation to a European scene, but to an Australian one.

The explorers found so many examples of park-like scenery that one is tempted to postulate an antipodean career for "Capability" Brown; at least some explanation seems to be called for. The use of the comparison could be explained quite simply: the correspondences were sufficiently obvious to justify the comparison and to use it was to make an objective statement about the Australian landscape. But such an explanation does not account for the way in which the details changed with some observers. The recognition of resemblances between an observed and a remembered landscape could be seen as an attempt to come to terms with an alien and uncomfortable environment, a means not of describing, but of modifying reality, an exercise of an exiled consciousness. But to describe the explorer's reaction to the landscape as a search for the known in the unknown is to radically alter the notion of exploration and what it involves. Any attempt

to account for the use of the comparison must be measured against that most frequently stated of motives, the desire to be first into an unknown region, an undiscovered locality. Certainly it is a device to make the impression of a landscape immediately available to the readers of the journal and its frequent use a measure of the paucity of the writer's imagination, a descriptive crutch. More importantly it is an indication of the relationship existing between the observer and the landscape through which he is moving. It is not simply an objective statement of the components of the scene; there is a personal response, a suggestion of the impact of the country on the writer's sensibilities even if at times it seems to involve no more than an affirmation of the landscape's pleasing appearance.

While other explorers were commenting on the similarities between Australian scenes and remembered examples of English landscape art, Leichhardt, always an interested and careful observer, seems to have been equally struck by the dissimilarities which lay behind them. He wrote of one scene :

Were a superficial observer suddenly transported from one of the reedy ponds of Europe to this water-hole in Suttor Creek, he would not be able to detect the change of his locality,

except by the presence of
Casaurinas and the white trunks
of the majestic flooded-gum. ²²

This general comment is followed by a scientifically detailed comparison from which Leichhardt establishes further correspondences: the reeds are similar, as are the polygonums, the insects and the small animals. He then continues:

The spell, however, must not be broken by the noisy call of a laughing jackass (*Dacelo gigantea*); the screams of the white cockatoo; or by the hollow sound of the thirsty emu.

Leichhardt's description is not one that could have been produced by a "superficial observer". Quite apart from the scientific detail of his account Leichhardt demonstrates his ability to perceive those sights and sounds which label the scene "Australian" - although one wonders at his reference to the emu. Perhaps he had heard the peculiar throaty, gravelly sound of the bird as it approached water and linked the sound to the activity.

3

The explorer who was able to find copies of a gentleman's park during his travels might have been doing

22

Leichhardt, Journal, p. 175.

no more than indicating his approval of some types of Australian scenery. Even so, to record such an approval meant that he was to some degree involved in the landscape which he was observing. Certainly there is not the detachment which is a feature of the objective comments on geological structure or vegetation. Also, the effect of the comparison was to force the observer to take a wider view; the landscape had to be seen as a whole for the connection to be made.

But the epitome of English landscape art was not the only standard that was applied to the Australian experience. Explorers found, and recorded their reaction to, qualities in the local scene which conformed to current taste in landscape beauty; they found examples which they were able to classify as picturesque or romantic. Observers in Australia were not alone in applying such aesthetic standards to foreign landscapes; English observers who travelled in other regions during the period also used notions of the picturesque and the romantic to guide them in their response to new landscapes. Travellers to the Near East during the first quarter of the nineteenth century responded to such qualities and their writings reflect such

"contemporary canons of taste".²³

George Gray certainly was aware of accepted standards when he explored the coastal regions of Western Australia. He was an educated observer and his accounts show a concern for detail, especially when he encountered a scene which he considered particularly congenial.

This ravine, in the luxuriance of its vegetation, and the great size of the trees, as well as in its rapid stream, at times leaping in cascades, or foaming in rapids, resembled those we had before seen in the sandstone ranges, but it differed from them in the greater height of the surrounding hills and cliffs, which being over-shadowed with hanging trees and climbing plants, presented as rich a painting as the eye could behold; and as these grew golden with the rays of the setting sun, or were thrown into deep and massive shadows, I could not but regret that no Claude of the tropics had arisen, to transfer to canvass [sic] scenes which words cannot express. ²⁴

23

The popularity of travel accounts and the influence they had on minor poetry is examined in two articles by Wallace Cable Brown:

"The Popularity of English Travel Books about the Near East, 1775-1825", Philological Quarterly, xv, 1 (January, 1936), 70-80.

"English Travel Books and Minor Poetry about the Near East", Philological Quarterly, xvi, 3 (July, 1937), 249-271.

24

Gray, Journals, i, p. 216.

Grey is not responding to the scene as an antipodean reflection of a European landscape, but to the way it satisfies his notion of a particular type of natural beauty. All the components are present: the rough and wild natural features, the contrasts of light and shade, the exotic vegetation. Little wonder that he regrets the absence of a Claude, who was especially revered as the great painter of the picturesque, and was probably the most influential of the Italian landscape painters, along with Salvator Rosa. These two provided,

for the connoisseur of natural scenery, landscapes which were so beautiful or so wild that they represented an ideal landscape, to which the landscape of a country could be compared. 25

Claude's name was so closely connected with the appreciation of picturesque landscape that it was the practice for travellers to carry a Claude glass.

This was a tinted reflecting glass, often oval or circular, and the viewer stood with his back to the landscape, moving the glass until

the perfect scene appeared framed as if in a picture. With the help of this glass, travellers saw scenes very like those in Claude's pictures, or, in mountainous places, landscapes after Salvator Rosa. 26

It is not surprising that Claude's name should have sprung so readily to Grey's mind.

Although the exotic was not seen as an essential feature of the picturesque by those who formulated its aesthetics, it was often sufficient inducement for Australian explorers to catalogue a scene as such.²⁷ It might be some feature of the vegetation such as the palm trees which Wills noted in the Cloncurry region of northern Australia which, he records, gave "a most picturesque and pleasant appearance to the creek".²⁸ At other times it was the appearance of trees even more unusual, such as the bottle tree, which

26

Watson, Picturesque Landscape, p. 14.

27

William Gilpin, in his Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty (London, 1792), in an attempt to define the difference between the beautiful and the picturesque claimed that "roughness" was the "most essential point of difference"; it was this "particular quality, which makes objects chiefly pleasing in painting". The artist, therefore, would choose a ruin rather than a piece of Palladian architecture, or a wrinkled face rather than a smooth one, or action rather than repose. Gilpin, p. 6.

28

The Burke and Wills Exploring Expedition
(Melbourne, 1861), p. 21.

established the scene as picturesque. Its presence on the Dawson River drew such a comment from Leichhardt.

We several times met with fine plains, which I called "Vervain Plains", as that plant grew abundantly on them. They were surrounded with scrub, frequently sprinkled with Bricklow groves, interspersed with the rich green of the Bauhinia, and the strange forms of the Bottle-tree; which imparted to the scene a very picturesque character. 29

On other occasions it is not the vegetation but the wild and abrupt forms of the land itself that calls to mind the character of the picturesque.

We had been travelling for some distance upon a high level open country, and now came to a sudden gorge of several hundred feet below us, through which the Rocky river wound its course. It was a most singular and wild looking place, and was not inaptly named by the men, the "Devil's Glen;" looking down from the table land we were upon, the valley beneath appeared occupied by a hundred little hills of steep ascent and rounded summits, whilst through their pretty glens, flowed the winding stream, shaded by many a tree and shrub - the whole forming a most interesting and picturesque scene. 30

29
Leichhardt, Journal, p. 36.

30
Eyre, Journal, 1, pp. 42-3.

This is Eyre's account of a discovery in South Australia and all the necessary components of a picturesque landscape are mentioned, as the epithets "singular" and "wild-looking" indicate. The very name the men bestowed put the matter beyond doubt. The surprising number of "glens" which dot the landscape of central Australia bears witness to the frequency with which explorers found examples of the picturesque. Giles must have gladdened many a Scottish heart with his liking for the name, but he was not alone in the practice. Warburton discovered and named a number of them in the vicinity of Central Mount Wedge. Of one of them, Glen Elder, he had this to say:

I might, perhaps, by degrees, convey to another person in conversation some idea of these places, but I cannot attempt it in writing; they are very grand and imposing. At the entrance of the first glen a huge column of basalt has been launched from a height of about 300 feet, and has struck perpendicularly in the ground; the base has been worn away by the torrent, and cannot much longer support this heavy top. It stands a sentry to guard the beautiful pool, which occupies the whole width of the entrance of the glen. 31

Warburton's disclaimer of any literary skill is genuine enough; his journal clearly attests the unpolished nature of his writing. However, so many travellers use the device that it becomes either a retreat from revelation, or else a measure of the involvement of the observer and the strength of his response.

The notion of the picturesque could subsume concepts of landscape which concentrated on the unusual and the exotic and it could also be defined as a quality in the landscape which rendered it a suitable subject for a picture. A surprising number of Australia's explorers possessed some skill as an artist and so it is not to be wondered at that they at times saw the landscape with an artist's eye. Others might regret, as Eyre did, their inability to sketch or paint, but they nevertheless saw in the scenes before them the possibilities of pictorial representation. Eyre's reaction to the enormous cliffs which bordered the Great Australian Bight included this regret, but did not prevent him from expressing the details of the scene in essentially visual terms.

Distressing and fatal as the continuance of these cliffs might prove to us, there was a grandeur and sublimity in their appearance that was most imposing, and which struck me with admiration. Stretching out before us in lofty unbroken outline, they presented the singular and romantic appearance of massy battlements of

masonry, supported by huge buttresses, and glittering in the morning sun which had now risen upon them, and made the scene beautiful even amidst the dangers and anxieties of our situation. It was indeed a rich and gorgeous view for a painter, and I never felt so much regret at my inability to sketch as I did at this moment. ³²

Eyre is moving so firmly within the accepted notions of the picturesque that the comparison of the cliffs with the battlements of a castle gives the scene the quality of the ideal. Again the essential components are clearly signposted: the "grandeur" and "sublimity" of their appearance, reinforced by references to the "singular" and the "romantic". The conjunction of danger and extreme beauty certainly heightens Eyre's response at this point, in true romantic fashion, but the dominant quality of the scene is still a visual one.

Mitchell could have no possible cause to regret an inability to sketch, since his published journals carry illustrations based on the explorer's drawings in the field, and they display a high level of competence. What he does regret, however, is the lack of time, the inability to pause

32

Eyre, Journal, 1, p. 327.

on his expeditions and record "scenes forming the most captivating studies". His skill as a draftsman causes him to view the landscape in a particular way and produces the sort of account that he gives of the scenery along the Lachlan River in 1836.

The scenery was highly picturesque at that part of the banks of the Lachlan, notwithstanding the dreary level of the naked plains back from them. The "yarra" grew here, as on the Darling, to a gigantic size, the height sometimes exceeding 100 feet; and its huge gnarled trunks, wild romantic formed branches often twisting in coils, shining white or light red bark, and dark masses of foliage, with consequent streaks of shadow below, frequently produced effects fully equal to the wildest forest scenery of Ruysdael or Waterloo. Often as I hurried along, did I take my last look with reluctance, of scenes forming the most captivating studies. 33

While there is an appreciation of those aspects of the scene which conformed to notions of picturesque beauty, there is no pleasant response to "the naked plains". For the rest, Mitchell's attention is fixed on the qualities of light and shade and the particular "effects" which were produced. There is no reason to doubt that Mitchell found the trees beautiful; like Eyre, he too was reminded of the great

practitioners of picturesque painting, in this case Ruysdael and Waterloo.

It is clear that these explorers were able to find something in the Australian landscape with which they could identify - sometimes an entire scene, at other times some isolated object which captured their attention - and which enabled them to apply European standards of beauty, particularly the picturesque. The explorers were not, of course, alone in this; other reporters had also found examples of picturesque scenery in Australia. Usually, however, observers found their examples in the Blue Mountains rather than out on the western plains. J. Graham, who published an apparently authentic journal of a visitor to Australia, Lawrence Struikby, has his hero comment on his reaction at crossing the Blue Mountains: "here nature opened up to him a new and bold page of her wild magnificence, savage ruggedness interspersed with touches of softness and beauty".³⁴ What would now be regarded as more essentially "Australian" failed to elicit a comparable response. Mitchell, for example, complained of the "general want of pictorial effect in the woods of New South Wales", and the reason for this was

34

J. Graham, Lawrence Struikby (London, 1863), p. 63.

not difficult to find.

The poverty of the foliage of the eucalyptus, the prevailing tree, affords little of mass or shadow; and indeed seldom has that tree, either in the trunk or branches, anything ornamental to landscape [sic]. 35

It was because the prevailing eucalypt appeared always the same that monotony came to be regarded as the dominant attribute of the Australian scene, at least in the forest land. William Howitt, writing in 1858, provides a consensus of opinion.

But everywhere that you go still it is the gum-tree that is the common tree of the woods. For ever and for ever it is the gum-tree, gum-tree, and still gum-tree. This makes the forest very monotonous, but the birds do their best to give life and variety to it. 36

Graham, too, found the gum tree singularly unattractive.

Gum trees of brown and leaden hue, with scant foliage and not remarkable for size, formed the great body of vegetation; ... 37

35

Mitchell, Three Expeditions, 1, p. 318.

36

W. Howitt, A Boy's Adventures in the Wilds of Australia (London, 1858), p. 17.

37

Graham, Lawrence Struikby, p. 64.

If monotony is the dominant characteristic then contrast becomes something to be sought. It was this lack of contrast which Mitchell most missed in the interior. When there was some sudden change then the explorer's reaction was immediate.

The evening was beautiful; the new grass springing in places where it had been burnt, presented a shining verdure in the rays of the descending sun; the songs of the birds accorded here with other joyous sounds, the very air seemed alive with the music of animated nature, so different was the scene in this well-watered valley, from that of the parched and silent region from which we had just descended. 38

It is not only the contrast between new and spent vegetation that is being suggested here; there is also the contrast between a "parched and silent region", one devoid of life, and an animated landscape. Evidence of life and growth is everywhere, celebrated and transformed in that intense blaze of light from the setting sun.

Sturt too noticed this particular quality of the afternoon light when he reached the Darling River on his journey into the interior in 1844. As with Mitchell, he is caught by the sudden change from a landscape which seemed

without life to one of fertility.

We reached the Darling at half-past five, as the sun's almost level beams were illuminating the flats, and every blade of grass and every reed appeared of that light and brilliant green which they assume when held up to the light. The change from barrenness and sterility to richness and verdure was sudden and striking, and nothing certainly could have been more cheering or cheerful than our first camp on the Darling River. The scene itself was very pretty. Beautiful and drooping trees shaded its banks, and the grass in its channel was green to the water's edge. Evening's mildest radiance seemed to linger on a scene so fair, and there was a mellow haze in the distance that softened every object. ³⁹

One explorer, Leichhardt, struck by the juxtaposition of different types of scenery, was prepared to assert it as a characteristic of the land: "it is a singular character of this remarkable country, that extremes so often meet".⁴⁰ But the important point for the explorers was not that such extremes existed in the landscape, but more the feeling of relief which accompanied the change from a level and monotonous terrain to one more congenial. The change of scene was matched by an emotional change in Sturt's

39

Sturt, Narrative, 1, p. 106.

40

Leichhardt, Journal, p. 185.

account and Leichhardt himself gives an example which is similar.

It is difficult to describe the impressions which the range of noble peaks, rising suddenly out of a comparatively level country, made upon us. We had travelled so much in a monotonous forest land, with only now and then a glimpse of distant ranges through the occasional clearings in the dismal scrub, that any change was cheering. Here an entirely open country - covered with grass, and apparently unbounded to the Westward; now ascending, first, in fine ranges, and forming a succession of almost isolated, gigantic, conical, and dome-topped mountains, which seemed to rest with a flat unbroken base on the plain below - was spread before our delighted eyes. The sudden alteration of the scene, therefore, inspired us with feelings that I cannot attempt to describe. 41

The feeling of relief is obvious, and so too is the preference for a particular type of landscape. The one type of country is rejected with labels such as "monotonous" and "dismal" while the other is approved with a swelling collocation of adjectives. The reaction to the change is so strong, the response to the landscape so evidently emotional, that it clearly deserves the name "romantic".

41

ibid., p. 123.

The realisation that Australia offered landscapes which could be considered picturesque had prepared the way for romantic responses. Whenever explorers came upon wild or mountainous scenery the possibility of such responses was there, below the surface. But there are times when romantic reactions appear in the explorers' journals as little more than convenient labels; they provide an economical method of suggesting a feeling to the scene, in the same way that the comparison was made between a particular landscape and an English park. Sturt, for example, appears to be applying the description in just this way when he describes the scenery of the headwaters of the Murrumbidgee as "wild, romantic, and beautiful; as beautiful as a rich and glowing sunset in the most delightful climate under the heavens could make it".⁴² Grey, too, employs the same technique in his account of a "narrow glen" discovered on his first excursion from Hanover Bay. Its romantic scenery, he writes,

could not be surpassed. Its width, at bottom, was not more than forty or fifty feet, on each side rose cliffs of sandstone, between three and four hundred feet high, and nearly perpendicular; lofty paper-bark trees grew here and there, and down the middle ran a beautiful stream of

42

Sturt, Two Expeditions, ii, p. 22.

clear, cool water, which now gushed along, a murmuring mountain torrent, and anon formed a series of small cascades. As we ascended higher the width contracted; the paper-bark trees disappeared; and the bottom of the valley became thickly wooded with wild nutmeg and other fragrant trees. Cockatoos soared, with hoarse screams, above us, many-coloured parrakeets darted away, filling the woods with their playful cries, and the large white pigeons, which feed on the wild nutmegs, cooed loudly to their mates, and battered the boughs⁴³ with their wings as they flew away.

Although Grey describes the scene as "romantic" there is nothing in the passage to indicate that the term is being used to mean anything more than pleasant or pleasing, or indeed merely picturesque. There is no doubt that he approves of the scene he is recording but this doesn't offset the commonplace account he gives of the glen or its trees. It is only when his attention is caught by the birds that the writing achieves any vitality. The cliffs, the trees, and even the stream remain obstinately at a distance, held back by such epithets as "lofty". Even the birds are drained of any real animation until almost the final line, when the one word "battered" brings them suddenly to life.

There are times, though, when Grey is more

43

Grey, Journals, i, pp. 93-4.

explicit in his response; when his reactions could with justice be described as "romantic". Grey himself is present in his depiction of Gantheaume Bay.

The estuary appeared this morning even more lovely than yesterday, and as the heavy morning mists arose, unfolding its beauties to our view, all those feelings came thrilling through my mind which explorers alone can know; flowering shrubs and trees, drooping foliage, a wide and placid expanse of water met the view; trickling springs and fertile flats were passed over by us; there was much barren land visible in the distance, though many a sign and token might lead the practical explorer to hope, that he was about to enter upon a tract of an extent and fertility yet unknown in s.w. Australia. 44

It is difficult to differentiate between the feelings which the landscape itself arouses and those which are the result of expectations of discovery. The features which appear particularly attractive are just those elements in the scene which act as indicators of a useful region. It is this fusion of responses which gives especial point to Grey's "all those feelings came thrilling through my mind which explorers alone can know". Here is the delight of discovery, the act of exploration as a beginning, the being first into

an unknown region, the sense that the land has waited for just this moment. And in Grey's account the experience reaches new heights, for the physical act of discovery is echoed in the natural world by the rolling back of the mists. This is certainly a romantic response to landscape, but Grey seems to suggest that it is one which is denied to lesser mortals. And the one element which excites this response is, of course, water; its presence is enough to initiate the reaction which, in Grey's recording of it, assumes the intensity of a mystical experience.

The presence or absence of water in the landscape played an important part in the explorer's sense of achievement, particularly if he was concerned to discover fertile areas of country. It is not surprising, therefore, that evidence of water should be essential for a satisfactory appreciation of landscape. A waterless landscape was beyond the experience of most explorers; there was no way in which it could be fitted into acceptable patterns of landscape beauty, difficult for them to see it as beautiful. Giles, whose experience of the interior of the continent was only equalled by John McDouall Stuart, was able at times to see something of beauty, "of singular and almost awful beauty", in a vista of red sand ridges and native fig trees but his full acceptance was withheld if water was absent. "This

alone was wanting to turn a wilderness into a garden".⁴⁵

When water was present Giles responded fully and he found in the landscape the realisation of an ideal: the edenic notion germinated and flowered. For a moment the explorer was able to accept the landscape not because it corresponded to accepted standards of beauty but on its own terms. When the desiderata of fertile soil and water occur together Giles becomes almost lyrical.

Small birds twittered on each bough, sang their little songs of love or hate, and gleefully fled or pursued each other from tree to tree. The atmosphere seemed cleared of all grossness or impurities, a few sunlit clouds floated in space, and a perfume from Nature's own laboratory was exhaled from the flowers and vegetation around.⁴⁶

Images of purity and freshness crowd in on Giles and the land is seen in its pristine beginnings, an "Austral land of dawning".⁴⁷ This was not a unique response; it had been an established reaction to the newly discovered and settled continent although usually it was not restricted to landscape but was applied to visions of the future greatness of the

⁴⁵ Giles, Australia Twice Traversed, i, p. 159.

⁴⁶ ibid., p. 150.

⁴⁷ ibid., p. 85.

emerging nation.

4

While explorers were able to regard the landscape as something to be observed, they were able to maintain a separation between themselves and the external world. When the traveller is concerned with the physical structure or its covering, its vegetation, the landscape exists as a specimen to be observed and nothing more. It is something that is there - at a distance - to be scrutinised, its components analysed and recorded but not demanding any other response. Even when the landscape is assessed for its economic potential, its fertility, this distance is secure. Certain criteria are available to the observer; they are applied and the landscape is either praised or rejected. Or else the land is measured by other, aesthetic, standards. Does it resemble a gentleman's park? Is it picturesque?

As long as the observer approaches the landscape in any of these ways he is able to remain the observer; he moves over the surface of the land and he either approves or disapproves of what he sees, but nothing more. But once he admits to a response beyond mere approval or disapproval isolation ceases and a link is forged between him and the landscape. It is no longer external, under observation; it

is no longer something over which he moves remotely, out of contact. In this changed situation the description of the external world is also an account of the explorer's inner world; it becomes an account of the relationship between the explorer and the world around him.

We have already noted Mitchell's condemnation of the Australian forest; his belief that it lacks pictorial effect. He could, for example, find little that was attractive in the bush country to the north of Sydney through which he moved at the commencement of his first expedition.

My ride, on that day, was along a ridge, which extended upwards of fifty miles, through a succession of deep ravines, where no objects met the eye except barren sandstone rocks, and stunted trees. With the banksia and xanthorrhoea always in sight, the idea of hopeless sterility is ever present to the mind, for these productions, in sandy soils at least, grow only where nothing else can vegetate. The horizon is flat, affording no relief to the eye from the dreary and inhospitable scene, which these solitudes present; and which extends over a great portion of the country, uninhabitable even by the aborigines. 48

Here the components which might have charmed other observers,

the "deep ravines" and the rocks, produce only antipathy in Mitchell. His reaction obviously owes something to experience since the vegetation suggests "hopeless sterility". The scene is "dreary and inhospitable" because it so clearly promises nothing for future settlement. Seen in this way, Mitchell's account of the landscape cannot be explained as objective; it is rather a description of the explorer's own disappointment.

This type of reaction, the deliniation of a mental state rather than an observation of external reality, becomes more common in the explorers' journals once the mountains were crossed and travellers ventured onto the great western plains. Oxley's expedition was the first to do so, and his account of the landscape is also a chart of his own mental state. The inner and the outer landscapes are not differentiated; the external scene is filtered and conditioned by the explorer's own disappointment.

It is impossible to imagine a more desolate region; and the uncertainty we are in, whilst traversing it, of finding water, adds to the melancholy feelings which the silence and solitude of such wastes is calculated to inspire. ⁴⁹

Oxley enumerates the components of the scene: the desolation, the silence and the solitude. This is undoubtedly a landscape of the mind; the melancholy feelings which his difficulties and the scene itself produce become constants in Oxley's reaction to the western plains. This reaction becomes so powerful at times that the explorer reaches the conviction that such an appalling country suffers under the condemnation of nature.

Nothing can be more melancholy and irksome than travelling over wilds, which nature seems to have condemned to perpetual loneliness and desolation. We seemed indeed the sole living creatures in these vast deserts. ⁵⁰

It was the "uniformity in the barren desolation" which particularly wearied Oxley.

One tree, one soil, one water, and one description of bird, fish, or animal, prevails alike for ten miles, and for a hundred. A variety of wretchedness is at all times preferable to one unvarying cause of pain and distress. ⁵¹

The bitterness of Oxley's reaction is apparent here; the repetition opens out the vista of the landscape until it seems interminable, as unending as the explorer's pain and

50
ibid., p. 91

51
ibid., p. 113.

frustration. There is no excitement of discovery. All the explorer's expectations have been denied and exploration is no longer even a duty - it is nothing more than a trial, an endurance. It is as though the landscape itself is deliberately thwarting the explorer's hopes.

Other explorers were as disappointed in their hopes as Oxley. While Grey was later to find scenery which he considered congenial, his first experience of the landscape of Western Australia was not especially impressive. He writes of his arrival at Hanover Bay:

At the first streak of dawn, I leant over the vessel's side, to gaze upon those shores I had so longed to see. I had not anticipated that they would present any appearance of inviting fertility; but I was not altogether prepared to behold so arid and barren a surface, as that which now met my view. In front of me stood a line of lofty cliffs, occasionally broken by sandy beaches; on the summits of these cliffs, and behind the beaches, rose rocky sandstone hills, very thinly wooded. ⁵²

Grey does not dwell on his disappointment but it is there nevertheless. Certainly his expectations owed something to the reports of earlier visitors to the western shores of the

continent, perhaps especially to Dampier's account.⁵³ It is impossible to say just what Grey's expectations were; there is no doubt what hopes activated John McDouall Stuart, however. Expectations of fertility were his chief compulsions to explore, and inevitably his observations on the landscape reflect them. Paradoxically, the areas which he explored were areas least likely to satisfy his expectations, although good seasons could produce startling changes. Whenever the country failed to meet his expectations Stuart's journals record his disappointment. His first expedition took him into the northern areas of South Australia, near Mount Finke, and he wrote of the view from the lower slopes of the mountain:

The prospect is gloomy in the extreme! I could see a long distance, but nothing met the eye save a dense scrub as black and dismal as midnight.⁵⁴

53

Dampier's comment hardly suggested fertility.

"The land is of a dry sandy soil, destitute of Water, except you make Wells; yet producing divers sorts of Trees: but the Woods are not thick, nor the Trees very big. ... There was pretty long grass growing under the Trees; but it was very thin. We saw no Trees that bore Fruit or Berries".

William Dampier, New Voyage Round the World (London, 1697), p. 463.

54

Hardman, The Journals of John McDouall Stuart, p.35.

The italics are Stuart's, and they suggest his search for an apt description of the effect which the view produced. There is certainly nothing original in the expression but the association is interesting. Several days later on the same expedition the dense scrub is broken by sand hills and spinifex and the view produces a comparable response.

To-day's few miles have been through the same dreary, dreadful, dismal desert of heavy sand hills and spinifex with mallee very dense, scarcely a mouthful for the horses to eat. When will it have an end? 55

The explorer's inability to record his disappointment emerges in the reliance on italics, this time reinforced by alliteration. Indeed, the juxtaposition of "dark" and "dismal" seems to be automatic whenever Stuart is faced with impenetrable scrub. The observations no doubt expressed a strong response on Stuart's part, but the reader is unable to place too much reliance on an examination of them. They are so trite, so automatic, that they yield little to examination, beyond disappointment and the association of the scrub with the loneliness and undefined fears of night. Certainly whatever associations these words have for Stuart include a negation of light and life.

During the second of his attempts to cross the continent Stuart was thwarted by such a landscape of dense scrub and his account of the country achieves an additional dimension. The impossibility of passing through the barrier is clear; although they were travelling at full speed, they were unable to cover more than one mile in a day! This is Stuart's entry for May 10, 1862:

The country is a light red soil, and covered with abundance of grass, but completely dried up. No rain seems to have fallen here for a length of time. We have not seen a bird, nor heard the chirrup of any to disturb the gloomy silence of the dark and dismal forest - thus plainly indicating the absence of water in and about this country. ⁵⁶

Stuart is unable to get beyond the inevitable epithets in his description, but there is at least a new note in the silence. Not only is the landscape one which bars his progress (a sufficient reason for the response which the explorer records) but it is one which is devoid of life, a dead landscape.

Although these accounts which Stuart gives plot his reactions accurately and provide a map of his mental

state, there is also a factual basis for the adjectives he selects, if such a term adequately suggests their inevitability. The blackness of the scrub could be taken to be an observed characteristic, as a description he gives of the country near Daly Waters indicates. The view from the top of a "scrubby ironstone rise" is, he says, "to all appearances one of the blackest and most dismal views a man ever beheld".⁵⁷ This was not an unusual response when the trees were so thick that only the tops could be seen, and they presented a dark, unbroken surface from above. So it is not only the disappointment at the absence of fertile land that justifies the comment and produces a feeling of melancholy in the observer, but the actual colour as well.

The melancholy feelings which the landscape at times inspired were the result not only of disappointed expectations of fertility but also a belief that unanimated nature was abhorrent. The aridity of the interior was an indication that the land had been abandoned by all living creatures. In such cases the explorer felt that he was being presented with a landscape that appeared to offer nothing to

57

Stuart, Explorations, p. 31.

man. Such was Mitchell's reaction to the country through which he passed soon after leaving Bathurst in 1835.

No living thing remained in these vallies, for water, that element, so essential to life, was a want too obvious in the dismal silence, (for not an insect hummed), and the yellow hues of withering vegetation.⁵⁸

Once water was withdrawn all life had to follow and the only reaction open to the explorer was to record the "dismal silence". A landscape without life, without sound, meant that the discoverer was isolated from all that he knew. Such a landscape was beyond his experience and was a region not of life but of death. When Mitchell later traced the course of the River Darling to its confluence with the Murray the land beyond the river to the west appeared to represent such a lifeless territory. At first Mitchell's view of the interior was restricted by a range of low hills.

The hills on the opposite bank at length receded, and we saw before us only a wide desert plain, where nothing seemed to move, and the only indication of life throughout this melancholy waste, was a distant column of smoke ascending in remarkable density to the sky. ⁵⁹

58 Mitchell, Three Expeditions, i, p. 169.

59 ibid., p. 237.

Even the evidence of the smoke which was usually a heartening indication of the presence of man could do little to alleviate the despair. It captures Mitchell's attention for a moment because of its density but the earlier impression remains. However, as so often happens with Mitchell's writing, there is a feeling of detachment from the scene, a feeling that some part of him is uncommitted.

This is certainly not the case with Sturt. On his great expedition down the Murray he responds enthusiastically to the mountainous scenery of the headwaters of the Murrumbidgee but everything alters once he passes out onto the plains.

It is impossible for me to describe the kind of country we were now traversing, or the dreariness of the view it presented. The plains were still open to the horizon, but here and there a stunted gum-tree, or a gloomy cypress, seemed placed by nature as mourners over the surrounding desolation. Neither beast nor bird inhabited these lonely and inhospitable regions, over which the⁶⁰ silence of the grave seemed to reign.

Sturt's inability to describe the country is a reflection of his dissociation. He finds it difficult to come to terms with an alien environment, one which no longer answers to

60

Sturt, Two Expeditions, ii, p. 59.

European attitudes and preconceptions. The lack of scale, the vastness of the horizon point to man's insignificance in the landscape and leave him exposed, adrift, unable to fasten onto familiar or recognizable objects. It is a lonely, inhospitable, uninhabited terrain, inhibiting to life. Again and again Sturt is compelled to account for his response in images that speak of death; it is the "silence of the grave" that dominates. This was the landscape he was to encounter repeatedly in the interior, both on the banks of the Darling and in the unending sand of the Simpson Desert. In one of the frequent but futile attempts to break clear of Depot Glen Sturt was forced back by such a region.

We were then in one of the most gloomy regions that man ever traversed. The stillness of death reigned around us, no living creature was to be heard; nothing visible inhabited that dreary desert but the ant, even the fly shunned it, and yet its yielding surface was marked all over with the tracks of native dogs.⁶¹

Man's very position in the universe seems to be annihilated in such a landscape; the silence is oppressive and the absence of life marks an exile more profound than the one imposed by many thousand miles of ocean. Man's isolation and loneliness is extreme on this other journey beyond the world

61

Sturt, Narrative, i, pp. 277-8.

of the living into the region of death. The journey the explorer must make into the interior of the continent has become a mythic journey where the signposts are negation and the distance is measured not in miles but in the increasing revelation of the silence that is at the centre.

To explore such regions meant that the traveller was forced out into a landscape beyond the reach of his fellow man. Even the sense of being first is replaced by a primal fear of boundless and uninhabited space. Giles, in his many journeys into the interior, admitted that he was chiefly impelled by the desire to be first but even he was unable to dismiss the feeling of alienation which the silence produced. While he refused to modify his plans to cross the continent from South Australia to Perth through doubts about adequate water supplies, the realisation that he would be moving into a region beyond human contact, into a territory that gave no evidence of life at all, gave him pause. This he realised when he surveyed the country ahead of the security of the water supply at Ooldabinna.

No traces of any human inhabitants were seen, nor, were they ever present (in all other parts of the Continent), tracks of native game or wild dogs distinguishable upon the trackless sands of this previously untrodden wilderness. The silence and the solitude of this mighty waste were appalling to the mind, and I

almost regretted that I had sworn
to conquer it. 62

Despite the obscurity of the syntax and inevitable references to "trackless sands" and "untrodden wilderness" something of Giles's experience echoes in the phrase "appalling to the mind". This alone in the passage reverberates.

5

As long as the explorers were able to describe the landscape as "gloomy" or "dismal", or feel that it evoked melancholy responses, it was possible to maintain a certain distance between it and themselves. It could be seen as something unattractive, something to which it was difficult to respond but there seemed no need to regard it as threatening or hostile. And yet there were times when the possibility of hostility was not far from the minds of the travellers, especially when the landscape suggested a reversal of all that was familiar and accepted. The belief that Australian nature was an inversion of European experience was nothing new and the observation was made so frequently that it became a commonplace. Something of its persistence, however, is indicated by the remarks of Jesse Young, who travelled with

Giles in 1875. Young, in an address to the New York Geographical Society, described Australia as a land where one would find

winds from the north that blow hot
and those from the south cold;
black swans, as well as those which
are white; trees that cast their
bark instead of their leaves; tulips
and lilies that grow high in the air,
and ferns which grow big as trees (where
the fauna consists almost entirely of
the nearly extinct marsupial); the
duck-bill Platypus, a curious animal,
half bird and half fish (Ornithorhynchus
anatinus), is also found and wondered at;
- these are but a few of the natural
wonders of this strange clime, which
lies far on the other side of the
world, where the sun is now shining,
and where the midnight chimes are being
rung while we are at our noon-day
meal, and the blasts of mid-winter,
which, bye-the-bye, are not very cold,
sweep over the hot and parched country
during our summer months. 63

This is as classic a statement of antipodeanism as one could find anywhere and it was applied to Australia during the entire period of discovery by land. The first published account of an Australian explorer was that written by Oxley, and the British reviewer, writing in the Edinburgh Review, saw in the termination of the Lachlan and Macquarie Rivers a prime example of the topsy-turvey behaviour of Australian nature.

Whether Botany Bay was made in a merry mood of Nature, or whether it was her first essay in making continents, we shall never know; but we may be quite sure, that everything found there will be diametrically opposite to the ordinary productions and inventions of the Old World. ⁶⁴

The inability to apply established notions to the Australian landscape might seem innocuous enough when it is noticed in such a mildly amused fashion, but its implications are wider. It does suggest an inability to rely on what is seen, an inability to take as evidence of the external world what the mind receives as sense impressions. And from such a position it is but a short step to a belief that the contrariety is a deliberate deception, an attempt to confound established fact and opinion. More than one explorer was to comment on this impression of deception, the unreality of appearances. Giles, as he moved out into the great Victoria Desert, noted the types of vegetation he encountered: spinifex, pines, casuarinas, mulga and so on.

The giant mallee also were very numerous; they give a most extraordinary appearance to the scenes they adorn, as they cheat the eye of the traveller into a belief that he is passing through tracts of alluvial soil and gazing upon

the ever water-indicating gum
trees. ⁶⁵

It is not only that appearances are untrustworthy - for this could be taken as a reflection upon the observer's skill - but also that Nature seems determined to cheat the expectations of those who seek to investigate her secrets, that she displays an intention deliberately to deceive, to raise the explorer's hopes and then to dash them.

Giles certainly suggests an active spirit at work in the landscape, but it was not always seen as an evil force. Leichhardt on one occasion was deceived by columns of dust, but his response indicates acceptance and sympathy.

We saw many columns of dust raised by whirlwinds; and again mistook them for the smoke of so many fires of the natives. But we soon observed that they moved in a certain direction, and that new columns rose as those already formed drew off; and when we came nearer, and passed between them, it seemed as if the giant spirits of the plain were holding a stately corroboree around us. ⁶⁶

Leichhardt comes surprisingly close to a realisation, if perhaps an unconscious one, of the aboriginal concept of landscape and it is interesting to see that he himself makes

⁶⁵ Giles's Explorations, 1875, p. 7.

⁶⁶ Leichhardt, Journal, p. 515.

the connection between the natural event and the land's original inhabitants.

But the feeling that the landscape was deliberately deceptive emerged most noticeably as a reaction to mirages. There were some explorers who regarded a mirage as nothing more than another phenomenon to be observed and recorded; it might make the observer's task more difficult, but there it ended. Certainly John McDouall Stuart's reaction is of this order. His record of a mirage on his first expedition in 1858 is objective enough.

I think we have now made the dip of the country to the south, but the mirage is so powerful that little bushes appear like giant gum-trees, which makes it very difficult to judge what is before us; it is almost as bad as travelling in the dark. I never saw it so bright nor so continuous as it is now; one would think that the whole country was under water. ⁶⁷

A mirage certainly meant something more than this for Eyre, as his account of its effects on Lake Torrens indicates.

As we advanced a great alteration had taken place, in the aspect of the western shores. The bluff rocky banks were no longer visible, but a low level country appeared to the view at seemingly about fifteen or twenty miles distance.

From the extraordinary and deceptive appearances, caused by mirage and refraction, however, it was impossible to tell what to make of sensible objects, or what to believe on the evidence of vision, for upon turning back to retrace our steps to the eastward, a vast sheet of water appeared to intervene between us and the shore, whilst the Mount Deception ranges, which I knew to be at least thirty-five miles distant, seemed to rise out of the bed of the lake itself, the mock waters of which were laving their base, and reflecting the inverted outline of their rugged summits. The whole scene partook more of enchantment than reality, and as the eye wandered over the smooth and unbroken crust of pure white salt which glazed the basin of the lake, and which was lit up by the dazzling rays of a noonday sun, the effect was glittering, and brilliant beyond conception. ⁶⁸

Eyre is conscious that he is in a region beyond that normally inhabited by man; here human senses no longer have any validity. It is as though the explorer is doubly an exile. He has passed beyond a landscape where things are as they seem and even further beyond scenes which carry echoes of a distant European experience. There is nothing to connect him to such a landscape; it is, as Eyre says elsewhere, a "region of magic". ⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Eyre, Journals, i, pp. 111-112.

⁶⁹ ibid., p. 113.

"Mirage" and "enchantment" might be synonymous to Eyre, but the word has other connotations for Sturt. A mirage is still evidence of deception but it is also a deliberate stratagem: a trap laid by the land itself and a sign of malevolence and hostility. There is no sense of delight or enchantment in Sturt's description of one day's travel across the plains bordering the Murrumbidgee:

Our route during the day, was over as melancholy a tract as ever was travelled. The plains to the N. and N.W. bounded the horizon; not a tree of any kind was visible upon them. It was equally open to the S., and it appeared as if the river was decoying us into a desert, there to leave us in difficulty and distress. The very mirage had the effect of boundlessness in it, by blending objects in one general hue; or, playing on the ground, it cheated us with an appearance of water, and on arriving at the spot, we found a continuation of the same scorching plain, over which we were moving, instead of the stream we had hoped for. ⁷⁰

The explorer is here moving into a landscape which is active in its opposition to the intruder; man is reduced to a mere speck in such a scene where he can find nothing against which he can measure his stature. To enter such a region is to give oneself up to the possibility, as Sturt suggests, of "difficulty and distress".

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Sturt, Two Expeditions, ii, p. 58.

Sturt was not alone in his fears. Other explorers were as convinced that to enter the interior of the continent meant that they would return only with difficulty, if at all. Giles, on his first expedition, found his way to the west vanishing in hopelessness and he contemplated retreat with relief; "I was only too thankful to get out of this horrible region and this frightful encampment, into which the fates had drawn me, alive".⁷¹ Giles here is suggesting a greater, cosmic purpose behind the enticement of the landscape, but the response to the region is essentially the same as Sturt's.

Even though the explorer might claim that the land was conspiring to lead him to danger and possible death, he could not insist that there were no warnings of what might eventuate. Giles, on the journey he made from Ooldea to Beltana, a journey which he described as a "forgotten expedition", was aware of the signs; they were especially clear when he led his small party to an isolated "sterile mountain" in search of water only to find there was none there.

But if indeed the inland-mountain
has really voice and sound, all I
could gather from the sighing of the
light zephyrs, that fanned my heated
brow, as I stood gazing hopelessly

71

Giles, Australia Twice Traversed, 1, p. 67.

from its summit, was anything but a friendly greeting, it being rather a warning that called me away; and I fancied I could hear a voice repeating -

"Let the rash wand'rer here beware:
Heaven makes not trav'lers its
peculiar care". ⁷²

Even if one discounts the imaginative pose which Giles assumes at this point there still remains the consciousness of an inimical landscape, a region where the explorer is denied the protecting wing of Heaven.

It is interesting to see how readily Giles adopts a literary stance. His allusions are not always identified (or indeed always identifiable) but they generally serve a useful function. Here, for example, the couplet effects a bringing together, a knotting, of the different strands of his argument. But he does not always succeed. When Giles visited Mount Olga and Ayers' Rock on his second expedition he attempted a comparison.

Mount Olga is the more wonderful and grotesque; Mount Ayers the more ancient and sublime. There is permanent water here, but, unlike the Mount Olga springs, it lies all in standing pools. There is excellent grazing ground around this rock, though now the grass is very dry. It might almost be said of this, as of

72

Giles, Geographical Travels, p. 153.

the Pyramids or the Sphinx, round
 the decay of that colossal rock,
 boundless and bare, the lone and level
 sands stretch far away. ⁷³

The reference to Shelley's "Ozymandias", which is neither acknowledged nor printed as verse - the audacity of "rock" for "wreck" might be excuse enough - was not included in the earlier text of the journal when it was printed as a South Australian Parliamentary Paper. The comparison might have had a better chance of succeeding if it had not included the allusion. As it is, Giles has started poetic echoes which are decidedly antipathetic to his purposes. Notions of great age and sublimity are appropriate enough, but they are silenced in the reverberations of decay and futility which are at the centre of Shelley's sonnet.

Even without warnings such as Giles's ear was able to catch, the explorers of the interior of the continent could hardly claim that they were entering a region without some prior hints about its nature to guide them. Almost a decade before Giles's explorations Eyre had been able to make a surprisingly accurate assessment of the conditions which were likely to be encountered at the centre. In 1841, while he was struggling to round the head of the Great Australian

Bight, Eyre recoiled from the intense heat and the scorching wind that swept from the inland even to the coast.

The weather was most intensely hot, a strong wind blowing from the north-east, throwing upon us an oppressive and scorching current of heated air, like the hot blast of a furnace. There was no misunderstanding the nature of the country from which such a wind came; often as I had been annoyed by the heat, I had never experienced any thing like it before. Had anything been wanting to confirm my previous opinion of the arid and desert character of the great mass of the interior of Australia, this wind would have been quite sufficient for that purpose. ⁷⁴

By reaching such a conclusion about the inland Eyre places himself in opposition to Sturt's thesis of a great inland sea: a thesis that was to founder on the frozen waves of the Stony Desert. But Eyre was not alone; Leichhardt had reached a similar conclusion even before he commenced his first major expedition in 1844, and he had found all the evidence he needed in safety in Sydney.

Die heissen Winde von Sidney
scheinen mir wahre Wüsten Winde,
welche der Nordwestküste von Neu
holland ins Innere hinein wehen
die trockenen Lüfte einer weiten
Wüste mit s. hinwegführen nd.
.f der Ostküste v Neu-holland

hinaus treten. 75

6.

Both Eyre and Leichhardt had reached their conclusions about the nature of the interior without venturing far beyond the coastal margin, but as explorers moved farther and farther inland their predictions were fulfilled. The journals of travellers to these regions make frequent reference to extreme temperatures, like those recorded by Sturt at Depot Glen: it was so hot that the ink dried up on the pens and the sheep's wool ceased to grow. Tietkens had to face similar conditions when he was well-sinking and exploring in South Australia later in the century. His entry for Tuesday, December 9, 1879 is a documentation of the effects of such extreme heat.

Last night was very hot. At 10 o'clock just before turning in the therm. stood at 100°. At daybreak 102°. The flies were fearful, another of those days which

75

Leichhardt to Dove, May 27, 1842. Aourousseau, *The Letters*, 11, p. 473. Aourousseau translates the letter as follows :

The hot winds at Sydney, it seems to me, are true desert winds, which blow inward from the North-west coast of New Holland, pick up the dry air of an extensive desert, and then blow across the East coast of New Holland. p. 479.

passes all power of description. The late afternoons of such days when the sun heat is terrific and wind hotter, the ground is so hot that the bare hand cannot be borne upon it for a minute and water left in a basin is also far, far too hot to hold the hand in. I watch through the spaces between the logs for the sun to go down and the day seems as if it never could end. If anyone had lost all hope of future happiness through downright piety on such a day as this, I have. Poets drivel about the "Glorious Orb of Day" and the Merry Merry Sunshine and call it the "Minister of the Almighty", to me it is the "Minister of the Devil".⁷⁶

At first glance Tietken's account seems to provide no more than another example of Australian contrariety. But there is more to the notion of the sun as the "Minister of the Devil" than this: the interior is beginning to assume the characteristics of Hell. This is perhaps an inevitable progression from earlier predictions and the parallel is hardly novel. Nevertheless, the sun is no longer something benign, but a force for evil - something against which the explorer finds himself pitted.

If the sun is to be seen as a "Minister of the Devil", the region over which it holds sway is obvious. With Tietkens the parallel is implied, but Giles puts the matter

beyond doubt. Giles, during most of his expeditions, relied on horses and the condition of these animals was vital to the safety of the party. On one occasion it became necessary to spell them, and the spot was frightfully exposed to the sun's power.

It was impossible to ride them away, and here we had to remain for another day, in this Inferno. Not Dante's, gelid lowest circle of Hell, or city of Dis, could cause more anguish, to a forced resident within its bounds, 77 than did this frightful place to me.

Again and again explorers were convinced that, as they moved nearer to the centre of the continent, they were entering a region from which God had withdrawn. When Sturt made his final retreat from the centre he found his earlier haven at Depot Glen bare of vegetation and given over to the "silence of the grave". All life had fled, and he asked

Was it instinct that warned the feathered races to shun a region in which the ordinary course of nature had been arrested, and over which the wrath of the Omnipotent appeared to hang? 78

When Giles was forced back on his first expedition by the barrier of Lake Amadeus, his disappointment is tempered with

77

Giles, Australia Twice Traversed, i, p. 310.

78

Sturt, Narrative, ii, p. 98.

relief.

We turned our wretched horses' heads once more in the direction of our little tank, and had good reason perhaps to thank our stars that we got away alive from the lone unhalloved shore of this pernicious sea. ⁷⁹

And when he came to venture into the Great Victoria Desert on his final crossing to Perth, Giles's description brings together all those qualities which marked the landscape as the underworld: the absence of water, the lifelessness, the rejection by God.

It was evident the region we had entered was utterly waterless; and in all the distance we had come in ten days, no spot had been found where it could lodge. It was totally uninhabited both by man or animal; not a track of a single marsupial, emu, or wild dog was to be seen, and it seems we had penetrated into a region utterly unknown to man and as utterly forgotten by God. ⁸⁰

When explorers such as Sturt and Giles defined the landscape of the interior of the continent as barren of life and inherently evil they had constructed a setting suitable for epic. Here was the background against which great struggles could be enacted and heroic feats performed. But

79

Giles, Australia Twice Traversed, i, p. 104.

80

Giles's Explorations, 1875, p. 6.

there were to be no supernatural beings in the cast; the Australian hero, unlike the protagonists of earlier epics, had no legendary creatures to subdue. His opponent was the land itself.

And the explorers as they turned towards the centre soon became aware of the opposition it presented. Few explorers were as persistent as Eyre in his attempts to penetrate beyond the coastal fringe and at first the resistance he encountered appeared to be no more than passive. As Eyre moved north in 1840 he measured his future chances from point after point. From Mount Serle the view ahead offered nothing but disappointment.

The whole was barren and arid looking in the extreme, and as I gazed on the dismal scene before me, I felt assured I had approached the vast and dreary desert of the interior, or, it might be, was verging on the confines of some inland water, whose sterile and desolate shores seemed to forbid the traveller's approach. ⁸¹

Entry through this door was prohibited and so Eyre attempted to find another but each in turn was barred and boarded. Even when he altered his plans and resolved to strike for

81

Anon., "Narrative of Mr. Edward John Eyre's Journeys and Discoveries", p. 19.

Western Australia he found his opponent still there, this time more active in his opposition. Again and again his attempts to round the head of the Bight were thwarted until at last he was forced to cry:

There appeared to be a disastrous fatality attending all our movements in this wretched region, which was quite inexplicable. Every time that we had attempted to force a passage through it, we had been baffled and driven back. ⁸²

These were the comments which followed hard upon the experience and which were recorded in his journal. When Eyre looked back on his career as an explorer he was prepared to assert that such opposition was an part of discovery itself, that all explorers who sought the centre had to face: "Many able and enterprising men have distinguished themselves by their efforts to penetrate the depths of a country which seems everywhere to offer an insurmountable barrier to the traveller..." ⁸²

Sturt, too, was prepared to define such opposition as a constant of Australian exploration.

Men of undoubted perseverance and energy in vain had tried to work their way to that distant and shrouded spot.

A veil hung over Central Australia that could neither be pierced or raised. Girt round about by deserts, it almost appeared as if Nature had intentionally closed it upon civilised man, that she might have one domain on the earth's wide field over which the savage might roam in freedom. ⁸³

The barrier is there, certainly, but something of the hostility of the opposition had been dissipated in this comment. This is a general assessment of the problem; when Sturt describes his own situation later in his journal he does not ascribe such a humanitarian motive to Nature in forbidding his entry. The explorer chafed at the forced detention at Depot Creek and each attempt at escape met with failure.

It was not however until after we had run down every creek in our neighbourhood, and had traversed the country in every direction, that the truth flashed across my mind, and it became evident to me, that we were locked up in the desolate and heated region, into which we had penetrated, as effectually as if we had wintered at the Pole. It was long indeed ere I could bring myself to believe that so great a misfortune had overtaken us, but so it was. Providence had, in its allwise purposes, guided us to the only spot, in that wide-spread desert, where our wants

could have been permanently supplied, but had there stayed our further progress into a region that almost appears to be forbidden ground. ⁸⁴

It seems as though this is the one spot in the region where Providence's writ still runs; beyond is forbidden ground. It is interesting to note that Sturt, in this passage, wavers between accepting his imprisonment as blessing, or rejecting it as curse. Whichever way it goes it is a clash of wills with the explorer seeing his detention as a misfortune and yet an example of Providence's "allwise purposes".

For the majority of the explorers who ventured into the interior the barriers that prevent their entry remain vague and undefined. It is enough to see the opponent as the landscape without adding form and flesh to the idea. Giles, the explorer most prepared to let his imagination range, on one occasion becomes quite definite in his identification of the enemy. Sunsets might be part of the poetic stock-in-trade but they become something else for Giles: "The sun as usual was a huge and glaring ball of fire that with his last beams shot hot and angry glances of hate at us, in rage at our defiance of his might". ⁸⁵ Man might be puny and ineffectual

84

Sturt, Narrative, i, pp. 264-5.

85

Giles, Australia Twice Traversed, i, p. 306.

in such a landscape but defiance is a sort of weapon, and Giles is certainly not cowed by the land. In fact, this particular sunset initiates a response in which nature is made subservient to man.

It was so strange and so singular that only at this particular sunset, out of the millions which have elapsed since this terrestrial ball first floated in ether, that I, or indeed any white man, should stand upon this wretched hill, so remote from the busy haunts of my fellow men.

Man and his moment have met and Giles finds in the moment the satisfaction of that most constant desire to explore, the desire to be first, and he forgets for a moment the difficulties of his position and the hostility of the land he is pledged to conquer. His companion on a later journey, Jesse Young, is not unmindful of the price that such a task might demand. He, too, takes a sweeping look over the whole field of Australian exploration of the centre and describes the difficulties that have to be faced.

There are in the middle half a million square miles (about one-fifth of the entire area of the continent) which offer nothing but barrenness and death to the bold invaders. ⁸⁶

The offer was made and the explorer accepted the challenge. He pitted himself against an opponent who was in no way inferior to or less terrible than those of other epic struggles.

CHAPTER 4

NOBLE SAVAGE OR RURAL PEST?

In the Australian epic the explorer is the hero and his opponent is the land. The cast might have been otherwise if the aboriginal inhabitants had seemed to offer some opposition - if the discoverers had felt themselves able to consider them worthy opponents. But such was not the case, as an examination of the explorers' comments on the aborigines bears out.

At first travellers found much that was deserving of praise in the natives that they met. There are factual, ethnographic accounts of their appearance and there were also times when they were seen as examples of the "noble savage". However, with increasing familiarity what attraction there was was replaced by revulsion; the aborigines came to be regarded as people who occupied the lowest point on the "scale" of human development. Explorers commented on their moral and religious deficiencies and their lack of culture. Throughout they were judged from the secure position of European superiority and, although there were some observers who were prepared to concede particular skills, it was insufficient to

redress the balance.

But this need not imply that the explorers were unaware of the consequences of their arrival; they were only too conscious of the impact that must follow in their tracks. Some saw the sequence of events more clearly than others, but were still blind to the contradiction at the heart of the matter. They might deplore the change, but the explorers themselves were the instrument of that change.

The aborigines were there; they were observed and reported upon. Finally, however, they were disregarded. Except in isolated cases they exercised no influence on the explorer's task. This role was reserved for the land.

The reader who is interested in investigating that moment in time when an explorer first came upon a particular region, or wishes to share the experience of being the first European to see some impressive natural wonder, faces no problems. Such sign-posts on the explorer's journey are fully documented in his journals and the excitement of discovery remains undimmed even after the passage of many years. There seems, however, to have been no corresponding concern to record the first encounters with the aboriginal inhabitants of the continent once settlement had been accomplished on the eastern seaboard. Perhaps the reasons are not difficult to find. There were few explorers who set out on expeditions

without some previous acquaintance with the natives. A quarter of a century had elapsed after the First Fleet landed its human cargo at Sydney Cove before the exploration of the interior began in earnest with Evans's journeys. During this time aboriginals had become familiar features of the townscape and their presence was hardly worth a comment. As well, many of the explorers included aboriginals on the strengths of their parties. Eyre, for example, had two native boys with him on his expedition in 1840 and another joined him at Fowler's Bay. Mitchell took a native, Piper, as a guide on two occasions and Leichhardt was accompanied by the aboriginals Brown and Charlie on his expedition to Port Essington. Such familiarity provides some measure of the lack of excitement in meetings with the aboriginals and helps to explain the absence of the explorer's own reactions to such encounters.

However, one explorer at least records his first meeting, not with an aboriginal as such since these he had seen before, but with a naked savage. Leichhardt, in a letter to his friend William Nicholson, tells of this first encounter.

In Newcastle begegnete ich zum ersten Male dem nackten Wilden. In der Stadt dürfen sie nur bekleidet erscheinen; die Männer tragen alte Hosen, Jacken; die Weiber halten sich in grobe Sackleinwand. Ich ging eines Tages am Ufer des Meeres entlang, als uns ein Wilder

in fast völliger Nacktheit leichten
muntern Schrittes, mit dem Waddi in
der Hand mit einer Last auf dem Kopfe
entgegen kam. Er hatte ein weisses
Band um die Stirn gebunden, ein
leichtes spanisches Mäntelchen
flatterte um die Schultern, ein
haariger Riemen von Opossum fell
lag um den Leib. Seine Nacktheit
genirte ihn nicht im geringsten.
Sein Körper war wohl gebildet, die
Glieder mager, schwächlich, doch
die Muskeln wohl entwickelt, die
Brust sehr gewölbt der Penis wahrschl.
in Folge der Kälte. .sserordentlich
klein. Die Haut ist keineswegs so
sammtartig wie die des Negers;
die Haare sind grob, rabenschwarz
und lockig, doch keines wegens
Negerhaft. Die Arkaden der Orbita,
besonders der inner Winkel sind
.sserordentlich hervorragend, die
Nase eingedrückt, die Nasenflügel
breit; der Mund .sserordentlich
breit, die Lippen lang und Pferdartig
beweglich. Die Backen Zähne nutzen
sich wie die der Egyptisch. Mumien
ab, die falschen Molars erschienen
mir in einem jungen Manne fast wie

die eines Hundes lobed.¹

Whatever excitement there is in this account is the excitement of the scientist faced with his first perfect specimen. The description is the product of a thorough and detailed observation and moves beyond the particular meeting on the beach only to establish the appearance of the aboriginal by comparison with others that the explorer had met. Although it

1

Leichhardt to William Nicholson, October, 1842.
Arousseau, The Letters, ii, pp. 535-536.

It was at Newcastle that I first encountered the naked savage. In the town they have to wear clothes, so the men wear cast-off coats and trousers whilst the women wrap themselves in coarse sacking. One day I was going along the sea-shore when I met an aboriginal coming towards me, walking lightly and briskly. He had a waddy in his hand and was carrying a burden on his head, and he was completely naked. He had a white band tied around his forehead, a light Spanish cape flapping over his shoulders, and a hairy strap of opossum skin around his waist. He was not in the least embarrassed by his nudity. His body was well proportioned, the limbs lank and lean though the muscles were well developed, the chest very deep; and the penis, probably because of the cold, remarkably small. Their skin is nothing like as velvety as that of a negro; the hair is coarse, raven-black and curling but not crinkled like that of a negro at all; the orbital ridges are extraordinarily prominent, particularly at the inner angle; the nose is flattened and the nostrils wide; the mouth is very wide indeed, with long lips as mobile as those of a horse. Their molars get worn down like those of Egyptian mummies, and the canine teeth of the young man looked to me almost the same as those of a dog, lobed. (pp. 546-547).

is so balanced and objective, there are times when the reader is made aware of Leichhardt's own attitudes. The repetition of "ausserordentlich" suggests that the observer has a standard in mind and Leichhardt's selection of the similies that link the teeth and lips of the native with a horse and a dog respectively seems to set the aboriginal apart from the explorer's own race. Such moments of initial contact between the native and the European might have some small relevance or significance for the explorer, but they were certainly of great importance to the aboriginal. His first contact with the white intruder was a moment of profound physical shock and the explorers' journals perform a valuable service in providing even a limited insight into the impact of such meetings. No doubt it would be preferable to have a record of the experience from the aboriginal's point of view, but this is not available. Studies which have attempted to describe the impact of European exploration on African society have faced a similar limitation; they, too, have been forced to make do with the comments the explorers themselves made, although in some few cases an oral tradition existed and could be drawn upon. ²

2

See the Introduction by Robert I Rotberg, Africa and its Explorers, Rotberg (ed), (Cambridge, Mass., 1970).

When the only descriptions are those which the explorers provide, it is inevitable, if regrettable, that attention is restricted to reactions which are obvious and external.

At times the reactions which the sudden arrival of a white party produced in the aboriginals were extremely violent. Sturt records one such arrival on his first expedition. The first native to become aware of a white man's presence was a young girl sitting by a fire.

She was so excessively alarmed, that she had not the power to run away; but threw herself on the ground and screamed violently. We now observed a number of huts, out of which the natives issued, little dreaming of the spectacle they were to behold. But the moment they saw us, they started back; their huts were in a moment in flames, and each with a fire-brand ran to and fro with hideous yells, thrusting them into every bush they passed. I walked my horse quietly towards an old man who stood more forward than the rest, as if he intended to devote himself for the preservation of his tribe. I had intended speaking to him, but on a nearer approach I remarked that he trembled so violently that it was impossible to expect that I could obtain any information from him,...

It is interesting to see the way the focus shifts in this

3

Sturt, Two Expeditions, 1, p. 44.

account. Sturt is aware of the impact of his arrival and he attempts to temper the shock, to minimise the frightening experience which he has initiated. At the same time there is an obvious interest in the dramatic incident to be exploited, even if Sturt is too stiff in his presentation to succeed. Finally, there is an underlying tone of superiority, a gentle amusement at the simplicity of a people who could react in this way.

Sturt's sympathy for the natives' plight is reflected in his decision not to add to their evident dismay by speaking. Leichhardt, faced with a similar situation, shows his sympathy in a different way. He, too, is caught up in the little drama he has set in motion, but seeks to account for the reaction from the aboriginals' point of view. As his party was moving down the Suttor River on route to Port Essington, he saw ahead of him an aboriginal woman and her child. He tried to warn her of his approach by calling gently, but the woman didn't hear him;

after repeating the call two or three times, she turned her head; in sudden fright she lifted her arms, and began to beat the air, as if to take wing, - then seizing the child, and shrieking most pitifully, she rapidly crossed the creek, and escaped to the opposite ridges. What could she think, but that we were some of those imaginary beings, with legends of which the wise men of her people

frighten the children into obedience, and whose strange forms and stranger doings are the favourite topics of conversation amongst the natives at night when seated around their fires? ⁴

Leichhardt, in contrast to Sturt, shows considerable skill in his presentation of the incident. One effective image captures the woman's terror admirably and her sudden flight is echoed in the movement of the prose itself. But of greater importance is the attempt which is made to provide an explanation of the woman's behaviour, even though it might be no more than an over-simplified example of cultural transference.

Whenever the aborigines first caught sight of an exploring party they reacted in a similar way, and did what they could to escape. At times the frightening nature of the experience was heightened by the appearance of the white man mounted on horses or camels. Not surprisingly, the aborigines at first believed that the man and his mount constituted a single animal, the type of imaginary being that Leichhardt had commented on. The animals alone were enough to inspire terror in the natives but the two together passed beyond the limits of reason. Wills records an incident where he and Burke and their two companions were travelling through the country

⁴ Leichhardt, Journal, p. 190-191.

of the upper Cloncurry. On the journey they surprised a small family of "blacks",

- a man, who, with a young fellow, apparently his son, was upon a tree cutting out something, and a lubra with a picaninny [sic]. The two former did not see me until I was nearly close to them, and then they were dreadfully frightened. Jumping down from the trees, they started off, shouting what sounded to us very like "Joe, Joe!" Thus disturbed, the lubra, who was some distance from them, just then caught sight of the camels and the remainder of the party as they came over the hill into the creek, and this tended to hasten their flight over the stones and porcupine grass.⁵

The description which Wills gives is too tentative to catch the full drama of the incident and one wonders if this is due to the speed with which the aborigines escaped or whether it is the product of a general inability of the writer to fix on vital details. Many of Wills's descriptions of the natives are of this order, lacking in impact and descriptive power. There is however, one interesting feature of the account and that is the use of native names to describe the woman and the child, which is evidence of some degree of familiarity.

It is true that descriptions of the meetings with aborigines are limited to the impact of such encounters on

5

Andrew Jackson, Robert O'Hara Burke (London, 1862), pp. 86-7.

the natives. Nevertheless explorers paid close attention to those they met in their travels. In this they were faithful to their instructions, which required them to make detailed observations on the aborigines' appearance, their occupations, their "Condition and mode of Government", their "Religion and Objects of Worship" and its influence on their "Moral Character and Conduct", and so on. Some of this information would be impossible to collect without prolonged study but the explorers made valiant efforts to meet the demands of their instructions and when direct observation was difficult they sought to deduce what was required from the infrequent or fleeting contacts that they made. The conclusions that they came to about moral beliefs and religious customs will be examined later. Although much of the complexity of native life and organisation might elude them, the explorers were at least able to give a detailed account of the physical appearance of the people they met. Such descriptions varied greatly in treatment. They were sometimes factual, objective accounts which demand our attention and respect as valuable ethnographic records, or they suggest the moral or aesthetic stance of the observer to a greater or lesser degree. In this they have obvious parallels with the descriptions which explorers gave of the landscape of the interior. Sturt, for example, provides a straight-forward, objective assessment of the appearance of the natives he met.

The sunken eye and overhanging eyebrow, the high cheek-bone and thick lip, distended nostrils, the nose either short or aquiline [sic], together with a stout bust and slender extremities, and both curled and smooth hair, marked the natives of the Morumbidgee as well as those of the Darling. They were evidently sprung from one common stock, the savage and scattered inhabitants of a rude and inhospitable land. ⁶

All this is strictly impartial. There is no moral stance attributable to the observer; there are no points in the description at which any personal reactions obtrude since the only value judgement that Sturt makes refers not to the inhabitants, but to the land.

But not all descriptions of the aborigines are as objective as this. It was not easy for the observer to remain aloof from his subject; he finds himself at times drawn towards what he sees. This personal involvement is especially evident in an account which Leichhardt gives of the aborigines he met during a visit to the Bunya-Bunya region to the north of Moreton Bay. He writes of them as

a fine race of men, tall and well made, and their bodies, individually, as well as the groups which they formed, would have delighted the eye of an artist.

⁶ Sturt, Two Expeditions, ii, p. 53.

Is it fancy? but I am far more pleased in seeing the naked body of the black-fellow than that of the white man. It is the white colour, or I do not know what, which is less agreeable to the eye. When I was in Paris, I was often in the public baths in the Seine, and how few well made men did I see! There is little fat on the black-fellow, but his muscles are equally developed and their play appears on every part of the body, particularly on the back, when you are walking behind him and he is carrying something on his head. ⁷

It is fascinating to watch the oscillation between observation and memory in this passage. There is first of all a visual response which gives way to memory, to be replaced by a general comment on the "black-fellow"; this in turn suggests a particular memory of the explorer walking behind a native.

At first glance this appreciation of the physical beauty of the aborigines appears to have connexions with the idea of the "noble savage", an idea which dominated European attitudes towards native peoples until it was called into question by travellers in the Pacific, as Bernard Smith has pointed out in his study European Vision and the South Pacific. Certainly there were times when the aborigines of Australia were regarded as examples of the "noble savage" and Cook was

⁷ Leichhardt to Robert Lynd, September, 1843. Arousseau, The Letters, ii, p. 675.

impressed by their virtues of courage and endurance and their renunciation of the luxuries and excesses of civilization.⁸ Smith maintains that this concept of the native had virtually disappeared by the early 1800's to be replaced by a view which saw them as ignoble and depraved.⁹ Whether explorers are more traditional in their opinions or not is difficult to say, but the concept continues to recur from time to time in the reactions of the travellers. There is, of course, no illogicality in regarding the natives as ignoble and at the same time being impressed with their physical beauty, and this seems to have been the situation. Tietkens, writing of his experiences in 1880 was able to make a passing reference to some aborigines as "strapping young fellows",¹⁰ or describe them as "noble looking and handsome men, quite unlike one's usual ideas of diminutive Australian blacks".¹¹ Although Warburton's treatment of the aborigines suggests that he regarded them as little better than animals, he too could see

⁸ B. Smith, European Vision and the South Pacific 1768-1850 (London, 1960), p. 126.

⁹ ibid., pp. 243-7.

¹⁰ Tietkens, Diary

¹¹ ibid.

something that was beautiful in their appearance. When his party was detained at Waterloo Springs because of the illness of one of the camels, a group of natives was induced to visit the camp.

They were fine, well-made men, most of them bearded, and, considering the wretched hand-to-mouth life they lead, were in very fair bodily condition. Clothing they possessed none; they were armed with spears and waddies, or short clubs, the latter of which they use to knock over the wallabies, a small species of kangaroo, on which they seem mainly to subsist. ¹²

Even though he demonstrates his sympathy for their having to exist in a harsh environment - and this is really what is being documented here - Warburton reveals his usual antipathy to the aborigines when he goes on to call them "scamps" or "blacks" and comments on their "prowling" round the camp.

Generally it is the men only who elicit such favourable responses from the explorers; the women were usually regarded as singularly unattractive, unless they were very young. Leichhardt had been impressed by the men he had seen in the Bunya Bunya region and he was equally responsive to the young women whom he met.

12

Warburton, Journey, p. 186.

I saw some black beauties - young unmarried women, about 14 to 17 years old, or perhaps still younger. They were very regularly formed; their movements free and graceful; they were full of mirth and joke, and examined us with all the naivete of youth. Their faces could not be beautiful, for their flat broad noses will never permit it; but the proportions of the body in woman and man are as perfect as those of the Caucasian race, and the artist would find an inexhaustible source of observation and study amongst these black tribes. 13

Leichhardt's opening comment seems to announce a prurient interest in the young women but their nubility is submerged in a celebration of their youth. Despite the qualification Leichhardt clearly finds them attractive but he appears to be drawn more by their picturesque qualities - whether as fit subjects for painting or as fine examples of the exotic is not clear. But, as was suggested earlier, such descriptions of feminine beauty are rare in the explorers' journals. Certainly there was no possibility of the Tahitian experience being repeated in Australia. Despite the later tradition of "black velvet" the country was never seen, as Tahiti was, as a New Cythera.

13

Leichhardt to Robert Lynd, January 9, 1844.
Arousseau, The Letters, ii, p. 708.

Increasing familiarity was to effect a change in attitudes, at times even within the course of a single journey. Sturt, on his expedition down the Murray in 1829, was at first charmed by the freedom with which the aborigines came up to the camps but this was gradually replaced by feelings of annoyance and disgust.

Their sameness of appearance, the disgusting diseases that raged among them, their abominable filth, the manner in which they pulled us about, and the impossibility of making them understand us, or of obtaining any information from them, - for if we could have succeeded in this point, we should have gladly borne every inconvenience, - all combined to estrange us from these people, and to make their presence disagreeable. 14

This is more than the commonplace inability of one race to perceive individual differences in another, just as it is more than mere fastidiousness and outraged sensibility. Sturt was an explorer first and only then an anthropologist and the practical demands of exploration claimed priority. The specific complaints against the natives come rapidly one upon the other and then there is a pause; it is almost as though the voice of Duty had whispered in Sturt's ear and all the complaints against disease and filth are submerged

in the heroic tasks that discovery demands.

Sturt's revulsion is suggested only briefly but the tone behind descriptions such as "disgusting diseases" and "abominable filth" spills over and colours the passage as a whole. Mitchell could be equally revolted but his description goes far beyond Sturt's when he writes of an old native woman he has met. To him she appears to be

a more degrading picture of human misery than could possibly be imagined - or conceived by civilized beings, - one eye alone seemed to see through the dimness of age. Her shrivelled limbs of the colour of earth with groping after reptiles on which she fed, more resembled those of quadrupeds. The back of her head only was bald - with one or two large warts or excrescences projecting like so many ears and a strange gash or scar on one side of her chin had healed leaving in sight part of the jaw bone. ¹⁵

Mitchell's description achieves a fine balance between fascination and disgust which is perhaps the essence of the grotesque and it certainly goes beyond the limitations of objective reporting. His attention moves from one disgusting feature to another until the woman's appalling appearance is fully revealed. There are two points in the account at which

15

Mitchell, MS Journal, 1831-2, entry for December 19, 1831, M.L. C47.

Mitchell's own assumptions are revealed; both the opening comment and the reference to the woman's animal-like limbs suggest that in any ranking of humanity she would be placed far down the scale indeed.

The passage is taken from Mitchell's manuscript journal of his first expedition and it is instructive to place it against the version which was eventually published.

She presented a most humiliating specimen of our race - a figure shortened and shrivelled with age, entirely without clothing - one eye alone saw through the dim decay of nature - several large fleshy excrescences projected from the side of her head like so many ears - and the jawbone was visible, through a gash or scar, on one side of her chin. The withered arms and hands, covered with earth by digging and scraping for the snakes and worms on which she fed, more resembled the limbs and claws of a quadruped. ¹⁶

Mitchell's revision moves in two quite distinct directions: he suggests a greater compassion for the woman through his insistence on a common humanity (the native woman and the European are now members of the same race) while at the same time he reinforces her bestiality. There are stylistic changes, too, in the later version. The writing is more consciously controlled even if one is not convinced by what Mitchell

16

Mitchell, Three Expeditions, i, p. 49.

considers a more literary turn of phrase. Little is gained in vividness or impact through the substitution of the phrase "decay of nature" for the earlier "dimness of age". On the other hand the feeling of repugnance deepens with the inclusion of the more specific details, the "worms" and snakes on which the woman is said to feed, and the addition of claws to the withered arms and hands.

The woman is placed so low on the scale of humanity that there is little that separates her from the beast. This sort of equation, where the terms "aboriginal" and "animal" are linked, is a relatively common one with Mitchell. At times the similarities are suggested rather than stated, as in a description Mitchell gives of a native who is unaware of the explorer's scrutiny. The effectiveness of the comparison is all the greater because the subject is unaware; he is unable to mask his feelings and he is therefore revealed as he really is.

His hands were ready to seize any living thing; his step, light and noiseless as that of a shadow, gave no intimation of his approach; and his walk suggested the idea of the prowling of a beast of prey. ¹⁷

¹⁷

ibid., ii, p. 119.

On another occasion Mitchell, like Sturt, had become annoyed with the behaviour of a group of aborigines who approached the camp. Mitchell makes his annoyance plain in what he says about the leader of the group. "The chief spokesman was a ferocious forward sort of savage, to whom, I would rather have given anything than a tomahawk, from the manner in which he handled my pockets".¹⁸ Again, it is interesting to compare this comment with Mitchell's reaction as it appears in his original field journal. In the manuscript version the old man of the tribe is described as "a ferocious forward sort of beast" and there is no mention of a tomahawk. "The chief spokesman was a ferocious forward sort of beast to whom I had rather have given a bullet than a present from the manner in which he handled my pockets".¹⁹ When Mitchell's private and public utterances are contrasted in this way he is placed in a position similar to that of the native who was observed without his knowledge: the explorer, too, is unable to assume another identity.

¹⁸Mitchell, Three Expeditions, 1, p. 216.¹⁹

Mitchell, Ms Journal, 1836, entry for May 26, 1836, M.L. C54.

Mitchell's second-in-command on the 1836 expedition, Stapylton, also kept a journal, and he would no doubt have been surprised to think that his assessments and opinions would ever be made public. He seems to have had a poor opinion of the aborigines the party encountered. For him they were no better than beasts and he also feared them.

Their Hollow resembles precisely the cry of some wild beast which in fact it is. Woe be to the poor devil alone and astray who hears that fatal omen on all sides around him - his fate is sealed for they track with unerring certainty and a running pace. 20

Other explorers were as convinced as Mitchell and Stapylton had been that the aborigines rightly belonged with the brute creation. Giles, on his first expedition, was forced by lack of water to bail out the foul-smelling contents of a native well. As he was engaged in this distasteful exercise he felt convinced that he was being watched: "I felt sure they were watching both me and my movements with lynx-like glances from their dark metallic eyes".²¹ Giles may have expressed himself, as he so often did, in an over-dramatic way, but even such a criticism leaves the central comparison intact. Nor was he always as serious in the presentation of his reactions;

20

Stapylton, MS Journal, entry for August 14, 1836,

M.L. A332.

21

Giles, Geographic Travels, p. 119.

often he was guided by a conscious desire to amuse his readers. This intention seems to be present in an account he gives of an old native whom he met on the banks of the Ferdinand River;

...the old man was so monkey-like he would have charmed the heart of Professor Darwin, and I had some thoughts of preserving him, but I had not a bottle large enough. 22

But it is not enough simply to acknowledge the humour here; there are still some snippets which refuse to be accommodated in this fashion, and they will only fit in terms of a generally poor opinion of the natives. And, in any case, humour of this type carries with it its own assumptions of superiority.

The Australian-born explorer, John Forrest, seems to have accepted the aborigines he encountered with a considerable amount of sympathy. The comments which he makes reflect his desire to take the good with the bad and the realisation of the natives' degraded appearance does not exclude the recognition of some physical attractiveness.

The natives met today were all circumcised; they had long hair and beards, which were all clotted and in strands. The strands were covered with filth and dirt for six inches from the end, and looked

like greased rope; it was as hard as rope, and dangled about their necks, looking most disgustingly filthy. The men were generally fine-looking fellows. ²³

At times the final note of approval dies in a general feeling of revulsion, and the only theme audible is the familiar one of the essential bestiality of the natives.

The seven natives slept at our fire. We gave them as much damper as they could eat. They had not the least particle of clothing, and made pillows of each other's bodies, and resembled pigs more than human beings. ²⁴

Even though he is writing in the second half of the nineteenth century, Forrest's comments suggest an approach to the natives of Australia that had its genesis in William Dampier's famous dismissal of them as "the Miserablest People in the world" - a people who "differ but little from Brutes".²⁵ European reactions to the inhabitants of the new continent had been conditioned by his assessment, and they were little changed by the visit of Cook a century later. As Bernard Smith has pointed out :

23

Forrest, Explorations in Australia (London, 1875), p. 246.

24

Ibid., pp. 108-9.

25

William Dampier, New Voyage round the World (London, 1688), p. 464.

In the field of natural philosophy and reflective thought the general tendency was to regard the New Hollander as brutish rather than heroic: instead of fostering poetic parallels from Theocritus and Vergil, he stimulated thought concerning that aspect of the chain of being which presupposed a link between the higher primates and man. ²⁶

In early presentations of the theory of the chain of being the lowest position on the human scale was usually assigned to the Hottentot.

Animal life rises from this low beginning in the shell-fish, through innumerable species of insects, fishes, birds, and beasts, to the confines of reason, where, in the dog, the monkey, the chimpanze, it unites so closely with the lowest degree of that quality in man, that they cannot easily be distinguished from each other. From this lowest degree in the brutal Hottentot, reason, with the assistance of learning and science, advances through the various stages of human understanding, which rise above each other, till in a Bacon or a Newton it attains the summit. ²⁷

The earlier explorers particularly were still guided in their view of the natural world by this concept of the chain of being, but from their comments it is clear that they regard the

26

B. Smith, European Visions, p. 127.

27

Quoted in O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (Cambridge, Mass., 1942), p. 197.

Australian aboriginal as a suitable successor for the position occupied by the Hottentot. Because they tended to regard the natives as brutish they found it impossible to accept them as heroic opponents.

The concept of the chain of being was only one view of the universe and it was to give way to another theory, the theory of evolution as it was finally propounded by Charles Darwin later in the century. But even when this was applied to the aborigines, they were still seen to occupy a stage through which the European had long since passed, and the white man was doing no more than fulfilling a natural law in taking possession of a country that was inhabited by such lower beings. But whatever view was advanced, at no stage did the explorer seriously entertain the thought that the aboriginal was the equal to the European, or that he could ever be considered a partner, or rather an opponent, in an heroic struggle for the land, as he might have been had he been accepted as a "noble savage".

2.

The conviction that the Australian aborigines were anything but "noble savages" was not based on appearance alone. It has been pointed out that the instructions which were issued to the explorers required them to investigate and report

on methods of government and systems of belief both religious and moral. Bernard Smith has shown that the idea of the noble savage came to be modified by experiences in the Pacific and suggests that it was abandoned in favour of a concept of the natives of the Pacific that saw them as ignoble, as creatures who had fallen from grace and therefore required redemption. The native was held to be someone who was possessed by evil and therefore deserving of missionary help. When explorers came to assess the religious and moral state of the aborigines they too adopted a view that stressed their ignoble traits.

Of the explorers who established satisfactory relations with the aborigines, Sturt seems to have been the most successful. He could claim, with justifiable pride, that throughout his journeys he had not been responsible for the death of even a single aboriginal. He was usually sympathetic in his approach but there were times when he found aspects of their life which he could not praise. When he came to comment on the natives who inhabited the regions bordering the River Darling he was prepared to concede that they were representatives of a "clean-limbed, well-conditioned race" but, he noted, they "do not appear to have war-like habits, nor do they take any pride in their arms".²⁸ This may or may not have been

28

Sturt, Two Expeditions, 1, pp. 105-6.

intended as praise, coming as it did from an officer of the Army, but there is no doubt of his position in his reports on their religious beliefs. This was one aspect of aboriginal society which Sturt was eager to investigate but lack of effective communication had made it difficult and so he was forced to rely on conjecture.

Whether these people have an idea of a superintending Providence I doubt, but they evidently dread evil agency. On the whole I should say they are a people, at present, at the very bottom of the scale of humanity. ²⁹

Mitchell, too, found it difficult to impute religious principles to the tribe he found on the Darling. This tribe he christened, for obvious reasons, the "Spitting-Tribe" and, Mitchell said, it was evident "that these people were actuated by superstitious ideas of some kind; but which, judging by their acts, had no connexion with any good principle". ³⁰

This same "spitting" tribe was to provoke the first clash that Mitchell had experienced on his journeys. On his first expedition he had not been personally involved, even though two of his men who were sent back for additional

²⁹
ibid., p. 107

³⁰
Mitchell, Three Expeditions, 1, p. 306.

supplies were killed. On his second expedition, that undertaken in 1835, his botanist Richard Cunningham wandered away from the party, became lost, and was murdered by the natives. Mitchell might not have been completely blameless in these incidents, but there is no doubting his responsibility for what happened on the Darling. Spitting was not the only defiance offered; the natives also threw dust into the air and this reminded Mitchell of parallels from the Bible. He cited the reception which King David received from the people at Bahurim (2 Samuel. xvi. 13) and the treatment Paul received in Jerusalem (Acts xxiii. 23). The Biblical references are interesting but the comment they draw from the explorer is worth noting: "Strange as this custom appears to us, it is quite consistent with some passages in the early history of mankind".³¹ To Mitchell, then, the Australian aborigines are in a position comparable with an earlier stage of human development, before the yeast of civilization has had a chance to work.

Charles Darwin, whose own work was to influence attitudes towards native peoples so profoundly later in the century, also assigned the original inhabitants of the continent a lowly position on the "scale of civilization".

31

ibid., p. 246 n.

His travels in the Beagle brought him to Sydney in 1836 and during his brief visit he made an excursion to Bathurst. The first stage of the journey took him to Parramatta and here he met a party of aborigines.

They were all partly clothed, and several could speak a little English: their countenances were good-humoured and pleasant, and they appeared far from being such utterly degraded beings as they have been usually represented. 32

He found their skills in spear throwing and tracking "admirable" and was convinced that they were not without intelligence. Finally, however, they were measured by European standards and they suffered in the comparison.

They will not, however, cultivate the ground, or build houses and remain stationary, or even take the trouble of tending a flock of sheep when given to them. On the whole they appear to me to stand some few degrees higher on the scale of civilization than the Fuegians. 33

The criteria which Darwin uses were those most commonly applied by the white colonists. Secure in their superiority, and victims of their own assumptions, they failed to recognize anything of worth in native civilization. And because they

32

Charles Darwin, Journal of Researches... (London, 1839), p. 519.

33

Darwin, Journal of Researches, p. 519.

could find no evidence of a material culture the act of dispossession seemed doubly justified. C.D. Rowley, in his study The Destruction of Aboriginal Society, compares the colonisation of Australia with that in other areas. In these regions the village as least provided a tangible indication of a culture. In Australia no such evidence existed.

But the Aborigines were not villagers. They had no recognisable claim as evidenced by tilled areas and no fixed centre for resistance such as, culturally at least, the villages were. ³⁴

In their adherence to such assumptions explorers such as Mitchell, and there were others as well, showed themselves to be very much men of their time.

But to return to Mitchell's Biblical parallel. Another explorer, Eyre, had a similar experience in South Australia. During an absence from the camp his overseer had abducted a native girl to help in the search for water. Eyre returned to find a party of sixty or more natives shouting and threatening, and throwing dust in the air. The explorer makes the allusion to the Bible, but omits the historical judgement.

Leichhardt takes a slightly different view of the aborigines' stage of development: they are to him "children of nature". However, that the European is more advanced is obvious from his account of a meeting with a tribe when the expedition was nearing Port Essington. The natives were unable to hide their fear of the expedition's bullocks but Leichhardt did not consider that he would have any trouble with them.

I had not, however, the slightest fear and apprehension of any treachery on the part of the natives; for my frequent intercourse with the natives of Australia had taught me to distinguish easily between the smooth tongue of deceit, with which they try to ensnare their victim, and the open expression of kind and friendly feelings, or those of confidence and respect. I remember several instances of the most cold-blooded smooth-tongued treachery, and the most extraordinary gullibility of the natives; but I am sure that a careful observer is more than a match for these simple children of nature, and that he can easily read the bad intention in their unsteady, greedy, glistening eyes. ³⁵

Leichhardt calls the aborigines "simple children of nature" because of their inability to hide their true feelings from the percipient observer and what he has to say is as much a

statement in his own defence as a competent judge of man as it is of the natives' lack of sophistication. To describe a possible attack by the aborigines as treachery is an indication of the width of the gulf between the two races since it ignores the natives' not unreasonable view that the white man's coming was nothing less than an invasion. To the European there is no suggestion that a state of war existed; if there had been, the idea of treachery would have been largely irrelevant. Only one's friends are treacherous.

The explorers were even more convinced of the aborigines' lowly position when they came upon examples of native culture. A gallery of native art failed to inspire Giles, for example, so profound was his conviction that they showed signs of no skill whatever. There is therefore no shame, and not a little humour, in his account of the vandalism of his companion.

Mr Carmichael left upon the walls a few choice specimens of the white man's art, which will help, no doubt, to teach the young native idea sic, how to shoot either in one direction or another. 36

Such an action now would probably be condemned, but Giles obviously thought that he was not destroying anything of value.

Another series of rock paintings Giles derisively labelled "the aboriginal National Gallery of paintings and hieroglyphics"³⁷ and the hands and the serpents which he saw there reinforced his opinion of the debased culture of the natives and he categorised the artists as "cave-dwelling, reptile-eating Troglodytes".³⁸

Such examples of native art proved how backward their culture was and at the same time they revealed deficiencies that were even more profound. When Giles discovered a large cave or ledge near Ayers' Rock he wrote the following description. The cave, he said,

was ornamented with many of their rude representations of creeping things, amongst which the serpent class predominated; there were also other hideous shapes, of things such as can exist only in their imaginations, and they are but the weak endeavours of these benighted beings to give form and semblance to the symbolisms of the dread superstitions, that, haunting the vacant chambers of their darkened minds, pass amongst them in the place of either philosophy or religion.³⁹

Giles consigns the natives to the region of the damned with

³⁷ ibid., p. 101.

³⁸ ibid., p. 79.

³⁹ ibid., p. 161.

a convincing battery of epithets: they are "benighted beings" under the influence of "dread superstitions" and their arts are the product of no rational processes at all. The explorer is the uncomprehending European who reacts against a culture which he does not even begin to understand. European standards fail him and he grasps desperately at his prejudices or else he is lost.

Physical evidence of aboriginal culture, apart from the few paintings explorers stumbled upon, was difficult to find or else passed over unknowingly. Giles, when he came across what appeared to be a sacred site, was unable to make the imaginative leap demanded, and so it seems to him that he has clear evidence of the most horrific practices of all.

This is a most singular little glen. There are several small mounds of stones here, placed at even distances apart, and though the ground was all stones, places like paths have been cleared between them. There was also a large piece of rock in the centre of most of these strange heaps....I have concluded,....that on the bare rock already mentioned the natives have and will again perform their horrid rites of human butchery, 40

Giles is so obsessed with these "horrid rites" that even when he is unable to find any native graves it strengthens his belief

"that these people eat their aged ones, and most probably these who die from natural causes also".⁴¹

It would be unfair to Giles to maintain that his attitude towards the aborigines remained so uncompromisingly one of repulsion. His later expeditions were to bring him into closer contact with individual natives, and his impressions were modified by this more intimate knowledge. In 1875 he conducted a brief expedition from Ooldea to Baitana in South Australia and for the first time he took aborigines with him as members of the party. His guide was an older native Jimmy, and Giles was impressed by his skill in finding his way to localities which had been visited only once before, and then as a boy. Although the explorer attempts to explain this facility in quasi-scientific terms, the admiration is undimmed.

The knowledge possessed by these children of the desert is preserved owing to the fact that they have their imaginations untrammelled, the denizens of the wilderness having their mental faculties put to but few uses, and all are concentrated on the object of obtaining food for themselves and their offspring. Whatever ideas they possess (and they are by no means

41

Giles, Australia Twice Traversed, i, p. 298.

dull or backward in learning new ones) are ever keen and young, and nature has endowed them - in whatever intellectual gifts she has afforded them - with an undying mental youth until their career on earth is ended. As says the deep but witty poet, Bon Gaultier, speaking of savages or men in a state of Nature -

"There the passions may revel unfettered,
And the heart never speak but in truth;
And the intellect, wholly unlettered,
Be bright with the freedom of youth".

Assuredly man in a savage state is by no means the unhappiest of mortals. ⁴²

The Australian aboriginal might not be quite the noble savage in Giles's estimation, but there is certainly a note of envy here that is absent in earlier comments. But despite this new-found understanding, there are still areas of native life which are completely beyond Giles; the superiority of the European refuses to admit that native customs might be worthy of respect. Even a seemingly insignificant incident points up the eroding of native structures that was invariably the consequence of white contact. The younger lad with Giles's party in 1875, Tommy, was apparently an initiate and so was compelled to wear his hair in a chignon. Tommy cut it off and the older native, Jimmy, was obviously upset; the explorer, however, takes some delight in flouting the custom

42

Giles, Journal of a Forgotten Expedition, pp.12-13.

and supporting the young lad in his defiance: "but Tommy being a bit of a pet in the camp, and knowing he had my sanction for what he had done, quietly told old Jimmy in plain English to go to blazes".⁴³

When the explorers came to realise that Australia was a land which was sparing in its favours, a land (especially in the arid interior) which revealed its treasures of water and grass reluctantly, they became more conscious of the aborigines' skill in coaxing even a meagre living from the environment. Their competence in moving through the country and their knowledge of bushcraft earned them the respect of the explorers, and even praise at times. Mitchell was sufficiently impressed by their ability to question the dichotomy of "savage" and "civilized".

This was a very busy day for the whole party - black and white; I cannot fairly say savage and civilized, for in most of our difficulties by flood and field, the intelligence and skill of our sable friends made the "white-fellows" appear rather stupid. They could read traces on the earth, climb trees, or dive into the water, better than the ablest of us. ⁴⁴

⁴³
ibid., p. 25.

⁴⁴
Mitchell, Three Expeditions, ii, p. 162.

Leichhardt, like Giles, was impressed by the natives' ability to recognize localities previously visited, but his explanation suggests a physiological difference or an innate difference rather than a learned skill.

The impressions on their retina seem to be naturally more intense than on that of the European; and their recollections are remarkably exact, even to the most minute details. Trees peculiarly formed or grouped, broken branches, slight elevations of the ground - in fact, a hundred things, which we should remark only when paying great attention to a place - seem to form a kind of Daguerreotype impression on their minds, every part of which is readily recollected. ⁴⁵

The ability to live off the land was a skill which many explorers envied and had they possessed it their tasks in many instances would have been considerably lightened. What appeared to be inhospitable desert to the white man was a source of food to the native, as Browne, Sturt's surgeon in 1845, recognised, when he was travelling through the region of Lake Torrens. He saw a good many natives and realised that "they had come from some place to hunt for small animals in this desert - no desert to them for it abounds in Jerboas, Talporcoos and Wallaby". ⁴⁶

⁴⁵

Leichhardt, Journal, p. 118.

⁴⁶

H.J. Finnis, "Dr. John Harris Brown's Journal", South Australiana, v, 1 (March, 1966), p. 51.

The course of at least one expedition might have been altered considerably if the white men had been able to extract a living from the land with as much skill as the natives brought to the task. Burke and Wills might not have perished on Cooper's Creek if they had been able to manage as competently as the local aborigines and this was realised by Wills. He was helped by the aborigines on the occasions when he travelled back up the creek to the original Depot and his earlier aversion was replaced by admiration and he began to consider them his friends. His determination to learn from them led him to actively seek the natives out as his diary entry for June 4, 1861 makes clear.

Tuesday, June 4:- Started for the black's camp, intending to test the practicability of living with them, and to see what I could learn as to their ways and manners. ⁴⁷

Unfortunately the natives shifted their camp and the white men grew progressively weaker. Only King, who persisted in remaining with the aborigines once his two leaders had died, survived.

But admiration for native skills did little to redress the balance in their favour. The weight of opinion

indicates that the aborigines were regarded as debased examples of human life, little better than the beasts, without observable beliefs or moral precepts. There was little in their culture that was estimable, and they inspired not respect but revulsion. Nevertheless many explorers approached the task of discovery of the new land with a clear understanding of the consequences that must follow for the aboriginal peoples of the country. This might be justified in terms of divine law, of the inevitable subjugation of an inferior race by a superior one, but the explorers were not blind to the effects of their actions.

3.

While Australian explorers generally were aware of the impact of their movement into undiscovered regions on the aboriginal occupiers, such a realisation frequently created a dilemma. How was it possible to reconcile such an impact with the desires which so often motivated them to explore? How, for example, was the explorer to reconcile his desire to discover land suitable for white settlement with the destructive effects of such settlement upon the native peoples? The explorer Mitchell provides an excellent example of the confusion of motives which could occur. When he set out from Sydney on his first expedition he was excited by visions of great deeds and great achievements and yet within the first

few miles the sight of smoke ascending from a native fire initiated a seemingly incompatible concern for the fate of the "unfortunate" native.

These unfortunate creatures could no longer enjoy their solitary freedom; for the dominion of the white man surrounded them. His sheep and cattle filled the green pastures where the kangaroo (the principal food of the natives) was accustomed to range, until the stranger came from distant lands and claimed the soil. Thus these first inhabitants, hemmed in by the power of the white population, and deprived of the liberty which they formerly enjoyed of wandering at will through their native wilds, were compelled to seek a precarious shelter amidst the close thickets and rocky fastnesses which afforded them a temporary home, but scarcely a subsistence, for their chief support, the kangaroo, was either destroyed or banished. I knew this unhappy tribe, and had frequently met them in their haunts. ... I felt no hesitation in venturing amongst them, for, to me, they appeared a harmless, unoffending race. ⁴⁸

Mitchell grasps and presents the effects of white settlement with definite perception; his assessment of the consequences is accurate and he writes of the natives' plight with evident sympathy. And yet even as one concedes the sympathy and the perception, one is unable to discover a moral judgement at work.

48

Mitchell, Three Expeditions, i, p. 10.

No blame attaches to the European intruder and one even doubts whether Mitchell is aware of his own role in the dispossession and destruction of the aborigines. This moral abdication is made even more surprising when one remembers the times when Mitchell comments on the speed with which the settler followed the explorer into the new regions - even at times within the explorer's very wheel-tracks. Mitchell succeeds in casting a romantic glow over the dispossession of the natives; he mourns their loss of "freedom" without perhaps realizing that in such a situation "freedom" needs to be equated with existence.

Mitchell might have had no apprehension about venturing amongst these people, but the situation was otherwise when, on his second journey, he felt compelled to construct a fort at Bourke. Such a structure was, according to the explorer, an immediate requirement.

Our first care was to erect a strong stockade of rough boughs, that we might be secure under any circumstances; for we had not asked permission to come there from the inhabitants, who had been reported to be numerous, and who would of course soon make their appearance. ⁴⁹

⁴⁹
ibid., pp. 217-8.

Admittedly these were not aborigines who had already been driven from their tribal lands; these were "myalls" and Mitchell doesn't extend his sympathy to them. He is prepared to concede their right to their land - this is implied in the comment that permission had not been sought - but the act of building a fort appears to negate such a right.

On the same expedition Mitchell takes the argument one stage further. The white man isn't alone in his realisation of the effects of white intrusion: the aborigines, too, must surely be aware of what the future holds for them.

No reflecting man can witness the quickness and intelligence of the aborigines, as displayed in their instant comprehension of our numerous appliances, without feelings of sympathy. He must perceive, that these people cannot be so obtuse as not to anticipate in the advance of such a powerful race, the extirpation of their own, in a country which barely affords to them the means of existence. Such must be the conclusion in their minds, although it is to be hoped, that the results of our invasion may be different; and, that if these savage people do not learn habits of industry, a breed of wild cattle may at least compensate them, for the loss of the kangaroo and opossum. ⁵⁰

There is a moral sense evidently at work here, and a realisation that the white man's intrusion constitutes nothing less than an "invasion". There is, of course, a comprehension of the practical results of the white man's coming; there is no understanding of the close, mystical bond between man and land that was a fundamental support of aboriginal society.

Even at the end of a career of exploration, which included a number of serious clashes with the aborigines - and which were so obviously part of an ineffectual but desperate attempt by them to repel the invasion - Mitchell is still attempting an exercise in empathy. The effects on the introduction of cattle were plain enough during Mitchell's expedition to tropical Australia in 1846.

The change produced in the aspect of this formerly happy secluded valley, by the intrusion of cattle and the white man, was by no means favourable, and I could easily conceive how I, had I been an aboriginal native, should have felt and regretted that change. ⁵¹

Regret and sympathy achieve little in historical processes, and that expressed by Mitchell is no exception. His comments are particularly interesting because of the

51

Mitchell, Journal of an Expedition, p. 14.

confusion they so clearly show between motivation and humanitarian considerations. But other men were as aware of the consequences of their actions. Leichhardt is conscious of the changes which must follow his discoveries but while he regrets them, he sees no real alternative. The only possible way to avert the destruction of the aboriginal is through a programme of education and if that should fail then Leichhardt's sympathies are on the side of the white invader. For him the progress of the white race is the fulfilment of a pre-ordained divine law.

Die Stämme der Schwarzen sind jetzt fast ganz geschmolzen, wenigstens ist ihre Unabhängigkeitsgefühl gebrochen und sie begnügen sich mit den Brochen welche vom [sic] dem Tische des Weissen Mannes fallen. Und so wird es überall sein, wo Europaeische Civilisation auf einmal un ohne Vorbereitung mit dem Wilden in Berührung kommt - und so war es überall! Oft habe ich, als ich mich unter mächtigen Stämmen befand, mit Schmerzen der nicht zu fernem Zeit gedacht, wo viele dieser kräftigen Gestalten von der Kugel des Weissen durchbohrt sein werden, viele sich unter bösatigen Krankheiten zum zeitigen Grabe schleppen und endlich der Rest, siech und verkümmert um die Wohnungen der Weissen herum bettelt, oder vor den öffentlichen Schenkhäusern aufspringender Städte nach berausenden Getränken giert. - Ist es nicht möglich diese Schwarzen Naturkinder zu civilisiren oder auch nur mit der Civilisation zu befreunden, so bin ich immer zu grosser Freund meiner eigenen Race, ein wohlbevölkertes wohlregirtes Land von Weissen einem zwecklos hinlebenden Haufen Schwarzer von zu ziehn und wir

müssen in der Oberhand der Caucasier
 dasselbe Naturgesetz anerkennen,
 vermöge dessen die Hinde dem stärksten
 Nirsche folgt. 52

Leichhardt's "Naturgesetz" is remarkably close to that which was to be later propounded by Darwin, and it is equally inevitable, although it should be noted that Aourousseau's translation: "Everywhere it has been the same" does not have the same note of conviction of Leichhardt's "Und so wird es überall sein, ... nd so war es überall!" There seems to be

52

Leichhardt to his brother-in-law. May 14, 1844.
 Aourousseau, The Letters, ii, p. 752.

And already the little bands of blacks have almost completely faded away. At the very least their spirit of independence has been broken, and they accept the crumbs that fall from the white man's table. And that will happen wherever European civilization makes sudden contact with savages unprepared for it. Everywhere it has been the same. Often, when I've been with vigorous tribes [of blacks], I've thought sadly of the day that will not be long in coming, when many of these robust bodies will be pierced by the white man's bullet, when others, stricken by virulent diseases, will drag themselves to an early grave, and when those who survive, sickly and languishing, will finally come to begging at the white man's door or to craving for strong drink at public houses in the rising towns. - If it is not possible to civilize these black children of Nature, or even to reconcile them to civilization, I am far too firm a believer in the race to which I belong ever to prefer a swarm of wayward, aimless blacks to a populous, orderly white country. In the predominance of the Caucasians we must acknowledge [the working of] the same law of Nature which ordains that the hind shall follow the strongest hart. (p. 757).

one possibility of ameliorating the condition of the aborigines, and that is education, but Leichhardt does not seem to hold any great hopes for its effectiveness. In a letter he speaks of the presence of Catholic missionaries in the Moreton Bay area.

Katholische Missionäre sind hier vor wenigen Monaten angekommen. Ich weiss nicht ob der äusserliche Gottesdienst der Katholiken mehr geeignet sein wird, die Schwarzen an einem Orte fesseln und ihre Aufmerksamkeit von den allein körperlichen Bedürfnissen auf geistige und göttliche zu richten. Könnte man die Kinder von dem Stamme entfernen und sie in der Ferne regelmässig erziehen so liesse sich wohl etwas hoffen. Doch diess wird von der Englischen Regierung als Eingriff in die Rechte britischer Unterthanen, als welche sie die Wilden betrachtet, angesehen - und so schwindet denn auch diese Hoffnung eines künftigen Erfolges. 53

53

Leichhardt to his mother, August 27, 1843.
Arousseau, The Letters, II, p. 670.

Catholic missionaries arrived here a few months ago. I don't know whether the pageantry of the Catholic service would be more effective in keeping the blacks in the locality, and in diverting their attention away from mere bodily needs towards mental and devotional interests. If the children could be taken away from the clans and brought up properly quite apart, there might be hope for them. But the British Government regards this as interference with the rights of British subjects, which it considers the blacks to be - so even this hope for a better future fades away. (p. 673).

Given the situation as Leichhardt sees it, there seems to be little point in attempting anything. Religion under such conditions would be nothing more than a palliative, almost an opiate. Leichhardt comments on the inevitability of the extinction of the aborigines in a comment in his Scientific Excursions in New South Wales. His earlier reaction had been expressed in a private letter, but this is a public statement, and the position is as strongly stated.

Though now forming several powerful tribes, it cannot be doubted that they will soon disappear before the progress of civilization; and while philanthropy deplores this result, it is quite evident that none of the many means, hitherto employed to preserve them from destruction, is likely to prove successful. It seems fore-ordained that these races shall vanish from the earth to make way for the Caucasian race, though all are endowed with the same passions and the germs of similar virtues. From what I have seen, I conclude that the natives of this part, at least of New Holland, are by no means stupid or incapable of learning; but an education of two or three, or even twenty years, will not do much for them; and, alas! even ten years will have wasted these people nearly away, so fatal are the consequences of small pox, and other introduced maladies, so baneful the effect of spirituous liquors. 54

Leichhardt does not admit to a notion of dispossession; the disappearance of the native tribes, while it is inevitable, is not due to open warfare, but rather the unfortunate if irremedial consequences of white settlement: disease and liquor. Leichhardt's companion Gilbert is more convinced that the physical conflict between the races is the true cause of the disintegration of aboriginal society, if not its extinction. His outline of the events which together constitute the pattern has already been noted. A more extensive discussion of the situation is to be found in Eyre's Journals.⁵⁵

When Eyre found his way to the north barred by salt lakes he led his party across to Port Lincoln. He arrived there to hear of the attack by the aborigines on a young boy and this prompted him to "take a view of the conduct of the aborigines of Australia, generally..." Eyre is convinced that they "have seldom been guilty of wanton or unprovoked outrages, or committed acts of rapine or bloodshed, without some strongly exciting cause, or under the influence of feelings that would have weighed in the same degree with Europeans in similar circumstances". If this is so Europeans should admit

the presence of provocation which might be unknown and he then goes on to list a number of points which, he feels, are often lost sight of in any discussions of native conduct. Eyre has no doubt that the aborigines regard the white man's presence as "an act of intrusion and aggression". They can have no idea of motives which have brought the white man and so he is convinced that it is to dispossess them. And this, says Eyre, is precisely what has happened. Those areas of the continent which are best for white settlement are also best for the aborigines. There is moreover the point that the aborigines have laws and customs and the white man may be unwittingly violating these. Eyre then outlines the sequence of events which follows on white settlement of an area, first from the view point of the settler and then, more interestingly, from the position of the aboriginal occupier of the land.

But let us go even a little further, and suppose the case of a settler, who, actuated by no selfish motives, and blinded by no fears, does not discourage or repel the natives upon their first approach; suppose that he treats them with kindness and consideration (and there are happily many such settlers in Australia), what recompense can he make for the injury he has done, by dispossessing them of their lands, by occupying their waters, and depriving them of their supply of food? He neither does nor can replace the loss....They are strangers in their own land, and possess no longer the usual means of procuring their daily

subsistence; hungry, and famished, they wander about begging among the scattered stations, where they are treated with a familiarity by the men living at them, which makes them become familiar in turn, until, at last, getting impatient and troublesome, they are roughly repulsed, and feelings of resentment and revenge are kindled. This, I am persuaded, is the cause and origin of many of the affrays with the natives, which are apparently inexplicable to us. ⁵⁶

It was this failure to recognize the aboriginal's right to his land that was at the basis of the conflict that developed between the two races. In places where this right was recognised, primarily because the native peoples were organised to resist the white intrusion, the occupation of the land was held to be a war of conquest. In New Zealand, for example, "Maori resistance made the establishment of peace by treaty essential for the settlers".⁵⁷ C.D. Rowley has summed up the situation precisely: "The Maori was respected as a warrior; the Aboriginal was despised as a rural pest".⁵⁸

By the 1860's the pattern was clear and it is therefore surprising to find Stuart's visionary pronouncement

56

ibid., pp. 171-2.

57

Rowley, The Destruction of Aboriginal Society,

p. 15.

58

ibid., p. 15.

as he broke the Union Jack over the centre of the continent.

We then gave three hearty cheers for the flag, the emblem of civil and religious liberty, and may it be a sign to the natives that the dawn of liberty, civilization, and Christianity is about to break upon them. 59

The natives were better at reading the heavens than Stuart. He might be able to act the visionary but the aborigines knew otherwise. It is clear that the explorers were, on the whole, reluctant to admit that this is what their exploration meant. Some were more perceptive than others, and realised that a conflict existed. For those explorers with whom we are mainly concerned, the men who journeyed into the centre of the continent, this conflict came to be seen essentially as a conflict not about land, but the limited supplies of water. Giles, for example, records an incident where his young companion, Jimmy, went to fill a billy of water and soon found himself surrounded by thirty to forty natives. He fled back to the camp and the aborigines were driven off. Giles's reaction was not without some sympathy for the natives, but he doesn't doubt his right to take what he needs.

These poor creatures were no doubt dreadfully annoyed to find their little reservoirs discovered by such water"

swallowing wretches as they doubtless thought white men and their horses are. I could only console my mind with the reflection, that in such a region as this water must be taken where found at any price; But I dare say, they knew where to get more, and I did not. 60

When Giles came to revise this comment in his Australia Twice Traversed he made some interesting changes, and the effect is of a more rigid attitude. The note of pity with which the earlier version opened has evaporated and the realisation that the competition for water is the true conflict emerges fully. It becomes, as it so obviously was, a matter of life and death, and consequently more heroic.

No doubt these Autocthonous were dreadfully annoyed to find their little reservoirs discovered by such water-swallowing wretches as they doubtless thought white men and horses to be; I could only console myself with the reflection, that in such a region as this we must be prepared to lay down our lives at any moment in our attempts to procure water, and we must take it when we find it at any price, as life and water are synonymous terms. I dare say they know where to get more, but I don't. 61

60

Giles, Geographic Travels, p. 109.

61

Giles, Australia Twice Traversed, i, pp.212-213.

But Giles was also aware that the conflict involved things other than water. On Christmas day, 1873, his party was surprised by a sudden attack and his account of the battle, although it is lengthy, deserves to be quoted in full.

While Jimmy Andrews was away (upon the horse, that had been tied up all night) after the others, we were startled out of our propriety by the howlings and yellings of a pack of fiends, in human form and aboriginal appearance, who had clambered up on the rocks just above the camp. I could only see ten or a dozen in front, but many more were dodging behind the rocks; the more prominent throng were led on by an ancient individual, who having fitted a spear was just in the act of throwing it down amongst us, when Gibson seized a Snider-rifle, and presented him with a conical Christmas-box, which smote the rocks with such force, and in such near proximity to his hinder parts, that in a great measure it checked his fiery ardour, and induced most of his more timorous followers to climb with most perturbed activity over the rocks; the ancient more slowly followed them, and then from behind his rocky shield he spoke spears and boomerangs to us, though he used none. He however poured out the vials of his wrath upon us - as he probably thought to some purpose; I am sure my interpretation of his remarks is correct, for he most undoubtedly stigmatised us as a vile and useless set of lazy crawling wretches, that came on hideous brutes of animals, being too lazy to walk like black men, and took upon ourselves the right to occupy any country or waters,

we might chance to find; that we killed and ate any wallabies we happened to see, thereby depriving him and his friends of their natural and lawful game, and that our conduct had so incensed himself and his noble friends, who were now in the shade of the rocks near him, that he begged us to take warning, that it was the unanimous determination of himself and his friends to destroy such vermin as he considered us to be, and drive us from the face of the earth. It appeared to me, however, that his harangue required punctuation; so I showed him the rifle again, whereupon he immediately indulged in a full-stop; they shortly after retired from those rocks, and recommenced their attack by throwing some spears through the tea-tree on the opposite side of the creek, when we had to discharge the firearms at them again. Just at this time Jimmy returned with all the horses, and we heard and saw no more of them. ⁶²

This was a battle for the aborigines, but it becomes only a comic interlude for the explorer. Giles leaves the reader in no doubt as to his opinion of his opponent and the entire incident is presented in superbly comic terms, whatever one might think of the morality of the conflict. Giles's elaborate style, with its sprinkling of Biblical references, is sustained throughout and even though the catalogue of the aborigines' grievances is undoubtedly accurate, the writer

62

Giles, Geographic Travels, p. 136.

reduces them to the level of ridicule by the one judiciously placed "noble". It is this refusal to take the conflict seriously even on those occasions when the aborigines were fighting for their very existence that denies to that conflict the right to be accepted as an epic struggle.

4.

Giles's account of his "battle" is unique in the literature of exploration because of its comic treatment and its easy assurance of white supremacy. After all, to describe the need to fire on the aborigines as a need to provide "punctuation" for a native harangue is surely assurance enough. The unquestioning way in which the explorer accepted his superiority is a feature common to most explorers and demonstrates in a completely effective way their refusal to accept the native as a serious opponent. Even Sturt's humanitarian approach to the aborigines at times gave way before the desire to impress them with his greater powers. On one occasion he was particularly impressed by the aborigines' honesty in returning a stolen blanket. The man who returned it was rewarded with a tomahawk and a clasp-knife in order that his companions might be impressed with the white man's sense of justice. And yet Sturt follows this apparently successful moral lesson with a display that seems to have the opposite effect, a demonstration of the white man's greater force of

arms. He called for a gun and fired a ball into a tree. "The effect of the report upon the natives", Sturt reports in his journal, "was truly ridiculous. Some stood and stared at me, others fell down, and others ran away".⁶³

Mitchell, too, seems to have taken a similar delight in over-awing the aborigines with the white man's miraculous powers. On the return from his newly-discovered Australia Felix, and still under the influence of the earlier conflict with the natives on the Murray, he met a group of natives. They were given tomahawks and then dispersed by one of the explorer's party appearing in a gilt mask. Others fired rockets or bellowed through speaking trumpets and discharged rifles. Two of the natives who fled left clubs plainly showing that they had been fashioned with the tomahawks. The discovery of the clubs earns a stinging rebuke from Mitchell.

Such an instance of ingratitude was to me, however, a subject of painful reflection. The clubs made in the dark, during a very cold night, with the tomahawks I had given them, enabled me to understand better, what the intentions of the natives had been in other similar cases;

63

Sturt, Two Expeditions, i, p. 143.

and I was at length convinced, that no kindness had the slightest effect in altering the disposition and savage desire of these wild men to kill white strangers, on their first coming among them. That Australia can never be explored with safety, except by verry powerful parties, will probably be proved by the treacherous murder of many brave white men. 64

A close examination of this passage demonstrates how carefully Mitchell has structured his argument. He first of all shows a complete lack of insight (or else it is a conviction of superiority) in uncritically applying European moral standards to aborigines. Because the clubs were fashioned with the tomahawks he had given this cannot be anything but ingratitude or, even worse, treachery. This is beyond argument because, Mitchell states, they were made "in the dark, during a very cold night". It is painful to be made to realise that earlier attempts at kindness have been wasted, but such a conclusion has been forced upon him.

Mitchell's argument here is in conflict with earlier comments he had made on the ruinous effects of the white man's entry on the natives. All of this has been forgotten and the European is here described as the "white stranger" (a term neutral enough to preclude any trace of blame)

while the aboriginal sinks to the level of a wild man. And there is the irony of the final comment: of all the expeditions mounted during the century Mitchell's more nearly resembled a military undertaking with its precision and its fortified camps. Nor was this feature of Mitchell's method easily forgotten, for in the 1920's William Hay could still describe the departure of the explorer's first expedition in these words: "on November 24, 1831, a gallant Peninsular major, the Surveyor-General, struck off into the hot bush in red coat, towering collar, sword, and gloves, with a chosen following of good-conduct prisoners". The very title of Hay's essay, "Exploring in Full Uniform" is suggestive enough.⁶⁵

There are enough inconsistencies in Mitchell's account of the making of the clubs to force one to treat his general statements on aborigines with a great deal of caution. It seems more than likely that he is attempting to justify his disastrous conflict with the natives on the Murray, a confrontation which drew censure from the Executive Council of New South Wales. The description of this incident in his published journals needs to be treated with suspicion since

65

William Hay, An Australian Rip Van Winkle (London, 1921), p. 72.

it gives the impression that the attack on the natives was forced upon him and was not undertaken lightly. The report he sent the Governor in October, 1836, from the field, however, suggests that Mitchell had enticed the natives into an ambush, and then opened fire as they fled into the river. The official inquiry criticised Mitchell for not making sufficient efforts to gain the goodwill of the aborigines but did not recommend that any other action should follow.⁶⁶

There is greater honesty in the comments made by others of Mitchell's parties who kept diaries of the journeys. Their records were not intended for publication and they show a directness and honesty that seems to be missing from the leader's accounts. G.B. White, who accompanied Mitchell as surveyor on the first expedition, admitted that he was afraid of the natives. Few were encountered in the early stages and this, to White, was fortunate, "as some of us have a terrible dread of them and would as soon see the devil".⁶⁷ He claims that Mitchell was equally afraid of them and had a

66

For an account of the inquiry and the evidence presented, as well as the judgement, see the New South Wales Government Gazette January 21, 1837, Supplement.

67

G.B. White, MS Diary, entry for January 16, 1832.

particular distrust of their coming too close to the camps:
 "the Surveyor General dreaded them as such near neighbours
 and he proceeded I followed at his command armed to dislodge
 them. On coming in sight he fired his rifle ..."⁶⁸

White might have feared the aborigines but he also relished
 the thought of conflict; there is an apparent delight at the
 possibility of a clash.

Not a shot should be fired until they
 were within Thirty Yards and what with
 my rifle and Buck Shot in the Muskets
 it would be strange if a Separation
 did not happen between the Black Souls
 and Carcases of some of them. ⁶⁹

With such an attitude prevalent among the members
 of Mitchell's party it is hardly surprising that trouble did
 occur. And the feelings of those who travelled with Mitchell
 in 1836 were as bellicose. When Mitchell moved ahead to ambush
 the natives on the Murray, Stapylton was ordered to remain
 behind at the Depot Camp. He was disappointed as he hoped
 "to have participated in opposing any warlike demonstrations
 of the Tribes of that River".⁷⁰ This is additional evidence

68

ibid., entry for February 10, 1832.

69

ibid., entry for February 18, 1832.

70

Stapylton, MS Journal, entry for May 23, 1836.

that the confrontation was engineered. A later comment by Stapylton on one particular practice throws even more doubt on some of the stated attitudes towards the aborigines that appear in Mitchell's writings.

Black fellow shot at and wounded to day by one of the men in the Bush - Native shipped his spear and was accordingly very properly fired at now for war with these Gentry I suppose they are encamped around us to night tomorrow will give them A Benifit if they don't keep of - Piper carries A Pair of Handcuffs slung round him as one must be taken Prisoner for the sake of obtaining native names of Places. ⁷¹

Piper was the native who travelled with the expedition as guide and he seems to have been responsible on more than one occasion for fermenting trouble between the aboriginal tribes and the white explorers.

The practice of forcibly enlisting natives as guides was adopted by Warburton on his journey across the western half of Australia in 1833, although his intention in capturing them was to force them to lead him to water. One attempt at holding a native girl failed when she gnawed through her fastenings, and a later one was to prove equally

71

ibid., entry for July 28, 1836.

frustrating. The explorer discovered a native well but the search for a native to lead him to other supplies was not immediately successful.

Could not catch a native there [i.e. at the well], they being too quick for us; so far, however, from the camp a howling, hideous old hag was captured, and, warned by the former escape, we secured this old witch by tying her thumbs behind her back, and haltering her by the neck to a tree. She kept up a frightful howling all night, during which time we had to watch her by turns, or she would have got away also. I doubt whether there is any way of securing these creatures if you take your eyes off them for ten minutes. ⁷²

Such treatment, although it is indicative of a low opinion of the aborigines, deserves no more than a marginal comment, but when it is seen as part of the general process of exploration the notion of aboriginal "treachery" becomes very difficult to sustain. Not only were the natives restrained in this arbitrary fashion but their offers of friendship were viewed with distrust. The explorers disclaimed any notion of conquest, but often their behaviour seemed to suggest this very approach. Eyre, when he was searching for water which would

72

Warburton, Journey, pp. 207-208.

allow him to round the head of the Great Australian Bight, was impressed by the generosity of the natives who led him to one water hole after another. When they had shown him where the water was they stood back, disclaiming any prior rights of ownership. And yet, when those same natives established themselves on a position above the white party, on higher ground, Eyre felt uneasy. There was a general jostling for position with first the natives and then Eyre occupying the strategic heights. Finally the explorer had the summit of the highest hill cleared and then the aborigines left. Even though Eyre claims to have been "a good deal amused" by the strategy, his apprehension seems to have been real enough.⁷³

This view of the aboriginal as a being inherently treacherous, inherently untrustworthy runs like a constant thread through the journals of the explorers. Eyre, after an overlanding expedition in 1839, felt impelled to warn those who might follow his tracks that they should not rely on outward signs of friendship since he considered them to be people who "are both cunning and treacherous and frequently refrain from acts of violence only from the dread of superior

73

Eyre, Journals, i, p. 226.

force".⁷⁴ John McDouall Stuart was also convinced that they were not to be trusted: "they will pretend the greatest friendship one moment and spear you the next".⁷⁵

These sorts of comments define an opponent who is hardly worthy of the name. Had a state of war existed - or had the Europeans been prepared to admit that it did - things might have been different. The sporadic conflicts and confrontations would have then been accorded something of the status of battles. As it was, however, no such state was recognized. There might be local conflicts over water and times when the aborigines retaliated for the white man's occupation of the land, but there was no general condition of open warfare. In north America the process of settlement could be defined in terms that allowed the Indians to be represented as warriors and worthy opponents (hence the legends that have grown up around the sites of battles and the great Indian chiefs) but it was otherwise in Australia. In the Australian epic, then, the explorer-hero's struggles were against the land and not its inhabitants.

74

Anon., "Narrative of Mr. Edward John Eyre's Journeys", p. 16.

75

Stuart, Explorations, p. 39.

CHAPTER 5

THE EXPLORER AS HERO

To this point we have been concerned almost exclusively with the writings of the explorers themselves - their journals, their diaries and their letters - and it has been argued that, taken as a whole, this body of literature constitutes an epic. When explorers were prepared to admit their motives in choosing to explore an unknown continent they came eventually to explain their mission as a confrontation between themselves and the land. Their attitudes towards the landscape reinforced this concept of a struggle, and the way in which they described their relationship with the aboriginal occupiers of the land added further proof. The story of exploration emerged as the story of an epic struggle between the discoverers and the land, and once this explanation is accepted the explorer, because of his position in the conflict, the epic confrontation, achieves the stature of a hero.

Explorers themselves, with perhaps fitting modesty, declined to throw the mantle around their own shoulders but contemporary observers and commentators were quick to concede their right to the title. Nowhere is this recognition better demonstrated than in the poetry which was written to celebrate either the explorer's departure or his successful return, or, importantly in the case of a few, his failure to return. The recognition of the explorer as hero seemed to satisfy a particular colonial need: the need to define the relationship which was felt to exist between the newcomer to an alien environment and that environment itself. In giving expression to this need colonial poets achieved other satisfactions as well; as the explorers moved across the landscape historical associations were forged and poets were able to give a local expression to a dominant concern of the age in England.

Among colonial poets it was a relative commonplace that the new land held no historical associations at all. Barron Field, the author of the first volume of poetry published in the colony of New South Wales, categorised the land as one "where's no past tense";¹ James Hebbelthwaite, writing in the closing years of the nineteenth century, held

¹ Barron Field, "On Reading the Controversy between Lord Byron and Mr. Bowles". See his Geographical Memoirs of New South Wales (London, 1825), p. 497.

it to be a land where

there are no legends from the past
Of sacred isle and barrow, fairy dell,
Or wave of border war - a wash of steel
Breaking in massy gate - or life and death
In country ballads sung in ingle nook
When winds sweep down the valley. ²

Others were convinced that poetry itself was impossible until such associations could be found. "Australie" (Mrs. Emilie Heron) complained in the closing lines of her poem "From the Clyde to Braidwood":

But everything is cold, new, new, too new
to foster poesy. ³

Poets confronted by a land barren of historical associations or legendary links and convinced that these were essential to the writing of poetry could escape the dilemma in part by asserting a continuity of tradition with the Europe they had left behind. This is implied at a rudimentary level in the frequent references to Europe, and more particularly England, as "Home". Though they might be separated by many thousands of miles, the colonists continued to insist on a close and unbroken connection. This insistence was not confined to poets,

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James Hebblethwaite, "The Bush", See Brian Elliott and Adrian Mitchell (eds), Bards in the Wilderness (Melbourne and Sydney, 1970), pp. 139-140.

3

The Balance of Pain: and Other Poems (London, 1877), p. 43.

of course; the explorer Eyre felt justified in denying a suggestion made to him by a relative in England that he had forfeited the right to consider that country his home.

You rightly imagine that I do not feel so interested in the every day concerns of public affairs as I should were I on the spot - but I cannot allow you to monopolise the title of "Our Land" - for those only who are resident there - believe me tho' far away - I feel as interested in her welfare and as anxious for her prosperity and Glory - as any of her children can. ⁴

The anxiety for England's prosperity and glory showed itself in many ways. With the arrival of ships, newspapers carried reports of English affairs and the colonists felt directly involved in English policies. When, for example, patriotic funds were set up in England to assist the survivors of the Crimean War, the leader writer of the Sydney Empire claimed that

every spot on earth where the flag of England waves, and where the enterprise of Englishmen has made a home for her sons and daughters, is common English ground, where our sympathies and our charities are invoked on behalf of the widowed and fatherless whose natural protectors have perished in the battle for our national honour. ⁵

⁴
ML Ae9/8.

⁵
Empire, February 2, 1855.

The claim that the colonies were "common English ground" involved more than commonality of interest and shared sympathies, however. The colonists were as eager to assert a joint culture and a common heritage; to claim English history and, more particularly, English heroes as their own.

And in England of the nineteenth century the figure of the hero was a major concern. The search for heroes became so dominant a preoccupation that it could be regarded as the phenomenon of the age. One of the foremost expressions of this absorbing interest is to be found in Carlyle's series of lectures, delivered during 1840, under the title of "On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Hero in History", a series which did much to promote a cohesive theory of the hero as a man different from other men, set apart from them by his original insight, his sincerity, nobleness and valour. Because he is a man of moral worth he is "profitable company".⁶ More importantly, he is an active historical agent, one who alters the course of history; such a person as was to be later described as an "event-making man".⁷

⁶ Thomas Carlyle, On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History in Thomas Carlyle's Collected Works, xii (London, 1869), p. 4.

⁷ Sydney Hook, The Hero in History (London, 1945), p. 111.

Although the Carlylean hero was "profitable company", he could have only limited force as an example for ordinary men since he belonged to a different order of beings. However, it was his value as example that was to be developed by more popular commentators and which explains the century's massive output of biographies. Carlyle himself had defined history as the "essence of innumerable biographies"⁸ and Coleridge had designated the period as "emphatically the age of personality". The manifestly great received the major share of attention: between 1835 and 1862, for example, Lord Nelson was the subject of three "lives" (one of which, by Southey, ran to fifteen editions), a memoir and a volume of despatches and letters. During the same period eight "lives" of Napoleon appeared, but the clear leader in the race was the Duke of Wellington with some twenty "lives" as well as an illustrated biography and a Biographical Memoranda.⁹

Behind all this biographical activity was the assumption that great men, or at least their lives, existed to serve a moral function. The hero was the great example and

⁸ Carlyle, "Biography", Critical and Miscellaneous Essays in Thomas Carlyle's Collected Works, ix, p. 6.

⁹ Information extracted from The English Catalogue of Books, 1 (January, 1835 - January 1863) (London, 1864).

the net was widened to include not only the event-making man, but all those whose claims to greatness resided in their moral worth. An anonymous biographer of Charles Gordon, the commander of the seige of Khartoum, described his subject's life as an "incentive" and an "example", and stressed throughout his willing performance of his duty. Gordon's life was "infinitely instructive in its simple heroism, enforcing in its every page the great lesson of duty manfully performed and temptations nobly resisted and overcome".¹⁰ There were, of course, other attributes: the absence of fear, personal courage and dauntless bravery, but it was his acceptance of duty which provided the chief lesson. Through such biographies ordinary men were encouraged to take on similar qualities and so the concept of the hero came to be associated with that other great doctrine of the century, self-help.

The association is most apparent in Samuel Smiles's Self-Help, which first appeared in 1859 and was enormously popular. Biography was valuable because of the "noble models of character in which it abounds".¹¹ Smiles extends the range to include the "multitude of smaller and lesser known men"

¹⁰
n.d.), p. iv. England's Hero and Christian Soldier (London,

¹¹
p. 371. Samuel Smiles, Self-Help (New ed.; London, 1892),

on whom the progress of civilisation also depends. All display the qualities of energy of will ("the very central power of character in a man"), self-reliance and tenderness, a quality which is an extension of Smiles's concept of duty: "the duty of helping one's self in the highest sense involves the helping of one's neighbours".¹²

At this point it is possible to formulate a popular definition of the nineteenth century hero which became the model for colonial poets as well as those in England. He was morally upright, determined to perform his duty no matter what the outcome, a man able to forget self in the service of others. Such a definition made it possible for examples to be found in almost every sphere of human activity, and something of the range is suggested in the preface to one collection of biographies with the lengthy but indicative title, The Boyhood of Great Men Intended as an Example to Youth:

The early exploits and aspirations of those who have performed memorable services to their country and their species, led mighty armies into the field, advanced the progress of humanity and civilisation, achieved important triumphs in literature and science, or associated their names

¹²

ibid., p. iv.

honourably and indissolubly
with some great profession, are matters
fraught with instruction to the young,
and with interest to all. ¹³

Increasingly, however, it was those men who "led
mighty armies into the field" who came to be regarded as
heroes. This is not to be wondered at in a century dominated
by war: the Napoleonic struggles (which threw up such giant
figures as Napoleon, Nelson and Wellington), the conflict in
the Crimea and, as the century progressed, the wars in India,
the Sudan and South Africa. Heroic opportunities proliferate
in time of war - there are so many more situations where
devotion to duty and self-sacrifice can be displayed.

The various strands come together rather nicely
in Tennyson's "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington".
This is as it should be since the "Iron Duke" has been held
to be "the greatest single argument for Victorian hero-
worship".¹⁴

Such was he: his work is done,
But while the races of mankind endure,
Let his great example stand
Colossal, seen of every land,
And keep the soldier firm, the statesman pure:
Till in all lands and thro' all human story
The path of duty be the way to glory.

13

John G. Edgar, The Boyhood of Great Men (London,
n.d.), p. 111.

14

Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind,
1830-1870 (New Haven, Conn., 1957), p. 309.

It has already been said that poets who were concerned with the absence of historical associations in the new land, and who were convinced that these were necessary before poetry could be written, could resolve the problem by drawing upon English traditions. One way of asserting such a continuity was to write poetry that had its inspiration in events and figures that had stirred men's imaginations on the other side of the world. But there was another solution: continuity could also be achieved if figures could be found in the new land who embodied qualities similar to those possessed by the great men of Europe, either present or past, and the only figure who seemed to satisfy these requirements was the explorer. It might not be possible to cast him in the likeness of his European counterpart, since the exploration of the Old World was lost to the European consciousness. Nevertheless it was possible to see in the explorer a man who displayed qualities which might best be described as heroic; to see the role of the discoverer as an heroic one. And such parallels were frequently drawn.

There were few explorers who failed to catch the interest of colonial poets at one time or another but it is also true that some particular figures received the major share of the attention. Two names outshine all others - or

rather three, since history has linked two of them indissolubly - and they are Leichhardt, and Burke and Wills. An attempt to find reasons why this should be so and consideration of the poetry which the exploits of these men generated will be deferred. At this stage it is intended to limit the discussion to poems which were written in response to the deeds of men who attracted considerably less attention, or to poems which relied on a vision of the explorer in general. That their response, and their vision, lacked the fermenting power to turn stodgy verse into a poetic feast must be admitted, even if with regret. And for this reason it has been gathered together in an Appendix. Only the crumbs need concern us here - the crumbs which have value not for their poetic memorability but for the assumptions and preoccupations which they reveal.

Colonial poets showed no hesitation whatever in presenting the explorer as a lineal descendant of the great heroes of the past and were prepared to assert a family likeness with the heroes of classical times. Thus George French Angas, in "Lines Addressed to Stuart's Exploring Party" urges the explorer on to his goal with an exhortation that equates the task of the South Australian discoverer with any assigned to a Greek or Roman.

Go forth again, brave band!
 Renew thy toils once more -
 And rest not till you tread the strand
 Of Carpentaria's shore!

The triumph nearly won,
 Undaunted, start again;
 For glory waits you where the sun
 Gilds yon blue Indian main.

(Appendix p.425)

Angas is perhaps better remembered as an illustrator of colonial life in Australia and New Zealand but his early associations were with the infant province of South Australia and he had travelled as artist on at least one exploring expedition during his time there. But to return to the poem. If the prize for the classical victor is traditionally held to be the laurel wreath or crown, then the successful explorer is no less deserving of such a "crown of fame". It is likely that the image of the victor's crown appealed to Angas because of the peculiar conditions of Stuart's attempts to cross the continent. Because another party was in the field, the party under the command of Burke and Wills, and intercolonial rivalries were involved, the search for a successful path across the continent assumed the character of a race. This was certainly the public expectation, and it was clearly encouraged by South Australia's offer of a reward to the expedition which reached the northern coast first. Because of this the image of the "triumph" and the "crown of fame" is perhaps inevitable. And Angas, like so many of the colonial

poets, relies on the inevitable image; it is difficult to stir much life out of stale embers such as "Strand", "gilds" or "main". But Angus's poem has a further interest in that he regards the Australian explorers as together forming a congregation of martyrs. Leichhardt's name is invoked as is his "sacred grave" and to the saints are added the martyrs.

We pledge you in the name
Of Leichhardt's sic sacred grave,
That there awaits a crown of fame
For the successful brave.

By all our martyr'd sons
Who have gone forth in vain,
We'll hail right well our valiant ones
When they return again!

Another South Australian poet, "Ellie" (Ellen Elizabeth Debney), also regarded Stuart's achievement in crossing the continent as one deserving of the laurel wreath, although she adopts a peculiarly sentimental position in choosing to bestow it on the explorer's hat!

Twine a laurel wreath around it,
Sure it claims the honour now;
For long days and nights have found it
Friend-like shielding this worn brow.
(Appendix p.454)

Since Ellie chooses to write the poem in the voice of the explorer himself it is perhaps rather more than mere sentimentality. The hat comes to assume all the qualities of the true friend and in this way the explorer reflects the

commendable virtue of humility. Ellie tries to cover the broad sweep of the journey but, apart from the invention of the idea of the hat, the task eludes her. Perhaps the wells of inspiration were shallow, and the one bucket emptied them. However, it really isn't enough to imply the difficulties of the journey in the one description of the explorer: "this worn brow", or the more general suggestion in the following lines:

.... Together
 We have tracked the forest wide;
 At all times and in all weather,
 In good faith we were allied.

In yet another exhortation, "To the South Australian Explorer, John McDouall Stuart", written under the initials "E.W.H.", the heroic tasks are specifically spelled out. There is a recognition that what the explorer is called upon to do involves a risk to life.

Deeply as we must deplore,
 That before our northern shore
 Had gladdened thy expectant, wearied eyes,
 Thy onward steps were thwart
 By those bushmen fierce and swart,
 That thou must renew, to perfect, thy emprise.
 (Appendix p.460)

With the earlier poems the heroic activity is vague but here the danger from attack by the aborigines is seen as a significant part of the undertaking. Stuart's previous attempts to reach the coast had been prevented by native hostility at Attack Creek and the possibility of another

conflict is implicit in these lines. There must have been other citizens of Adelaide in 1860 who were as concerned for Stuart's safety but there was one at least who took some delight in the possibility of a clash. The leader writer of the Register of October 22, 1860 wrote with a noticeable thrill:

The excitement of suspense is combined with the excitement of success; hope and glory unite in our emotions; the stimulus of a conflict and the glory of a victory are joined in the demonstration.

For "E.W.H." the "glory of a victory" is to achieve somewhat more tangible form for Stuart in the "Explorer's crown" and that this is similar to the wreath presented to the victor is evident in the poet's comments :

And what glory waits thy brow
When the learned world shall know,
Not the deed alone, but how that deed was done;
How thyself and comrades too
Savage hordes failed to subdue;
Lone and ill, true Britons still, your lives
ye nobly won.

Thou'lt not fill a nameless grave;
For unfading laurels wave
To garland - e'en in death - the shrines of those
Who, spurning danger's plea,
Fill Life's mission manfully,
Be their chalice drugged with pleasures or
with woes.

Henry Halloran, who seems to have taken upon himself the role of apologist for the explorer Mitchell, forges an even stronger link between the explorer and the heroes of

classical times. In his poem "To T. L. Mitchell M.R.G.S. and F.G.S." he celebrates Mitchell's departure on his expedition of 1836 and to the question "What is thy aim, in leaving human faces, / And ever-stirring life?" answers with a series of motives that include a love of nature and a desire to serve Science, as well as the compulsion to be first into an unknown region. What he has already achieved, to Halloran, is sufficient to secure him a "hard-earned fame".

Each rock in Greece for ever, stands - repeating,
Some high and worthy name;
So shall Australian Mounts, as life is fleeting,
Preserve thy hard-earned fame.

(Appendix p.469)

A similar connection between the Australian landscape, or at least the explorer of that landscape, and that of Greece is suggested in another of Halloran's poems, "Mitchell's Farewell".

Deep deep in thy rocks Oh Australia
I carved out my Sovereign's name
By the side of Triton and [trator] ?
I toiled up the stiff side of Fame.

Farewell to thy deserts Australia
My Centaurs who surveyed them are gone
Their [bones] bleach on hill and in valley
Their dust in the hot wind is blown.

(Appendix p.467)

Although the classical references in this poem seem completely meaningless - why his horses should be metamorphosed into Centaurs is nowhere explained - they do suggest that the link

between Australian exploration and its heroes and classical times was one that suggested itself with surprising frequency.

There is, by the way, an interesting problem in the authorship of this poem. The version which is included in the Appendix is derived from an unpunctuated and somewhat illegible manuscript in the papers of the Mitchell Family held in the Mitchell Library. This copy shows a signature of Henry Halloran's.¹⁵ Cecil W. Salier, in an article entitled "Thomas Livingston Mitchell, Explorer, Surveyor-General, and Savant", prints an extended and rather different version with this explanation:

This is an appropriate place in which to quote Mitchell's "Farewell" a poem written, so I am informed, just prior to a departure for England (probably in 1852), whence he expected never to return to Australia.¹⁶

In this rendering the Triton has been displaced and the line reads "By the side of the banished, but faithful" which at least confers immortality on the convicts who accompanied Mitchell in the hope of receiving some remission of their sentences. The centaurs, however, still sweep across the desert.

¹⁵

Mitchell Family Papers, NL Uncat. MSS 327, Item 2.

¹⁶

C.W. Salier, R.A.H.S. Journal and Proceedings, xvii, 1 (1931), p. 32.

Australian poets, in their desire to prove that Australian explorers were entitled to be considered heroes, frequently saw them as modern examples of classical figures. They were, however, even more eager to draw parallels between exploration and military heroism, and exploration was not allowed to suffer in the comparison. It has already been pointed out that in England during the nineteenth century it was the military hero who was accepted as chief example of heroic endeavour, and colonial commentators echo these sentiments. The Sydney newspaper, the Empire, on November 21, 1855, reprinted from the Times a discussion of British military heroism. In this, war "with all its pomps and perils" was described as "naturally attractive" and it was claimed that the country identified with "the triumphs of its army" because "admiration is involuntarily extorted by the spectacle of the nobler feelings which war can call into play". The acceptance of such a position created a number of paradoxes in Australia, since at the time it was almost an article of colonial faith that the new land was to be one where wars would be unknown. Percy Russell, in a poem "The Birth of Australia", claimed with noticeable pride that the new nation had not been born "'mid the thunder of the battle guns" or on "the red field of an Empire's wrath". To him Australians were a people

thro' whose annals runs
 No damning stain of falsehood, force or fraud;
 Whose sceptre is the ploughshare - not the sword -
 Whose glory lives in harvest-ripening suns. ¹⁷

A.B. Paterson, too, maintained that Australia's songs were
 "not songs of strife / And hot blood spilt on sea and land". ¹⁸

Without wares of her own Australia had either to share
 vicariously in Britain's battles as was done during the
 Crimean War or else find a substitute in exploration. And
 such a substitution is made directly in a leading article in
 the Australasian of January 19, 1866.

The same spirit as was demonstrated
 when WELLINGTON called upon men who
 could show others how to mount a
 breach upon which four-fifths of the
 army rushed forth in a hopeless dash
 against the blood-stained ramparts of
 Badajoz, has animated the explorers
 of unknown lands in all times in our
 past national history. But there is
 a difference. Our dare-devil but yet
 calculating spirit has shown itself in
 all manner of ways; but in the exploring
 line she has shown exclusively in three
 great lines - the Arctic Regions,
 Africa, and Australia.

This sounds confident enough, but F. Susca Lewin
 was even more emphatic in her poem "Australia's Heroes".
 She takes as her first premise the familiar argument that

17

Douglas B.W. Sladen (ed), A Century of Australian
 Song (London, 1888), p. 385.

18

"Song of the Future".

Europe, unlike Australia, is blessed by legend and memory.

Europe, home of knightly legend,
 Home of chivalry and song;
 Ah! what thousand thousand memories
 Round thy ruined castles throng.
 Every rood of ground is hallowed
 By a memory all its own;
 Every mountain has its legend,
 Every vale its history known.

(Appendix p.489)

This is beyond argument and she then asks: "and our fair and proud Australia, / Is she destitute of both?" This can't be true; for her the explorers are "dauntless heroes", "our brave explorers", and then in the final verse she proclaims their right to be so considered even in the face of Europe's claims.

Europe has her knightly legends,
 And her names that cannot die;
 We have Burke, and Wills and Stuart,
 Is their glory not as high?
 Though they did not fight in battle,
 'Mid the great ones of the earth;
 Yet they made a country's history,
 And they gave a country birth.

The importance, and the strength, of Lewin's poem lies in the fact that she is arguing a general case. All explorers, if her argument stands, are undoubted heroes. Morgan Hawkes, on the other hand, is able to present a comparable case for an individual explorer. In his poem "Welcome to Warburton" he celebrates the traveller's safe return from his almost fatal crossing to the West. The successful completion of the undertaking earns for Warburton

a fame appropriate to a member of a family which, the poet says, was renowned for valiant deeds.

Lo! through the annals of Arley Hall,
 Are written the Warburton deeds of yore;
 Tattered and stained on the oaken wall
 Are hanging the banners they bravely bore.
 (Appendix p.472)

The Warburton men fought bravely at the Crusades and then for "reign after reign" and their spirit is not dead but lives on in the Australian explorer.

No! the old courage is active still;
 And the white-haired Colonel round whom we flock,
 Brave, tender-hearted, yet firm of will,
 Is one of the Warburton ancient stock.

One of the more interesting poems dealing with exploration is the one written by D. Landale Beetson with the singularly uninviting title "Exploring Rhymes and Camel-Back Jingles". The last part of the title is certainly apt (the verses might well have been written from that position) and "rhymes" they certainly are. Beetson was a member of Tietkens' expedition to Central Australia in 1889 and he has no doubt at all of the heroic scale of the undertaking. The climax of the expedition, in Beetson's treatment of it, comes when the party is unable to find sufficient water to continue. This is certainly an heroic inflation of the situation, for there is nothing in Tietkens' journal to suggest that the position was at any time desperate. As Beetson tells it, the party's search for water has led them to a range of

hills but each gully and ravine that they search proves hopeless and the three white men and the aboriginal, Billy, recognize that the "last spark of hope" has been extinguished. The poet turns on those who dwell in cities and accuses them of a lack of understanding; they are unable to picture the trials and hardships that the explorer must endure.

Often you read of a hero,
 With an exquisite thrill of delight,
 Engaged in the heat of a battle,
 In a glorious hand-to-hand fight.
 'Mid the din of rifle and cannon,
 The groans of the dying are heard,
 And all is intensest excitement,
 And his blood to a fury is stirred.
 Not a second he thinks of the danger,
 As he seeks the advantage to gain
 Over the man that's before him,-
 He must either slay, or be slain.

(Appendix p.439)

Beetson quite perceptively defines both the popular notion of the military hero and the attraction he is able to exercise over the public, and yet the heart of the heroic contract is made to appear rather an arbitrary thing: either to slay or be slain. Beetson continues with his tale of heroism:

He has conquered; and now dashes forward,
 The ranks of the foremost to gain,
 And see! he is gallantly leading;-
 Ah! he's stopped by a shot through the brain.
 'Twas a brave and a glorious ending,-
 He knew not that death was at hand;
 But we perish in agony slowly,
 In this horrible desert of sand.

The remorseless rhythm almost succeeds in obscuring or even obliterating the essential point, and the near-disastrous slide

Military exploits are accepted without question as examples of the heroic if for no other reason than that they provide opportunities for appeals to patriotic sentiment. There can be no doubt about the desire to do one's duty or one's capacity for self-sacrifice when they are demonstrated in the service of one's country.

But Australians had no "songs of strife" with which to proclaim their patriotism; they needed some other means of celebrating such feelings. Consequently exploration came to be accepted as an alternate expression of national pride, in the same way as it came to be regarded as a substitute for feats of arms. And the espousal of such a view should not be seen as a gesture towards incipient republicanism or national self-sufficiency. There was at first no need to voice such patriotism in purely local or colonial terms; poets were content to present the explorers' services to the nation in a specifically British context.

George French Angas, in "Lines Addressed To Stuart's Exploring Party", is certain that this explorer will succeed in his venture because his party is made up of men possessed of "stout hearts of British blood". The task the explorer is engaged on is one of national concern; that it has the sanction of the nation is suggested by the obviously

martial command he receives.

Britannia bids you hail,
 Ye earnest men and true!
 She bids you bear o'er hill and dale
 Her dauntless flag of blue!

Till on that northern shore
 Her flag shall firmly stand;
 And Britons' cheers shall echo o'er
 Their newly-wedded land!

(Appendix p.425)

Angas suggests that the principal motive in reaching the northern shore is the linking of the separated parts of the continent. Thus such expeditions in the new land are part of a wider tradition: the national desire for the extension of territory. The explorer is the servant of empire and his and the soldier's roles are identical. There is therefore ample justification for the martial exhortation and the presentation of the undertaking in such overtly military terms.

The equation of the explorer's and the soldier's missions was never a difficult one to make in Australia; many of the explorers were themselves soldiers, or had been earlier in their careers: Sturt, Mitchell, Grey, Burke, Warburton. It is therefore not unexpected that Charles Harris, in his "Tribute to the Memory of Sir Thomas Livingstone Mitchell", links that explorer's military career and his patriotism.

The Patriot's fire
 In a moment is quenched.
 The sword of the Warrior
 At once it is wrenched.

(Appendix p.471)

In his tribute Harris mourns the loss of one attribute after the other that, with Mitchell's death, are now gone for ever. The "Patriot's fire" and the sword, the symbol of the soldier, are but two of these. However, Mitchell's patriotism does not depend on the sword alone; it is as clearly demonstrated in the achievements of his explorations and for these also he receives the poet's praise.

Thou true son of Britain
 Reflected thy mind
 Shall shine in her annals
 The Friend of Mankind.

Patriotism, then, can assume a variety of forms. It is not limited to deeds on the field of battle but can evince a more humanitarian cast. Mitchell is applauded as a "Friend of Mankind" because of his discovery of the fertile regions of Australia Felix since by this discovery he added many millions of acres to those already available for settlement. And for this his death is sorrowful indeed.

O Mitchell a tear
 For thy memory shed.
 By many a stranger
 To a home thou hast led.

The explorer's patriotism might be linked with the extension of Britain's territorial empire, but at the same time it is

allied with the dream of an Australia growing to nationhood. Thus Angas is able to look forward in time and see the consequences of Stuart's successful journey.

The future shall behold
 A trackless waste no more;
 The highways of our land of gold
 Shall stretch from shore to shore.
 (Appendix p.425)

Beetson makes this image of a land of gold even more specific when he explains the reasons which prompted Tietken's journey.

Geographical knowledge is wanted,
 The world grows so wonderfully small,
 That the time is not very far distant,
 When there won't be room for us all;
 But out to the westward there may be
 A country where white men can live,-
 With mountains, rivers, and pastures,
 The best that nature can give.
 Geological knowledge may help us
 The glorious news to unfold,
 Of a country abounding in minerals -
 Copper, silver, and gold.
 (Appendix p.431)

One would feel happier with the sentiments that Beetson expresses if he was not so obviously the victim of his own rhyme scheme but his vision of a future Australia is what is relevant here. "D.C.", on the other hand, gives Poole a less materialistic outlook and explains his desire to become an explorer in more humane terms:

He sought a new home for the houseless, the poor,
 A bright smiling land for the stranger.
 (Appendix p.450)

Of those explorers who achieved acceptance as heroes because of their discovery of immense new areas for settlement, Mitchell demands pride of place. Charles Harris's tribute has already been noted but another poet who wrote under the initials "J.W." saw Mitchell's discovery of Australia Felix as the dominant fact of the explorer's career. Such a region offered new hope for many.

There the victims of poverty may find
Plenty, in nature's overflowing lap -
And those in grinding workhouses confined,
A permanent relief from their mishap.

And there a people great and good may grow,
And far extend Great Britain's wide domain -
(Appendix p.484)

This is the vision of Australia's future greatness once again: a "new Britannia in another world". It is a vision that receives its most extensive, and its most successful, treatment in Halloran's "Lines", written to celebrate Mitchell's return from his last expedition, undertaken in search for the great river which would carry him to the Gulf of Carpentaria. It was an expedition, however, which was to prove abortive, especially as Mitchell was prevented by Leichhardt's success. Halloran gathers Mitchell's discoveries about him, with obvious delight, and takes up his prophet's cap.

In days to come, when we are dust, our
 children may abide
 Upon Salvator's beauteous banks, or Claude's
 romantic side;
 Or gazing from the Grafton Peak o'er
Fitzroy Downs, behold
 Their numerous herds, their shining cots,
 like Patriarchs of old;
 Or straying with their snowy flocks, from
Mantuan Downs may throng,
 To where the bright Victoria flows in majesty
 along.
 Cannot imagination see, with her prophetic
 ken,
 The land now void, replete with life, and all
 the works of men?
 Piercing the calm blue heavens above, the
 village spire shall rise,
 While jocund bells with frequent peal salute the
 blissful skies.
 And simple annals shall be writ, and faithfully
 record
 The name of that bold man who first the
 wilderness explor'd.

(Appendix p.46B)

Halloran's poem sets up the expected opposition of the works of men to the works of nature, an animated landscape to one devoid of life. That the poet should also see the future in terms of simple rural happiness is not surprising. The explorer strides Moses-like across the landscape, striking the rocks from which flow rivers of plenty and peace. It is essentially an 18th century dream that comes to Halloran and because of this the poet can perhaps be excused his "snowy flocks", his "shining cots" and "simple annals" - even though the jocund bells with their "frequent peal" are a little more difficult to accept.

This is certainly written in a tone of anger, a tone which sits uneasily on a reputed hero. And even while the anger might be justified its abrasiveness is too dominant. There is nothing else in the poem apart from this because Malloran doesn't succeed in getting away from the most hackneyed of epithets: "weary ways", "hearts stout and true", "teeming mines" and so on. And finally one is not altogether convinced of the justice of the claims that are being made. There is no doubt, however, of Malloran's success in catching what appears to be Mitchell's own driving ambition and demand for recognition. The point that is significant here is the demand for recognition of the explorer based on his contributions to the nation's future prosperity.

It is contributions such as these, P. Sesca Lewin argues, that secure for the explorers a "glory" which is as high as that won by Europe's heroes, men with "names that cannot die". They might not have had to prove their worth in battle but they had to face other perils on the way.

Wild nor desert could not daunt them,
Peril could not make them fear;
On they pressed until the landscape
Showed before them bright and clear.
Then it was this land of dawning
Stood revealed in all her pride;
Bounteous plenty in her promise,
Wondrous wealth on every side.

What if of that band of heroes
 Some did perish in the sand,
 Others lived to see the dawning
 Flushing brightly o'er the land-
 Lived to see the wilds they'd traversed
 Teem with goodly cities fair;
 Lived to see the sun of progress
 Shining brightly everywhere.

(Appendix, p. 491)

Like most visions, perhaps, the details are lost in the nimbus, but the status of the explorer-hero, because he was the one to herald the dawn, is assured.

When the explorer returned from his travels with vast new areas waiting for settlement he was acclaimed as a hero, but he could achieve fame in other ways as well. "J.W." is convinced that Mitchell has just claims to "welcome and reward" not only because of the "rich and luxuriant plains and downs" that he has opened to settlement, but also because of his services to science.

New animals, new trees, new plants descried;
 With "never-failing" streams meandering
 Where beauteous flowers bedeck the mountain side,
 Still cheering on the patriot's wandering.
 (Appendix p.484)

Both needs are served here: the scientific, with additions to natural history, and the economic, with good land, well-watered. It is only poetry which is forgotten, at least with the stress on streams which meander and flowers which "bedeck" the slopes.

Henry Halloran, writing on Mitchell's departure for England on leave, draws attention to the fields in which Mitchell has excelled: military service, scholarship, travel

and authorship. Scholarship seems to include science, for
Hallowan says

He has gone o'er the wave, that Scholar grave,
Who traced the Orbs which rear,
Their thrones of light, to the fourth in night,
In this Southern Hemisphere.
Who gazed entranced, on the beams which glanced,
From the depths of heaven above,-
While Pleasure's Thrall sought the crowded hall;
Or the joys of adulterous love.

(Appendix p.463)

It would be pleasant if "seems" could be replaced by something more definite, but Hallowan's references to scientific pursuits are annoyingly vague. Things might have been clearer if the poet had not been so dazzled by his image of the Orbs and their "thrones of light". Nevertheless such pursuits are pronounced worthy of commendation, especially when they are seen in contrast to those which occupy "Pleasure's Thrall": the stay-at-home attractions of women and adulterous love.

In another poem, this time celebrating Mitchell's departure on an exploring expedition, Hallowan advances scientific curiosity as one of a number of possible motives. The explorer is asked: "What is thine aim, in leaving human faces, / And ever stirring life?" and in response declares that he is impelled to explore by the need

To watch the thronging stars - Earth's changing
bosom
Her Life-restoring Waters;
To claim for science many a lovely blossom,
The forest's unknown Daughters.

(Appendix p.468)

And again, in "Vox e Sepulcro", it is Mitchell's contribution to science in general and geography in particular that forms part of his "honest claim" to fame and fair treatment at the hands of his contemporaries.

And I traced for them, that they might read,
 whatever fools may say;-
 The features of their noble land that cannot
 pass away;
 It's [sic] skeleton of range, and stream for
 many a coming day.-
 (Appendix p.469)

Thus far it has been argued that the explorer's right to the status of hero was validated by his being in direct descent from older, European heroes - whether classical, military or patriotic. But hand in hand with this insistence on continuity went the beginnings of a purely local tradition. Not only were the deeds of the explorers written up as chapters of a European history; Australia was in the process of writing her own annals.

5

And Australia's annalists were becoming increasingly convinced that the material was there: the hardships and triumphs of the explorers could with justice be regarded as constituting a separate, antipodean chapter of great deeds. But the writing was a perplexing task. Angas, who had been able to see Stuart as a patriotic Briton was also able to present him as one of Australia's "martyr'd sons", and invoke

the name of a greater hero, Leichhardt. Other poets were able to envisage a growing number of Australian heroes; "D.C." points to a band of them, to which Poole deservedly belongs.

May the names of bold Leichardt [sic], of
 Stuart, Wills, and Burke,
 Be revered, though life's pulse has resigned
 them;
 May hope, which inspired them, cheer on to
 the work
 Brave hearts that may press on behind them.
 (Appendix p.451)

The explorers are ranged along a temporal line, and the "brave hearts" who are to follow have the earlier ones as example. In this they fulfill the prime function of the hero.

Australian explorers may have been celebrated as heroes, and for the most noble of qualities, but poets were not blind to the more selfish motives which could induce a man to take upon himself the demanding task. Halloran in his poem "The Explorer Dying in the Wilderness" has his hero admit to such motives directly.

Oh! take my fame, for good or ill,
 Nor let my name be lost;
 I sought a household word to be,
 Nor do I grudge the cost.
 (Appendix p.464)

This desire for fame could be acknowledged even at that moment when the vanity of human aspirations was most clearly revealed. It is a suitably Victorian sentiment, essential to all death-bed scenes, even when, as in "Ellie's" poem

"The Dying Explorer", they are set in a "lone place" far from the haunts of men.

Honor [sic], what but a passing dream;
 A name, how worthless now to me,
 The things of time, what drops they seem,
 Edged by eternity.

(Appendix p.454)

This notion of a "lone place" became an essential part of the heroic pattern as far as the colonial poets were concerned. Just as the explorers came to recognize that the essence of their task was to be found in the relationship that existed between themselves and the landscape, so it was with the poets.

Usually when poets came to describe the explorers' task they fell back on what can only be considered a formula. "Australie", in "The Explorer's Message", gives an account of the departure of an expedition in the following terms:

But six months a gallant band, the brave
 explorers had set forth,
 Resolute to pierce the mysteries of Australia's
 unknown north,
 Strove they nobly, daring danger, hardships
 cheerfully endured!

(Appendix p.428)

"D.C." described Poole's purpose in taking part in Sturt's expedition as a desire "To lift the dark veil from those wilds obscure" (Appendix p.450). Halloran, seeking for reasons to justify Mitchell's right to recognition, spoke of how he had "toiled, with resolute hand & brow / Piercing the wilderness" (Appendix p.468), while Lewin celebrated the

explorers as "Men who raised the veil of darkness / From our land for evermore" (Appendix p.490). Such descriptions occur so frequently in the poetry of exploration that they cease to have any discernible meaning; they become simply a rather empty convention. And yet they do point the direction in which the poets' thoughts are moving. There are times when such functions seem to gather around them something of the quality of a supernatural power. Halloran, in "Vox e Sepulcro", describes the function of the explorer in what are essentially magical terms:

Upon the mountain top, at last, with infinite
 toil, he stands,
 And strives to fix, with care minute, and with
 unfaltering hands,
 The magic instrument that links the summits
 of the lands.

(Appendix p.470)

John Neilson, in his poem "Ernest Giles" is prepared to make an even wider claim. Neilson was the father of John Shaw Neilson and his poem had its origin in a newspaper report of Giles's death at Coolgardie. This report, which is printed at the head of the poem as it appears in Men of the Fifties, provided Neilson with information about the career of the explorer which he then reworked. Giles, as an explorer, is seen to possess powers beyond the comprehension of other men.

Already many of the components of this "ideal" landscape are present. One can forgive the poet her "wild Australian scene" since its generality is redeemed later in the poem. But the rather melodramatic tale is set in a "lonely desert", the earth is "barren". Later lines add further details: the "shadeless trees", the absence of life, both animal and vegetable. And yet it would be wrong to say that the scene is without any beauty whatever. Over this arid "weary land" floods the "glorious beauty" of the sunset and there is a celebration of the colour and light in the scene.

The details which "Australia" suggests appear in other poems as little more than token descriptions. "Ellie", in her "Thanksgiving Hymn", limits her scene-painting to the "desert plain" (Appendix p.455); Hawkes extends the brush stroke a little so that the landscape becomes the "far-stretching desert plain" (Appendix p.472); Halloran, in "The Explorer Dying in the Wilderness" (Appendix p.464), makes a tentative dab with "vast plain", and, to fix the geographical locality (but without, unfortunately, a corresponding precision in the poetry) labels the scene a "central waste" or the "central sands". There is, however, one poet who tries to suggest a little more local colour, even though one has reservations about his success. Beetsen's "Camel Rhymes" at least appears to have a particular scene in mind since he suggests specific vegetation and animal life. Nevertheless

the pattern is as obvious here as it is in other poems: it is still a desert landscape, silent, lifeless and inimical to man.

Still over the spinifex sandhills,
 Across the spinifex plain,
 Dotted with oak and acacia,
 Then over the sandhills again.
 Not a sign of anything living,
 Not a sound of life is heard;
 Not even the track of a lizard,
 Or the note of a passing bird.
 From dawn of day to sunset,
 Over these seas of sand;
 Under the burning tropical sun,
 Scarce man or beast can stand.

(Appendix p.432)

This is the landscape not of life but of death.

It is an unknown land, a land veiled from men's eyes, and to expect the explorer to venture into such a region is to expose him to possible death. This is the Australian archetypal struggle and it was to be repeated by countless settlers throughout the colonial period and even beyond. And some at least of the poets who wrote of explorers defined the landscape in terms that suited such a struggle. It became not only a region of silence and death, but an active opponent in its own right; a force against which the explorer was compelled to measure his courage and perseverance.

Some poets attempted to account for this opposition in terms of deception - a quality in the landscape which lured men to their destruction. Beetsen writes of such a landscape but the explorers are too experienced to be deceived.

The yellow stalks of the porcupine,
 Growing amongst the trees,
 In the distance, looks like a field of corn,
 Waving about in the breeze.
 We know, however, that it is
 A desert waste at least,
 Without a particle of food
 For either bird or beast.

(Appendix p.434)

"D.C." gives the quality of deception its most usual form:
 a mirage.

The region of mirage, its waterless gloom,
 The wild dog with fear has forsaken;
 It slumbered on, mute, as the depths of the tomb
 The last trump alone will awaken.

(Appendix p.450)

There is a hint here that the landscape represents a viable force, and although Cudmore presents it as quiescent, other poets were prepared to have it fully awake. And once it was disturbed it showed its opposition to the intruder. It might be, as Beetsen suggests, limited to a warning; this is the description he gives of Mount Leisler, the highest point in the Kintore Range in Central Australia:

The highest peak is Mount Leisler,
 Seven thousand feet high, or more;
 Looming boldly up, like a lion
 Standing on guard at his lair,
 And frowning darkly upon us,
 As though to say, "stranger, beware!"

(Appendix p.437)

If the warnings are ignored then the explorer can expect to pay for his temerity.

Where thou lay'st, thy bones shall whiten,
 In the rain and burning sun.
 As a warning unto others,
 Who may in the future come, ...

(Appendix p.440)

It is interesting to notice that Beetsen's "spirit of the mountain" is represented as the protector of the aborigines, its "dark-skinned children", and that he echoes the feeling often expressed or implied by the explorers themselves that the landscape was essentially evil. But it is even more interesting to compare Beetsen's response to Mount Leisler with Tietkens' account of it in his journal of the expedition. The party had moved on from the Kintore Ranges and Tietkens looks back at them:

From this point Mount Leisler and The Kintore Range form a noble and imposing spectacle, but instead of offering rest and shelter to the weary traveller through these dreary wastes, it must always be viewed as a beacon of warning, like the lighthouse at sea which warns the mariner of points of danger. So the only practical result of my visit to Mount Leisler is that this mountain will fulfil a useful purpose by warning the future traveller to avoid its dry and waterless surroundings.¹⁹

Beetsen's imagination is rather more responsive than his

19

South Australia, Parliament. Journal of Mr. W.H. Tietkens' Central Australian Exploring Expedition, S.A.P.F. No. III of 1890, p. 13.

leader's, not only here in his choice of similes, but also in his treatment of the hardships endured on the expedition. Tietkens acknowledges the difficulties of finding water in the vicinity of Mount Leisler, but Beetsen inflates the experience to its full heroic dimensions, with the vision of his daughter and the dramatic downpour. But both Beetsen and his leader agree in finding emanations of hostility and warning.

F. Sesca Lewin also takes up this notion of the landscape as something which is actively hostile. As with Beetsen, the explorers are cautioned against intrusion. There is, however, a fascinating contradiction in the position the poet adopts. Reference was made earlier in the discussion to the way in which Lewin saw the explorer as one whose task was to raise the "veil of darkness". Although it was suggested that this image was used so constantly that it ceased to carry much weight, it obviously attracted her, for she extends it into a nuptial one, with the landscape

Like a fair bride, shyly standing,
 Veiled and blushing in her place,
 Till her bridegroom lifts her veil,
 Shows them all her smiling face; ...
 (Appendix p.491)

All of which is rather difficult to accommodate in a notion of the landscape which warns the intruder against further progress.

So our beauteous proud Australia,
 With the veil about her thrown,
 Waited till our brave explorers
 Came and made her beauty known;
 Though her mountains, sternly fronting,
 Bade them from their way turn back;
 And her deserts, widely stretching,
 Offered them a pathless track.

(Appendix p.491)

If the warning was ignored then the explorer's life was in jeopardy. In such a situation there was always the possibility of a lonely death, and in this the explorer came to personify a persistent colonial fear: a fear which saw death as a lonely event when there was no one to mourn one's passing, or indeed even to know. This is the fate which calls up "Australia's" sympathy for her explorer as one by one his companions perish.

Each day saw a martyr added, each night heard
 some dying moan,
 Till at last one man was left in that great
 wilderness - alone -
 Solitary, all untended; none, none left behind
 to mourn,
 Now the last of the explorers lies on dying
 bed forlorn.

(Appendix p.428)

For Cudmore, too, it is the "grave in the desert" that made Poole's dying so poignant.

No loved parent knelt at his couch in prayer,
 Nor sisters hung sorrowing round him;
 Unheard the fond maiden's deep sob of despair,
 Where Death in his fast fetters bound him.

(Appendix p.450)

Neither the sentiment nor the poetic expression exercises an attraction for the present-day reader, but still one is forced

to concede the importance of the fear that the prospect of such a death produced.

Only now is it possible to define what the explorer meant to the colonial consciousness. That he was regarded as a hero is beyond doubt. Poets who took his exploits as theme were eager in their insistence that he deserved to be ranked with the great men of Europe and yet there is something which appears to set him apart. It is likely that this "something" needs to be sought in the explorer's relationship to the landscape and the nature of his death, and this is a quest that leads directly to those explorers who attracted the major share of the attention of colonial poets, Leichhardt and Burke and Wills.

CHAPTER 6LEICHHARDT AND LEGEND

Despite the extent of Australian exploration during the nineteenth century, the numerous expeditions which took the field, the hardships suffered and the privations endured, there have been surprisingly few legends about the explorers and their deeds. This is not to suggest that hardship and privation are essential to the formation of legends, but it would seem likely that out of such a catalogue of events some would have arisen. The dearth is in part explained by the enormous body of historical evidence available; with few exceptions the explorers maintained comprehensive journals and diaries.¹ In such a situation legend finds it difficult to take root, let alone grow. It flourishes best in those shadowy areas where the writ of historical evidence ceases to run, where the documentation is absent or at best inconclusive. Indeed, legend is best

¹

The principal exception is Robert O'Hara Burke, who did not keep a regular journal on his expedition to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

defined in opposition to history, as something that is unauthentic, non-historical, traditional.

But, let me repeat, this is only a partial explanation. It is possible to describe another process which leads to the formation of legend. In this situation legend is not constructed brick by brick until an edifice stands where nothing stood before; historical facts, or at least the unpleasant ones, or ones that add nothing attractive to the design (and there is a conscious shaping at work here), are plastered over until only an impressive exterior remains in view.

Generally, though, legends have not developed where so much is known. The explorers went out and they returned; what happened to them was known, the routes they travelled, what they did and what they saw. Even those men who were lost in the interior or were murdered by the aborigines had their deaths faithfully recorded; and their memorials, whether a cairn of stones or a tag on some remote geographical feature, have been enough to lay their ghosts. This does not mean that there are no gaps in the record, no areas of doubt or confusion. There are pockets of uncertainty and it is in these that the frail plant of legend can germinate and

sometimes even flower. More usually, however, such pockets have remained of interest only to the historian and the legends have failed to appear, even though the material to nourish them is there. What, for example, were the events which surrounded the disappearance of Alfred Gibson, when, in April, 1874, he and Ernest Giles made the final attempt to break out of the region in which they had, mistakenly, gone in search of water - the desert which now perpetuates Gibson's name? Why did Giles, knowing the man to be no bushman and unable to use a compass, give him one and send him back alone? What, too, was the fate of the botanist Cunningham on Mitchell's expedition of 1835?

In cases such as these legends are possible because the historical accounts are inadequate. There are even greater possibilities where there are no historical records at all; when, for example, an entire expedition vanishes without trace. This is precisely what happened to the expedition mounted by Leichhardt in 1848, the second attempt made by that explorer to traverse the continent from east to west. Nor is it surprising that legends should develop around the name of Leichhardt; all explorers, as we have seen, came to be regarded as heroes and none more so than Leichhardt. It has already been pointed out that poets turned to him as to a standard. At one time his grave is something by which oaths can be sworn - "Leichhardt's sacred

grave" - or else he is one of those explorers whose position is so assured that a fresh exploit can be measured against his achievements. Thus "E.W.H." calls up Leichhardt's name, along with the names of other great explorers both African and Australian, as witness of John McDouall Stuart's right to be called a hero: through his crossing of the continent he has become "Park's compeer, and Sturt and Leichhardt's elder brother".²

But colonial poets were not alone in their certainty of Leichhardt's heroic stature; Sir Charles Fitz Roy, when Governor of New South Wales, praised him to the Colonial Secretary for his "known energy, endurance, and courage, combined with activity and physical powers".³ His fellow explorers were as unstinting in their praise; Giles described him as "an eager seeker after fame in the Australian field of discovery, and whose memory all must revere",⁴ while Landsborough called him one of Australia's "most eminent and patriotic sons".⁵ Such comments establish Leichhardt's

2

"E.W.H.", "To the South Australian Explorer, John McDouall Stuart". (Appendix p.460)

3

Sir Charles Fitz Roy to W.E. Gladstone, September 30, 1846. New South Wales, Governor's Despatches, vol. 52 (1846), p. 421.

4

Giles, Australia Twice Traversed, i, p. xxx.

5

In a letter published in the Australasian, July 7, 1865.

right to be accepted as a hero, but the matter was placed beyond doubt by his disappearance and his presumed death. In the trite expression of the heroic contract, he had paid the ultimate price demanded of the hero: he had "sacrificed his life on the altar of science" in helping to disclose the nature of the interior of Australia.⁶ During the relief expeditions sent out to succour Burke and Wills, McKinlay had discovered the graves of white men near Cooper's Creek. It was thought that these bodies might have belonged to Leichhardt's party and this was seen as additional reason for their investigation. The comment which the subject drew from the Australasian of October 15, 1865, is an appropriate summation of Leichhardt's position in the colonial consciousness.

In thus far extending our scope of action, we have, moreover, been impelled by a deeply-felt persuasion that it is a holy duty of all Australia to leave nothing undone which might shed light on the destiny of one who stands second to none, and above most of the explorers of this country - a man who unfolded first to the astonished world the treasures and resources of a vast extent of this great continent, the richest dependency of the British Crown.

It is little wonder that around Leichhardt's final expedition and its fate a whole forest of legend was to spring up, and

⁶ Australasian, June 23, 1865.

nowhere is this better illustrated than in the persistence with which poets have turned to Leichhardt and his story during the century and more which has passed. But the forest is not impenetrable; it is possible to follow colonial poets along three distinct paths. Interestingly enough, the most obvious of these proved to be the least attractive to the colonial imagination. Little attention is given to attempts to construct legends about the actual death of the explorer. Of much greater concern was the landscape against which the events were played out, and another, ideal landscape in which it was hoped Leichhardt's body would find appropriate peace.

2

The expedition of 1848 was not the first that Leichhardt had undertaken to lead. From the time of his arrival in Sydney in 1842, and indeed before, he had set himself the goal of exploring the Australian continent. At first his excursions were limited to areas close to Sydney, but he eventually extended them to Newcastle and Moreton Bay. It was from Moreton Bay that his first great venture was to commence.

An overland expedition from Sydney to Port Essington had been under consideration by the colonial government for some time. Such an undertaking promised commercial

advantages, especially through a connection with India, as well as the expected scientific and geographical results, but the necessary funds were difficult to find. Although Mitchell, as Surveyor-General of New South Wales, had clear claims to the leadership of such an expedition, Leichhardt did not hesitate to offer his services. In December, 1843, he wrote to Mitchell from Moreton Bay.

I feel the deepest interest in the success of the proposed expedition and I should be happy, could I contribute to make it useful to science. I shall hasten down to Sydney as soon as I hear that the expedition is decided. ⁷

Still money could not be found and no firm plans were made. Leichhardt continued with his investigations in and around the settlement but as time passed and no decision was taken,⁸ he began to make arrangements for a private expedition of his own. By April, 1844, plans were taking shape and Leichhardt was able to write to his friend Robert Lynd, a friend whose interest and hospitality had eased the explorer's path in the new land:

It is probable, my dear friend, that I shall not stay long in Sydney when

7

December 11, 1843. Arousseau, The Letters, II, p.684.

8

A committee of the New South Wales Legislative Council had recommended the expedition, but Governor Gipps had delayed it because of the likely cost.

I come down. I have found young men willing and able to undergo the fatigues of a private expedition, and if I can muster sufficient resources to pay the expenses of provisions for six men, I shall immediately set out for Port Essington.⁹

He was able to muster sufficient resources; members of the public contributed money and supplies, even livestock, and the party was given free carriage to Moreton Bay by sea. By August, 1844, all was assembled on the outskirts of the settled districts and the expedition pushed away to the north - on a journey which Leichhardt estimated would take six months.

The months passed and nothing was heard. By December rumours were brought in by the aborigines of horrible massacres and murders. By June of the following year disquiet had grown to the stage where it was decided that a search party should be sent to investigate. Leichhardt's friend, Lynd, was clearly worried for the explorer's safety; in fact he seems to have feared the worst. When the search party was about to depart he composed his "Lines Addressed to the Party proceeding on the track of Dr. Leichhardt".

⁹ April 13, 1844. Aourousseau, The Letters, ii, p. 746.

That Lynd envisaged only one fate is clear from the opening lines.

Ye who prepare with pilgrim feet
 Your long and doubtful path to wend,
 If - whit'ning on the waste - ye meet
 The relics of my murder'd friend.
 (Appendix p.500)

The poem goes on to detail the treatment Leichhardt's "relics" are to receive: his bones are to be conveyed with "rev'rence" to the banks of a "mountain streamlet" where, despite the absence of clergy, "anthem", "holy walls" or indeed all "the hallow'd pomp of death", they are to be buried with prayer, and blessings are to be called down upon them.

Lynd makes no attempt to recreate the circumstances of the explorer's death or to explain how he came to be murdered. His friend has passed beyond the limits of an actual world into a legendary one. Initially Lynd is working within a framework imposed by the rumours of massacre and murder but this is fractured by the requirements of the legendary account he is attempting to construct. Behind his attempt is a model, the details of which have already been suggested in the previous chapter, and Leichhardt conforms to the pattern of the explorer-hero which emerged there. All the attributes are present, or are at least subsumed in Lynd's presentation: the hero as martyr, patriot and scientist; the hero as virtuous man. His death has been a lonely one, far from the world of living men, and the landscape reinforces

the impression of loneliness. There is, as well, another landscape - a landscape that is the reverse of the "waste" - a landscape appropriate to the hero and one which provides a fitting resting place. These components are present in Lynd's account and it is the intention of this chapter to trace their emergence in the work of other poets who chose to write of Leichhardt and his death.

The model which Lynd's poem exemplifies requires that the explorer's remains should be discovered "whit'ning on the waste", and this is where he expects the search party to find them. Bones there are, certainly, but when the poet comes to describe the hero's burial other influences dictate the details.

When ye have made his narrow bed,
 And laid the good man's ashes there,
 Ye shall kneel down around the dead,
 And wait upon your God in prayer.
 (Appendix p.501)

Thus, although the search party discovered Leichhardt's bones, when they come to be buried they have turned to ashes. To some extent the details which Lynd imposes on the description are due to an apparently automatic response, conditioned by the Anglican burial service with its reiteration of "ashes to ashes" and "dust to dust".

But the search party which Lynd farewelled found nothing to substantiate the rumours and so his friend, and the

people of Sydney, could do nothing but wait. And then, in March 1846, the vessel Heroine sailed into Sydney Harbour and the town rang with the news of the traveller's return. Leichhardt was acclaimed on all sides and the story of his successful journey was the topic of the hour. The Sydney weekly, the Atlas, reported his return on March 28; it mentioned the fears which had been entertained and the failure of the search party to settle the question.

The return of the Doctor was still looked upon as a thing beyond the range of probability, and a touching and beautiful funeral dirge was written by one of his friends, and set to music, no less beautifully, by another. In all circles he was beginning to be forgotten, otherwise than as one of the many martyrs in the cause of science and discovery. As a living being he had passed away from the public mind. But, to the surprise and joy of every body, while the plaintive melody in which his supposed fate was commemorated, was resounding through our drawing-rooms, and calling forth, from time to time, a transient feeling of regret, he returned, in health and vigour, to contradict the friend who had consigned him to a solitary tomb in the wilderness, and to furnish the world with another memorable example, of what human energy and ability are able to accomplish.

It is worth nothing how completely this report echoes the assumptions of the hero's fate that inform Lynd's poem.

Other newspapers announced the explorer's unexpected arrival and he was also the subject of welcoming

For similar reasons there is no mention of the commercial and scientific consequences of the undertaking: the opening up of vast areas for settlement, the seemingly-assured chance of trade with India or the delineation of the natural features of a new region of the continent.¹⁰ Sylvester is only concerned to translate event into legendary terms and so he ignores the limitations which a strict adherence to the details of the journal would impose. Consequently Leichhardt is not referred to as an explorer but as a "pilgrim of the mighty wastes", a "wanderer of the wild", a "conqueror". He is compared with other explorers of established stature - "Afric's martyr traveller" - and assigned a similar heroic task.

Oft in the silent wilderness, when meaner
spirits quail'd,
Have thy unfailing energies, to cheer and
soothe, prevail'd;
For well thy hope-inspiring voice, could speak
of perils past,
And bid each coming one appear, less painful
than the last.
(Appendix p.511)

Because of the poet's desire to stay in such company one event only of the journey is singled out: the death of the

10

The explorer P.P. King, who helped Leichhardt to edit his journal for publication, commented on the expectations which the explorer's journey had encouraged - expectations of "extensive tracts of fine country". King to Messrs Donaldson, April 20, 1846. King Papers, II, p. 265.

collector Gilbert, speared in a native attack near the Gulf of Carpentaria. Even here the effect is one of heroic inflation with the poet relying on such expected epithets as "stricken heart" and "silent prayer". Also, the reader's attention is directed not towards the tragic incident, or even towards Gilbert himself, but towards Leichhardt and his noble sorrow and bitterness at a life terminated with the "dream of young renown" unrealised. The incident as Sylvester recounts it becomes a meeting place for two legendary systems: one the legend which is emerging around Leichhardt and the other the wider and more familiar one which dictates the reaction of the hero to the loss of his companion.

And when beside thy comrade's grave, thy stricken
heart bow'd down,
And wept o'er that glad spirit's wreck, its dream
of young renown -
There was bitterness of soul, in the silent
prayer that rose,
Ere they left him in the desert, to his long
and lone repose.
(Appendix p.512)

Sylvester's "Stanzas" were later set to music but the song, "The Traveller's Return", omits all but the opening two stanzas and the final two. By deleting the references to public fears for the explorer's safety and the rumours which circulated in the colony, the song concentrates its attention on the national elements of the legend. Those heroic qualities which Leichhardt possessed as a man - his bravery, his resolution, his cheerfulness, his ability to inspire others - are

suppressed. In this way attention is focussed on the central struggle between man and landscape, the epic confrontation. This is made particularly obvious in the song's treatment of the final stanza, where the explorer's role as "harbinger of peace", his ability to teach the wilderness to "blossom like the rose" becomes the refrain. It is worth noting one change in the presentation of the wilderness, however. What was earlier a "howling wilderness" has become "the dark and smiling wilderness" - an indication of an interesting, if ambivalent, shift in attitudes flowing from the expedition's success. The song ends with these lines :

Who scorning hope of selfish gain
 Distaining soft repose
 Taught the dark and smiling wilderness,
 To blossom like the rose, like the rose,
 Like the rose, like the rose, like the rose.
 Taught the dark and smiling wilderness
 To blossom like the rose. ¹¹

The explorer's enthusiastic welcome was not restricted to a set of stanzas and a popular song. Congratulations came in from every quarter and groups were formed to collect money to provide a fitting reward for his achievements. As Leichhardt wrote to his brother-in-law, Carl Schmalfluss, in Prussia:

¹¹

S.H. March and A. sic K. Sylvester, "The Traveller's Return: a song". [1846]

... Von allen Seiten von allen Ständen gratulirte man mich über den Erfolg meiner Reise, und Du kannst Dir leicht vorstellen, dass diese unerwartete Theilnahmen mich angenehm überraschten. ... Gesellschafte bildeten sich sogleich, Geld für mich zu sammeln, um mich würdig zu belohnen und von allen Seiten, von allen Enden der Kolonie liefen Dankbriefe und bedeutende Geldsummen ein. 12

The official reaction was no less enthusiastic. The Legislative Council voted £1,000¹³ and when news of Leichhardt's return was received in London the Governor was asked to express "the high sense which H.M.'s Government entertain of his services and their acknowledgement of the great personal sacrifices which he appears to have made in pursuing the enterprise".¹⁴

12

April 18, 1846. Arousseau, The Letters, iii, p. 857. Arousseau translates this letter as follows: Congratulations on the success of my journey came pouring in from all directions and from all classes; and you can just imagine how I enjoyed the surprise of this unexpected public response. ... Groups were promptly formed to raise enough money for a fitting reward for my services; and letters of thanks and generous contributions have been coming in from all sides and from the very confines of the colony. (pp. 860-861)

13

Gipps to W.E. Gladstone, June 23, 1846. New South Wales, Governor's Despatches, vol. 51(1846), pp.763-768.

14

Earl Grey's despatch, August 18, 1846. Despatches to Governor of New South Wales (July-December, 1846), p. 222.

With the money raised by public subscription together with the reward voted by Government Leichhardt was able to make preparations for his "grand design": the crossing of the continent from east to west, from Moreton Bay to Swan River. On this first attempt, which began in December, 1846, success eluded him. The party floundered through flooded watercourses and was bedevilled by recalcitrant animals and illness until it was manifestly impossible to continue. The scheme was abandoned. Leichhardt recruited fresh companions and in 1848 set out once more from the Darling Downs. The expedition moved down the Condamine River and crossed over to the Cogoon. Everything seemed to be proceeding to plan and in a letter to P.P. King Leichhardt was cheerful and optimistic.

Seeing how much I have been favoured in my present progress, I am full of hope that our Almighty Protector will allow me to bring my darling scheme to a successful termination. 15

But the letters written from the Cogoon were to be the last received from the expedition. At first there was no great alarm; Leichhardt had forecast that the crossing would take

15

April 3, 1848. Arousseau, The Letters, iii, p. 1009.

at least two years to effect, and so it was some time before fears began to grow. And then, in the absence of reliable information, legend emerged as people sought to account for the unknown. One such attempt was made by Adelaide Ironside in a poem published in the Australasian on January 10, 1853.

The explorers are visualised camped on the banks of "Bunderabella's desert stream"; it is evening and they are talking over their "old achievements" and anticipating future triumphs. The poet's insistence on a particular location is interesting, but can be accounted for by the fact that only four days prior to the publication of her poem the Australasian carried a letter from a George Robertson Maclean, reprinted from the Sydney Morning Herald of December 29, 1864. The letter attempts to account for Leichhardt's fate in terms which are reminiscent of the rumours which had circulated before the explorer's return from Port Essington.

Last April I was talking to a young blackfellow belonging to a Mr. Norman, on the Yo Yo Creek, Upper Warrego, talking about a place which the natives called 'Bunderabala', a land very far to the westward of the Yo Yo - a great tract of country so devoid of trees that the opossums are forced to hide amongst the grass by day. 'What do you know of Bunderabala?' said Mr. Norman to me. 'What!' I exclaimed, in amazement, 'do you know of Bunderabala also? I thought I was the only one that had ever heard of it before'. 'Bah!' said he; 'I knew of it nearly sixteen years ago. There's where Leichhardt was killed!' 'The devil it was!' I

traveller's "hopeful visions" and the "wild confusion" of the final scene; there still remains the "well-known savage shouts of blood", which imparts a direct and credible force to the description.

It is probable, too, that Adelaide Ironside is drawing on the death of Gilbert for the details of the attack and it is therefore worth noting the account of that incident as Leichhardt records it in his published journal and which would have been available at the time the poem was written.

After dinner, Messrs. Roper and Calvert retired to their tent, and Mr. Gilbert, John, and Brown, were plaiting palm leaves to make a hat, and I stood musing near their fire place, looking at their work, and occasionally joining in their conversation. Mr. Gilbert was congratulating himself upon having succeeded in learning to plat; and, when he had nearly completed a yard, he retired with John to their tent. This was about 7 o'clock; and I stretched myself upon the ground as usual, at a little distance from the fire, and fell into a dose, from which I was suddenly roused by a loud noise, and a call for help from Calvert and Roper. Natives had suddenly attacked us. They had doubtless watched our movements during the afternoon, and marked the position of the different tents; and, as soon as it was dark, sneaked upon us, and threw a shower of spears at the tents of Calvert, Roper, and Gilbert, ... 16

The elements are all present such as they are found in Adelaide Ironside's treatment: the calm, almost domestic scene as the men gather around the camp-fire, the surprise attack and the treachery of the aborigines in waiting until nightfall. It is the treachery which emerges as the most significant element in the poem.

The trust in native hearts, alas, how was it
 justified!
 There, 'neath the sable murderers' clubs, the
 struggling pilgrims died;
 Far in the wilderness they fell, with none to
 mark the day;
 The spirits [sic] of the martyred band unrequiemed
 passed away.

In choosing to account for the aborigines' attack in terms of treachery the poet is demonstrating attitudes that were examined in an earlier chapter, attitudes which denied to the aborigines an heroic role in the struggle for settlement in the new land. This reflection of common attitudes is matched by a dependence on equally common images in the description of the aborigines themselves: the "savage hearts" of the "sable" murderers. And there is a lack of originality in the use of "unrequiemed"; on the one hand it adds to the heroic dimensions of the story, but on the other it adds little more than the tradition which saw the death of any man without the benefit of clergy as a thing to be abhorred. And yet it is this abhorrence of the lonely death which was to become a vital element in the fate of the explorer-hero, as a later examination of the poetic treatment of the Burke and Wills story will attempt to show.

This fear was also one of the main reasons suggested by Lynd for the relief party; once the bodies had been found they were to be buried with all suitable reverence, even though no "reverend man" was there to perform the rites. It would be necessary for one of the relief party

To call that blessing round the place
Which consecrates the soil to God.
(Appendix p.501)

Some three months later The Empire published a poem by Henry Halloran which proposed a different explanation from that advanced by Adelaide Ironside. The scene is set not on the banks of a desert stream but far in the desert itself, in a "cloven waste of gaunt and hungry sand", and Leichhardt meets his death not at the hands of the natives but through the hostility of the land itself. In a waterless region death from thirst is to be expected, but this is seen not as an accident but rather as a direct act by a malevolent environment. The landscape is presented as something antagonistic to the explorers, as something evil; it is a "cloven waste" - marked with the Devil's sign - and stands in opposition to Heaven and all that is good.

A cloven waste of gaunt and hungry sand
Hides from the pitying Heaven the Dauntless One-
Who stricken down amidst his faithful band,
Here made his last Appeal,- life's journey done:-

(Appendix, p.465)

As with the earlier poems the force of the presentation is dissipated by the introduction of cliché: Leichhardt's party is his "faithful band" and the explorer himself is the "Dauntless One". Still, there is a perceptiveness in the evocation of the land itself which here becomes the agent responsible for Leichhardt's death and so no blame attaches to the leader or his followers. Leichhardt is allowed his last appeal and what he says reinforces the concept of a land intrinsically hostile, shunned by man and animal.

"Thou void wild waste, where, nor the Emu's foot
 "Dare wander, nor the wilder man to roam,-
 "Where not a shrub finds nurture for its root,
 "Nor Heaven's fresh Angel, water, finds a home;"

Although Halloran accounts for the death of Leichhardt, he is more concerned to make a plea that the explorer's memory should not be lost. The poem was written in support of the building of a statue of the explorer as an indication that the country which benefitted by his discoveries has not forgotten him.¹⁷

And man with pride might tell his curious child,
 That Leichhardt, many - many years ago,-
 Sought, with a resolute few, the Central Wild,
 Its varying aspects to behold and know,-

17

There is no evidence that such a statue was ever erected. On March 18, 1848, the Empire carried an article again calling for a monument.

And died, - and that good men did not forget,
 But raised this monument, that coming Time,
 Might learn that they had paid their Country's
 debt,

And left a record of bold deeds, sublime.

Halloran is convinced that the passage of time and man's preoccupation with material success must mitigate against the remembrance of those great deeds which were engendered by exploration and he sees the discoveries of gold, which had been made within several years of his writing, as contributing to the neglect.

Life cannot pause beneath the fiery stings
 Of wild aggrandisement, or frantic gain;-
 Around the roaring cauldron, as of old,
 Expectants throng, as in some maniac dance,-
 Grasp at the bright delusion, gorgeous Gold-
 Nor turn aside their fierce, bewildered glance.

Others beside Halloran were persuaded that the discovery of gold had contributed to the lowering of standards and the moral decline which they saw around them. William a Beckett, who was to become Victoria's Chief Justice and that colony's first knight, was one of these and he wrote a pamphlet deploring the prevailing insanity as thousands vacated their jobs and scrambled for gold on the newly-discovered fields.

Never before, with a retinue so vast
 and devoted, did Mammon go forth to do
 battle with God; nor ever, perhaps,
 before, was the spectacle seen on such
 a scale, of a Christian people not only
 fighting beneath his banners and
 exulting in his sway, but even

venturing to hope from his
Omnipotent and Everlasting Foe,
a blessing on his rule.¹⁸

A similar point was made by an anonymous poet
in "Not Too Late", which was published in The Australasian in
May, 1865.

In this our time,
From every clime,
Thousands came thirsting with the greed of gold.
Their's not to flout,
Their's not to scout,
The labours of the pioneers of old.
(Appendix p.424)

There is a certain appropriateness in the Tennysonian echoes
here, although the appeal is to a recognition of the
performances of others, rather than to sense of present duty.

The poet goes further than a Beckett in his
suggestion that the discovery of gold resulted in a division
of society into old settlers and new, with the newcomers
tending to neglect or ignore the great events which have taken
place in the past. He also wishes to make a plea for
Leichhardt's memory, even though he is not convinced that the
explorer is dead, since it is the duty of those who came after
him and benefitted by his work to search for him. But more is
involved than the need to see whether or not Leichhardt lives;

¹⁸

Quoted in G. Serle, The Golden Age (Melbourne,
1963), p. 31.

there is also the obligation to see that he is given a Christian burial.

If famine, thirst,
Have done their worst,
And low in dust the honoured head should lie;
Shame on us then,
As Christian men,
The rites of Christian burial to deny.

The explanation which is given of Leichhardt's death is similar to that advanced by Halloran. It is not the aborigines who are responsible, but the land itself which has turned upon the explorer and caused his death.

In another poem published in the same paper and on the same day Leichhardt's fate is compared with that suffered by the Arctic explorer Franklin who, in 1845, was lost in his attempt to discover the North-West Passage. "Leichhardt and Franklin" compares the attempts mounted by Britain to trace Franklin's movements with the neglect suffered by his Australian counterparts.

Years passed and they returned not, while their
homes
Faded in cold neglect from out the land.
The friends they loved forgot them; others came,
To whom their memory was a foolish tale;
And ere the mother's and the widow's tears
Had furrowed wrinkles on the pensive cheek,
Men said that they were dead, and left them there
In the lone wilderness to live or die.
(Appendix p.458)

Both this poem and the previous one were occasioned by moves in Melbourne to form a Ladies' Committee to promote

a search for the lost explorer. Again there are parallels with the Arctic traveller; when official attempts to find him were abandoned, his wife refused to abandon the search and organised another expedition which succeeded in finding evidence of his fate.

'Twas woman's heart made Britain's heart beat
 high
 Through all the changing fortunes of the sea;
 'Twas woman's love smiled victory to despair,
 And Franklin's widow lived for Franklin's tomb.

Woman's role is ever thus; men are mere "breadwinners" and it is left to woman to nurture all that is gentle and noble. So it is to be with the search for Leichhardt.

Leichhardt, the lost! and woman's gentle heart
 Yearns o'er the wanderer on his weary way;
 'Tis but a little sand-grain in the scale,
 But it may save a hero - grant it, Heaven!

Although no final answer is given to the question of the explorer's death, the suggestions point to what the poet describes as the "living death": death by starvation or thirst "amid unknown deserts". While his fate is shrouded in "cold oblivion" and "awful mystery" the questions go on reverberating.

Where are the traces of his desert path?
 Where the mute records of his shadowy end?
 Has the lone sea of sand engulfed them all,
 Horses and riders, in one mighty grave?

S.H. Wintle's "Leichhardt" also links the disappearances of Leichhardt and Franklin, but the interest is not in recounting any particular legend of the Australian

explorer's death, it is rather in what impelled him to explore. The poem is so dependent on cliché, so reliant on stock responses, as to make almost no point at all. There is the hope that the explorer could be alive - despite the lapse of more than twenty years -

But if like him whose fearless soul
Dared the dread dangers of the Pole,
He hath a martyr fallen too,
And found untimely life's dark goal
A deathless name is then his due!
(Appendix p.514)

The collection of emasculated adjectives so reduces the power of what is asserted that the designation "martyr" becomes nothing more than an empty tag.

There are obvious reasons why poets in Australia should have been so eager to draw parallels between Leichhardt and Franklin. The parallel presented itself first of all through the fate they shared - the fate of the lost traveller, the explorer whose end was unknown. The link was to some extent inevitable because the two expeditions were in the field at approximately the same time, but there were other reasons as well. To make the comparison was to establish the colonial hero on the same footing as the British one - and the establishment of such connections had a considerable attraction to the colonial mind. Nor did the comparison cease when Franklin's death was proved and the manner of his dying known. When the Ladies' Committee was being urged on in its task, Ferdinand von Mueller was still able to couple the two

names.

Of this we may rest assured, that infinitely greater hopes may be upheld to bring our travellers back from their western course than ever could have incited those who set out searching for Franklin's tracks, who never shrunk from the danger of the Polar sea, though well aware that on its ever-frozen shores Franklin and his comrades could no longer live - that nothing would be found there but their icy death-beds. 19

Henry Kendall's poem "Leichhardt", which was published in 1880, is more interesting in its explanation of the explorer's motives than in its recreation of the final hours of the expedition. As a result Leichhardt's fate is implied rather than stated, and this is achieved mainly through the description which Kendall gives of the landscape. His death is acted out

On the tracts of thirst and furnace - on the dumb,
 blind, burning plain
 Where the red earth gapes for moisture and the
 wan leaves hiss for rain,
 In a land of dry fierce thunder, ...
 (Appendix p.489)

The land itself is the antagonist, it is the "waste of thorny terrors", and even the sun is a "menace glaring from a sky of brass".

3

The poems which were written about Leichhardt during the nineteenth century are evidence of the legends which came to surround the explorer's name, but they tell only part of the story. Each expedition which was sent in search of traces of the vanished party had its own version of the explorer's fate. In 1852 Hovenden Hely met with a party of natives who claimed that the explorers had been killed in a night attack; this account was to reappear later in Maclean's letter to the Sydney Morning Herald. A.C. Gregory's investigations in 1855 and again in 1858 suggested that the expedition had perished in the desert. The rescue parties which were despatched to succour Burke and Wills were also seeking traces of Leichhardt and both Landsborough and Walker found signs which they though referred to him while McKinlay discovered graves which could have been

connected with the Swan River party.²⁰ The most usual indication was a tree apparently bearing Leichhardt's blazed mark but so many had been located by the last decade of the century that The Times felt justified in commenting that they had become "so plentiful that it became evident that even if LUDWIG LEICHHARDT had spent the whole of his life in carving these rustic records of his progress, his brief career would have been all too short for the task". The writer had earlier hailed the announcement of yet another expedition as "evidence of the extent to which this mystery of the Antipodes has affected the imagination of our fellow-countrymen in the Far South. It is their one romance, and they make much of it".²¹

20

In 1871 Police Inspector James Gilmour investigated reports of supposed traces of Leichhardt in the vicinity of Cooper's Creek. He found the remains of three human skeletons and reported that the natives held to a supposition that white men had been seen "walking". Brisbane Courier, April 5, 1871. There had also been reports by McIntyre of traces of Leichhardt in 1864.

"About 300 miles from the sea, and west of Burke's track, Mr. M'Intyre came across two old horses (grazing on what appeared to be a permanent creek), which he supposed must have belonged to the long-lost Leichhardt's party - he has brought those horses into this station, where they are at present. To the east, a short distance, he discovered two camps evidently belonging to Leichhardt, as the trees were marked with L, and which appeared to be of old date. The track from the one camp to the other evidently tends to the westward.

Antaralasian, January 6, 1865.

21

The Times, September 5, 1890.

One of the more persistent legends connected with Leichhardt, and the one which is the most bizarre, concerns a fascinating character, Andrew Hume, who was convicted of horse-stealing in 1866 and sentenced to ten year's imprisonment. After serving half his time he wrote to the authorities claiming that he had been far into the interior and there had met a white man living with the natives. This man claimed to be Classen, the sole survivor of the lost expedition. With him he still had the papers and instruments of the party. Eventually Hume was released and went to the Northern Territory where he worked for a time on the Overland Telegraph Line. Although he continued to stand by his story he was unable to convince one of those who met him at this stage, the local telegraph supervisor Randall Knuckey. According to Hume, Classen claimed that Leichhardt had reached the west coast and there died. He still retained Leichhardt's papers but would not allow Hume to take them and said that he was too old and feeble to return himself. Knuckey, by giving Hume sufficient rum, was able to get a brief glimpse of the papers which he was told included some German letters and Leichhardt's journal. "He showed me the first sheet which was nothing more or less than some scribbling in shorthand ...", and Knuckey was certain that the supposed journal was in fact

sheets of blank paper.²²

Hume returned to Sydney but was unable to produce the papers and claimed that they had been stolen on the journey. He later set out on another attempt to find Classen but he and one of his two companions died of thirst in the west of Queensland.

There were other people who insisted that they had discovered relics of the missing Leichhardt. A Queensland station-owner, Sculthorpe, offered Leichhardt's and Classen's journals and instruments to Sir Henry Parkes in 1881 for £6,000; Parkes promised a "commensurate reward" whereupon Sculthorpe's offer strangely collapsed.²³ Ali Blooch, who had been employed as a camel-driver on the Burke and Wills expedition, appeared in Adelaide in the late 1880's claiming to have discovered four skeletons and various relics of Leichhardt's party in the vicinity of Brunette Downs. His story was ridiculed and nothing further was heard of him.²⁴

22

Letter from Knuckey to the South Australian Post Master General, Charles Todd, April 2, 1880. Typescript copy, ANL MS 1323.

23

A. Grenfell Price, "The Mystery of Leichhardt", P.R.G.S.A. (S. Aust.), xxxix (1937-38), pp. 25-6.

24

ibid., p. 26.

The notion that Leichhardt survived and was living somewhere in the remote interior captured the imagination of a number of minor storytellers. In these accounts, all in the tradition of the "Boys Own Paper", the figure of the "lost explorer" varies in importance. In some, the solution of the Leichhardt mystery is incidental to stories of improbable adventures, the discovery of lost civilizations and the finding of immense hoards of gold. One, at least, claims more than a fictional basis but even here the discovery of traces of the missing explorer is of minor importance. In The Adventures of Louis de Rougemont as told by Himself,²⁵ the author is wrecked on the northern coast of Australia. He survives a number of improbable adventures and eventually finds himself at an aboriginal village in central Australia. Living with the natives is a half-caste girl who tells de Rougemont that her father was a white man who had penetrated into the region twenty years before. The adventurer then stumbles upon a cairn of stones on which are carved the initials "L.L.", and he is convinced that he has discovered Leichhardt's daughter. He is also able to solve another riddle -

25

Louis de Rougemont, The Adventures of Louis de Rougemont as told by Himself (London, 1899).

the unaccountably large number of trees marked apparently with Leichhardt's initials. The mystery evaporates once de Rougemont's explanation is accepted: "In the course of my numerous journeys abroad I blazed or marked a great number of trees; my usual mark being an oval, in or underneath which I generally carved the initial 'L'".²⁶ The resourceful adventurer also finds Alfred Gibson, Giles's missing companion, wandering in the desert, and in an evocative death-bed scene the man regains his lucidity sufficiently to describe how he came to wander away from the party.

Leichhardt appears fleetingly in another adventure story, The Golden Lake by W. Carlton Dawe.²⁷ Richard Hardwicke and his cousin Archie learn of a Golden Lake far in the interior of Australia and set out to locate it. As they struggle across the intervening deserts they find traces of the lost Leichhardt. They come upon a tree on which the initial "L" is carved together with the date - 1849. Archie, the "new chum" of the team, wonders at its explanation and Dick replies

²⁶
ibid., p. 323.

²⁷
W. Carlton Dawe, The Golden Lake (London, 1894).

"Why, that the lost explorer, Leichhardt, must have been on this very spot in the year 1849. It was the custom of explorers to initial trees, and this must have been Leichhardt's work, or some one attached to his party. Poor fellow! I wonder if he got farther than this? He was last heard of in '48, and he then hoped to accomplish his darling project, as he called it, which was to cross from east to west Australia. After once plunging into the interior he was never heard of again. Poor devil!" 28

The mystery does not remain a mystery for much longer. Natives raid the camp the travellers have made near the marked tree and one member of the party is beaten to death. It is decided to bury him at the foot of the tree and as the grave is being prepared the shovel throws up a skull. Hardwicke's reaction is immediate.

"Good God, it's a human skull!" he cried.
 "A human skull, say you?"
 "Yes, and what is more, it's a white man's!"
 I felt a cold, creepy shiver run through me.
 "Leichhardt's party?" I queried.
 "Yes; perhaps this is Leichhardt's skull". 29

In both these novels the fate of Leichhardt and the discovery of traces of the missing expedition appear as little more than conventional romantic elements, part of the stock-in-trade of writers of such stories. They appear

28
ibid., p. 86.

29
ibid., p. 104.

alongside other traditional situations, such as the white girl forced to live with a tribe of natives, forgotten cities and so on. This is in itself a measure of the status of legend which had come to surround the name of the missing explorer, but there is nothing more to be learned from such stories, no additional understanding of the explorer's role as hero.

But there are other novels in which the quest for the missing explorer supplies the central theme and dictates the action of the story. J.F. Hogan's The Lost Explorer is an example of such a treatment.³⁰ The story is presented as the reminiscences of the explorer's son. Leichhardt appears under the name of Leonard Louvain, but Arthur's account of his father's career makes it clear that the disguise is intended to be transparent. He describes the explorer's early interest in and love for "scientific studies", his journey to Australia and his initial researches there.

But his great opportunity came with the proposal to open up an overland route between Sydney and the settlement newly established on the far northern coast of Australia under the name of Port Essington.

30

J.F. Hogan, The Lost Explorer (London, 1890).

This involved a journey of over 3,000 miles across an unknown and untrodden territory. My father was offered and accepted the command of the expedition. Its results were of the most fruitful character, affording the first insight into the unequalled natural resources of what is now the wealthy and progressive colony of Queensland, and eliciting a mass of new and valuable information on the flora and fauna of interior Australia. ³¹

Only one significant detail is altered: the question of the command of the expedition. Here the undertaking assumes a greater importance and consequently the position of the leader is enhanced.

Arthur Louvain had taken up land to the north of Cooper's Creek. With several companions - one of whom, Ben Wardill, had accompanied his father on the expedition to Port Kessington - he sets out to investigate native rumours of a waterfall further in the interior. There they are surprised by a native, Wonga, who tells them that Leonard Louvain is alive, imprisoned by the Malua tribe in the centre of the Stony Desert. The aboriginal leads them through the outer barrier of the desert - "an impregnable barrier of solid rock which seemed to encircle the desert like the protecting walls of a fortified city of olden time" - and as they cross the

31

ibid., p. 31.

inhospitable region they discover the body of a white man in a cave. This poor fellow - clearly intended to be Andrew Hume - had gone in search of Louvain and had managed to reach the valley of the Malua. Unable to rescue the explorer, he had attempted to make his way back through the Stony Desert but had perished before he could reach the outer barrier. By chance he sought refuge in the same cave in which Louvain had earlier hidden his papers. From these Arthur is able to learn something of the fate of his father's expedition.

I gathered from his minute methodical journal that all went well with the party until they were confronted by the menacing barrier of the Stony Desert. Then arose murmurs and discontent that finally broke out into open mutiny. All, save the dauntless leader, were cowed and dismayed by the unearthly spectacle of this lonely, lofty, and seemingly insurmountable barrier. They besought my father, as he valued his life, not to tempt destruction by trying to cross this dreadful desert, but to imitate the commendable prudence of previous explorers by retiring from a venture where the odds were so overwhelmingly against him. To their excited, terror-stricken entreaties, my father characteristically replied that Australia had sent him forth to cross and explore the Stony Desert; that he was fixedly resolved to fulfil this mission to the letter, and that the refusal of all previous explorers to face the difficulty was all the stronger reason why he should persevere and settle the question at once and for ever. 32

The leader refused and so his companions deserted, only to perish themselves on the attempt to return. All those qualities which one has come to expect here designate the explorer-hero: dauntless, resolute, persevering, a strong sense of duty.

Young Louvain struggles on across the desert and eventually reaches the village of the Malua. Father and son are reunited and, after a series of incredible adventures, the lost explorer is returned to civilization.

Another version of the Leichhardt story, and the last one which will be considered here, would seem to promise a more credible account since the author is himself remembered as an explorer. Ernest Favenc was involved in explorations in the northern regions of the continent, but he is chiefly remembered for his historical writings on explorers and their discoveries, especially his History of Australian Exploration from 1788 to 1888. His novel, The Secret of the Australian Desert,³³ is an attempt to explain the mystery which surrounds the fate of the explorer: "This, the great mystery of Australian exploration, I have taken for the groundwork of my story".³⁴

33

Ernest Favenc, The Secret of the Australian Desert (London, n.d.).

34

ibid., p. iv.

Again, the adventures have their beginning in a decision to investigate an aboriginal rumour; on this occasion it is the story of a "burning mountain". Three men and a faithful native hand set out from the far north of South Australia. The "burning mountain" proves to be a volcanic area whose inhabitants are cannibals. Living with the tribe is a white man, a survivor of Leichhardt's party. The shock of possible rescue is more than he can bear and he dies, but a note-book found nearby explains the fate of the expedition. The party had been attacked by the aborigines and Leichhardt had injured his hand when a musket burst. Attacks of feverishness and temporary madness follow but the leader grew steadily weaker.

We took it in turns to hold the Doctor on his horse, but he got very bad a few hours after we started, and when the sun grew hot he begged us to lift him off the horse for a little while. We had all the canteens full, and Kelly had made a bag of calico and rubbed it outside with goat's fat, and it held water tolerably well. So we gave the Doctor plenty to drink, but he got no better, and about noon he died. He talked a good deal to himself in German, but had lost all knowledge of us or where he was, and a good thing too. We could not stop to bury him, for we had to push on, so we left him there on the big plain, where I think no living thing ever comes or ever will come since we were there.³⁵

This is an entry taken from the journal of one of the survivors, Stuart. The remainder of the narrative is concerned with the search for Stuart, whose body is eventually discovered in a cave which also reveals evidences of demonic practices followed by the ancestors of the cannibals. Stuart's journal is instrumental in leading the party to a gold reef, an inevitable consequence of this sort of adventure. Favenc's narrative has a particular interest in its treatment of Leichhardt himself. There is no attempt to present the explorer in a heroic light and this agrees with the author's assessment of him in his history of exploration where he describes him as a man "destitute of tact and readiness of resource" and "deficient in observation" - the last criticism surely a damning one to make of an explorer.³⁶

4

None of the poems which treat of Leichhardt develop as fascinating an account as those presented in the novels, but the poets who used Leichhardt as theme were not primarily interested in retelling the story of his expedition or even

³⁶

Favenc, The History of Australian Exploration from 1788 to 1888 (Sydney, 1888), pp. 165-6.

in recreating incident. They do give some attention to creating a legend but their main preoccupation is with what could be best described as legendary landscape, a legendary landscape against which the explorer and his companions move.

Such a landscape is adumbrated in the earliest of the poems, Lynd's "Lines", with the reference to Leichhardt's bones "whit'ning on the waste" and is developed in more detail in Sylvester's "Stanzas". Much of Sylvester's presentation of the landscape is in all too familiar terms: "wild", "mighty wastes", "wilderness", even "howling wilderness" which, despite its Biblical connotations, is as empty as the others. These are terms which make no demands on either the reader or the writer. And yet even within this limiting imaginative framework there is one attribute that is significant, and that is the quality of loneliness. Thus the landscape of Leichhardt's journeying is described as a "silent wilderness", a "silent desert", and one of the principal benefits which the explorer brings to the land is the benefit of civilization. He is one who is able to make "that wild and savage night of solitude to cease".

Nor is the loneliness restricted to the landscape; it is an inevitable consequence of exploration and something which is inseparable from leadership. There are echoes here of the Carlylean hero, the man set apart and isolated from other men.

And oft e'en that brave heart of thine, has
 sadden'd to despair,
 When o'er some wild and lonely scene, the
 moonlight shining fair,
 Hath bid thy soften'd spirit feel, how lonely
 were thy lot,
 To die - thy mission unfulfilled - unknown,
 unwept, forgot.
 (Appendix p.511)

Despite the despair which attends it, the explorer's journey is a journey into loneliness, for it is at the centre of loneliness that the heart of the land, that nature herself, resides. The essential experience is therefore one of penetrating to the centre and to do this there are obstacles which have to be overcome.

Thou hast battled with the dangers of the forest
 and the flood,
 And amid the silent desert - a conqueror hast
 stood:
 Thou hast triumph'd o'er the perils of the mountain
 and the plain -
 And a nation's smiling welcome, is thy greeting
 home again.
 (Appendix p.511)

The explorer's task is therefore almost mythic in scale and he comes close to the archetypal wanderer who has to go forth, overcome unknown perils and dangers and after performing what are almost "rites of passage" is welcomed home. And the course of Leichhardt's travels are here presented in very much these terms. He has gone out, battled with the obstacles which beset his path, endured the despair and loneliness inherent in the journey and penetrated to the centre. Then, and then only, is the way clear for his return :

At length the hour of triumph came, the white
 man's track appear'd
 Visions of bright and holy joy, thy toil-worn
 spirit cheer'd;
 A glorious pride lit up thy heart, and glow'd
 upon thy brow,
 For Leichhardt's name among the great, and good,
 is deathless now.

The return bears traces of that mythical journey which has been described as the "Journey to the Centre" and which informs works as diverse as Dante's Divine Comedy and Satre's Roads to Freedom, at least according to one writer on the myth of the journey.³⁷ Leichhardt, too, attains a paradisaical state as suggested by the accent on radiance and holiness and the gift of immortality.

Halloran makes the journey to the centre, in the sense of a journey of the soul, quite specific although the motivation is seen as a scientific one with knowledge as the goal. It is not taking the parallels too far to suggest that it is in essence a search for self-knowledge.

And man with pride might tell his curious child,
 That Leichhardt, many - many years ago, -
 Sought, with a resolute few, the Central Wild,
 Its varying aspects to behold and know.
 (Appendix p.465)

Halloran, earlier in the poem, makes it clear in what terms he sees the Central Wild: it is "a cloven waste of gaunt and

37

Honor Matthews, The Hard Journey (London, 1968).

hungry sand", a "void wild waste" shunned by man and animal alike and from which Heaven too averts its eyes. It is a paradigm of evil in which Leichhardt's body is held in bondage, in the way that the redeemed soul, in Christian terms, is made to suffer purgatory.

"Wilt thou, oh! Wolfish Waste, preserve this frame
 'Till God's good providence demand it back?
 (Appendix p.465)

Embling's poem "Leichhardt and Franklin" also presents the two explorers engaged on a mythic journey, although here the goal is not the attainment of knowledge or salvation or the explorer's apotheosis; nevertheless the quest is an appropriate one and in its prosecution all that is secure and known is left far behind:

The silence of the untrod wilderness
 Shrouded a band of exiles, pioneers,
 The first and bravest of their Southern home,
 Forth from the little hamlet by the sea,
 Forth from the shadow of their fellow-men,
 Calmly they sought the desert solitude
 To wrest an empire from the grasp of Time.
 (Appendix p.458)

The landscape into which the explorers are to move is indicated here, with its qualities of silence and loneliness, but it is more fully drawn earlier in the poem. There the Australian landscape is contrasted with the Polar one in which Franklin met his death.

The North wind here has lost his robe of ice,
 And rides upon the air with breath of fire;
 While deadly thirst and bitter scorching heat,
 Wide seas of barren sand, with dried-up streams
 And empty torrents, mock the traveller's haste.
 The granite rocks, in fierce confusion piled,
 The strange, weird foliage of a thousand trees,
 The gliding serpents 'mid the gaudy flowers,
 The circling eagle, and the dark-plumed swan,
 With Nature's wildest fancies clustering round,
 And over all the cloudless tropic sky,
 Arching the landscape in a dream of light.
 How grandly beautiful earth's ocean-world
 Graces in majesty the Southern Sea!

(Appendix, p. 457)

It is a strange and deceptive landscape with rivers that do not run; it is a region of menace and evil and yet within the menace there is something of awful beauty, even if it is the beauty of contrariety with its "strange, weird foliage" and the "dark-plumed swan". Embling writes in the tradition of colonial observers who saw Australia as a region of topsyturveydom, a land of "Nature's wildest fancies", but he goes beyond these expected reactions to a realisation of that quality in the landscape which redeems it:

And over all the cloudless tropic sky,
 Arching the landscape in a dream of light.

Embling was able to see the Australian landscape in such terms, but not Henry Kendall. In his poem, "Leichhardt", light carries connotations which are similar to those conveyed by the desert - a region where the sun is seen "as a menace glaring from a sky of brass". It is a region where

everything is harsh and searing, where the very air catches at the throat and leaves a bitter after-taste. Leichhardt must travel through "tracts of thirst and furnace", across "thirsty tracts of bitter glow" and into a "zone of furnace". In Kendall's evocation of the landscape the qualities of aridity and glare impinge on a number of senses simultaneously; it is one undivided world of perception, where the light can be almost tasted and the dryness oppresses the sight.

Poets inspired by Leichhardt felt the need to evoke a setting appropriate to the deeds of exploration, to create a myth of the centre. At first such a landscape was conceived in terms which relied on expressions such as "waste" or "wilderness" or "wild", expressions which could be applied to any region unsettled by man, but later poems, especially those of Embling and Kendall, present a more detailed picture, a more complete awareness of the peculiar qualities of the Australian inland. There is, especially, a growing awareness of the importance of light as a component of this landscape. The change could be attributed to a more general acceptance of the landscape as a whole, but it could also be explained as deriving from a greater knowledge; knowledge which itself resulted from the great desert journeys, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, of such men as Giles, Forrest and Warburton.

5

It is not surprising that poets should have selected such a landscape as an appropriate setting for the death of Leichhardt, for the centre came to represent the peculiar threat of the continent to a people huddled in a few cities on the coastal fringe. Beyond was the region "where the dead men lie", a region of menace and undefined evil. But this landscape of barrenness and aridity, of heat and glare, is not the only one that these poems present. There is an alternative landscape which represents all that is good and ideal. Thus while there is an insistence that Leichhardt meet his death in a region of thirst and hunger, bare and arid, there is an equal insistence that his final resting place should be otherwise. Lynd in his "Lines" accepts that the explorer will be found "whit'ning on the waste" but asks that his remains be taken

To where some mountain streamlet flows;
There, by its mossy bank, prepare
The pillow of his long repose.
(Appendix p.500)

Having placed the ground colour, Lynd then brushes in the details:

It shall be by a stream, whose tides
Are drunk by birds of ev'ry wing;
Where ev'ry lovelier flower abides
The earliest wak'ning touch of spring!

Such a landscape is very much a contrast to that implied even in the single word "waste", but it is for Lynd the appropriate

ONE:

O meet that he - (who so carest
 All beauteous Nature's varied charms)-
 That he - her martyr'd son - should rest
 Within his mother's fondest arms!

But it is appropriate for another reason as well. It is in essence a European rather than an Australian landscape, especially when set alongside the common colonial assertion that Australia was a land devoid of such beauties of nature as sweet-scented flowers and singing birds, and it therefore represents a turning away from the experience of the new country to another and a past existence. There is also the need to conjure up such a landscape in order that the melancholy responses to Leichhardt's death, which are so much a part of Lynd's treatment, can be evoked in the final lines of the poem. The drooping myall has relevance only as a substitute for the more readily accepted funeral cypress.

The note of private melancholy finds no echo in Halloran's "Leichhardt"; the landscape which enshrines Leichhardt's bones - "a cloven waste of gaunt and hungry sand" - is contrasted with one which is drawn not from observation but from memory. It is a region sought by all who are wearied by the harshness of life. It is a region founded on dreams.

He rests not where sick men desire to rest,
 In some sweet slope, beside a hymning stream,
 That lifts perpetual music from its [sic] breast,
 And wanders, like a Spirit in a dream;...

(Appendix p.464)

It is the sort of picture one might expect the explorer, dying of thirst, to call to mind as an escape from present hardships. But it is more than this; it is a turning back to a lost childhood, to a time when all that is difficult is softened and doubts are replaced by serenity and certainty. It is also the landscape of young lovers and this aspect casts a romantic glow over the death of the explorer, especially through the hints of a maiden to whom Leichhardt is forever lost.³⁸ Thus it is a place

Where, as the fair sad moon floats up apace, -
 The maiden, hushing her sweet fears, will press,
 To listen to that voice, and on that face
 To gaze, - which make to her a Heaven of
 happiness.

It is an ideal landscape in so far as it is a negation of the Australian experience. Here are all those qualities which the colonists sought but could not find in the new environment and which explains the search by many explorers to discover landscapes which appeared to reflect European models of beauty.

38

There is some evidence that Leichhardt had become attracted to a Marianne Marlow, although the letters make only slight references to her.

Over everything there hangs a hint of nostalgia for days that have passed and lands that have been left behind. And this suggestion is not completely vitiated by the vagueness of the language nor the imprecision of the description. Something still remains. Even though Halloran relies on the tritest of images to describe the progression of the world through time and space:

The Great Wheel on it's [sic] jarring axle
rings, -

The Whirling Torrent rushes on amain, -

there is nevertheless the desire to return to a happier, more simple existence, both in a personal sense and in a social sense, to avoid the upheavals caused by the discovery of gold.

This desire to recapture past experience, the desire to return to past landscapes, is important in Kendall's treatment of Leichhardt. Kendall sees the explorer perishing in a "land of dry fierce thunder" and he wonders if Leichhardt ever escaped from the Australian experience, from the "waste of thorny terrors", both in vision and actuality, to "the cool green German valley and the singing German stream". He is hopeful that Leichhardt did and that

... in some leafy valley, underneath blue
gracious skies,
In the sound of mountain water, the heroic
traveller lies!
(Appendix p.489)

This is the sort of landscape that Kendall was to make

peculiarly his own; the standard is specifically English, even though it was a landscape which Kendall was not to know personally.

Down a dell of dewy myrtle, where the light is
 soft and green
 And a month, like English April, sits - an
 immemorial queen,
 Let us think that he is resting - think that
 by a radiant grave
 Ever come the songs of forest and the voices
 of the wave!

This is the setting that provides the only fit resting place for the explorer, and it is appropriate not only because of Leichhardt's love of nature (as Kendall suggests in the final line of the poem) but also because it represents Kendall's ideal; it is in such a landscape that the poetic muse dwells.

In the ranges, by the rivers, on the uplands,
 down the dells,
 Where the sound of wind and wave is - there the
 mountain anthem swells,
 Yet shall float the song of lustre, sweet with
 tears and fair with flame,
 Shining with a theme of beauty - holy with our
 Leichhardt's name!

These are the favourite haunts of nature herself and they have become the common property of Australian school-children through Kendall's "Bell Birds".

In these poems written during the nineteenth century with Leichhardt as their theme, three preoccupations emerge. There is first the desire to reconstruct the events which led to the death of the explorer. Then there is the insistence

on an appropriate heroic setting against which these events can occur. Finally there is the attempt to present an ideal landscape where, it is hoped, Leichhardt's bones will find their ultimate resting place. The first of these has occupied poets least; they have been more concerned to delineate a myth of the interior of the continent of Australia and to set this alongside an ideal which is drawn not from experience or observation in the colonies but from memories of Europe.

CHAPTER 7.BURKE AND WILLS: THE LONELY DEATH OF THE HERO

All of the explorers of the Australian continent were accepted as heroes, but there were three who dominate the poetry written about their journeys and achievements: Leichhardt, and Burke and Wills. Leichhardt commanded attention because of his disappearance and legends flourished because of this. It was otherwise with Burke and Wills. Here the demand for heroes outweighed all other considerations, just as the demands for exploit had outweighed considerations of science or geography in the decision to mount the expedition. With Leichhardt's fate little was known; with Burke and Wills there was a surfeit, and poets, in their insistence on the heroic, found much in the story that was irreconcilable. Consequently legend supplanted fact, and Burke and Wills were raised up and sanctified.

As with other explorers, their achievements were measured against those of heroes from earlier times, and the landscape against which they played out their struggle corresponds to that set behind other explorers. It is only in their death that they altered the pattern set before.

Poets had mourned Leichhardt because he had died "unhousel'd, disappointed, unaneled"; Burke and Wills were denied not only the last offices of the church but they perished alone, without the consolation of family or friend. In this lonely death, as the poets presented it, were compounded all those aspects of the central landscape which made it a region to be feared, which made it in fact an alien environment. Such a landscape did not attract, it repelled, and it is therefore little wonder that poets echoed the general demand that the explorers' bodies should be recovered and brought back to Melbourne for burial. The circumstances of the hero's death and the demands for recovery suggest a response to the landscape which denies to exploration its role of discovery and revelation and acceptance. It is this which is the paradox of the story of Burke and Wills.

1

The departure of an exploring expedition was always a matter of considerable excitement to the Australian colonists, but none succeeded in capturing the imagination of contemporaries so completely as the Victorian Expedition of 1860. There are a number of reasons for this: it was, after all, the first exploration venture undertaken by the colony of Victoria and everything about it seemed designed to set it apart from earlier expeditions. Here was no dry and official

undertaking, but one which had its origins in an anonymous donation. There was much about the venture that fed the public's taste for the romantic and the exotic: for the first time camels were to be used in a major attempt to explore the interior of the continent,¹ and these had been brought at considerable expense and with no little difficulty from India. Most importantly of all, the leader was a man whose personal history promised qualities of dash and daring, sufficient, it was felt, to guarantee success. Some seven hundred applications had been received for the subordinate positions and nothing was spared in equipping the party. There was an immense quantity of food, a miniature armoury, and a bewildering array of incidental equipment, including signal lights and rockets, two Union Jacks - and even a Chinese gong!²

It seemed at the time that never had such a cavalcade been assembled in Australia, and the newspaper reports caught and echoed the prevailing excitement when the day of departure arrived.

1

J.A. Horrocks appears to have been the first explorer to make use of camels.

2

Royal Society of Victoria, Progress Reports and Final Report of the Exploration Committee of the Royal Society of Victoria, 1863 (Melbourne, 1863), "Seventh and Final Report", Appendix ii: "List of Articles and Services".

Yesterday will be a memorable day in the annals of Australian history. The 20th of August, 1860, will long be remembered as the day upon which the largest and best appointed expedition yet organised in the Australian colonies started from Melbourne for the purpose of exploring the vast unknown interior of the Australian continent. Perhaps no similar expedition has ever excited greater interest than the one which has just gone forth. ³

A note of colonial pride is not completely absent from this report. It can be heard above the hubbub of preparation and the fanfare of departure, and there is some justification in the wealthiest of the Australian colonies demonstrating its pre-eminence so clearly. And there was another expedition in the field - a circumstance sufficient to give an additional edge to the anticipation. John McDouall Stuart was again pushing north and there was consequently the added exhilaration of a race to be first across the continent.

It is hardly surprising, then, that the citizens of Melbourne turned out almost to a man to wish their own expedition "God Speed!"

One o'clock was the time appointed, but long before that thousands of persons were wending their way to the Royal Park. The road was crowded

³
Age, August 21, 1860.

with vehicles of every description, and all classes of society hastened to take a farewell of those pioneers of civilization and progress, some of whom perchance will never return to reap the reward of their labours, or live to see the result of their enterprise.

The writer of this report was not gifted with the ability to see into the future; he is investing the expedition with all those heroic possibilities that we have come to expect, and which his contemporaries so clearly included in their expectations. The explorers are no longer travellers or even adventurers; they are "pioneers of civilization and progress" and the possibility of tragedy is merely another requirement of the heroic.

The revelry did not cease once the caravan had moved off from Royal Park. The explorers did not travel far but camped that night at Moonee Ponds and the memories of carnival remained with at least one visitor to the camp until many years later: "twas a gala night for all and sundry who visited them that night".⁴

⁴
W.T. Quinton to Street, February 18, 1930.
Latrobe Library H 2416.

Before long the camels, wagons, and men had passed through the settled districts of the colony on their way to the Darling. From here news of dissensions within the party, the resignations of Landells, the second-in-command, and the botanist Dr. Beckler, filtered back to Melbourne but this seems to have done nothing to dampen the general enthusiasm or blight the hopes of success - although doubts were beginning to be voiced in some quarters. Then the expedition passed beyond the reach of contact for many months. There were reports that Burke had divided his party at Nenindie and moved on to Cooper's Creek, leaving the bulk of the equipment and stores in charge of the newly-appointed but unknown Wright. The prolonged silence finally caused concern and in June, 1861, a contingent party under Alfred Howitt was sent out. At Swan Hill he met Brahe who told the disturbing news that Burke, with Wills and two companions, had pressed on from Cooper's Creek to the Gulf of Carpentaria in December of the previous year. Brahe had remained in charge of the depot at Cooper's Creek and had retreated to the Darling when the advance party failed to return.

Those possibilities of disaster which had been hinted at when the expedition departed had been realized. People were reminded of Leichhardt's disappearance in 1848, and it seemed that Burke and his companions had also disappeared, swallowed up in the unknown interior. Howitt returned to Melbourne and his small party was augmented. The other

colonies were brought into the search. McKinlay was despatched from South Australia, the Queensland authorities promised to assist and Victoria commanded her own sloop to the waters of the Gulf in case the travellers had made the northern shore and were stranded there.

Howitt, with Brahe to guide him, reached the Cooper to find Burke and Wills dead and the only survivor, King, living with the natives. The other member of the advance party, Gray, had died on the return from Carpentaria. By November 2nd the worst was known in Melbourne: the continent was crossed, but at enormous cost. And as if this wasn't enough there was the irony of the advance party's returning on the very day on which Brahe had removed from the depot.

Here was the very stuff of epic, and not only Victoria but the whole of Australia erected a heroic fabric from the details. Burke and Wills were translated into heroes overnight; Victoria had sent out a magnificent expedition at great expense and had secured two heroes in return - and the exchange seemed more than worthwhile. No one questioned the transaction, least of all the poets who wrote in almost immediate response to the dramatic outcome. They were prepared, without reservation, to admit the explorers to the ranks of the heroes, and they expressed this in terms which are by now familiar.

There is an equal familiarity in the poetry itself. As with those poems which were written about other explorers, the verses which dealt with Burke and Wills made their appearance for the first time either in newspapers or in small volumes of unimpressive quality. One or two well-known names obtrude, but the majority of the writers live on only in entries in bibliographical or biographical dictionaries. A number of the poems were written almost immediately the outcome of the expedition was known but others continued to be published throughout the succeeding decades of the century.

But whatever the date of publication, the response to the explorers' journey and their death on Cooper's Creek was essentially automatic. The impact of the tragedy was profound; here was an event which clearly demanded a literary expression, especially by those poets who could with justice be regarded as representatives of the people. At this "folk" level it is therefore not surprising that poets turned to the first literary forms which suggested themselves, forms which were obviously suitable for narrative verse. The one most commonly chosen was the ballad, written in four or eight line stanzas of "eights and sixes" or fourteeners. As well, poets turned to the heroic couplet as a vehicle suitable for what they had to say. In very few cases were there attempts to explore other possibilities, and the poets who were prepared to experiment had already moved beyond the simple expectations

to a more consciously literary response. Poets such as Kendall, Gordon and Horne brought to their verses a sensibility and a technical competence that was beyond the reach of other writers.

There was a similar inevitability in the poets' choice of a suitable vocabulary. Those expressions and images which were so deeply embedded in the poetic consciousness of the people - and this was a vocabulary which carried with it all the connotations of the "poetic" - were automatically selected. As a result there is throughout this poetry a pervading sense of the commonplace and the expected. And yet there is more. Despite the inevitability of the response there is still a sense of the impact of the experience on the colonial consciousness, a sense that events had occurred which were significant and which therefore demanded a significant expression.

All the epithets which we have come to expect - as well as the automatic response which it has been argued is inseparable from so much explorer poetry - are present in an anonymous "In Memoriam" which was published in the Melbourne Punch early in November, 1861. It is in many ways a representative sample.

The black man bowed his head and wept
 Above the hero's grave,
 Who, for a noble end achieved,
 His life a forfeit gave:-

(Appendix p.423)

Equally representative is the way in which comparisons are made between Burke and Wills and heroes of other times and in other spheres. The great deeds of Greece and Rome are readily accepted as worthy of emulation, but the Burke and Wills monument, so Edward Booth Loughran insists in his poem "The Story of Burke and Wills", "a tale recalls / Of heroes nearer home". (Appendix p.494) And the task the explorers performed is no less heroic than martial deeds.

What was their task? Not theirs the fire
 That glows in martial hearts
 When to the fight for fatherland
 Rank after rank departs,
 And beating drums and pennons fair
 Make bright the scene and glad the air;
 Yet no less lofty mission they,
 Nor perilous less, took up that day.

The move from military heroism to patriotism requires no great imaginative leap, and many colonial poets made it. The poetry, however, remains obstinately behind. To Loughran, "fatherland" implied Britain, but to another poet, Provis, the explorer's patriotism feeds a local fire.

Australia - mourn! thy brightest star is fled,
 Thy hero of explorers now lies dead;
 That spirit once so ardent, brave, and true,
 Has breathed to all on earth its last adieu.

(Appendix p.509)

There were others who were eager to tend a provincial hearth. Nixon, in his "Burial of Burke and Wills", directs his apostrophe to Victoria alone, calling on that colony to treasure the explorers' bones, to

Guard well the legacy! it is a gift
Than which the proudest nation may desire
no grander. Here is that which typifies
All that is brave, enduring, martyr-like,
High-toned, heroic!

(Appendix p.508)

But the bones represent more than the achievements of the explorers; they are also evidence of the moral value of the heroic death.

These dry, unburied bones
Are thine to boast of, thine to sow as seed
In soil from which new heroes shall arise,
As fabled phoenix from thy smouldering pile.

Nixon's poetry, like his gardening, is suspect, even when allowance is made for the inept conflation of differing myths.

For colonial poets the heroic stature of Burke and Wills was beyond dispute, but there were some, like "Orion" Horne, who were prepared to extend the honour to other members of the party. He is prepared to include not only King and Gray, companions on the dash to the Gulf, but also those who had been left behind at Menindie to bring up the stores to Cooper's Creek. These members of the expedition are to some extent the forgotten men of the tragedy, especially those who died during Wright's ineffectual wanderings between the Darling

and the Cooper. But they are not forgotten to Horne; they are given some small share of the heroic mantle under which to creep.

Already Death has visited this band
Of spirits heroic. Those who formed the rear
Journeying towards Cooper's Creek, camped at Bulloo
'Midst hostile blacks, with fever and disease,
Were still too sick to follow; man or beast.
(Appendix p.476)

He is even prepared to include Burke's "sturdy bush-horse" Billy in the company of "spirits heroic". His death, when it comes, is as noble as that of his master.

Alas! poor horse! thou did'st thy duty well;
Drank'st of the stream from Carpentaria,
And, like to some who once in life were blest,
Saw Paradise, and yet died miserably.
(Appendix p.478)

There is no doubt that the poets who responded to the story of Burke and Willis regarded the explorers as heroes, and in their treatment of their heroism they applied the same tests and made the same comparisons as those poets who wrote of other discoverers. But to so insist in this case involved poets in some difficulties, for there were elements in the narrative of the expedition's progress, odd threads of dissension and knots of bungling and ineptitude that hampered the weaving of the heroic fabric. And such difficulties were particularly troublesome in the case of the leader, Burke.

Although the anonymous donation, of £1000, was instrumental in involving the public of Victoria directly in the exploration of the interior of Australia, investigations into ways in which Victoria might take a more significant part in such exploration had been in hand for some time. The Philosophical Institute of Victoria (which was to become the Royal Society of Victoria in 1860) had originally envisaged an attempt to cross the continent from east to west and had offered the position of leader to the experienced explorer A.C. Gregory. In his reply to the offer, Gregory expressed reservations about the scope of the undertaking and its likely success and declined the position. More specifically, he declared his conviction that the leader ought to be a man chosen from within the colony of Victoria, some one who would be "more closely identified with the community" than an outsider. He also advised a modified scheme in place of the transcontinental crossing and at the time it appeared that the Royal Society had accepted his advice.⁵ But the anonymous donation enabled the original plan to be revived,

5

Philosophical Institute of Victoria, Transactions and Proceedings, ii (1858), pp. xiv - xxiii.

and it was decided to invite applications for the post of leader. Seventeen were received and these were subsequently reduced to three; from these Burke was balloted in.

There is enough evidence to suggest that the result did not meet with universal approval. Burke could claim no experience as an explorer, neither was he a scientist; and his position as Police Inspector at Beechworth did not necessarily fit him for the tasks he might be called upon to face. At least one man was sufficiently concerned with Burke's apparant deficiencies to decline to accept a position as assistant surveyor with the expedition. On August 21, 1860 - the very day on which the expedition was farewelled from Royal Park - Alfred Selwyn of the Government Survey Office wrote offering such an appointment to a Mr. Morres. Morres replied with a request for additional information, and he especially sought answers to some specific questions.

1st Do you think the party is properly fitted out for the purpose and that the men chosen are fitted for the task before them?

2nd Do you think Mr. Burke has all the qualities that a leader ought to have. (Everyone gives him credit for being a kind hearted man with plenty of pluck and determination, & with great powers of endurance, but some who know him predict disturbance in his party from his too hasty temper and say that he

acts too much from impulse).⁶

Morres's questions suggest that there was some public criticism of Burke's appointment and some doubts about the successful completion of the enterprise. That Selwyn shared these doubts is apparent from his reply:

I fear I shall not be able to give you satisfactory answers to your queries and I must say, that I have not much faith in the success of the Expedition as at present constituted.⁷

Even those people who knew Burke personally and were prepared to champion his selection as leader were forced to concede his eccentricity. One commentator, admittedly writing many years later, found evidence of this in Burke's habits of dress.

His ordinary dress was a slouched hat, short sac coat, without vest, flying open to the breeze, baggy trousers without braces and turned up at the heels, and slippers. He sometimes appeared on horseback in this fashion while drilling the mounted police, who, whatever they might think of their officer's turn-out, soon discerned that they had a competent and strict instructor. It was this sort of thing that led

6

H. Morres to Alfred Selwyn, August 25, 1860. Latrobe Library 5449.

7

Selwyn to Morres, August 28, 1860. Latrobe Library M5549.

many people to misjudge Burke. They failed to see that, below the surface, there was much vigorous common sense, and thorough knowledge of official work.⁸

But there were still those who relied on proverbial wisdom and it was not long before the predictions were borne out. Even before the party had reached the Darling the foreman had resigned and once there the second-in-command and the medical officer, Beckler, withdrew. Such signs were even more difficult to excuse when it was recalled that the leader had been given a free hand in the selection of his subordinates. The Melbourne papers, and those of the other colonies, began to publish bulletins on the health of the expedition and it was clear that the patient was not doing well. Nevertheless, there was a general reluctance to diagnose too precisely. In early November, 1860, the South Australian Advertiser commented on the loss of some of the camels and told of abandoned carts and wagons.

From all of this one does not acquire very exalted ideas of the Burke expedition, which, like all other monster caravans, seems destined to break down by its own weight.⁹

⁸ John Sadleir, Recollections of a Victorian Police Officer (Melbourne, 1913), p. 73.

⁹ South Australian Advertiser, November 6, 1860.

When, in the following year, it was learned that an advance party had gone on from Cooper's Creek towards the Gulf, the same paper castigated the apparent senselessness of the preparations and outlay.

When we reflect upon the immense caravan that left Melbourne, it appears astounding that nearly the whole of this imposing force of men, horses, and camels, should have been required chiefly as an escort party through the known country, and that Burke, with three companions, six camels, and one horse should have been left alone to make the great venture.¹⁰

South Australians could pride themselves on the success of Stuart's lightly equipped party, but there was more here than intercolonial jealousy. Melbourne reactions were equally critical. The Melbourne Weekly Age described the expedition as "one prolonged blunder throughout", even though it made no attempt to indicate where the cause might be sought.¹¹

The business of apportioning blame, of finding causes and naming names, began immediately the news of the death of Burke and Wills reached Melbourne. Within ten days

¹⁰
ibid., July 8, 1861.

¹¹
Melbourne Weekly Age, July 5, 1861. Quoted in William Wills (ed), A Successful Exploration through the Interior of Australia (London, 1863), p. 253.

the Government had appointed a Royal Commission, charged to enquire into and report upon "the circumstances connected with the sufferings and death of ROBERT O'HARA BURKE and WILLIAM JOHN WILLS".¹² By the end of January, 1862, the Commission had completed its hearings and had drafted and adopted its report. The responsibility for the disaster was sheeted home.

The Royal Commission was faced with a difficult task. The evidence which it had heard made it inevitable that some censure would have to be directed at the leader, and the criticisms that it made were associated with certain vital stages in the progress of the expedition. The Commission, for example, described Burke's appointment of Wright at Menindie as an "error of judgment" in that he had insufficient knowledge of the man. There was, however, some attempt made to blunt the point of the criticism in the suggestion that Burke had faced a "pressing urgency" at the time. The leader was also held responsible for the division of the party at Cooper's Creek - and act which the Commission suggested "evinced a far greater amount of zeal than prudence".¹³

12

Victoria, Parliament, Burke and Wills Commission, Report of the Commissioners, V.P.P. No. 97 of 1861-2.

13

ibid., p. vi.

Nevertheless the Commission was at some pains to keep the reputation of the leader as unsullied as possible, and what sting there was in their condemnations was largely drawn by the concluding remarks of the report :

We cannot too deeply deplore the lamentable result of an expedition, undertaken at so great a cost to the Colony; but, while we regret the absence of a systematic plan of operations on the part of the Leader, we desire to express our admiration of his gallantry and daring, as well as of the fidelity of his brave coadjutor Mr. Wills, and their more fortunate and enduring associate Mr. King;...¹⁴

The Commission was not so temperate in their judgement of others connected with the expedition. Brahe was not too harshly dealt with. His abandoning the depot at Cooper's Creek was most likely to draw censure, but the fatal coincidence seemed to suggest the intervention of a blind fate into the affairs of men and he was absolved of a responsibility which, it was felt, was "far beyond his expectations". There were, in any case, more suitable candidates for the Commission's pillory than either Burke or Brahe. When the blame was shared around by far the greater portion was given to Wright. Instead of following Burke on to Cooper's Creek he had

¹⁴
ibid., p. vii.

remained for month after month on the Darling and to this delay, which Wright never satisfactorily explained, was attributed "the whole of the disasters of the expedition, with the exception of the death of Gray".¹⁵

Only one party to the expedition remained - the Royal Society - and especially its Exploration Committee, and it was criticised more for sins of omission than otherwise. Because it had failed to act when it knew that the expedition was in peril it was censured for what the Commission described as "errors of a serious nature".¹⁶

There was certainly enough here to call into question the heroic nature of the entire enterprise, or at least to shake the pedestal on which Burke had been placed. In fact this did not happen. There was criticism, certainly, but the public's demand for heroes was greater than their desire for truth. Even before the Commission had handed down its report the Argus refused to allow any blame to attach to Burke.

The tongue of slander, which has been busy with the name of ROBERT O'HARA BURKE, has failed to point out a single fault of any importance committed by the leader of the Exploration party.

15
ibid., p. vi.

16
ibid., p. vi.

The dashing success of the Expedition - the whole history of its conduct - the silent evidence borne by the diary of WILLS - lastly, the direct and emphatic testimony given by the best possible witness, the sole survivor of the party, all prove beyond any cavil that BURKE was a fitting leader for the Victorian Expedition. The base and dastardly attempts which have been made to injure his name with the public, and the absurd endeavour made to exalt the second above the first, must fail to touch a reputation, now removed above the reach of calumny and malice. Gratitude and justice alike demand that we should render this tribute to a character, whose failings, whatever they were, did in no way affect his duty to the country which he loyally served, and for which he died. The first qualities of a leader - the brain to conceive, the will to do, and the courage to dare - were all possessed in an eminent degree by BURKE. The temper of the old Greek hero was his - the strength of heart -

"To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

In such an office the moral was the highest qualification, and mere technical skill, or animal endurance, of far less account.

The Argus's comments are useful both for the way they demonstrate the criticisms of the leader which were circulating, and the refusal of those who demanded heroes to accept them. So determined were some to preserve Burke's position against all challenge that when the decision was made to change the name of the expedition to perpetuate the name of both Burke

and his surveyor, Wills, one correspondent to the press responded:

Justice demands that the decision ... should be reversed, and that Burke should bear the undivided honours.¹⁸

It is clear that, even though criticism was expressed, nothing was permitted to tarnish the heroic enterprise.

Poets who were moved to write of the expedition and its achievements behaved in a similar way. They tended either to ignore those details of the narrative which they found difficulty in reconciling with the glorious event, or they deflected the blame for the bungling and the eventual disaster onto those members of the team whom the Commission had censured. Or else they dissipated the responsibility so widely that the position of the leader remained unchallenged. The Commission, it has already been noted, directed its attention towards several vital stages of the expedition's progress: the division of the party and the appointment of Wright at Menindie, the subsequent splitting of the smaller party at Cooper's Creek, the "desertion" of Brahe. By looking at the way in which poets handled these potentially unheroic crises much may be learned of the legend-making process.

¹⁸

ibid., December 9, 1861.

Only one poet, Eliza Berry, makes specific reference to the division of the expedition at Menindie and the resulting appointment of Wright. Her poem "Australian Explorers (from 1818 to 1876) in Rhyme" is a tedious and pedestrian attempt to cover the field of exploration during this period and her treatment of the Burke and Wills expedition is no more distinguished than other sections. It is disappointing both in vision and technique, as her account of events at the Darling demonstrates.

His party strong, with fatal speed,
 O'Hara Burke divides,
 To Wright, the stranger, gives the lead,
 And all the camp confides;
 But ill-requited is the trust,
 And pregnant of mischance;
 That blunder caused their deaths unjust,
 Our pity does enhance.

(Appendix p.443)

There is nothing here of interest apart from the one note of criticism directed at Burke, and the recognition of the fatal consequences that were to flow from his decision.

The fatal withdrawal of the depot party from Cooper's Creek on the very day that the advance party returned proved to be much more attractive to poets. F.M. Hughan's "The Lost Explorers" traces the fortunes of the expedition from the departure for the Gulf until they return to the Creek,

"the great achievement done". As they neared the camp they were sustained by success

But of their anguish who may know,
Save God, who heard each groan,
When they saw no face at the trysting place,
And found themselves alone!

(Appendix p.482)

Another poem, this time by Provis, and untitled, makes a disappointingly ineffectual attempt to establish blame, and emphasises the tantalisingly brief space of time by which the two parties missed each other.

What cruel hearts thus to desert their chief,
When most he stood in need of their relief!
Had they a few short hours prolong'd their stay,
The gallant Burke had been alive today.

(Appendix p.510)

Provis does not excuse Brahe's withdrawal, as the Commission was to do; his is the responsibility.

Both Hughan and Provis wrote within weeks of the first report of the tragedy. By the time Horne came to deal with the events much more was known. The Commission had completed its deliberations and this additional information informs Horne's poem. Nevertheless he makes no attempt to be specific in his censure.

The goal, so achingly desired, at last is reached
By these three worn-down, yet victorious men -
And all is vacancy! - the camp broken up!
Deserted - man and beast - their friends are gone,
Not one remains! A scored tree-trunk imparts
The dreadful truth - the blank dismayng news!
The heart-depressing strait that few foresaw,

Yet all should have foreseen as possible,
 And with care all forestalled. That very morn
 Their friends departed, thinking them all dead,
 And fearing a like fate, their homeward course
 had sped.

(Appendix p.477)

There is no criticism here of Burke, or even of Brahe. The culprit is that anonymous "all" - the depot party is absolved from culpability. Horne strives to recreate the impact of the "dreadful truth" through the broken syntax, the series of exclamations, but this is more successfully achieved through the sympathetic tone which embraces both Burke and Brahe.

Loughran is also able to combine a feeling of sympathy for all involved but Catherine Martin, in her extremely long poem, "The Explorers", has pity only for Burke, and Wills, and Gray.

What use in idle tears or words, and yet,
 Who could repress the words of wild regret
 When in that fateful and soul-crushing hour,
 Helpless, foresaken, by the tree they cower?
 If Brahe had but stayed another day -
 If they had risked no needless vain delay -
 But he had gone, and they were left alone,
 And Heaven was deaf to piteous cries and moan;... 19

Although there were unheroic overtones in the account of the abandoned depot, poets were more concerned

19

"C.M." (Catherine Martin), "The Explorers", The Explorers and other Poems (Melbourne, 1874), p. 93. An extract only is included in the Appendix.

with the possibilities of irony, and noble irony at that, which it offered. Consequently the question of blame was to a great extent irrelevant. Better to focus attention on the tragic tableau, the heroes left to their fate not primarily through the insufficiencies of men but through the intervention of fate. Here was the real tragedy. With such a view in mind Horne is able to establish the nobility of the explorers' deaths, despite the blame that might with justice be levelled.

THE WORLD PROGRESSES BY ITS MARTYR'D MEN:
 Let none deplore the means whereby it moves
 To higher knowledge and to larger acts;
 But the great sorrow o'er these noble bones,
 After their victory, springs from the thought -
 How little foresight would have saved their lives!
 (Appendix p.479)

Even so, Horne is careful to exclude the leader from any blame. Others were prepared to account for the disasters of the expedition in terms of human inadequacies, and even Burke is not immune, although his implication is at times ambiguous.

Just think! of all that goodly train
 From Royal Park set forth,
 Four men, six camels and a horse
 Now front the unknown north!
 Certes, not for emprise like this
 Was treasure pour'd like rain I wis;
 But all that Care and Foresight plann'd
 Soon scatters Folly's reckless hand.
 (Appendix p.496)

The retreat into allegory at least saves the poet from the threat of an action for libel, while the personification permits the poet so wide a dispersal of blame that all are safe.

Catherine Martin, on the other hand, chooses to make her criticism through the figure of an old man, recently returned from the bush. The poet has considerable difficulty in deciding on the form her poem is to take and she introduces the traveller as a commentator on the departure of the expedition from Royal Park. He is granted sufficient powers of perception to recognize the canker at the heart of the outward show.

I don't wish to pall
The general joy, with auguries of dark ill,
Nor play the raven, 'mid glad birds - but still
Incompetence and self-will have oft-times been
The ruin of great enterprises, and I ween
Such fatal qualities are not wanting here.²⁰

Although the predictions seem dire enough, any possibility of their application to Burke is removed, later in the poem, when Burke rehearses in front of Willis the complaints others are likely to make.

"Oh, but I fear, my boy, that though our name
Cannot be linked with aught unworthy those
Chosen for a great task, that as time shows
What fell disasters met us on the way,
There will be no lack of those who'll say -
"Poor fellows! one was rash, the other young;
When the fate of such an undertaking hung
On such a pair, what wonder that success
Did not attend them." Harsh and merciless
Will be some men's speech. O! I seem to hear
The shallow pratings of those who make clear
The course we should have taken, and the cause
Why danger and distress were ours. The flaws
Of our policy will be passing plain
To the most obtuse intellect.

(Appendix p.503)

Although the explorer's speech recognises the likelihood of criticisms there is a noble resignation evident here that discounts them almost before they can be made. Paradoxically, even the admission of the unheroic blunders which others will discover enhances the heroic stature of the men.

Faced with a narrative which was flawed with so many unheroic elements, poets in general preferred to focus their vision on what remained unquestionably noble. This was achieved not through a subversion of truth but rather through a determination to preserve the image of the explorer-hero. Where this seemed to present unavoidable difficulties poets chose to dissipate the blame so widely that no one individual was noticeably maligned. Such a course of action was not prompted by a desire to necessarily falsify, but there was a higher demand which took precedence - the desire for heroes.

Perhaps the most interesting detail of the story, and the one most difficult to accommodate in any heroic treatment, is the death of Gray. Charley Gray was one of the three selected by Burke to accompany him to the Gulf, and he died during the closing stages of the return. That he had been unwell for some time is evident from the references made to him in Wills's journal. On March 7, 1861, Wills reported on the health of both Burke and Gray: "Mr. Burke almost recovered [Burke had become ill through eating a snake which

Gray had caught], but Charley is again unwell, and unfit to do anything; he caught cold last night through carelessness in covering himself.²¹ There is no further mention of Gray's illness until March 25, when Wills recounts the following incident:

After breakfast took some time altitudes, and was about to go back to the last Camp for some things that had been left, when I found Gray behind a tree eating skilligolee. He explained that he was suffering from dysentery, and had taken the flour without leave. Sent him to report himself to Mr. Burke, and went on. He, having got King to tell Mr. Burke for him, was called up and received a good thrashing. There is no knowing to what extent he has been robbing us. Many things have been found to run unaccountably short.²²

On Monday, April 8, there is another brief reference: "Halted fifteen minutes to send back for Gray, who gassed he could not walk".²² The final note on the fate of Gray appears in the entry for April 17: "This morning, about sunrise, Gray died. He had not spoken a word distinctly since his first attack, which was just as we were about to start".²³ Four days later the party struggled into the deserted depot.

²¹ The Burke and Wills Exploring Expedition, p. 23.

²² ibid., p. 24.

²³ ibid., p. 25.

Burke's treatment of his subordinate and the events which led up to his death became the subject of specific questions at the Royal Commission. King, the only one present competent to answer, was asked to describe the incident over the flour, and then the following questions were put to him:

937. Mr. Burke was in camp? - Yes, at that time. Gray requested me that I should do it, as I knew the nature of the case, and I did it. I told Mr. Burke that Mr. Wills had found Gray sitting under a tree, some distance from our camp, eating this porridge.

938. Cooked? - Yes, cooked - some flour boiled; and Mr. Burke called him, and asked him what he meant by stealing the stores, and asked him if he did not receive an equal share of the rations, which of course he could not deny; Mr. Burke then gave him several boxes on the ear with his open hand, and not a sound thrashing, as Mr. Wills states; Mr. Wills was at the other camp at the time, and it was all over when he returned. Mr. Burke may have given him six or seven slaps on the ear.²⁴

There is no doubt King was determined to protect the reputation of the leader, as his reaction to Landell's brief appearance before the commission suggests, and this must colour any attempt to mediate between his and Wills's record of the incident. King later felt it necessary to come to Burke's defence and deny the rumours that Gray had been "knocked down, kicked,

24

Burke and Wills Commission, Report, p. 34.

and so ill-used that King would have shot the leader if he had had a pistol". King's reply was basically similar to the answer he had given before the Commission: "Mr. Burke boxed his ears several times with both hands, and followed him up for a few steps as he retreated".²⁵

Whichever version is accepted, the fact still remains that Burke's behaviour could never be considered noble. As a result no poet even attempts to handle the situation. There is no way in which the blame can be deflected or dissipated and so the incident is ignored. Gray's death is presented, certainly, but in such a way that his illness, suffering and death is another item in an impressive catalogue of heroism. Eliza Berry, for example, reverses the role of the leader; instead of chastisement, he now offers encouragement.

Exhausted, starved, but hopeful still,
 That help may yet be near,
 The leaders, with heroic will,
 Their weaker comrades cheer;
 But hope for one is now no more,
 The slowly dying Gray:
 His last words said long days before,
 He gently sinks away.

(Appendix p.445)

25

Quoted in "Laurel and Cypress: A Chapter in the History of Australian Exploration", Frazer's Magazine (1862), p. 736.

For Horne, Gray's death is a measure of the heroic nature of the journey back; no human agency is responsible.

... and Grey [sic] succumbed,
 From the intolerable suffering of the march
 Thus forced by want, and down he sank, like one
 So craving rest, he had no thought beyond;
 Nor of his last words have we any note,
 Nor of the spot where lie his mouldering bones.
 (Appendix p.477)

The epic nature of the undertaking is further stressed in Hughan's poem. Gray's death has become one of a series of "battles". The explorers have been confronted by "cold and famine", "fiery heat", and rocks which caused their "wounded feet" to leave a "trail of blood". Now powers greater than the landscape have entered the fight; death stalks the explorers and with his "icy hand" strikes down the unfortunate Gray (Appendix p.481). Or else other spectres are his close companions:

But want and sickness haunt their way,
 Still hovering round like beasts of prey,
 Till, rack'd with famine, pain, disease,
 Gray finds in death a glad release.
 (Appendix p.497)

Poets who set out to construct an epic from the narrative of the Burke and Wills expedition were faced with a difficult task. If one is permitted a musical analogy - the heroic theme was there, especially in the sufferings and deaths of Burke and Wills and Gray but there was the need constantly to guard against discords or accidental changes of key. That the poets succeeded is a measure of their determination

to ignore those notes of less than heroic quality - nothing was permitted to damage the reputations of the explorers or diminish the nobility of their sacrifice.

With Leichhardt it was claimed that legends grew where no facts were known; with Burke and Wills the legend was in danger of being choked by the weeds of fact and so they were pulled in order that the plant might grow and flower.

4

Such a horticultural programme was also followed when poets turned their attention to motives behind the expedition. Although facts might suggest otherwise, their accounts show the expedition purged of all traces of self-seeking or commercial considerations and the undertaking is presented as a venture inspired by the highest and most noble of motives: duty, self-sacrifice, the desire for scientific knowledge. History hints at other motives and so it is as well, therefore, to understand something of the motives of the men who conceived and executed the scheme.

As early as 1857 the Royal Society of Victoria (or the Philosophical Institute as it then was) had shown an interest in exploration. An exploration committee was appointed

and it was directed to enquire into the "practicability of fitting out in Victoria an expedition for traversing the unknown interior of the Australian Continent from east to west".²⁶

Apart from the one reference to the colony of Victoria the Society appeared to be displaying no more than a commendable scientific curiosity. But the intrusion of that single note of colonial patriotism suggests quite accurately the way in which the project was to develop. Indeed, at its first meeting the Committee unanimously acknowledged the "desirability" of Victoria's sharing in the work of exploration, however, several meetings later the virtue of sharing diminished; to be replaced by a desire to prove Victoria's superiority over the other colonies.

At the same time the solution of an important geographical problem no longer seemed to so urgent, or so attractive. What was wanted was an opportunity to carry out some spectacular exploit. The explorer Gregory, in his reply to the Committee's offer of appointment to the leadership, had brought the alternatives to the Committee's notice.

26

Royal Society of Victoria, Progress Reports and Final Report, "First Report", p. 1.

Either they could support the work of gradually reducing "the limits of the Australian terra incognita" or else they could channel their efforts into "the very doubtful, but, if successful, the more brilliant mode of making energetic endeavours to accomplish the result without delay".²⁷ Gregory cautioned "prudence" but it was not a dish to the Committee's taste; they did not want a simple meal - they wanted a banquet.

Admittedly they had supported Gregory's modest scheme for an expedition to prepare the way for a transcontinental attempt, but this had foundered on the rocks of Government indifference. And then the situation changed dramatically. The donation of £1000 was doubled by the public, but not until the disinterested service to science had been replaced by the hard, measurable, material benefits that might be expected from discovery. Promises of improved communications, especially by telegraph, and the opening up of access to "vast areas of pastoral land" in the north succeeded where appeals to science had failed.²⁸ Somewhere the desire to solve an important geographical problem had been lost. Both the public and the Royal Society wanted more than cautious exploration.

27

Philosophical Institute of Victoria, Transactions and Proceedings, ii (1858), p. xvii.

28

Royal Society of Victoria, Progress Reports and Final Report, "Special Report of the Exploration Fund Committee for 1859", p. 2.

And the patriotic note which had sounded earlier was sounded again. John McDouall Stuart was in the field in an attempt to cross the continent and the South Australian Government was offering a reward for the first to reach the northern coast. Exploration slipped further into the background and the enterprise came to be seen increasingly as a race - as the famous cartoon in the Melbourne Punch makes clear.²⁹ Both South Australia and Victoria realised that the honour of their respective colonies was at stake and so comparisons were inevitable.

The Melbourne papers appear solicitous to gather up every crumb of information relative to Mr. Burke's exploring party; and few, indeed, are the allusions to Mr. Burke that are not associated with allusions to Mr. Stuart.³⁰

But nothing demonstrates the Royal Society's concern for success better than the insistence that Burke be kept informed of Stuart's progress. A special despatch was sent to warn of Stuart's return in 1860 and the messenger was instructed to follow Burke on from Menindie if necessary. Although it was denied at the Royal Commission that the Society

29

The cartoon, which appeared on November 5, 1860, carries the caption "The Great Australian Exploration Race".

30

South Australian Advertiser, November 6, 1860.

ever intended to urge Burke on,³¹ Kathleen Fitzpatrick has pointed out that the envelope which contained the despatch bore the admonition "The Honour of Victoria is in your hands".³²

Although patriotism and heroism are not incompatible - it is generally accepted that heroism achieves its highest expression in service to one's country - the type of patriotic fervour implied in a colonial scramble for the Gulf seemed somewhat less than sublime. And since not only the promoters but the public as well saw the undertaking as a race, poets found themselves in a decidedly ambivalent position. Their main concern was the celebration of an heroic achievement and so any connotations of a race are carefully excluded. To Eliza Berry the prime task set for the explorers is to reach the northern shore but it is the achievement of a goal that is stressed. There is no mention of other contestants. Even the fact that Burke was unable to come within actual sight of the sea does not diminish the scale of his success.

31

See questions 1617-1619 and their respective answers, Burke and Wills Commission, Report, p. 60.

32

Kathleen Fitzpatrick, "The Burke and Wills Expedition and the Royal Society of Victoria", H.S.A.N.Z., x, 40 (May, 1963), p. 476.

What matter flood and noxious damp,
 When victory is theirs?
 Why trouble that the mangrove swamp
 Their view of sea impairs? -
 For they have reached the flowing tide,
 They breathe the salt sea air,
 And with a glorious sense of pride,
 They leave a record there.

(Appendix p.444)

There is little impression of a contest in Berry's description and even less in those of other poets. In Horne's version the explorers' success is acclaimed, but any notion of a race is lost in the heightened meaning bestowed on the event.

The Continent is crossed! What joy is theirs!
 What triumph of the soul, and the full heart!
 What sense of the Great Victories of Peace,
 Which shall bring good-will among distant men.

(Appendix p.475)

In general, though, poets wrote of the achievements of the expedition in terms which echo poems encountered earlier. There is a ready acceptance of the explorer's task as one of revelation of an unknown continent, and the confrontation between man and an alien environment. So similar is this vision of the explorer's role to that held by poets discussed earlier that the terms in which it is expressed are identical. To the anonymous poet of "In Memoriam" the explorers achieve success because they have "rent aside the veil" (appendix p.423); Loughran's formula is equally familiar: it is the work of the explorer

To pierce, for science and for man,
 Through far untrodden plains,
 To dare the pangs of famine, heat,
 And thirst's fell maddening pains;
 The close-hid secrets to reveal
 Australia's central wilds conceal,
 And gain, if life and strength could hold,
 To where the northern ocean rolled.

(Appendix p.494)

The whole procedure represented here deserves no other comment; it offers nothing more than a barren formula. Even when the terms are varied, or the poet seeks to impart a dramatic quality to the presentation, the result is only marginally different. This is what Horne attempts to do in his description of the journey north.

They journey on, week after weary week,
 Through ways impassable, as Nature thought
 When first she cast these deserts from her hand,
 Unsuitable for life. But manhood, rare
 In energy and fortitude, improves
 Its Maker's gifts, 'till, hardening to the work,
 The shaggy, matted wilderness is cloven,
 And opens her thorny breast to let them pass.

(Appendix p.474)

The sense which pervades Horne's account of a landscape opposed to intrusion is at the heart of the formula poets employed, as a check-list of the verbs used to describe the penetration indicate: "cloven", "force", "rent", "carve", "pierce" and so on. Such terms offer innumerable permutations but the sense of assault by violence is always there. The explorer as revealer is also ravisher, and the land is hostile and resistant.

The formula that was used to describe the explorer's task had its counterpart when poets came to present their impressions of the landscape against which the heroic action of the story was to be staged. Although Wills's journal provides no evidence of immense tracts of desert that had to be negotiated by the expedition, poets, in their determination to construct a suitable mythic landscape, turned aside from reports of easy progress and well-watered country to embrace the vision of a "desert vast and lone".

An examination of Wills's journal indicates how fortunate the explorers were in both their outward journey and their return. Within a week of setting out Wills reports that the country through which they have so far passed "has been of the finest description for pastoral purposes. The grass and saltbush are everywhere abundant, and water is plentiful, with every appearance of permanence".³³ As they proceeded into the tropics, Wills noted that "the country improved at every step. Flocks of pigeons rose and flew off to the eastward,

33

The Burke and Wills Exploring Expedition, p. 16.

and fresh plants met our view on every rise; everything green and luxuriant".³⁴ The return from the Gulf was made incredibly difficult by incessant rain and flooded country; even the entry which describes the return to the Stony Desert makes it clear how different this expedition found conditions - how different the situation was from Sturt's experience some fifteen years earlier.

Saturday, April 13. - Small water-courses lined with lakes. Plenty of saltbush and chrysanthemums on either side. Camped on Stony Desert.³⁵

This must have reinforced Willis's earlier impression that the horrors of the Stony Desert had been much overrated. On that earlier occasion he had expressed his "disappointment" at the reality.

Sunday, Dec. 23. - At five a.m., we struck out across the desert in a W.N.W. direction. At four miles and a half we crossed a sand-ridge, and then returned to our N.W. by N. course. We found the ground not nearly so bad for travelling on as that between Bulloo and Cooper's Creek; in fact, I do not know whether it arose from our exaggerated anticipation of horrors or not, but we

34
ibid., p. 19.

35
ibid., p. 25.

thought it far from bad travelling ground, and as to pasture, it is only the actual stony ground that is bare, and many a sheep run is, in fact, worse grazing than that.³⁶

Not all poets deserted the actuality for the vision of a parched and stony centre. Loughran records the party's "toilsome march"

'Neath blazing suns, o'er stony tracts,
The tiring feet that parch;
Through tearing scrub, through flooded fens,
O'er dreary flats of salt-bush dense,
Through forests where dim twilight broods,
O'er rivers swoln with tropic floods.

(Appendix p.496)

It is a landscape of wild extremes, and to this extent is an accurate reflection of the factual basis derived from the expedition's narrative. However, he goes on to describe the delight felt by the explorers when they come upon those "green and luxuriant" regions which Willis noted so enthusiastically in his journal.

Yet sometimes cheer'd their weary eyes
Scenes fair as dreamland knows;
Wide uplands, gay with flower and bird,
Green valleys of repose;
And spirits rose, and hopes grew bright
Besides the camp-fire's ruddy light,
While shiver'd on the broad lagoon
The silver arrows of the moon.

It is significant that this description comes almost at the point in the journey where the travellers come within the tidal

reach of the sea. It is a landscape of dreams, certainly; a landscape similar to that which poets predicated as a fitting resting place for Leichhardt. But it is here a landscape of success as well - the goal for which all explorers were striving. There is nothing in the poet's description to designate this as an Australian landscape, except for the colonial touch of the camp-fire. Every other component of the scene is more English than colonial - even the harsh power of the "blazing sun" had given way to the "silver arrows of the moon". And the difference in tone and sensibility when this stanza is compared with the one quoted earlier makes it apparent that, in the same way that the explorers have reached their goal in a green and pleasant land, so too has the poet.

The two landscapes - the mythic and the actual - come together effectively in Horne's account of the explorers' progress through the desert.

Red sandy plains,
 And hills that seem to bake before they blaze,
 Must now be traversed. Thence, the different toils
 Of the Great Stony Desert - hideous miles
 On miles more hideous. But, ere long, the scene
 Grows verdurous; creek after creek appears.
 Great parks and forests; chains of water-holes
 Full of bright fish; rich grass and pasture lands.
 Here is no barren desert, as 'twas thought,
 But a new region for laborious hands!

(Appendix p.475)

Although Horne's statement appears to explode the myth of the centre, in a paradoxical way it reinforces it. For this

idyllic region is only encountered by the travellers when they have passed through the "red sandy plains". That such a region is to be equated with a regained Eden is made plain by the poet's immediate acceptance that the goal of the northern coast has been reached.

With beaming and exultant eyes they gaze
 On glittering swamps, and chains of reedy pools
 Made rich with floating stars of many a flower;
 Marshes and grassy emerald, streak'd with gold
 Or touched with flashes of the rising sun;
 Lengthening lagoons tufted with islets; brave
 In flags and ferns, or mossy rocks and shrubs,
 Where colonies of wild fowl swim around;
 While overhead, in the cerulean sky,
 Flocks of white pigeons gambol, poise, and flash,
 And in the distance, 'midst these watery lands,
 Grave pelicans on sandy reaches stand,
 Flapping the showery arches of their wings,
 As if in welcome, while the herons scream,
 Like music to the ear of victory.

Everything is transmuted in this ideal landscape; the sun is no longer an agent of torture, but a benign force that infuses everything with flashes of light. The very sky is a region of life abundant; in fact there is a totality of landscape here, with the "reedy pools" appearing like the heavens with its stars, while the air allows the birds to "gambol, poise, and flash". However, this inversion gives no hint of contrariety. Here everything is at peace, the ideal landscape has been found.

Only in isolated cases did poets turn to such a pleasant landscape, even though it had its basis firmly fixed

in fact. Of much greater interest was the creation of a mythic landscape which would provide a setting suitable for the heroic action of the story. Not that this interest always led poets to produce acceptable poetry; it is usual to find that they rely on the most formulaic of approaches. The region of the centre is evoked through the use of epithets which are themselves so arid as to contribute little meaning at all. Kendall, for example, depends on such hackneyed terms as "weary waste" or "wild faced plain", while Lewin settles for "weary waste of sand" or a "desert vast and lone". Gordon, too, is unable to escape the expected with his "sand waste lone". And yet empty as such descriptive terms are in themselves, when they are taken together they reveal an attitude towards the landscape that is important. Behind the most vacuous expressions there is a response to the landscape which is similar to the one we have already encountered both with the explorers themselves and with colonial commentators in general. What emerges, then, is a landscape recognizable in its monotony, its loneliness and its essential melancholy - with the accent particularly on the loneliness and melancholy. When this is taken into account there is some justice in granting to the poets a limited success in their attempts to create their necessary heroic landscape. There are even isolated instances - disappointingly rare though they are - where poets are able to pass beyond the empty formula to suggest the

insignificance of man against such a backdrop. There is in "Dusk's" poem, for example, a realisation of the isolation and alienation that played a part in the colonial experience. After Burke's death, King remains

A gloomy hero, in that gloomy wood,
 Deep in the wild - divided from his race,
 A wretched pris'ner in a world of space, ...
 (Appendix p.451)

The formula which poets used in their descriptions of the centre stressed man's relationship with his environment, but concentrated on human attitudes and responses. There was not attribution of particular characteristics to the landscape. This was only possible if the formula was discarded and, when this was done, the landscape which emerged was one actively hostile in its opposition to European trespass. In his poem "Gone" Gordon rejects the view that the place of one's dying is in any sense relevant, and in his presentation of the setting of Burke's death he paints a landscape which is dead and menacing.

What matters the sand or the whitening chalk,
 The blighted herbage, the black'ning log,
 The crooked beak of the eagle-hawk,
 Or the red hot tongue of the native dog?
 (Appendix p.462)

Here the two aspects are separated: the landscape is a dead landscape, while the menace derives from the predators who inhabit it. Margaret Thomas, in her poem "Death in the Bush", is appalled by the fear of a lonely death in the bush and

specifically by the fear of having

To know not if thy wasted form shall lie
 And shrivel 'neath the sun's all-scorching eye;
 Or if the warrigal with rapture grim
 Shall tear thee piece from piece, and limb from
 limb;
 To know thine eyes may gaze unclosed to Heaven,
 Till from their orbs by crows and swamp-hawks
 riven;
 Which to their prey, while still thou'rt
 conscious, rush;
 God grant we face not death while in the bush.
 (Appendix p.513)

This is as full a catalogue as one could wish and the menace is due as much to the landscape as to the creatures who make it their home.

But the threat exists at levels other than the physical. The interior is a region which is unknown, and the explorer, in seeking to penetrate it, journeys into a landscape of potential evil. The undefined menace is suggested in Loughran's presentation of the departure of the advance party from Cooper's Creek, while the simile he uses propels the action into the heroic sphere.

A last farewell to comrades said
 (Whom three shall see no more)
 With steadfast hearts and resolute steps
 Set out the dauntless four.
 The little party left behind
 Long watch them o'er the desert wind,
 As men may watch some frail bark sink
 Below the ocean's glimmering brink.
 (Appendix p.496)

Both the threat and its heroic potentialities are most effectively caught in Horne's poem, "The Explorers". The poet

describes the way in which the landscape bars the explorers' progress, the dangers and difficulties of penetrating a hostile land.

Month treads on month; dangers and pangs are
borne,
Of scanty water - oft with none at all -
Tenfold more terrible than hunger's fangs.
And, thus undaunted, do they force a way,
Through salt-bush wastes, box-forest, mallee scrub,
O'er rugged deserts of the torn-up rocks,
Hills, long ravine and gorge, black earthy plains -
Darkening the eye to the horizon's verge, -...
(Appendix p.474)

Even though this seems to be no more than an unemotional list of terrain and vegetation, there is nevertheless a pervading sense of darkness and evil. This sense is reinforced as the poem continues, and to it is added the quality of deliberate deception which was so frequently associated with the desert mirage.

Grey mud-plains, hard and pale as pumice-stone,
Boundless, and ghastly, with unnatural light,
Where the mirage presents clear pools and lakes.
(To one who lags behind, or gets astray),
And men and camels of the Exploring Train
Travelling along the necromantic sky,-
Another Train, inverted, foot to foot,
Travelling beneath: both shadows! - and all else
Of the reality, then invisible!
Saw'st thou yon Horseman, journeying thro'
the sky?
'Twas Burke the Leader! - oh, that desert
prophecy!

This is the true apotheosis of the explorer-hero, and the two protagonists are inseparably linked in Horne's description of the mirage. It would be difficult to postulate the terms of

the epic confrontation between explorer and landscape more effectively.

6

In an earlier chapter it was argued that while the Australian hero shared many qualities with nineteenth century European models, there still remained something which set him apart. It was suggested that this "something" would be found in the landscape against which he would have to struggle, and in the peculiar conditions of his death. The first of these was central to the discussion of that poetry which was inspired by the disappearance of Leichhardt. It is now necessary to turn to the question of the explorer's death, and especially the fate of the explorers Burke and Wills.

The expression "heroic contract" has been used a number of times in the discussion of modes of heroism. In common with all contracts the heroic one implies a benefit or reward in return for the payment of a stipulated price. The conditions are usually quite explicit: the price is hardship or privation or suffering of a sufficiently demanding sort and the reward is fame or glory. In its most stringent form, the contract may set the price at an even higher level and demand, as recompense for great fame, the hero's life.

Paradoxically, the measure of fame and glory achieved is not increased if the life is surrendered willingly. There is added renown in making the terms as difficult as possible to enforce. The terms were sufficiently familiar to allow poets who wrote of the Burke and Wills tragedy to use the most hackneyed of epithets in its formulation. Thus the anonymous author of "In Memoriam" is able to present the death of Burke in a way which establishes the nature of the "forfeit".

The black man bowed his head and wept
 Above the hero's grave,
 Who, for a noble end achieved,
 His life a forfeit gave.

(Appendix p.423)

The hero is always placed in a situation where his death is a possibility; it is the ultimate test of his heroism, and his stature can be assessed by his resistance to the foreclosure of the contract. As far as Burke is concerned, it is his refusal to surrender that earns for him a particularly high renown. This willingness to prolong the conflict with death, this rejection of death as an easy escape, becomes the badge of the hero in Kendall's recreation of the explorer's final hours.

Though he rallied in the morning, long before
 the close of day,
 He had sunk, the worn-out hero, fainting,
 dying, by the way!
 But with Death he wrestled hardly: three times
 rising from the sod,
 Yet a little further onward o'er the weary waste
 he trod;
 Facing Fate with heart undaunted, still the
 chief would totter on,

Till the evening closed about him - till the
 strength to move was gone.
 (Appendix p.485)

The moral value of his actions, always an important factor in the presentation of the hero, is also enhanced by the way in which he encounters death, and the quality of the opposition that he is able to demonstrate. Because of his reluctance to passively accept death, Burke comes to represent the great example to Adam Lindsay Gordon:

God grant that whenever, soon or late,
 Our course is run and our goal is reach'd,
 We may meet our fate as steady and straight
 As he whose bones in yon desert bleach'd;...
 (Appendix p.462)

Death itself exerted a compelling influence on Gordon, as his own suicide indicates, and Burke's grand gesture in the face of it caught for him the standard by which he felt all men should approach their end.

Although many elements in the Burke and Wills expedition could not be made to fit the heroic model which poets were determined to construct, the record of the leader's death provided heroic details and to spare. This is King's account of the events which followed his and Burke's farewell to Wills and their search for the natives.

From the time we halted Mr. Burke seemed to be getting worse, although he ate his supper. He said he felt convinced he could not last many hours, and gave me his watch, which he said belonged to the committee, and a pocketbook, to give to

Sir William Stawell, and in which he wrote some notes. He then said to me, "I hope you will remain with me here till I am quite dead - it is a comfort to know that some one is by; but when I am dying, it is my wish that you should place the pistol in my right hand, and that you leave me unburied as I lie." That night he spoke very little, and the following morning I found him speechless, or nearly so, and about eight o'clock he expired. 37

The details provided by King were seized by poets as proof positive of Burke's heroism; his wish to lie unburied, pistol in hand, was accepted as proof of the explorer's refusal to concede victory to his opponent. This is certainly the interpretation that Horne was to place on his request.

Having so long the frightful desert faced,
 He would lie stark, and arm'd to face it still.
 He met Death hand to hand, nor felt the sting -
 A skeleton of man, bow'd to God's skeleton King!
 (Appendix p.479)

The point must be conceded even though one is repelled by the enormity of the pun.

The impressively heroic gesture of the pistol, and the request to remain unburied, proved so attractive to poets that there is hardly a poem that fails to reproduce them. Some, like Eliza Barry, do no more than mention them; others like Horne gave them a full measure of attention, dramatised

them, presented them as the climax of the narrative. Even poets who included no other specific incident - and Gordon is relevant here - did not reject this one.

With the pistol clenched in his failing hand,
With the death mist spread o'er his fading eyes,
He saw the sun go down on the sand,
And he slept, and never saw it rise; ...
(Appendix p.462)

There is another detail in King's account which proved as attractive: Burke's hope that he would not be left alone to die. It might at first seem that this introduces an anti-heroic note into the story - a suggestion that Burke's determination had deserted him at the end. However, another interpretation is possible. Burke's pistol is sufficient to guarantee his continuing opposition to death, but something more is required to enable him to endure the isolation and the sense of alienation which the landscape imposes at the last. If this is so then it is not difficult to see which of Burke's fears is the greater.

That it was a real fear - an apprehension of dying alone - is apparent from the emphasis which it received. On its most superficial level it finds expression in Hughan's poem "The Lost Explorers".

Who can guess the depth of agony -
 That no mortal tongue can tell -
 Which each felt when slowly dying
 At the brink of hope's dry well!
 Deserted, famished, garmentless,
 No voice of friendship nigh,
 With loving care, to breathe a prayer
 When they settled down to die.

(Appendix p.482)

It is difficult to excuse the bathos - and "garmentless" is a disaster - but the force of the fear is at least hinted at. Francis Nixon is no more successful poetically but even the declamatory opening and sentimentality can't quite cancel the underlying notion.

Dead - both dead!

Not as in common die,
 The life-spent travellers of every day,
 On tended couch and pillow fondly smoothed
 By friendship's hand; but on the scorching plain,
 Far from the reach of help, at duty's beck,
 Gave they their precious lives - these martyrs.

(Appendix p.508)

Both Hughan and Nixon explain the loneliness in terms of absent friends. Provis, in his untitled poem, seems to want to ensure that no one who might be expected to administer to the dying men is excluded. The list naturally includes "grieving friends" but also embraces everyone likely to be mentioned in the Table of Kindred and Affinity.

The fear of the lonely death receives its most effective statement in Margaret Thomas's "Death in the Bush", a poem, which, while it does not mention the explorers by name at any stage, was "suggested by the death of Burke and Wills".

To die, to perish in the bush alone,
 With but the wilds to hear thy parting groan;
 With but the winds to catch thy parting breath,
 And mock the last long agony of death;
 To feel some message to the true and dear
 Clamour for utterance, yet with none to hear;
 To long with anguish health can never know,
 For the last solace human hands bestow; ...

(Appendix p.512)

Margaret Thomas catches the essence of the lonely death and as well specifies the solace which is absent: the "gentle tone", the "kind voice", the "gentle hand". These human ministrations, with their implications of concern and compassion, are opposed by the harshness of the environment itself, as a later section of the poem indicates.

To face the awful king unarmed, alone,
 Thy loss unnoticed, and thy fate unknown;
 To know not if thy wasted form shall lie
 And shrivel 'neath the sun's all-scorching eye; ...

It is this loneliness in death, the isolation from family, friends, and fellow men that sets the Australian hero apart from those of other lands and other times. That this was accepted as a fact of exploration emerges from a comment in the Australasian of October 28, 1864:

The accidents of the wilderness are so numerous, the chance of escape from them so slight, that the explorer when he turns his back upon the settlements is understood to carry his life in his hand.

Both the threat, and its likely implementation, is given as the distinguishing characteristic of the Australian hero in

Charles Eden's book Australia's Heroes: the author explains that his object has been

to point out the dangers to which the pioneer is subjected, and the heroism with which he meets - as is too often the case - his lonely and lingering death.³⁸

Behind this fear there is another - the fear of an alien environment, a landscape hostile and menacing. In fact the two are to a large extent inseparable.

How widespread was this fear emerges in the argument which developed over what was to be done with the bodies of the explorers Burke and Wills after Howitt had discovered them. At the time he gave them proper burial but he was sent out again to bring them back to Melbourne, where they were interred with all possible pomp and ceremony on January 21, 1863. For poets who wrote after this date the argument was no longer a live issue, but those whose poems appeared before 1863 in general seemed to be united in their demands that their bones should not be left to rot in the desert. Horne does not argue the case, but his final lines suggest that he is in agreement with the official decision.

38

Charles Eden, Australia's Heroes (London, 1875), p. iii.

Such is the tale: and with the blacks lived King
 Wasting to nought on their unwholesome fare,
 Till rescued by the party sent on search;
 Who reverently gather up the bones -
 All that remain - of the heroic dead,
 And homeward bear - slow months of heavy funeral
 tread.

(Appendix p.480)

Provis, in contrast, is emphatically persistent in his call
 that they be recovered.

Go! bring his bones, and o'er them raise a tomb,
 And there lament thy hero's mournful doom;
 Where all who live may read his honor'd name,
 And thousands yet unborn may learn his fame.

(Appendix p.510)

The decision to send Howitt to recover the explorers' remains
 could be explained as an exercise in public guilt, as a means
 for an impressive atonement for the bungling and disasters
 that had characterised the entire expedition. But it could
 also be explained on a deeper level as a rejection of the right
 of the landscape to claim the explorers so completely. To
 leave them where they had perished was to admit that the victory
 belonged finally to the land. This is a notion that was
 advanced by poets who wrote of Leichhardt also. It was
 appropriate that the explorer should meet his death in the
 desert - it was appropriate to the heroic scale of the
 undertaking - but this was countered by the hope that his final
 resting place should be otherwise: a region of coolness and
 greenness, of all that echoed the European experience and
 negated the Australian one.

And this is precisely what happened in the case of Burke and Wills. The official decision to bring the explorers' bodies back from the desert expressed a similar hope about the ultimate resting place of these two heroes. And this hope is not discounted by those poets who argued that their bones should remain where they had fallen. Kendall was concerned that this should be their eventual fate.

Let them rest where they have laboured! but, my
country, mourn and moan;
We must build with human sorrow grander monuments
than stone.
Let them rest, for oh! remember that in long
hereafter time
Sons of Science will be wandering o'er that
solitary clime;
Cities bright shall rise about it: Age and Beauty
there shall stray,
And the Fathers of the People pointing to the
graves shall say,
"Here they fell, the glorious martyrs! when these
plains were woodlands
deep;
Here a friend - a brother laid them; here the wild
man came to weep."
(Appendix p.487)

This, too, is a rejection of the landscape of the centre, even if it is couched in terms of visionary progress. And it was, in any case, an illusion. A similar picture of future beauty and plenty is painted by the writer of a letter to the Argus on December 18, 1861. He disagrees with the decision to recover the explorers' remains just to give them a "pompos funeral".

No! better let them lie undisturbed, and erect over their graves some mark by which the spots may at any future time be known, when that portion of the country, which is now pretty well explored becomes, as no doubt it will, populated, in a few years hence; at which time those spots would indicate to the stranger that there lie the mortal remains of the great and gallant explorers of the country he inhabits, now transformed from an inhospitable region and a vast desert into beautiful and shining fields, lovely gardens, splendid parks, and large and extensive streets adorned with palatial edifices, and having on its mountain tops the plodding cow, and the noble horse.

Whether the bodies were recovered or left to remain in the centre the result was the same. The explorer-hero, sent out to reveal the land to its new inhabitants, paradoxically reinforced the colonial fear of an alien environment. The process of exploration and discovery becomes self-defeating and the settlers in whose name the task was undertaken have their feelings of alienation and exile confirmed.

CONCLUSION

Australian explorers who ventured over the Blue Mountains into the interior were encouraged by a number of expectations about their role as explorers and about the country they would discover; they were, in a sense, guided by a variety of visions. There were visions of immense tracts of fertile country, of an earth ripe with minerals, of great rivers and inland seas. These were pragmatic visions, ironically, and there were others based on their understanding of exploration itself. Explorers felt assured that they were engaged on a task of great significance; they considered themselves to be the heralds of an awakening - the vanguard of civilization and the instruments of a God whose will it was that the white European, and the Briton in particular, should settle and civilize great portions of the earth. Nor were such visions merely personal or idiosyncratic. They were shared by the age and because of this they were enshrined in the instructions which guided the travellers in their journey.

But as explorers moved beyond the mountains that contained the coastal settlements out onto the western plains they were forced to modify their expectations. Their dreams were difficult to sustain when they were confronted with the realities of emptiness and aridity: of rivers that did not flow across the continent, but, unlike rivers elsewhere, gradually diminished in strength and finally disappeared, swallowed up by the land. Those travellers who had equipped

their parties with boats that they might sail on inland seas were forced to leave them to buckle and warp in the centre of a desert. The hope that they would discover great mountain chains or other impressive natural features did not survive the actualities of eroded hills and silent stony plains, and the immensities of space. The explorers, eager for fertile acres which would flourish under the plough reaped a bitter harvest; they had discovered in the interior a land which denied all their expectations.

As the century progressed and explorers moved further towards the centre such hopes and dreams evaporated and the motivations which had been based on them gave way to others. The hoped-for rewards of fertile land and geographical trophies proved to be illusory and so explorers turned in search for others less tangible. They described their desire to explore as a compulsion to be first into an unknown region, or as a need to match their perseverance and endurance and will against a land which everywhere seemed to forbid their entry. Paradoxically, the progression was from vision to reality but it was from a vision based on practical considerations to a reality which was in essence spiritual.

At the beginning of the century the commonplace view of exploration had emphasised the discovery of good land, but explorers were also seeking landscapes which echoed their

European experiences. This was a quest motivated by nostalgia, and it too failed to survive the impact of the reality at the heart of the continent. Instead, explorers found landscapes which failed to satisfy their picturesque and romantic expectations, landscapes which were characterized by a sense of hostility and opposition to the travellers' progress and to their survival. To continue to move through such regions meant that the explorer was no longer exploring in the accepted sense; he was, instead, engaged in a struggle with the land and there was no time to survey or measure or evaluate. The landscape gained in heroic proportions as its opposition to the explorer increased until it became a truly worthy opponent, and the contest between man and land emerged as a heroic struggle. The journals of the explorers ceased to be merely records of discovery and began to assume something of the quality of epic. To define the progression in this way is, of course, to state a paradox: as these men moved towards the heart of the continent on journeys of discovery they ceased to be explorers in the accepted sense and became instead explorers of a different order, explorers of an inner world.

Poets who chose exploration as their theme did so in the hope that they would find in the explorer someone who could rightly be regarded as a hero. And this hope seemed to be satisfied, especially when poets relied on a formula which described the explorer-hero as revealer and unveiler of

the unknown. There were at first discoveries of good land sufficient to sustain such hopes but eventually the poets, like the explorers themselves, found their visionary notions called into question by the realities of the centre. They were forced to recognize the true hostility of the land and they also came to realise its heroic proportions, its suitability as a setting for heroic action, for there was something about the scale of the landscape and its immensities of silence that made it seem appropriate. Again, there is a paradox at the heart of this realisation. The explorer grew in heroic stature as he ceased actually to explore.

This sense of paradox is most evident when we examine the poetry which was written in response to the disappearance of Leichhardt. Poets acknowledged that the landscape of the centre was appropriate to epic and they staged the explorer's last struggles before it. But at the same time they propounded another landscape which was based not on the harsh reality of such a region but on dreams and memory. Consequently, while poets accounted for the explorer's death in a world of sand and aridity, of barrenness and silence, they also hoped that his final resting place would be a cool, green spot, a haven of peace and beauty that drew for its details not on the actualities of the Australian experience but on memories of Europe. Here also it is possible to trace a movement from dream to reality, but poets took one further

step: They went on from the reality of the epic landscape to an illusory one and with that step turned their back on the centre and instead embraced a dream.

This retreat from a reality which by its harshness repelled was hastened when poets came to write of the outcome of the Burke and Wills expedition. Again they were prepared to accept the epic possibilities of the central landscape, but its capacity to repel was increased when poets accentuated those qualities in it which characterized the explorers' deaths as lonely and isolated. They were not able to substitute an ideal landscape, as had been done in Leichhardt's case, since the site of these deaths was known. Nevertheless their rejection of the centre was made plain in their support of the public demand that the bodies should be brought back to Melbourne for burial.

Thus as the explorers moved towards the centre of the continent and as they revealed it as a region where dreams and expectations were shattered, they reinforced the notion that it represented an alien environment. And the search for associations in the new land which poets had hoped exploration would assist led paradoxically to the rejection of the landscape in favour of one which negated the Australian experience. Leichhardt rested not in the centre but in a world of dreams; and Burke and Wills slumbered safely on a peopled shore, far from the regions of silence and loneliness.

And the paradoxes go on reverberating; to those we have mentioned must be added one more. Both the explorer and the poet were unable to accept the aboriginal as a worthy opponent in an epic struggle and yet he alone had demonstrated his ability to embrace and know the land. The European, armed with vision and dream, found his entry challenged and his expectations denied.

APPENDIX: EXPLORER POEMS

INDEX OF POETRY

ANONYMOUS

In Memoriam 423
 Not Too Late 424

ANGAS, GEORGE FRENCH

Lines Addressed to Stuart's Exploring Party 425

ANDERSON, EMMA FRANCIS

Thoughts Suggested by the Fate of Mr. Burke 426

"AUSTRALIE" (Emilie Heron)

The Explorer's Message 427

BEETSON, D. LANDALE

Exploring Rhymes and Camel-back Jingles 431

BERRY, ELISA

from Australian Explorers (from 1818 to
 1876) in Rhyme 443

COXHEAD, A.

Written on Walls the Explorer 449

"D.C." (D. Cudmore)

Lines on the Death of Poole, an
 Australian Explorer 450

"DUSK" (H. Huntley Hoskins)

from Exploration Thoughts 451

"ELLIE" (Ellen Elizabeth Debney)

The Dying Explorer 453

Stuart to his Old Bush Hat 454

Thanksgiving Hymn of the Explorers 455

EMBLING, WILLIAM HENRY

Leichhardt and Franklin 456

"E.W.H."	
To the South Australian Explorer, John McDouall Stuart	460
GORDON, ADAM LINDSAY	
Gone	461
HALLORAN, HENRY	
The Departure of Sir Thomas Mitchell	463
The Explorer Dying in the Wilderness	464
Leichhardt	464
Lines	466
Mitchell's Farewell	467
Sir Thomas Mitchell	468
To T.L. Mitchell Esq.	468
Vox e Sepulcro	469
HARRIS, CHARLES	
A Tribute to the Memory of Sir Thomas Mitchell	471
HAWKES, MORGAN	
Welcome to Warburton	472
HOBBS, RICHARD HENRY	
Australian Explorers	473
HUGHAN, F.M.	
The Lost Explorers	480
IRONSIDE, ADELAIDE	
The Death of Leichhardt	483
"J.W."	
Sir Thomas Mitchell	484
KENDALL, HENRY	
The Fate of the Explorers, Burke and Mills	485
Leichhardt	487

LEWIN, F. BESCA	
Australia's Heroes	489
On Seeing Burke's Pistol in the National Gallery	492
LOUGHRAN, EDWARD BOOTH	
The Story of Burke and Wills	493
LYND, ROBERT	
Lines Addressed to the Party proceeding on the Track of Dr. Leichhardt	500
"M.C." (Catherine E.M. Martin)	
<u>From The Explorers</u>	501
NEILSON, JOHN	
Ernest Giles	506
NIXON, FRANCIS	
Burial of Burke and Wills: Funeral Ode	508
O'HARA, JOHN BERNARD	
Pioneers	509
PROVIS, C.	
Untitled	509
SYLVESTER, E.K.	
Stanzas	511
THOMAS, MARGARET	
Death in the Bush	512
THOMPSON, LAMBERT	
On the Burke and Wills Monument	513
WINTLE, S.H.	
Leichhardt	513

ANONYMOUS

In Memoriam

The black man bowed his head and wept
Above the hero's grave,
Who, for a noble end achieved,
His life a forfeit gave:-

The desert crossed, the problem solved,
And rent aside the veil,
Which other daring hands essayed
To lift, without avail.

Brave heart, too early still'd by death,
Victor, but victim, too
The deed fulfill'd an earnest of
The greater thou mightst sic do,

Had life attain'd its utmost span,
And thou return'd to reap
The honours which fall faintly on
Thee, in thy dreamless sleep.

What can we give thee but our tears?
How dignify thy name?
The cypress with the laurel blends
Dark'ning thy meed of fame.

But greenly in our memories
Shall live the names of Burke,
And brave young Wills who perish'd, but
Completed their great work.

The younger still by dreadful thoughts
Upheld while life remain'd;
By courage, constancy, and hope
To his last hour sustain'd.

And honour be to him who heard
His leader's dying moan;
Composed his limbs in their last rest,
And then went forth alone.

Not Too Late

Too late? Ah no!
 Say not so;
 It is not certain that they must be dead.
 Ye who inherit
 Leichhardt's spirit,
 Go, follow nobly where he nobly led.

For death or glory,
 He went before ye,
 Bold settlers of the rude and savage North,
 Honour the brave,
 Step forth to save
 Him who for honour only ventured forth.

Pastured in peace,
 Your flocks increase,
 And children fearless play about your homes.
 Give of your store,
 Give much, give more,
 To learn perchance where homeless Leichhardt roams.

Palaces have grown,
 Huge blocks of stone,
 Where rove the wild beast and the wilder man.
 Give tribute then,
 Ye later men,
 You have but finished that which he began.

In this our time,
 From every clime,
 Thousands came thirsting with the greed of gold.
 Their's not to flout,
 Their's not to scout,
 The labours of the pioneers of old.

If famine, thirst,
 Have done their worst,
 And low in dust the honoured head should lie;
 Shame on us then,
 As Christian men,
 The rites of Christian burial to deny.

ANGAS, GEORGE FRENCH

Lines Addressed to Stuart's Exploring Party on starting on their second and successful attempt to cross the Australian Continent.

Go forth again, brave band!
Renew thy toils once more -
And rest not till you tread the strand
Of Carpentaria's shore!

The triumph nearly won,
Undaunted, start again;
For glory waits you where the sun
Gilds yon blue Indian main.

Stout hearts of British blood
Shall conquer in the end;
And may the aegis of our God
Your desert path defend!

We pledge you in the name
Of Leichardt's sic sacred grave,
That there awaits a crown of fame
For the successful brave.

By all our martyr'd sons
Who have gone forth in vain,
We'll hail right well our valiant ones
When they return again!

Britannia bids you hail,
Ye earnest men and true!
She bids you bear o'er hill and dale
Her dauntless flag of blue!

Till on that northern shore
Her flag shall firmly stand;
And Britons' cheers shall echo o'er
Their newly-wedded land!

The future shall behold
A trackless waste no more;
The highways of our land of gold
Shall stretch from shore to shore.

A mighty nation lies
A cradling infant now;
But soon a giant it shall rise,
With "Empire" on its brow!

Go forth, brave band, once more,
 To earn a glorious name!
 Those who first gain yon distant shore
 Achieve a deathless fame.

ANDERSON, EMMA FRANCES

Thoughts Suggested by the Fate of Mr. Burke and his Companion
 (Australian Explorers, who died in the Bush)

Hush, hush, old trees, 'twere sin to whisper here,
 Hush, hush, and let your withering leaves drop down,
 Like tears upon the spot where death has been.
 Weep, ancient trees, death's step has lingered here.
 Weep for the strong brave hearts whose last low prayers
 Went murmuring up to heaven athwart your leaves.
 Lone spot, where death perchance has never been
 Ere this; hath never shown his mighty power,
 Save in the gentle fading of the flowers,
 Or silent mouldering of the foliage sere.
 Sad place in which to breathe life's latest sigh,
 With no one nigh to band in sorrowing love;
 No form to meet the wistful, wandering gaze;
 Only the shadowy trees and cloudless sky,
 That weary with their sameness. Yet 'twas here
 Those two brave-hearted men laid down to die,
 After the toilsome journeying through the woods
 With thirst unslaked; with weary, bleeding feet
 Returning here to perish. Wondrous fate!
 To die with life so near, with joy and rest
 And hearty greetings waiting, but a few
 Short miles away. Oh, hope, why didst thou fail?
 Why did thy lamp, whose glimmering light had cheered
 Thro' cheerless wanderings, toil and want and pain,
 Burn out when suffering was almost done,
 When life was almost gained - burn out and leave
 The night of death to settle thick and dark
 On those undaunted souls?

Oh, that sad hour
 When hope grew dimmer, dimmer, in each breast,
 And on the pale blue quiet evening sky
 Appeared the mirage of a far-off home;
 And nature's sounds that murmured in the air
 Seemed voices from the busy haunts of men.
 Ah! how they rang around! They welcomed them
 With shouts of joy. They praised and spoke of fame -

A place in history's page - a name to live;
 Perhaps some low glad whisper promised love
 And peace, and rest, and ever-cheering smiles.
 Then rose the earth-bound spirit's feeble prayer -
 "Oh, death, let fancy live, though hope be dead,
 "A little while. Oh faint home-voices, stay."
 In vain. The silent darkness stealth on;
 Sight, thought, and hearing fail. "Oh life, farewell."
 And did they speak of fame, those sounds of earth
 That lingered in the dying wanderers' ears,
 Fame, what availth it? No answering throb
 Of the still heart responds to the vain word.
 The sighing trees and senseless song of birds
 Give as much joy to those who buy their fame
 With life. Yet it is theirs, bold daring men.
 A glorious work is done. A people's praise,
 A people's tears are theirs. And with the names -
 The far-famed names - of those who bore unscathed
 The perils of that trackless forest-sea
 Shall mingle those of them that sank beneath
 Its gloomy waves.

"AUSTRALIE" (Emilie Heron)

The Explorer's Message

Golden, crimson, glows the sunset o'er the wild Australian scene,
 Gilding e'en the lonely desert with a glory-tinted sheen,
 Purple, purple, gloom the mountains towering in their distant
 height,
 And the blushing air is quivering with the joy of rosy light.
 Glorious beauty! - heavenly radiance! beaming o'er the barren
 earth,
 While the weary land is stricken with a life-destroying dearth.
 But no joy that glory bringeth - ominous that sunset blaze,
 Telling but of rainless sunshine, burning on through cloudless
 days -
 Parch'd, the thirsty ground is gasping for one shower of
 cooling rain -
 Shadeless trees stand gaunt and withering on the grassless
 arid plain -
 Not a sound of living creature, not one blade or leaf of green!
 E'en the very birds have vanish'd from the desolated scene!

Hark! what sound of coming footsteps breaks the silence of the
air?

Can it be a human being all alone that rideth there?
Jaded, drooping, horse and rider slowly wend their dreary way,
Toiling on as they have toil'd through many and many a weary
day.

Wan the rider, wan and fainting - mind and body overwrought;
Worn the steed, and gauntly fleshless, perishing of bitter
drought -

"Water, water! oh, for water!" Now the horse sinks to the
ground;

And the faithful beast here resting a last halting-place has
found;

Now the last, last link is broken! e'en the poor dumb friend
is gone!

And the pioneer must turn his eyes unto a heavenly bourne.

But six months a gallant band, the brave explorers had set
forth,

Resolute to pierce the mysteries of Australia's unknown north,
Strove they nobly, daring danger, hardships cheerfully endured!
Recking not of death or failure, still by patriot hopes allured!
Onward they had pressed adventurous, till, by want and sickness
tried,

One by one their ranks had thinn'd, lost, or spear'd, or
famish'd, died.

Each day saw a martyr added, each night heard some dying moan,
Till at last one man was left in that great wilderness - alone -
Solitary, all untended; none, none left behind to mourn,
Now the last of the explorers lies on dying bed forlorn.
Faint the lonely man is growing, yet before he turns to die,
With one strong expiring effort, with one long-drawn weary
sigh,

Draws he from his breast a locket - with onstalking death he
fights,

While, upon a slip of paper, painfully he trembling writes -
"Mary, loved one, in the desert my last thought is still of you.
God be with you, guard and bless you. To my memory still be
true".

His last signature he signeth, gazing lovingly and long
On the face within that locket - tender memories o'er him
throng

As he folds the tiny letter, mournfully to parch'd lips
pressed -

Clasps it in the golden casket, lays it to his loving breast;
Then with one deep prayer for mercy - ere the last glow leaves
the skies,

Resting on his Father's bosom, calm the lone explorer dies.
None are near to close the eyelids - none weep o'er that
bronzed face,

Only night is stealing softly, shrouding him with tender grace.

Springs have fled, and summers faded, ten long years have
 come and gone, -
 Mary's face still wears its sweetness, though with long, long
 waiting worn;
 Many a one has sought to win her - clear her answering words
 and few -
 "I my love long since have plighted - to that love I will be
 true".
 Brave men, searching, have gone forth upon the lost explorer's
 track,
 Unsuccessful, disappointed, they have aye returned back.
 Yet, within the maiden's bosom, hope 'gainst hope will
 quenchless burn,
 Still his death is all unproven - still the wanderer may return.
 "Let me know his fate," she prayeth, "only one small token
 send,
 Then my heart in resignation to God's holy will shall bend."

Ride two horsemen through the wild lands where man's foot scarce
 trod before,
 "We, the pioneers," they murmur, "we now first this land
 explore."
 Ah! but see what is it then, that on the plain is gleaming
 there?
 Hush'd and lonely is the desert - motionless the silent air,
 As with solemn pace the travellers to the hallow'd spot draw
 nigh,
 Where a famish'd lone explorer years ago lay down to die:
 By him close his steed is lying - skeleton with harness trapp'd.
 While in life's worn mouldering garments still the master is
 enwrapp'd.

Awe-struck gaze they on the ruins whence a brother's soul
 has fled;
 Then, all loth to leave a comrade nameless on his desert bed,
 Search the men for note or journal - some faint clue to name
 and fate,
 Not a trace or record find they - not one letter, word, or date!
 'Least a grave they will make for him! Gleaneth now a yellow
 sheen,
 And amid the quiet ashes, where the faithful breast has been,
 Shining lies a golden locket, with a simple name engraved.
 Ah, that name! long mourn'd and honour'd - now from cold
 oblivion saved!
 Eagerly they ope the locket - in that dreary desert place
 Beams there now upon these rough men. sweetest, gentlest
 woman's face,
 Image of some cherish'd loved one; who, perchance these words
 may tell;
 See! here lies a tiny letter, - the explorer's last farewell.

BRETTSON, D. LANDALE

Exploring Rhymes and Camel-Back Jingles

Farewell to thee "Glen Edith",
 Thou hast been a haven of rest
 To us in our weary journeying
 Away to the distant west.
 Farewell to thy "Tarn of Auber",
 That dark, dark, mystical pool;
 Farewell to thy rocks and caverns,
 And waters so wonderfully cool.
 Thanks to the man that found thee -
 That bold explorer, Giles.

We have rested, and now we are ready
 To face the innumerable trials
 Of long and patient endurance,
 Of danger, hunger, and thirst, -
 And of all the body can suffer,
 The want of water is worst.
 A thousand miles we have travelled
 Under the burning sun,
 Into the heart of Australia; -
 And yet we have only begun
 The work we have come to accomplish -
 I mean to accomplish, or try;
 For we are determined to do it -
 Determined to do it, or die.
 Others have tried before us,
 But they have been beaten back;
 And the horrible words - "No water!"
 Is written across their track.

'Tis supposed that the Lake is extending
 Some hundreds of miles to the west, -
 How far? is the difficult problem
 We have been sent out to test.
 Geographical knowledge is wanted,
 The world grows so wonderfully small,
 That the time is not very far distant,
 When there won't be room for us all;
 But out to the westward there may be
 A country where white men can live, -
 With mountains, rivers, and pastures,
 The best that nature can give.

Geological knowledge may help us
 The glorious news to unfold,
 Of a country abounding in minerals -
 Copper, silver, and gold.

So, steadily facing to westward,
 Over the hills of sand;
 Winding about like a serpent,
 Moves forward our little band.
 Three of us only - the leader,
 Tietkens, Warman, myself,
 Besides the black boy, Billy,
 Who must not be left on the shelf.
 He's a capital hand at tracking, -
 The signs of water can tell, -
 And is up to the ways of the niggers,
 And a very good shot, as well.
 And no doubt we shall have trouble,
 If it be as we are told,
 That the natives out there are numerous,
 Stalwart, treacherous, bold.

Still over the spinifex sandhills,
 Across the spinifex plain,
 Dotted with oak and acacia,
 Then over the sandhills again.
 Not a sign of anything living,
 Not a sound of life is heard;
 Not even the track of a lizard,
 Or note of a passing bird.
 From dawn of day till sunset,
 Over these seas of sand;
 Under the burning tropical sun,
 Scarce man or beast can stand.

The camels being to feel it,
 And the pace is getting slow;
 Seven days they have been without water,
 And our casks are getting low.
 But away in the distant horizon,
 A little northward of west,
 We see some low stony rises,
 That may give us water, and rest.
 We reach them, much disappointed,
 For useless our journey has been;
 Not a sign of the presence of water,
 Not a vestige of anything green.

Still skirting the hills to the westward,
 We mount a low, stony rise,
 And there, immediately under us,
 Is a great and welcome surprise:
 An oasis - truly as beautiful
 As any that ever was seen;
 Blossoming trees and bushes,
 And everything bright and green;
 A stream of the purest water,
 Overshadowed by stately trees,
 And the scent of a thousand blossoms and flowers
 Is wafted along by the breeze.

Upon the bank of the streamlet,
 Under a beantree's shade,
 With the tall, white gumtrees towering above,
 A neat little camp is made;
 And stretching ourselves on the bright green grass,
 We fill up our pipes, and smoke;
 And once more we join in a hearty laugh,
 At some innocent, practical joke;
 And faces that were hard, and set,
 And stern but an hour before,
 Relax into a pleasant smile
 Of quiet content once more.

And then, the pannicans of tea,
 Made in the old quart pot;
 The juicy steaks of a kangaroo, -
 Grilled on the coals, and hot; -
 No epicure at kingly board,
 No gourmand at his feast,
 Ever enjoyed a meal as we
 Off that marsupial beast.
 No condiments do we require,
 No dainty sauces there,
 But an honest appetite and thirst,
 Hard earnt in God's pure air.

And as the evening shadows fall,
 And night resumes her sway,
 We talk of various incidents
 That happened in the day; -
 Of the bitter disappointment
 When we reached the biggest hill,
 And found there was no water,
 And we'd have to travel still.

We never could have reached the Tarn,
 'Twas useless, quite, to try;
 In a day or two, or three, at most,
 The whole of us must die.
 Though of our silent, inner thoughts,
 When first we saw the creek,
 And knew that we were safe once more, -
 Of these we do not speak.
 Yet, in the silence of the night,
 When the moon has climbed the hill,
 Shedding around its silvery light,
 And all is calm and still,
 Gazing up at the glorious lights
 In the great blue dome above,
 The soul draws near with a thankful prayer,
 To the one great God of Love.

Three days, and then with hope renewed,
 And strengthened by our rest,
 Again we face the waste of sand
 Stretching away to the west.
 The desert-oaks are thicker now,
 The sandhills not so high;
 And many places that we pass
 Are pleasing to the eye.
 The trees are thirty feet in height,
 And uniform in size;
 With a rounded top and tall straight trunk,
 That a forester would prize.
 The bark is rough and almost black,
 The string-like leaves hang down
 In clusters of a dark grey green,
 Almost approaching brown.

The yellow stalks of the porcupine,
 Growing amongst the trees,
 In the distance, looks like a field of corn,
 Waving about in the breeze.
 We know, however, that it is
 A desert waste at least,
 Without a particle of food
 For either bird or beast.

Day after day we travel west,
 Till the camels want a spell;
 When again kind fortune favours us,
 And we find a native well.

We had seen no signs of water near,
 At least, none that we knew,
 When just at dusk, from north to south,
 A bronzewing past us flew.

Next day we travel south till noon,
 To see what that brings forth;
 But as we find no signs about,
 We think it must be north.
 Billy, however, has gone off,
 And soon returns to tell
 The welcome news, that he has found
 A little native well.
 Yes, there it is, a good one, too,
 Quite hidden by the grass;
 And one, not knowing of the signs,
 Within ten yards might pass.

We let the camels rest three days,
 And then our course we change,
 And bear up to the north a bit,
 For a very distant range
 Of hills, now known as Beetsen's Range;-
 And again the Fates are kind,
 For running to waste in the desert sand,
 Another stream we find.

A pretty place - a little vale -
 About a half-mile wide,
 With lofty, rugged, pine-clad rocks,
 Rising on either side.
 In the centre - like a pedestal -
 A small hill stands alone,
 And, on top of this, a monument -
 A towering mass of stone.
 The leader calls it Laura Vale -
 After a daughter dear,
 I lost but eighteen months ago,
 Just in her thirteenth year.

No costly stone, with inscription,
 Over her little grave stands;
 But here is a monument priceless,
 And one not made by hands.
 My heart, though calloused and hardened,
 Grows soft, when I think of that day,

When the Lord in His infinite wisdom,
 Thought fit to take her away.
 On a sultry Sabbath evening,
 As the sun was sinking to rest,
 And a halo of golden glory
 Shone in the crimson west;-
 Just as the bells ceased their tolling,
 With a sigh, her sweet life passed away;-
 He had taken my jewel and treasure,
 And left me a casket of clay.

As the angels from Heaven were descending,
 To take up acceptable prayer,
 They met the pure soul of my darling,
 Taking its flight through the air.
 Oh, how they shouted in triumph,
 As they bore her above to her rest;
 In the arms of her dear, loving Saviour,-
 In the home of the holy and blest.
 "Away with such thoughts," they unman me,
 And are only fit for a girl,
 Whilst I am a hard-hearted sinner,
 With the manner and speech of a churl.

As soon as the camels are rested,
 We start on our journey again;
 And day after day we travel
 Over a desolate plain.
 To the northward, the southward, or westward,
 No matter which way we turned;
 For sixty or seventy miles or more,
 The whole of the country is burned.
 The plain is as flat as a table,
 The sand is a yellowish red;
 And the grass, the trees, and the bushes
 Are burnt up, blackened and dead.
 We travel along until sunset,
 To-morrow we'll have to go back;
 'Tis useless to go any further,
 We must try a more southerly track.
 In the morning, whilst after the camels,
 One of us climb up a tree;
 And far away to the westward,
 The top of a mountain we see.

This causes a little excitement,
 It may be the long-promised land;
 And it's pleasant to know, at any rate,
 There's a break in this terrible sand.

The question is gravely considered,
 Shall we go back on our track?
 It will take us three days to the ranges,
 And two-and-a-half to go back.
 There has been a shower here lately,
 No later than two or three weeks;
 Are we sure to find water
 In some of the gullies or creeks?
 The camels can stand about three days, -
 We have enough water for four,
 And if we shorten the ration,
 It may last a day or so more.

To return, we know, is the safest,
 And calmly we reckon the cost;
 If there is no water ahead of us,
 The whole of the party is lost.
 To be beaten is terribly galling,
 They will say we were wanting in pluck,
 So we'll make a bold dash for the ranges,
 And trust to our fortune or luck.
 No, we'll trust in the power above us,
 Who is watching us, even out here;
 So westward, steadily westward,
 We advance without shadow of fear.
 We leave the burnt country at mid-day,
 When the range looms up, rugged and black,
 We are sure to find water in this place, -
 We are glad that we did not turn back.
 We camp at some green cotton bushes;-
 To the camels, this should be a treat,
 But they, like ourselves, although hungry,
 Are far too thirsty to eat.

Again and again they make eastward,
 It is really a pitiful sight;
 As they will make back to the water,
 We must tie them down for the night.
 Next morning, long before daylight,
 We saddle them up, and away;
 We want to get into the ranges,
 Before the great heat of the day.
 He has called it the Kintore Ranges,
 After the Earl of Kintore;
 The highest peak is Mount Leisler,
 Seven thousand feet high, or more;
 Looming boldly up, like a lion
 Standing on guard at his lair,

And frowning darkly upon us,
 As though to say, "stranger, beware!"
 We approach it nearer and nearer,
 And to stifle the thought, though we try,
 There's a dread in each heart at the prospect, -
 The place looks so horribly dry.

The camels are now crawling slowly,
 Their race is just about run;
 The thermometer one hundred and eighty,
 When fairly exposed to the sun.
 All three of us look just like mummies, -
 Our skins are like parchment that's blacked;
 The eyes are sunk in their sockets,
 And the lips are like leather that's cracked.
 But still there's a look of defiance;
 Though our tongues are too swollen to speak,
 As we drink the last drop of water,
 When a mile-and-a-half from the peak.
 Our feelings and thoughts as we drink it-
 I often think of it yet,
 "Is this the last drink of water?"
 "The very last drop we shall get?"
 We approach to solve the great question -
 Are we to live or to die?
 Is this horrible desert to conquer us?
 Is death then so terribly nigh?
 At last we stop in the shadow
 Of a great perpendicular wall,
 That looks as though every moment,
 It would topple over and fall.

With a struggle, we take off the saddles, -
 We begin to get painfully weak;
 Then together we make for a ravine -
 'Tis there we shall find what we seek.
 Yes, there is a beautiful rock-hole;
 But each turns away with a sigh,
 And we look at each other in silence;-
 The hole is now empty and dry.

Then two turn off to the eastward,
 The others turn off to the right,
 And search in each gully and ravine,
 Till stopped by our weakness, and night,
 'Tis vain; of that life giving fluid
 Not a drop; not a sign is there there;

And we go back to the camp quite exhausted,
 With a feeling of dull, dark despair.
 The last spark of hope was extinguished
 When we looked at the others, and then
 We knew that nothing was left us -
 But to face death together like men.
 And then with paper and pencil,
 We each scrawl a word of farewell;
 Our hands are too feeble and nerveless,
 The whole of the story to tell.

Oh, ye who dwell in the city, -
 In homes of comfort and ease;
 With every luxury round you,
 Can you picture such moments as these?
 When men, in the prime of their manhood
 And strength, have to lay down and die,
 And feel their life's blood getting thicker
 And thicker, until it is dry.

Often you read of a hero,
 With an exquisite thrill of delight,
 Engaged in the heat of a battle,
 In a glorious hand-to-hand fight.
 'Mid the din of rifle and cannon,
 The groans of the dying are heard,
 And all is intensest excitement,
 And his blood to a fury is stirred.
 Not a second he thinks of the danger,
 As he seeks the advantage to gain
 Over the man that's before him, -
 He must either slay, or be slain.

He has conquered; and now dashes forward
 The ranks of the foremost to gain,
 And see! he is gallantly leading;-
 Ah! he's stopped by a shot through the brain.
 'Twas a brave and a glorious ending, -
 He knew not that death was at hand:
 But we perish in agony slowly,
 In this horrible desert of sand.

As we lay within the shadow,
 In the dark and silent gloom
 Of the mountain high above us,
 Waiting for our coming soon,

Thoughts of bygone days come rushing
 On my dull and fevered brain;
 Scenes and places long forgotten,
 I can see them all again.

Childhood's happy home at Stradbroke,
 Where I played beside the brook,
 Listening to the bubbling waters,
 In some dark and shady nook.
 Boyhood's days at school and college,
 And at home amongst the hills;
 And waterfalls at Morialta,
 Where I roamed about at will.
 Youth's bold dreams and high ambitions,
 As I grew to manhood's years;-
 All was bright and free from shadow,
 Full of promise, without fears.
 Then the years upon the station;
 The heavy loss through want of rain;
 And at last the utter ruin, -
 Then the start in life again.
 Its hard struggle and its failures;
 Then the one success in life,
 That has always since been brightened
 By a good and loving wife.

Then my mind begins to wander,
 As I think of those at home;
 And the sorrow they will suffer,
 As they struggle on alone.
 I can see strange forms and figures
 Coming from the mountain top,
 And one more bold than are the others,
 Close beside me seems to stop.

'Tis the spirit of the mountain, -
 And I think I hear him say -
 "Yes, bold stranger, thou art conquered;-
 Thou shalt not live another day;
 Where thou lay'st, thy bones shall whiten,
 In the rain and burning sun.
 As a warning unto others,
 Who may in the future come,
 I have stood here countless ages,
 Guarding this, my desert home;-
 Where my dark-skinned children only
 Are in peace allowed to roam;

I have heard them speak affrighted,
 Of a strange and white-skinned race,
 Who are coming from the southward,
 And would over-run the place.
 Tear me down to make their dwellings, -
 Clear my lands to grow their corn, -
 Destroying all the face of nature, -
 But I've treated it with scorn.
 And thou hast even dared defy me;
 Treated warnings with disdain;
 Now thou callest on another, -
 But thy calling is in vain.
 I alone am here to hear thee, -
 Other powers I do defy;
 Here I reign supreme for ever,
 To-morrow, stranger, thou shalt die!"
 "Cease, proud fool, thy silly boasting,
 Thou hast lured us on to death;
 And for this alone I curse thee,
 Curse thee with my latest breath.
 Thou hast foes that are remorseless,
 Who will conquer thee and thine,
 Brave old Pluvius, blustering Boreas,
 And that one great victor - Time.
 And there is a greater power
 Ruling o'er the other three,
 At whose will all things created -
 Even Time, shall cease to be.

Go and leave me to my anguish, -
 Thy triumphant boasting cease;
 For I know that I am dying -
 Let me die at least in peace."
 O! God above, is this thy mercy, -
 This our reward for trusting Thee;
 That Thou let'st the very devils
 Triumph o'er our agony?
 Now the darkness is departing,
 All around grows clear and bright;
 and I see two forms descending,
 Clothed in pure and spotless white.
 One, the angel called Mercy,
 Holds the other by the hand;
 And my eyes with light are blinded,
 As above my head they stand.

The one with pitying looks of sorrow, -
 The other with a heavenly smile, -
 Then I recognize the second -
 'Tis the spirit of my child!
 "Cease, poor sinner, all thy doubting,
 Canst thou alter God's decree?
 By thy sinful, vain complaining;
 What is to be, will surely be.
 If He wills that thou shalt perish
 Ere another day shall dawn,
 He the wind will surely temper,
 To the lambs that He has shorn."
 Then the light fades slowly, softly,
 As from me they float away;
 And I hear the second spirit -
 "Father, dearest father, pray."
 "Great God of love in very mercy,
 End my weak and wasted life;
 But, as Thou art a God of mercy,
 Guard my children, bless my wife."
 Now a peace comes stealing o'er me,
 That increases with each breath;
 Till all fear and pain has left me -
 Surely, this is never death?
 No, my heart feels light and happy,
 As I hasten down the street,
 To my little vine-clad cottage,
 And the children run to greet.
 Here the boys come, helter, skelter,
 And my pretty dark-eyed queen,
 With her little hands extended, -
 'Tis my bonny Ioleen.
 And, beyond, I see another,
 Standing at the cottage door;
 With a happy smile of welcome,
 That I've often seen before.

Ah! great God, the mount's on fire!
 See the cliffs are rent in twain!
 And the very rocks are roaring,
 As though they were in mortal pain.
 No! flash on flash! it is of lightning,
 And the thunder's echoing roar;
 Then there comes a moment's silence,
 And the rain begins to pour.

Stranger, can you guess our feelings, -
 Awakened thus from death's long sleep;
 Life, and strength, and hoping [sic] renewing, -
 Do you smile that men should weep?

BERRY, ELIZA

from Australian Explorers (from 1818 to 1876) in Rhyme.

The thousands cheer, the banners wave,
 The glorious sun shines down,
 When Burke and Wills, the gentle, brave,
 Set forth to seek renown,
 With Landells, King, and fated Gray,
 All smiling in farewell;
 The woes are hid on that bright day,
 That future annals tell.

His party strong, with fatal speed,
 O'Hara Burke divides,
 To Wright, the stranger, gives the lead,
 And all the camp confides;
 But ill-requited is the trust,
 And pregnant of mischance;
 That blunder caused their deaths unjust,
 Our pity does enhance.

Advancing now with seven men,
 He reaches Cooper's Creek,
 And all despatches from his pen,
 Good news and hopes bespeak;
 But sore they chafe at Wright's delay,
 Whose time has long been due,
 For having found Menindie gay,
 He slights his promise true.

Imprudent now is Burke's resolve
 His men to subdivide,
 For thus do greater ills involve,
 And chances worse betide.
 With three assistants, leaving Brahe
 The depot to command,
 Brave Burke and Wills, with King and Gray,
 Their mission take in hand.

In August (sixty) had been made
 The start from Melbourne town,
 And now upon their course delayed
 December's beam comes down;
 When Brahe enjoined three months at most
 To wait for Burke's return,
 They face their goal, the northern coast,
 To reach the "Gulf" they burn.

Now resolute their rapid march
 Beneath the tropic beam,
 Till palms luxuriant overarch
 Cloncurry's welcome stream.
 From Cooper's Creek through plains well grassed,
 With water all the way,
 Their journey of six weeks had passed
 Unnoticed day by day.

Cloncurry followed, meets a stream
 That eager they explore,
 For at its mouth, thy rightly deemed
 Is Carpentaria's shore;
 But camels weak, provisions low,
 Their hearts must heavy be,
 With half three hundred miles to go
 Before they reach the sea.

The horse and camels bog and fall,
 And Burke and Wills, alone,
 Encounter sufferings would appal
 The veriest heart of stone;
 But triumph is at last in store,
 The continent is crossed! -
 The "Flinders" at the northern shore,
 In salt -morass is lost.

What matter flood and noxious damp,
 When victory is theirs?
 Why trouble that the mangrove swamp
 Their view of sea impairs? -
 For they have reached the flowing tide,
 They breathe the salt sea air,
 And with a glorious sense of pride,
 They leave a record there.

Now joined again with King and Gray,
 To Cooper's Creek they bend,
 Predicting sad how best they may
 Their slender stores extend;
 But hopeful yet while health remains,
 Although allowance small,
 They hasten through the tropic rains
 Which now incessant fall.

'Twas February twenty-first
 Had seen them start for home,
 In March the truth upon them burst,
 That evil days must come:-
 The camels killed to eke out food
 And sickness on poor Gray,
 Fresh woes upon each day intrude
 And hunger marks his prey.

Exhausted, starved, but hopeful still,
 That help may yet be near,
 The leaders, with heroic will,
 Their weaker comrades cheer;
 But hope for one is now no more,
 The slowly dying Gray:
 His last days said long days before,
 He gently sinks away.

That 'tis foreshadow of their own,
 How little thought have they,
 While Burke and Wills his death bemoan,
 And smooth the lonely clay;
 Or that this duty-call obeyed,
 Would prove their last sad knell -
 Ah! but for these few hours delayed,
 What different tale to tell!

With effort born of hope's last gleam,
 The final stage is done,
 When, oh, too horrible to dream,
 They find that Erabe is gone!
 Despairing "coo-ees" rend the air,
 For answer, echo's call;
 No tents for weary limbs are there,
 Deserted, silent, all.

Their horror now to realize
 Needs no heroic pen,
 Its bitter truth speaks from the eyes
 Of three despairing men;
 Poor Wills, in searching finds a tree
 Marked "Dig three feet to west,"
 They dig, and food and letter see
 Within a hidden chest.

And, ah, but started on that day
 The abject three now learned,
 When near five months had passed away,
 And Burke had not returned;
 Advised by Wills to follow on,
 'Twas pity Burke denied,
 For Brahe had but a few miles gone,
 His camp by sickness tried.

The diary of gentle Wills,
 A record clear and true,
 Details the sufferings, straits, and ills
 Their hapless fate pursue;
 In evil hour does Burke decide
 Mount Hopeless route to take;
 For now with stores afresh supplied
 His sanguine hopes awake.

Down Cooper's Creek as slowly wends
 Their solitary way,
 The hardest heart some pity lends
 To martyrs such as they;
 Weak, ragged, soiled, with almost shame
 Each meets his comrade's face,
 Though feeling they to others' blame
 Their present woes must trace.

Now stooping over desert plain
 To gather black "nardoo",
 Again reduced by hunger's strain,
 For natives' food to sue;
 See Wills of scientific lore
 Now "jerking" camel's meat,
 Now searching wide the heavens o'er
 For path to guide their feet.

Of "nardoo grinding" from the tribes
 The secret now they hold,
 A native food that Wills describes
 As tasteless, dry, and cold;
 At last within the hut he lies,
 But useful still to grind;
 He speaks of weakness in surprise,
 But marmur, none, we find.

Last hope, poor Burke and King depart
 Reluctant from his side,
 And Wills beholds with aching heart
 His leader's broken pride;
 Now near, sufficient for eight days,
 Nardoo and water stand;
 The farewells are a long, last gaze,
 And wave of feeble hand.

Two days upon the weary quest,
 And Burke succumbs in pain;
 He creeps beneath a bush to rest,
 No more to rise again;
 With King he leaves his watch in care,
 And then his last command:
 That he shall lie unburied there,
 A pistol in right hand.

Two heirlooms now has King in store,
 For friends a sad "goodbye",
 Of gentle Wills we see no more,
 Who waits the hour to die;
 Expecting calm the Master's call,
 Within that "gunyah" shed -
 Oh, lightly let our footsteps fall
 Beside a hero dead!

Now back to Wright who pretext sought
 To gloss his long delay,
 And fearful of some mischief wrought,
 Made speed on meeting Brahe;
 They searched the depot o'er and o'er,
 But strange, no traces found,
 While Wills, by complication sore,
 Had once again been round.

The end of June in sixty-one,
 Saw hunger lay them low,
 While horsemen swift by Wright sent on,
 Took news so fraught with woe:
 Six months since Burke had disappeared
 Within the forest gloom,
 What wonder anxious thousands feared,
 And guessed aright their doom?

One universal feeling swayed
 The colonies at large,
 That active search at once be made,
 With leading men in charge;
 First Howitt from head-quarters sent,
 Explorer fit and brave,
 With party strong his steps are bent
 The lost to find, or save.

Next Queensland prompt gives welcome aid,
 With Landsborough in the van,
 While Walker from Rockhampton laid
 His great north-central plan;
 From Adelaide McKinlay's band,
 With Hodgkinson, our own,
 His vigorous "second in command"
 Are on the centre thrown.

O'er toilsome sands, through scrub and plain,
 Did Howitt take his way,
 Exploring tracks long weeks in vain,
 Accompanied by Brahe;
 Success at last his efforts crowned,
 When near the lone Barcoo,
 In native hut poor King was found,
 Who tears of pity drow.

A wasted shadow, squalid, weak,
 In tattered remnants clad,
 With laboured breath essays to speak
 To eager listeners sad;
 And fearful is the whispered tale -
 Starvation, death, and woe,
 That from those trembling lips so pale,
 Comes faltering and slow.

Restored by European food,
 Poor King becomes their guide
 To Wills' lone grave, who buried rude
 Reposes where he died;
 And sadly now they seek the spot
 Where one more hero lies,
 Where Burke's remains neglected rot
 Beneath the withering skies.

They tender fold in "Union Jack",
 And mark a second grave;
 King's sable friends reward, then back -
 And woeful news they gave! -
 The long procession slowly moves,
 The death-bell sadly tolls;
 And monumental marble proves
 The worth of two brave souls.

COXHEAD, A.

"Written on Wills the Explorer"

Poor Wills! at last thy toil is o'er
 Thy weary feet have trod
 Their last sad, lingering, lonely mile
 Of vast Australian sod.

Oh, who can tell the wild despair,
 The unutterable woe,
 That rends thy parents' hearts in twain,
 Thy sad, sad fate to know.

It was not on the battle-field,
 Nor on the trackless deep,
 Thy weary eyelids closed at last
 In death's eternal sleep.

Ah, no! 'twas in the forest wild,
 Far from the haunts of man;
 No kindly hand was there to sooth,
 Support thy form so wan.

Alone, yet bravely met thy fate
 In that distressing hour;
 Measuring thy life upon the brink
 Of death's unswerving power.

Poor victims of misguided power,
 Directions so ill-planned!
 Our hearts will never cease to mourn
 Our exploration band.

"D.C." (D. Cudmore)

Lines on the Death of Poole, an Australian Explorer.

He fought not for fame on the stern battle-field,
 To live in the blood-written story;
 Where canon's [sic] deep thunder has never yet peal'd,
 He found better path to true glory!

He sought a new home for the houseless, the poor,
 A bright smiling land for the stranger;
 To lift the dark veil from those wilds obscure -
 Dread stillness alone speaks the danger.

The region of mirage, its waterless gloom,
 The wild dog with fear has forsaken;
 It slumbered on, mute, as the depths of the tomb
 The last trump alone shall awaken.

Oft in thought would he gaze on his far native land,
 But truth, in its sadness returning,
 His dimmed eye but met those red hummocks of sand,
 The breeze on the desert was burning.

There, alas! in his youth, in manhood's full bloom,
 He dropped in those wilds, lone and dreary;
 A grave in the desert - the wanderer's doom -
 He slept the long sleep of the weary.

No loved parent knelt at his couch in prayer,
 Nor sisters hung sorrowing round him;

Unheard the fond maiden's deep sob of despair,
Where Death in his fast fetters bound him.

No tablets of marble, no carving in stone,
That mound o'er its bosom discloses;
No fair hand the flowers of affection has strewn
Where more than a hero reposes.

May the names of bold Leichardt [sic], of Stuart, Wills, and
Burke,
Be revered, though life's pulse has resigned them;
May hope, which inspired them, cheer on to the work
Brave hearts that may press on behind them.

"DUSK" (H. HUNTLEY HOSKINS)

From Exploration Thoughts

He wildly gazed around with glassy eyes,
And striving faintly, vainly strove to rise,
Nor had he raised his head from that hard clay,
Where it had pillowed, the preceding day,
Had not a friendly knee been bended there,
To lift his stifling spirit to the air,
He raised his form, as softly as the best
Of mothers folds her baby to her breast,
And then he looked into the fading eye,
Which had for answer only one reply,
A mute appeal, a glance inquiring bent,
With just a motion, pointing to the tent,
That glance half answered by the shaking head,
But asked the tear, that told his friend was dead,
A moment's pause, and then the dying man
Grasped his friend's hand, as but the dying can,
And looking southward, back the radiance stole
O'er all his face, and lighted forth the soul.

The sad survivor scarce believed him dead,
And on his knee, he pillowed still his head,
Till, finding life extinct, his unnerved hand
Raked out a grave, and hid him in the sand,
And there, like Campbell's last of men, he stood
A gloomy hero, in that gloomy wood,
Deep in the wild - divided from his race,
A wretched pris'ner in a world of space,

A bonded freeman, in the dreary waste,-
 Is waste enough, without a crumb to taste,
 Without a voice to fall upon his ear,
 To chide, to soothe, to counsel, or to cheer,
 Without a voice to break the dreadful spell,
 Which, in the silence, o'er his spirit fell,
 Except his own, and that he feared to hear,
 Lest it might wake the dead man, sleeping there,
 Without a friend, to give him groan for groan,
 With echo only, to repeat his own,
 And that but faintly, since his voice, too weak
 To pierce her caves, and make the echo speak,
 Died almost ere she caught its trembling note,
 Which lay, unpregnant in her gentle throat,
 And there he stood, wrapt in the lissom air,
 A clay clad phantom, writhing in despair,-
 Oh, for a thunder voice, that he could send
 Afar, and with it echo's caverns rend,
 And wake the wilderness, that some kind ear
 Might catch the sound, and snatch him from his fear!-
 The intense excitement of the half-breathed prayer,
 Was more, alas! than he had strength to bear,
 And his weak limbs relaxed, - he fell, and lay,
 Almost a load, upon the earth, of clay,
 How long he lay there, he might never cast,
 But woke to find himself with friends at last.
 The Blacks, while marching o'er the plains, had seen
 One hapless corse, stretched out upon the green,
 A pistol in his hand, as if he'd still defy
 The bitter fate, that told him he must die,
 The savage bosom, with remorse imbued,
 All o'er his form, the greenest branches, strewed,
 Then went to see if they, perchance, might find,
 Some straggl'ing sufferer, haply left behind,
 Their quest was answered, and this last they took,
 And gently bore him to a neighbouring brook,
 And laid him on the bank, where with the breeze,
 That breathed a welcome through the desert trees,
 And that instinctiveness, which nature gave
 The untaught mind, to succour and to save,
 They raised, fed, lulled their patient into rest,
 Calm as an infant's, cradled on the breast,
 And they they watch'd around him, lest the fly,
 Which wings the night, and sleepers as they lie,
 Drives from their slumbers, should undo the charm,
 They'd wrapt him in, and turn it to a harm. . . .

The white man moved away, and smote the air,
 The black man's hollow wailing of despair,
 These left the desert, where the guileless breast,
 In sweet security, may find its rest,
 To fly to cold and heartless scenes, where self
 is man's sole aim, and every thought is self,-
 They reached those busy haunts, but I'll not say,
 What greetings met them on the weary way,
 Nor what the plaudits of the fickle crowd,-
 If they were hollow, empty, faint, or loud,
 When home was won,- but let that passage grace
 The page of history, its proper place,
 For me, if I had any light, the spark,
 That lit the taper, is extinct and dark.

Farewell, you children of the desert land,
 I leave ye happy in th' Almighty hand,
 That feeds the raven,- may He keep you still,
 Under the guidance of His sacred Will,
 Far from the scenes, where priests and prelates preach
 The wretched fables, which 'tis sin to teach,
 From haunts where money freezes hearts to ice,
 That curdles every virtue into vice,
 May He protect you, and to white men prove,
 That you, and they are equal in His love,
 And teach them to reflect, that when they'd wring
 A right from you, they but reflect on King!

"ELLIE" (ELLEN ELIZABETH DEBNEY)

The Dying Explorer

How hard in this lone place to die;
 I feel my life's blood ebbing fast;
 See yon cool nook, there let me lie,
 This day will be my last.

Brave comrade mine, come rest thee here,
 And take once more thy leader's hand;
 Shed not for me one bitter tear -
 List, hear my last command.

First pluck a few wild twining flowers,
 And make a pillow for my head;
 Then I shall rest in these still bowers
 Calmly, as do the dead.

I pray to heaven a brighter fate
 Than mine doth yet before thee lay;
 That help may come - not, not too late -
 It can't be far away.

Just stay to close my eyes in death,
 Then onward go. A home once more
 May bless thee. Shorter grows my breath,
 Alas! the days of yore.

To those I love these relics bear;
 'Tis hard, oh God, how hard to die
 Without one spirit treasure here
 One homely comfort nigh.

Honor [sic], what but a passing dream;
 A name, how worthless now to me;
 The things of time, what drops they seem,
 Edged by eternity.

Ye old, majestic, time-stained trees,
 Wave o'er my bones a funeral knell;
 Take my last sigh, soft evening breeze -
 Brave comrade, fare thee well.

Stuart to his Old Bush Hat

Twine a laurel wreath around it,
 Sure it claims the honour now;
 For long days and nights have found it
 Friend-like shielding this worn brow.

True it doth look grim and hoary,
 Yet it stood the wreck of time
 Well; and now to me a glory
 Hangs about it e'en sublime.

Ah! the proud one may despise thee,
 With thy battered, faded brim;
 But how fondly he would prize thee
 Hads't thou been the friend to him

Thou hast been to me. Together
 We have tracked the forest wide;
 At all times and in all weather,
 In good faith we were allied.

Where the grand old trees are braving
 Storm and sunshine year by year,
 And a thousand flowers are waving
 All alone without a fear;

Where the ocean waves are bounding
 On our bright home's northern shore,
 And like mad things are resounding
 To each other's deafening roar;

There, my bonnie hat, we've travelled,
 And, like mine, thy work is done -
 Wild bush secrets are unravelled,
 Wear thy prize, for well 'tis won.

Yes, a laurel wreath around it
 Twine, it claims the honor [sic] now,
 For the days and nights that found it
 Friend-like shielding this worn brow.

Thanksgiving Hymn of the Explorers

We come to Thee, "Our Father",
 Accept the thankful prayer
 For all thy tender watchfulness,
 The parent-loving care.
 For Thou alone hast safely kept
 While on the desert plain;
 And by Thy mercy we have reached
 Home's thresholds once again.

We cannot on Thine altar place
 Some mighty offering;
 It matters not - Thou need'st no more
 Than grateful hearts may bring.
 And oh! the depths of gratitude
 That in our bosoms dwell,
 A fellow-mortal ne'er will know,
 But, Father, Thou canst tell.

Farewell to thee, each danger
 And peril of the past;
 Each lingering day of misery
 We felt might be our last.
 Each dark cloud that came o'er us,
 Each sad dream in our sleep,
 That left some shadowy, misty thoughts,
 Which through our souls would creep.

How false were those forebodings,
 That never to each breast
 We'd take the treasures to our homes -
 The dear ones we love best;
 That after all our wanderings,
 The hardships and the toil,
 At last our bones would mingle with
 The far off forest soil.

But no; our God, our Father,
 Accept our grateful prayer
 For all Thy tender watchfulness,
 Thy parent-loving care.
 For Thou alone has safely kept
 While on the desert plain;
 And by Thy mercy we have reached
 Home's thresholds once again.

EMBLING, WILLIAM HENRY

Leichhardt and Franklin

Icebound and deadly still, the frozen sea
 Closed round a band of heroes, Britain's sons,
 Fighting their stubborn way to do her will
 Where night and silence from their snowy thrones
 Smile a sad welcome to twin sleep and death.
 Year after year passed by, the Northern winds
 Bore back no message from the missing crew,
 Till a low whisper floated o'er the deep,
 "Franklin is lost!" and Time with silent hand
 Turned o'er the Book of Fate to seal his doom.

Amid the struggling myriads of the earth
 They were a tiny handful, workers once,
 But soon replaced now that their work was done.
 Others might find the shadow they had sought;
 The path of duty hides unnumbered graves.
 What were these few? The nations passed them by,
 Cast down their laurel wreaths, and hurried on -
 There were more Franklins in the world than one.

'Twas Britain bade him go; he served her well;
 His widowed wife was there, his empty home,
 The little circle where his name was Love,
 And e'en his memory seemed a hallowed dream.
 Say, did the Ocean-queen forget her son
 Lost in the darkness of an unknown sea?
 Let history tell how many noble hearts
 And stately ships she lavished from her store -
 How "Franklin!" was the watchword of the brave,
 Till the pale phantom of the frozen North
 Gave up his awful secrets to her care;
 And at the last her long-lost sailors' graves,
 The simple records of their hapless fate,
 Borne in fond triumph to her island home,
 Told all the world that Britain and her sons
 Were one in heart, in honour, and in death!

II

There is a Britain in the Southern seas,
 Where the mimosa's branches gently wave,
 And Nature in her virgin beauty smiles.
 The long grass glistens in the moontide [sic] sun,
 Whose burning glory mirrors fairy stars,
 Till the calm waters seem the glass of Heaven.
 The stately emu lifts his graceful head,
 The tiny orchids ope their tendrilled flowers,
 While from the silver-leaved acacia's shade
 The rainbow-tinted birds' discordant song
 Blends with the ceaseless sighing of the reeds,
 And in harmonious music floats to heaven.

The North wind here has lost his robe of ice,
 And rides upon the air with breath of fire;
 While deadly thirst and bitter scorching heat,
 Wide seas of barren sand, with dried-up streams
 And empty torrents, mock the traveller's haste.
 The granite rocks, in fierce confusion piled,
 The strange, weird foliage of a thousand trees,

The gliding serpents 'mid the gaudy flowers,
 The circling eagle, and the dark-plumed swan,
 With Nature's wildest fancies clustering round,
 And over all the cloudless tropic sky,
 Arching the landscape in a dream of light.
 How grandly beautiful earth's ocean-world
 Graces in majesty the Southern Sea!

III

The silence of the untrod wilderness
 Shrouded a band of exiles, pioneers,
 The first and bravest of their Southern home,
 Forth from the little hamlet by the sea,
 Forth from the shadow of their fellow-men,
 Calmly they sought the desert solitude
 To wrest an empire from the grasp of Time.

Years passed and they returned not, while their homes
 Faded in cold neglect from out the land.
 The friends they loved forgot them; others came,
 To whom their memory was a foolish tale;
 And ere the mother's and the widow's tears
 Had furrowed wrinkles on the pensive cheek,
 Men said that they were dead, and left them there
 In the lone wilderness to live or die.
 A marble bust, inscribed with Leichhardt's name,
 A few true hearts, where hope was flickering still,
 And it was over. Cover up the dust.
 An empire rises where the hamlet stood,
 And thousands follow in the path he trod.

Oh! generous nation of the sunny South!
 The youngest babe of Britain, ocean-born,
 Say, shall this always be? shall Leichhardt's doom
 Brand our young empire with ingratitude?
 England can count a thousand here-souls,
 Yet none can perish but her mother hand
 Casts the proud laurel wreath above his tomb.
 Have we so many on our golden shore
 That he the first, the wisest, and the best,
 Can vanish like a bubble from the wave,
 Leaving his fate a warning to his peers?
 He gave far more than ever Franklin gave,
 When first of all he braved the living death
 'Mid unknown deserts, in an unknown land.

Franklin but followed up a path of Fame
 Linked with past heroes; honoured by his Queen,
 He died a hero. Leichhardt's little band,
 Lost like a sunbeam in the darksome wilds,
 Foresaken and forgotten, starved or dead.
 Oh! fair Victoria! mistress of the south,
 Richer than all your sisters of the sea,
 Link but your name with this ingratitude
 And days must come when other hero-souls,
 Cradling their new-born hopes of honest fame,
 Will shrink in silence from the Motherland,
 Lest Leichhardt's labours give them Leichhardt's doom!

IV

Franklin and Leichhardt! brothers of the brave!
 Yet one is found, is honoured in his tomb,
 While cold oblivion shrouds his gallant peer
 In awful mystery, undefined and dim.
 Where are the traces of his desert path?
 Where the mute records of his shadowy end?
 Has the lone sea of sand engulfed them all,
 Horses and riders, in one mighty grave?
 Oh! 'twere a bitter thing should future years
 Tell the sad story that our Leichhardt died
 After long waiting through the wastes of Time
 For help that never came, though ever near!

The heart of woman, tender in her love;
 The hand of woman, soft as falling dew;
 The voice of woman, silvery, sweet, and low;
 The seraph link uniting earth and Heaven,
 When manhood's sterner nature scoffs at hope,
 And manhood's cares make other claims grow dim,
 Then woman's weakness forms a nation's strength;
 Like Hope's bright angel woman leads the way.
 'Twas woman's heart made Britain's heart beat high
 Through all the changing fortunes of the sea;
 'Twas woman's love smiled victory to despair,
 And Franklin's widow lived for Franklin's tomb.

Breadwinners are we all - 'tis woman's care
 Trains up the tender flowrets hope and peace,
 Points to the path of honour, crowns our fame,
 Prays for the erring, mourns the early dead,
 Rewards the hero, wreathes his laurel crown,
 And 'twines his memory as a household name
 With cradle stories of the Motherland.

Leichhardt, the lost! and woman's gentle heart
 Yearns o'er the wanderer on his weary way;
 'Tis but a little sand-grain in the scale,
 But it may save a hero - grant it, Heaven!
 Then those twin spirites through long days to come,
 Leichhardt and Franklin, like two glorious stars,
 Rising in dazzling splendour from the tomb,
 Shall light the path of honour to the brave!

"E.W.H."

To the South Australian Explorer, John McDouall Stuart.

Brave Stuart, thou hast dared,
 And the track thy toil has bared
 Shall our highway be from South and Northern Sea.
 Foremost thou amongst the men
 Who've gone forth, again, again,
 To resolve the gloom now turned to light by thee.

Since that vastly distant day
 When, above old Ocean's spray,
 The sun first saw Australia's rocksemerge,
 Until now, begirt so fair
 With township, farm, and house of prayer,
 In settlements around her utmost verge.

Deeply as we must deplore,
 That before our northern shore
 Had gladdened thy expectant, wearied eyes,
 Thy onward steps were thwart
 By those bushman fierce and swart,
 That thou must renew, to perfect, thy emprise.

Yet we comfort find in this -
 Leaving now, thou wilt not miss
 Th' Explorer's crown for which thou'st struggled on;
 So we greet thee well at starting,
 And cheer forth our hope, in parting,
 Thy goal won, thou may'st be honoured as "Sir John".

And what glory waits thy brow
 When the learned world shall know,
 Not the deed alone, but how that deed was done;
 How thyself and comrades too
 Savage hordes failed to subdue;
 Lone and ill, true Britons still, your lives ye nobly won.

Thou'lt not fill a nameless grave;
 For unfading laurels wave
 To garland - e'en in death - the shrines of those
 Who, spurning danger's plea,
 Pill Life's mission manfully,
 Be their chalice drugged with pleasures or with woes.

Hasten then; our neighbours run
 For the prize thou'st almost won,
 Be the first beyond thy flag to plant another;
 'Tis South Australia's due,
 Thou to self and her be true,
 Park's compeer, and Sturt and Leichardt's [sic] elder brother.

GORDON, ADAM LINDSAY

Gone

In Collins Street standeth a statue tall-
 A statue tall on a pillar of stone,
 Telling its story, to great and small,
 Of the dust reclaimed from the sand waste lone.
 Weary and wasted, and worn and wan,
 Feeble and faint, and languid and low,
 He lay on the desert a dying man,
 Who has gone, my friends, where we all must go.

There are perils by land, and perils by water,
 Short, I ween, are the obsequies
 Of the landmen lost, but they may be shorter
 With the mariner lost in the trackless seas;
 And well for him, when the timbers start,
 And the stout ship reels and settles below,
 Who goes to his doom with as bold a heart
 As that dead man gone where we all must go.

Man is stubborn his rights to yield,
 And redder than dews at eventide
 Are the dews of battle, shed on the field
 By a nation's wrath or a despot's pride;
 But few who have heard their death-knell roll,
 From the cannon's lips where they faced the foe,
 Have fallen as stout and steady of soul,
 As that dead man gone where we all must go.

Traverse yon spacious burial-ground,
 Many are sleeping soundly there,
 Who pass'd with mourners standing around,
 Kindred, and friends, and children fair;
 Did he envy such ending? 'twere hard to say;
 Had he cause to envy such ending? no;
 Can the spirit feel for the senseless clay
 When it once has gone where we all must go?

What matters the sand or the whitening chalk,
 The blighted herbage, the black'ning log,
 The crooked beak of the eagle-hawk,
 Or the hot red tongue of the native dog?
 That couch was rugged, those sextons rude,
 Yet, in spite of a leaden shroud, we know
 That the bravest and fairest are earth-worms' food,
 When once they've gone where we all must go.

With the pistol clenched in his falling hand,
 With the death mist spread o'er his fading eyes,
 He saw the sun go down on the sand,
 And he slept, and never saw it rise;
 'Twas well; he toil'd till his task was done,
 Constant and calm in his latest throe,
 The storm was weathered, the battle was won,
 When he went, my friends, where we all must go.

God grant that whenever, soon or late,
 Our course is run and our goal is reach'd,
 We may meet our fate as steady and straight
 As he whose bones in yon desert bleach'd;
 No tears are needed-our cheeks are dry,
 We have none to waste upon living woe;
 Shall we sigh for one who has ceased to sigh,
 Having gone, my friends, where we all must go.

We tarry yet, we are toiling still,
 He is gone and he fares the best,
 He fought against odds, he struggled up hill,
 He has fairly earned his season of rest;
 No tears are needed-fill out the wine,
 Let the goblets clash, and the grape juice flow;
 Ho! pledge me a death-drink, comrade mine,
 To a brave man gone where we all must go.

HALLORAN, HENRY

The Departure of Sir Thomas Mitchell

He has gone o'er the wave, that Soldier brave,
 Who forty years ago,
 Without sword or shield, sought the battle field,
 In the presence of the foe:-
 And each plain and rill, and stormy hill,
 Where the heady combat blazed,
 With a master's hand, or traced, or planned,
 And his "Atlas of Battles" raised.

He has gone o'er the wave, that Scholar grave,
 Who traced the Orbs which rear,
 Their thrones of light, to the fourth in might,
 In this Southern Hemisphere.
 Who gazed entranced, on the beams which glanced,
 From the depths of heaven above,-
 While Pleasure's Thrall sought the crowded hall;
 Or the joys of adulterous love.

He has gone o'er the wave, that traveller brave,
 Who for many a toilsome day,
 Each lineament, of this Continent,
 Hath laboured to pourtray [sic] -
 Who North, - West, - South, - thro' flood, and drouth,-
 In the midst of savage men,-
 As he journeyed on, hath some treasure won,
 For the Author's graceful pen.

He has gone o'er the wave, that Scholar grave,
 From his own adopted land,-
 To win to its shore, half a million or more,
 From Britain's starving strand:

And what have we done, for this Worthy One?
 Have we ever had him God Speed?
 Or left him in pride our injustice to hide,
 In his heart which scorn'd to plead?

The Explorer Dying in the Wilderness

Around me lie the scatter'd wrecks
 Of my brave company,
 Who journey'd forth into the midst
 Of this vast plain, to die.-
 Fierce Sun! thou can'st not light again
 The fires in each closed eye,-
 Nor loose the black parched tongue of death,
 Even unto God to cry.

Dwellers besides your cherished hearths!
 Kind friends who greeted me,
 Even as a brother when I came,
 The mourned one, o'er the sea;-
 And helped me forth (my bosom's thirst,)
 This central waste to see-
 I cry, tho' death may stop my words,
 God's blessings upon thee.

Oh! take my fame, for good or ill,
 Nor let my name be lost;
 I sought a household word to be,
 Nor do I grudge the cost:-
 Some hearts, I deem may grieve for him,
 Midst central sands now toss'd,
 And blame the lingering steps that might
 The dead man's path have crossed.

Leichhardt

He rests nowhere sick men desire to rest,
 In some sweet slope, beside a hymning stream,
 That lifts perpetual music from it's [sic] breast,
 And wanders, like a Spirit in a dream;
 Where Childhood in the mellow noon will come,
 With it's [sic] ethereal eyes, and loving shouts,-
 It's [sic] warm white bosom beating like a drum,
 With the full heart beneath, which nothing doubts:

Where flowers, the earliest of the time start up,
 As by an Angel's touch, and on the day,
 Scatter a sweetness from each fairy cup,
 That lingers - lingers - loath to pass away:-
 Where, as the fair sad moon floats up apace,-
 The maiden, hushing her sweet fears, will press,
 To listen to that voice, and on that face
 To gaze,- which make to her a Heaven of happiness.

A cloven Waste of gaunt and hungry sand
 Hides from the pitying Heaven the Dauntless One-
 Who stricken down amidst his faithful band,
 Here made his last Appeal,- Life's journey done:-
 "Thou void wild waste, where, nor the Emu's foot
 "Dare wander, nor the wilder man to roam,-
 "Where not a shrub finds nurture for its root,
 "Nor Heaven's fresh Angel, water, finds a home,-
 "My parch'd lips rage more fiercely at the name,
 "For Dives-thirst still holds me on the rack,-
 "Wilt thou, oh! Wolfish Waste, preserve this frame
 "'Till God's good providence demand it back?
 "Haply some Wanderer's foot, in days remote,
 "May dash the dust, my only shroud, aside,
 "And pause to wonder,- and perchance to note,
 "That Leichhardt here, and his companions, died."

Time brings no tidings of the Wanderer's fate,-
Hope to Despair gives up her charmed wand,-
Courage exclaims "'Tis now, alas! too late!"
 and even Love, can hardly look beyond!

The Great Wheel on it's [sic] jarring axle rings,-
 The Whirling Torrent rushes on amain,-
 Life cannot pause beneath the fiery stings
 Of wild aggrandisement, or frantic gain:-
 Around the roaring cauldron, as of old,
 Expectants throng, as in some maniac dance,-
 Grasp at the bright delusion, gorgeous Gold-
 Nor turn aside their fierce, bewildered glance.
 Yet Heaven itself would mark with gracious eye,
 The voiced marble with it's [sic] fine old tone,
 Speaking of Him who did not fear to die,-
 In making Nature's wild recesses known;-
 And man with pride might tell his curious child,
 That Leichhardt, many - many years ago,-
 Sought, with a resolute few, the Central Wild,
 Its varying aspects to behold and know.-

Sir Thomas Mitchell A.D.C., D.C.L.

He died in fifty five, tis eighty now
 And still the lukewarm public let him rest
 In that dim vault, his name above his breast,
 Without one sign to tell the people how
 Their Mitchell toiled, with resolute hand & brow
 Piercing the wilderness, North South & West.
 Or forming roads, or giving them the best,
 Of boundless acres for the flock or plough
 He "Sleeps the Sleep"; but his surpassing fame
 Shall one day waken when our children learn,
 What brave "Sir Thomas" did in the days gone by.
 So Sluggards, we may leave him silently
 The great may "bide their name" and ever spurn
 A people all regardless of their shame.

He shall yet top the tree, when the drowsy and dumb
 Wake up in a sorrowful frenzy -
 That they have made Gods of Jack Sprat and Tom Thumb
 And forgotten a genuine Rienzi -

To F. L. Mitchell Esq. M.R.G.S. and F.G.S. On his leaving
 Sydney for the interior on an Expedition of Discovery.

Again the "Australian Wilderness", thou piercest,
 Tho', with a scanty band;
 Again thou goest forth, to meet the fiercest
 Creations of the Land.

What is thine aim, in leaving human faces,
 And ever-stirring life?
 To follow nature, in her wildest Traces
 Of harmony, or strife.

To traverse plains, where never foot of mortal
 Perchance before has trod;
 To gaze, as thro some unpermitted portal
 On Nature, and her God.

To watch the thronging Stars - Earth's changing bosom
 Her Life-restoring Waters;
 To claim for science many a lovely blossom,
 The forest's unknown Daughters.

HARRIS, CHARLES

A Tribute to the Memory of Sir Thomas Livingstone Mitchell D.C.L.
Surveyor General of N.S.W.

Farewell to the World
Its pride and renown.
The Flag it is furled
On an Eternal Crown.

The Voice it is hushed
That to Victory led.
The hopes that it cherished
For ever are fled.

The arm that did wield
The weapon of war
Lays still by the shield
In the funeral car.

O Life what a Lesson
Now gives to all.
Unstable in health
Uncertain we fall.

The Patriot's fire
In a moment is quenched.
The sword of the Warrior
At once it is wrenched.

And He whom fair science
Had marked for her own
Of Poesy Beautiful
Wreatheth the crown.

Dire was the day
For Australia to see
The hand of the Spoiler
Laid upon thee.

O Mitchell a tear
For thy memory shed.
By many a stranger
To a home thou hast led.

Thou true son of Britain
 Reflected thy mind
 Shall shine in her annals
 The Friend of Mankind.

HAWKES, MORGAN

Welcome to Warburton

Finished at length is thy valiant task,
 The terra incognita boldly crossed.
 Answered the questions we feared to ask,
 When doubting, despairing, we deemed thee lost.

Worthy thy name and thy ancient race,
 Unscathed in our midst do we see thee stand.
 Earnestly, slowly, we scan thy face,
 And, wondering, warmly grasp thy hand.

Safe from the region unknown before,
 Restored from the far-stretching desert plain,
 Back from the wave-beaten western shore,
 United we welcome thee home again.

Lo! through the annals of Arley Hall,
 Are written the Warburton's deeds of yore;
 Tattered and stained on the oaken wall
 Are hanging the banners they bravely bore.

Ages ago in the great Crusade,
 Did one of thy ancestors gain him fame;
 Saracen knights knew his trenchant blade,
 And fled where the Warburton's war-horse came.

Reign after reign in the dear old land,
 Aye, making their mark on its history's page,
 Proudly the Warburton worthies stand
 Noted for valour in every age.

Nor yet is the spirit of those old knights,
Whose banner once floated o'er Arley Hall,
Dead with their horses, and loves, and fights,
Or dimmed like their armour upon the wall.

No! the old courage is active still;
And the white-haired Colonel round whom we flock,
Brave, tender-hearted, yet firm of will,
Is one of the Warburton ancient stock.

Not on the keep or the tented field,
In visor, and helmet, and armour clad,
Not in the lists his good sword to yield,
Our hero sought fame to his name to add.

His was the path that has oft been trod
By heroes as brave as the knights of yore,
Heroes who trusting their lives to God
Australia's mysteries strove to explore.

Leichardt [sic] - lost Leichardt sic, and Burke and Wills,
McKinlay and Stuart, a noble band;
Bold to go forth o'er the long low hills,
To an unknown fate in an unknown land.

These are the names that we honour most,
Theirs are the footsteps we love to trace,
While first to cross over the wild west coast,
A Warburton now on the roll we place.

HORNE, R.H.

Australian Explorers

What hopes inspired each brain - each throbbing breast -
As slowly paced the camels, with their packs,
Through Melbourne streets! The town became one mass
Of people crowding, anxious-eyed, to take
A last look - little dreaming 'twas the last.

Burke, on his sturdy bush-horse leads the van
 Of that adventurous band, pledged mutually -
 One to the other, and, within, as deeply -
 Each man to his own soul. They go to explore
 The vast unknown Australian continent,
 From southern rivers and abodes of men
 Northward to Carpentaria's homeless Gulf -
 Or die, - with dying hopes advancing still -
 To the last famish'd man, and his unconquer'd will.

They journey on, week after weary week,
 Through ways impassable, as Nature thought
 When first she cast these deserts from her hand,
 Unsuitable for life. But manhood, rare
 In energy and fortitude, improves
 Its Maker's gifts, 'till, hardening to the work,
 The shaggy, matted wilderness is cloven,
 And opens her thorny breast to let them pass.

The camel pauses o'er the gorge's brink,
 With obstinate nostril and averted stare;
 But downward his uncouth machinery
 Is led with skill, beneath its toppling pack,
 O'er jagged rock and slippery boulder stone,
 Until, once more, his dingy fabric rises
 Into the scorching splendours of the noon.
 Resting sometimes by day, all night they march,
 Measuring their course beneath the constellated arch.

Month treads on month; dangers and pangs are borne,
 Of scanty water - oft with none at all -
 Tenfold more terrible than hunger's fangs.
 And, thus undaunted, do they force a way,
 Through salt-bush wastes, box-forest, mallee scrub,
 O'er rugged deserts of the torn-up rocks,
 Hills, long ravine and gorge, black earthy plains -
 Darkening the eye to the horizon's verge,
 Loose and unsafe, with many a treacherous crack,
 Deep as the shoulder of a stumbling horse;
 Grey mud-plains, hard and pale as pumice-stone,
 Boundless, and ghastly, with unnatural light,
 where the mirage presents clear pools and lakes.
 (To one who lags behind, or gets astray),
 And men and camels of the Exploring Train
 Travelling along the necromantic sky,-
 Another Train, inverted, foot to foot,
 Travelling beneath: both shadows! - and all else
 Of the reality, then invisible!
 Saw'st thou yon Horseman, journeying thro' the sky?
 'Twas Burke the Leader! - oh, that desert prophecy!

Onward they plod, and struggle without pause,
 Save for their measured sleep, and measured meal;
 And in the centre of Australia's wastes
 The foremost party stands. The Leader here
 Selects three men, with him prepared to plunge
 Into the wilderness, as yet untrodden
 By human foot, and scarce by foot of beast-
 E'en the wild dog. The carrion bird here paused
 On prudent wing, nor left the Great Creek's bounds;
 But onward moved the men. The rest encamped,
 Remain with stores to solace their return.

Again, the weeks creep on with these four men -
 The leader, Burke, young Wills, with King and Grey [sic] -
 Their life a constant toil, and nothing else,
 Save one sustaining hope; their rest oft marred
 By pestilent clouds of gnats, horn'd beetles, ants,
 Marsupial mice and rats, and, worse than all,
 The ceaseless torment of the common fly
 Attacking mouth, eyes, skin, by day and night.
 So scorching is the heat, the natural course
 Of social habits now must be reversed -
 Breakfasts by moonlight, suppers in the sun
 Amidst his earliest rays. Red sandy plains,
 And hills that seem to bake before they blaze,
 Must now be traversed. Thence, the differant toils
 Of the Great Stony Desert - hideous miles
 On miles more hideous. But, ere long, the scene
 Grows verdurous : creek after creek appears.
 Great parks and forests; chains of water-holes
 Full of bright fish; rich grass and pasture lands.
 Here is no barren desert, as 'twas thought,
 But a new region for laborious hands!
 Thus on they fare; prairies and plains, each seeming
 Boundless as oceans, by these resolute men
 With devious steps, at length, are over-passed,-
 They reach the tidal influence of the Gulf -
 The Continent is crossed! What joy is theirs!
 What triumph of the soul, and the full heart!
 What sense of the Great Victories of Peace,
 Which shall bring good-will among distant men!

With beaming and exultant eyes they gaze
 On glittering swamps and chains of reedy pools
 Made rich with floating stars of many a flower;
 Marshes and grassy emerald, streak'd with gold
 Or touched with flashes of the rising sun;
 Lengthening lagoons tufted with islets; brave

In flags and ferns, or mossy rocks and shrubs,
 Where colonies of wild fowl swim around;
 While overhead, in the cerulean sky,
 Flocks of white pigeons gambol, poise, and flash,
 And in the distance, 'midst these watery lands,
 Grave pelicans on sandy reaches stand,
 Flapping the showery arches of their wings,
 As if in welcome, while the herons scream,
 Like music to the ear of victory.

Burke dips his hands within the tidal flow;
 Wills also - King and Grey [sic]. Oh, freshening life
 Where hope perceives her long-watched, leafless tree,
 Suddenly fruitful in the wilderness!
 All wade into the streams, to make truth sure,
 And the one chosen horse (Burke's "Billy") dips
 His nose, eye-deep, in the ecstatic flood,
 And drinks as if he never could be full;
 Then sighs and snorts, and pricks his ears, and stares,
 And tries to understand the common joy
 Which yet he with his master shares. But Burke
 All raptures soon controls. Brief time to pause
 For rest on the inhospitable shore
 Of their success. Hunger will drive them back
 In less space than they came - perhaps destroy.

Already Death has visited this band
 Of spirits heroic. Those who formed the rear
 Journeying towards Cooper's Creek, camped at Bulloo,
 'Midst hostile blacks, with fever and disease,
 Were still too sick to follow; man and beast.
 One, staggering, said, "Let me now shoe the camels,
 Lest I should die before that duty's done."
 He shod them, and then died. Another lay
 Prostrate in body, with a teeming brain,
 Wandering 'tween Science and Delirium,
 With Art to weep his epitaph. So passed
 Thy spirit, Ludwig Becker, - cast away
 By the "ignorant present," - scarcely named - and soon
 Forgotten, like a common clod. O, shame!
 O, sorrow! and the more of both, because
 His wrong is buried with him. Others died,
 Of no note; noted equally, - and all
 In the same list with the lost quadrupeds.

Meantime the Leader and his chosen three
 Returned to join their friends on Cooper's Creek,
 Central in this vast continent. Sore tried
 By ravening hunger, and with failing limbs
 Onward they gasping press, each step a pang,
 Beneath a sun that burns within the shade,
 Whenever shade is found; and through the night
 Aching, and well-nigh paralysed with cold,
 They still urge on, for life hangs in the hours,
 Morn toiling after morn as 'twere the last,
 Yet still another claiming equal toil,
 And more, from their lost strength. Severely urged
 The camels sweat with fury and with fear,
 Bleeding and groaning 'neath their galling packs.
 The store of food fast fails. One camel now -
 And now a snake they eat, whereby, it seemed,
 Burke sickened, as did Grey [sic]; and Grey succumbed,
 From the intolerable suffering of the march
 Thus forced by want, and down he sank, like one
 So craving rest, he had no thought beyond;
 Nor of his last words have we any note,
 Nor of the spot where lie his mouldering bones.

The Leader still, with Wills and King, holds on
 Dragging his wasted and exhausted form
 By energy of will, and only fed
 With confidence in succour waiting them
 At the great Central Creek. There they will find
 Good, clothing, sleep, congratulating friends,
 And heavenly rest of limbs, midst tears of joy.

The goal, so achingly desired, at last is reached
 By these three worn-down, yet victorious men -
 And all is vacancy! - the camp broken up!
 Deserted - man and beast - their friends are gone,
 Not one remains! A scored tree-trunk imparts
 The dreadful truth - the blank dismayed news!
 The heart-depressing strait that few foresaw,
 Yet all should have foreseen as possible,
 And all with care forestalled. That very morn
 Their friends departed, thinking them all dead,
 And fearing a like fate, their homeward course had sped.

Burke, Wills, and King, each wasted to the bone -
 Exhausted, and in rags - their camels sick -
 Only one horse - Burke's "Billy" - with them still -
 Now face their fate. And thus the Leader spake
 To Wills and King: "Can you our friends o'ertake,

Who for Menindie started with the dawn?"
 Both shake their heads - "We cannot." "Nor can I -
 To ask you 'twas my duty. Now must we,
 Each with his load of food upon his back,
 Gather'd from scraps left buried here, strive hard
 To reach the Southern settlements." The others
 Counsel conciliation of the blacks,
 Still on the Creek. O'ersway'd in this, they rise,
 And for Mount Hopeless plod their anguish'd way.

Tow'rd Adelaide their thoughts still gravitate,
 Till the last camel in a quagmire sinks.
 He dies, and he is eaten; but fierce thirst
 Assailing - their way lost - the Mount, a myth,-
 They must retrace their steps to Cooper's Creek.
 They reach it, feebler than before; but soon
 The last scraps left there, finish'd, once again
 To find Mount Hopeless they move forth. They move,
 As moves the dial's shade, these shades of men:
 No substance left - no food. And now the horse,
 Drooping from thirst, with nose that scrapes the ground,
 Sinks on his knees, - and, dying, he is killed,
 And his dried flesh will aid them to return.
 Alas! poor horse! thou did'st thy duty well;
 Drank'st of the stream from Carpentaria,
 And, like to some who once in life were blest,
 Saw Paradise, and yet died miserably.

Again they falter back upon the Creek,
 Living, yet feeling death in every limb,
 In every joint, nerve - almost in the heart.
 They pitch a tent, and having got some fish
 From native blacks who lurked about the place,
 Prepare to cook it; but the tent takes fire -
 They are too feeble 'gainst both wind and flames,
 And all their last few stores are soon consumed.
 King soothes the hostile blacks, and thus obtains
 The mardoo seed, to pound between two stones;
 Its flour, like stone-dust, making ruthless bread.

Searching for seed, and grinding it for food
 Extinguishes their final flickering strength,
 And Wills lies down with a calm smile, to die,
 Exhorting them to leave him there alone,
 And seek the blacks for aid. The Leader's heart
 Resists, but by young Wills at length o'erruled,

They leave him, placing near within his reach
 Mardoo and water for the next eight days,
 When they'll return. Bidding farewell, none weep;
 And one shall find him there - in his heroic sleep.

Burke now, and King, creep slowly along the Creek,
 The blacks are gone. There is no chance of life,
 Unless they're found; but, like the desert crow,
 Or the wild dog, once gone, 'tis rare for man
 Of the white races to discover them.
 The two creep forward with bewilder'd brain,
 Whence comes a dreadful hour of secret pangs -
 A silent, mental struggle, which shall die?
 Or which die first? Nature soon chooses this.

The Leader throws away his sickening swag -
 Makes his last supper on a carrion bird,
 Shot and prepared by King with tenderest care -
 And thus his last will speaks. "I shall but hold
 A few hours more, good King. Take this - and this;-
 If you survive, deliver them. Do not go,
 Till I am quite dead: 'tis some consolation
 To have a friend near. While I am dying, place
 This weapon in my right hand - and then leave me,
 Unburied, as I lie." Through that dark night,
 The Leader, slowly dying, held his peace.
 What thoughts were his - memories - affections fond -
 Sad visions of high fame, had he returned -
 None but his Maker knew. But once he sigh'd -
 At daybreak speechless - and at sunrise dead -
 One ragged, starving man, drooping o'er that grand head.

THE WORLD PROGRESSES BY ITS MARTYR'D MEN:
 Let none deplore the means whereby it moves
 To higher knowledge and to larger acts;
 But the great sorrow o'er these noble bones,
 After their victory, springs from the thought -
 How little foresight would have saved their lives!
 Blame lies on more than one; but no complaint
 The Leader breathed; - he knew his work was done,
 And reconciled to fate, desired to leave
 His bones to whiten for his monument:
 Having so long the frightful desert faced,
 He would lie stark, and arm'd to face it still.
 He met Death hand to hand, nor felt the sting -
 A skeleton of man, bow'd to God's skeleton King!

Noble delirium of a faithful brain,
 Which Homer, or grey Ossian might approve;
 While Christians equally will recognise
 A spirit steadfast - true to the last pulse -
 Pledg'd to the path of Duty. Nor less great
 In passive heroism, lay young Wills,
 Starving on unnutritious nardoc-bread,
 And dying, as he wrote, with a brave smile,
 "In excellent spirits." Oh, how strong was life
 In him, while on the threshold of the grave;
 Closing his journal with a pleasant phrase,
 Then lying back to die in that lone hut,
 With ghastly Solitude to close his eyes.

The black men find him there; then, meeting King,
 Lay down one finger - cover it with sand -
 A sign too well, and sadly understood,
 For King has left him there with scarce a hope.
 The sole survivor now two fingers lays
 Upon the sand, and covers them. The tribe
 Accompanying him to where the Leader lies -
 Arm'd, and unburied. Then, these savages,
 So little differing from the beasts, we thought,
 All wept - perhaps as they ne'er wept before -
 And pitying King, took him to dwell with them.

Such is the tale: and with the blacks lived King,
 Wasting to nought on their unwholesome fare,
 Till rescued by the party sent on search;
 Who reverently gather up the bones -
 All that remain - of the heroic dead,
 And homeward bear - slow months of heavy funeral tread.

HUGHAN, F.M.

The Lost Explorers

'Tis but a little lapse of time
 Since they passed from out our sight;
 Their hearts with hope were buoyant,
 And each face with gladness bright;
 And many were the fervent prayers
 That in safety they might go,
 Through a hidden land to the distant strand
 Where ocean billows flow.

"Theirs was no gay adventure
 In some softly pleasant place:
 They left home's quiet sanctitude
 To meet a hostile race;
 To carve a passage through the land,
 That down its channels wide,
 With a joyous start might flow a part
 Of the restless human tide.

"Across bleak stony deserts,
 Through dense scrub and tangled brier,
 They passed with hearts undaunted,
 And with steps that would not tire;
 Through morass and flooding waters,
 Undismayed by toil and fears,
 At their chief's command, with salient hand,
 Fought on the pioneers.

"Battled with cold and famine,
 Battled with fiery heat,
 Battled o'er rocks till a trail of blood
 Was left by their wounded feet;
 Battled when death with his icy hand
 Struck down the body of Gray:-
 'Onward!' they said, as they buried the dead,
 And wot on their gloomy way.

"Now gather round your household hearths,
 Your children by your knee;
 'Tis well that they should understand
 This tale of misery.
 'Tis well that they should know the names
 Of those whose toil is o'er;
 Whose coming feet, we shall run to meet
 With a welcome NEVER MORE.

"Tell how these modern martyrs,
 In the strength and pride of men,
 Went out into the wilderness
 And came not back again;
 How they battled bravely onward,
 For a nobler prize than thrones,
 And how they lay, in the glaring day,
 With the sun to bleach their bones.

"Tell how their poor hearts held them up
Till victory was won;
How with fainting steps they journeyed back,
The great achievement done.
But of their anguish who may know,
Save God, who heard each groan,
When they saw no face at the trysting place,
And found themselves alone!

"Left alone with gaunt starvation,
And its sickly brood of ills,
Stood Burke the sanguine, hopeful King,
And the hero-hearted Wills;
Sad and weary stood the pioneers,
With no hand to give relief,
And so each day winged on its way
As a dark embodied grief.

"Who can guess the depth of agony-
That no mortal tongue may tell-
Which each felt when slowly dying
At the brink of hope's dry well!
Deserted, famished, garmentless,
No voice of friendship nigh,
With loving care, to breathe a prayer
When they settled down to die.

"Yet God be praised, that one dear life
Was held within His hand,
And saved, the only rescued one
Of that devoted band
Who went into the wilderness,
In the strength and pride of men:
The goal was won and their task was done,
But they came not back again.

"We cannot break their calm, grand sleep,
By fond endearing cries;
We cannot smile them back again,
However bright our eyes;
But we may lowly bend the head,
Though not ashamed of the tears
We sadly shed, for the lowly dead,
Cut down in their bloom of years.

"And laurel garlands, greener
 Than war's heroes ever bought
 With the blood of slaughtered thousands,
 Shall by loving hands be brought;
 And sanctified by many prayers,
 Laid gently in their grave,
 That the coming race may know the place
 Where sleep our martyr'd brave.

IRONSIDE, ADELAIDE

The Death of Leichhardt

On Sunderabella's desert stream - whitening its reedy bank,
 The brave explorer's tents were pitched, when the bright sun
 had sank,
 Crimsoning the forest leaves; and there, afar from Christian
 men,
 A noble band was gathered round the wild wood's denizen.

They talked their old achievements o'er - this pilgrim band
 anon,
 And with ideal triumphs tracked their morrow's journey on:
 Alas, their brilliant-imag'd plans and glorious tales of yore!-
 They ne'er shall track that fancied path, nor tread earth's
 life ways more.

In peaceful calm they laid them down, with hopeful visions
 buoyed -
 But, ah! their dreams of hope and fame were ruthlessly destroyed:
 The poisoned spear came with the well-known savage shouts of
 blood!
 In wild confusion perished all - that noble brotherhood.

The trust in savage hearts, alas, how was it justified!
 There, 'neath their sable murderers' clubs, the struggling
 pilgrims died;
 Far in the wilderness they fell, with none to mark the day;
 The spirits [sic] of the martyred band unrequiem'd passed away.

'Twas dawn - a mottly greyish tint o'erspread the heavenly
 height -
 Then purple clouds, which melted soon before the coming light:
 But, ah! what scene was there revealed t' th' mellowed ray of
 morn -
 Brave Leichhardt's science-prompted band, in massacre folorn.

"J.W."

Sir Thomas Mitchell

And has our great explorer now returned,
 And brought a new Australia to light?
 And has our nation's public spirit burned
 To welcome and reward the aged knight?

Ah no! Though from untrodden regions come,
 Of rich, luxuriant plains and downs,
 Where millions yet may find a happy home,
 A cold neglect his public service crowns.

Must his reward be cold forgetfulness,
 Who left his home - endangered health -
 To serve his country scann'd the wilderness -
 Returned now laden with a nation's wealth?

New animals, new trees, new plants descried;
 With "never-failing" streams meandering
 Where beauteous flowers bedeck the mountain side,
 Still cheering on the patriot's wandering.

And elevations temperately high,
 Where healthful breezes sweep along the wild,
 Inviting us to dwell beneath yon sky,
 Where European beauty never smiled.

There the victims of poverty may find
 Plenty, in nature's overflowing lap -
 And those in grinding workhouses confined,
 A permanent relief from their mishap.

You must try to bear up longer, there is succour on our track,
 If you live till it arrives here, take this watch, they lent
 me, back;

Take it and the note-books with you; from the note-books they
 will learn

Something of our baffled movements - something of our sad
 return!

I have been too weak to write much, hence the records are but
 few,

But you'll tell them what I cannot, and I hope and trust in you!
 And for God's sake stay beside me! in this wild and lonely
 place,

It is now a comfort to be near a friendly human face!

Tarry here till all is over, so that you may see me die;

I shall pass away contented, knowing some one lingers by!

When you find that I have left you, do not move from hence my
 bones;

Do not hide them in the darkness of a heap of dust and stones;

Let them lie uncovered, comrade, bare and bleeding on the land-

But this pistol, which I give you, leave it loaded in my hand!"

Through that night he uttered little, rambling were the words he
 spoke;

And he turned and died in silence, when the tardy morning broke.

Many memories come together whilst in sight of Death we dwell,

Much of sweet and sad reflection through the weary mind must
 well;

As those long hours glided past him, till the east with light
 was fraught,

Who may know the mournful secret - who can tell us what he thought?

Very lone, and very wretched, was the brave man left behind

Wandering over leagues of wasteland, seeking, hoping help to
 find;

Sleeping in deserted wurleys; fearful, many nightfalls through,

Lest unfriendly hands should rob him of his hoard of wild nardoo.

When he reached their old encampment - when the well known spot
 was gained,

He had yet a hope within him that his other friend remained!

So he searched for food to give him, trusting they might both
 survive

Till the aid so long expected from the cities should arrive;

So he shot three crows and took them to the gunyah where he found

Him, whom he had thought to succour, cold and lifeless on the
 ground!

Weak and wearied with his journey there the lone survivor
 stooped;
 And the disappointment bowed him, and his heart with sadness
 drooped.
 But he rose and raked a hollow with his wasted feeble hands,
 Where he took and hid the hero, in the ruses and the sands;
 But he like a brother laid him out of reach of wind and rain,
 And for many days he sojourned near him, on that wild-faced
 plain.
 Whilst he stayed beside the ruin - whilst he lingered with the
 Dead,
 Oh! he must have sat in darkness, gloomy as the tears he shed.

Where our noble Burke was lying - where his sad companion stood,
 Came the natives of the Forest - came the wild men of the Wood;
 Down they looked and saw the stranger - he who there in quiet
 slept-
 Down they knelt, and o'er the chieftain bitterly they moaned
 and wept;
 Bitterly they mourned to see him all uncovered to the blast-
 All uncovered to the tempest as it wailed and whistled past.
 And they shrouded him with bushes, so in death that he might lie,
 Like a warrior of their nation, sheltered from the stormy sky.

Let them rest where they have laboured! but, my country, mourn
 and moan;
 We must build with human sorrow grander monuments than stone.
 Let them rest, for oh! remember that in long hereafter time
 Sons of Science will be wandering o'er that solitary clime;
 Cities bright shall rise about it: Age and Beauty there shall
 stray,
 And the Fathers of the People pointing to the graves shall say,
 "Here they fell, the glorious martyrs! when these plains were
 woodlands deep;
 Here a friend - a brother laid them; here the wild men came to
 weep."

Leichhardt

Lordly harp, by lordly Master wakened from majestic sleep,
 Yet shall speak and yet shall sing the words which make the
 fathers weep -
 Voice surpassing human voices - high unearthly harmony -
 Yet shall tell the tale of hero, in exalted years to be!
 In the ranges, by the rivers, on the uplands, down the dells,
 Where the sound of wind and wave is - where the mountain anthem
 swells,

And our fair and proud Australia,
 Is she destitute of both?
 Can she tell no deed of daring -
 No sweet tale of lover's troth?
 Can those mountains proudly rearing
 Up their grey tops to the sky
 Tell no tale of those who crossed them
 In the early days gone by?

Tell no tale! Why every desert
 On the broad Australian plain
 Speaks aloud of calm endurance
 Shown in bitterness of pain;
 Speaks aloud of men who tendered
 Up their spirits to their God,
 With the scorching sand around them,
 Ne'er before by white man trod.

Tell no tale! Ah! far too many
 Tales of suffering and of pain
 Could those sullen mountains utter
 Did we understand their strain;
 Tales of men, who, bravely daring
 Wilds, so trackless and so wide,
 Lost their way within the gorges,
 Vainly hoped and bravely died.

With the angry bush around them,
 With the sullen sun on high,
 With their last faint hopes expiring,
 There they laid them down to die.
 These are tales of dauntless heroes,
 Men who died that we might know
 Something of this fair Australia
 With its dawning hopes aglow.

Yea! those very mountains mighty
 Are their monuments of pride;
 Silent witnesses, proclaiming
 How they conquered, how they died.
 When the mists of morn'ing lifting
 Show their grey tops, high and clear,
 With the wilderness around them,
 With the silent forest near,
 Then it is we bow in reverence
 To the brave men gone before,
 Men who raised the veil of darkness
 From our land for evermore.

Like a fair bride, shyly standing,
 Veiled and blushing in her place,
 Till her bridegroom lifts her veil,
 Shows them all her smiling face;
 Looks at her with proud possession,
 Says to those on every side -
 "See the beauty of my chosen,
 See the glory of my bride."

So our beauteous proud Australia,
 With the veil about her thrown,
 Waited till our brave explorers
 Came and made her beauty known;
 Though her mountains, sternly fronting,
 Bade them from their way turn back;
 And her deserts, widely stretching,
 Offered them a pathless track.

Wild nor desert could not daunt them,
 Peril could not make them fear;
 On they pressed until the landscape
 Showed before them bright and clear.
 Then it was this land of dawning
 Stood revealed in all her pride;
 Bounteous plenty in her promise,
 Wondrous wealth on every side.

What if of that band of heroes
 Some did perish in the sand,
 Others lived to see the dawning
 Flushing brightly o'er the land -
 Lived to see the wilds they'd traversed
 Teem with goodly cities fair;
 Lived to see the sun of progress
 Shining brightly everywhere.

Europe has her knightly legends,
 And her names that cannot die;
 We have Burke, and Wills and Stuart
 Is their glory not as high?
 Though they did not fight in battle,
 'Mid the great ones of the earth;
 Yet they made a country's history,
 And they gave a country birth.

On Seeing Burke's Pistol in the National Gallery, Melbourne

In a room with relics crowded, as the day was waning fast,
 With slow reluctant footsteps from a guarded case I passed;
 There was that amongst its contents that filled my eyes with
 tears-

A pistol, rust encrusted, a relic of past years.

It lay in well earned rest 'mid mementos of the brave,
 And it told its tale too surely of one we could not save;
 It told of perils faced and of sandy deserts crossed,
 It told of lives well spent and of lives in honour lost.

Across the past's dim vista my spirit looked to see
 A band of heroes facing a doom that few men free;
 They saw the red sun setting, but they never saw it rise -
 They knew too well its dawning would never greet their eyes.

And they laid them on the sand afar from home and kin
 And mourned that far-off goal which it was not theirs to win.
 Aye! Men have died in battle, and in their nation's story
 Their deeds are told with honor, their names are crowned with
 glory.

And we read those deeds of glory and heart and pulse beat high,
 And we grudge them not their guerdon nor their laurel wreaths
 deny;
 But what of those who perished by pangs of hunger cursed,
 With their throats all parched and burnt by the bitter fiend of
 thirst?

Aye! What of those who struggled o'er weary waste of sand,
 With perils all around them and death on every hand?
 What of that band of heroes who died that men might know
 The promise of their country with its hidden hopes aglow?

We give them every honor, we claim their deeds as ours,
 Australia, Land of Dawning, on them all glory showers;
 She claims them as her sons, her heroes brave and true,
 And she proudly bears the nations extol their bravery too.

In a room with relics crowded these thoughts throng through my
 mind,
 And I cease to look before me - I sadly look behind,
 And I see that weary struggle o'er the desert vast and lone,
 And I see the mist uplifting from the land till then unknown.

But I see the men who lift it grow weak and pale and wan,
 And I see their brave hearts fail them as they blindly struggle
 on;
 And I see Burke's eyes grow misty as the long hours come and go,
 For the one who never failed him in death is lying low.

Then I see the shadows deepen on that face so bronzed and burned,
 As with a look of yearning towards his goal he turned;
 With a faint sigh of surrender he falls upon the sand,
 With the sunset glory on him and his pistol in his hand.

They found him lying thus when the help he'd yearned for came,
 They gently bent above him, they softly called his name;
 But no power of theirs could wake him - that sleep would last
 for aye;
 The sunburnt face had taken a sadder tint of grey.
 They could only raise him sadly from his bed upon the sand,
 And gently take the pistol from his lifeless, nerveless hand.

That pistol lies before me, a country's pride and care,
 And I thank the public spirit of him who sent it there.
 I gaze upon it sadly, and despite the lapse of years,
 As I think upon its history my eyes are filled with tears.

LOUGHRAN, EDWARD BOOTH

The Story of Burke and Wills (Written for a Child)

The story of that monument,
 On Traffic's stir looks down?
 And of the noble forms of bronze
 The pillar's summit crown?
 And how among Australian Blacks
 Came camels with their crooked backs?
 And what may mean that cavalcade?
 And who seems dying? Who lies dead?

My boy, you'll in your school-books read
 The deeds of Greece and Rome;
 That monument a tale recalls
 Of heroes nearer home—
 A tale to make your young heart swell,
 If I its merest outlines tell;
 And fit that young Australians knew
 What brave men dead have done for you.

In Melbourne, many years ago,
 A mighty gathering
 ('Twas when late August's mild winds blow
 With whispers of the spring)
 Muster'd beneath the ancient trees
 Of Royal Park, and to the breeze
 Uprose the farewell cheer and shout,
 As an heroic band set out.

What was their task? Not theirs the fire
 That glows in martial hearts
 When to the fight for fatherland
 Rank after rank departs,
 And beating drums and pennons fair
 Make bright the scene and glad the air;
 Yet no less lofty mission they,
 Nor perilous less, took up that day.

To pierce, for science and for man,
 Through far untrodden plains,
 To dare the pangs of famine, heat,
 And thirst's fell maddening pains;
 The close-hid secrets to reveal
 Australia's central wilds conceal,
 And gain, if life and strength could hold,
 To where the northern ocean rolled.

And well equipp'd to face the work
 Extends the long array,
 With laden wains, and camels brought
 From distant India.
 You see how, at the column's base,
 The sculptor doth the parting trace:
 The mayor, 'mid cheers on every hand,
 Wishes "God speed!" the gallant band.

Foremost, on his small wiry grey,
 Brave Burke, the leader, rides;
 A manly form a soul as bold
 As e'er faced foeman hides-
 Fitter perchance a "forlorn hope"
 To head, up ball and shell swept slope,
 Than bear with the chagrins, defeats,
 And sleepless cares the explorer meets.

And near him now, when hope burns high,
 As in despair's bleak hour,
 Young Wills, whose fame from the dark grave
 Blooms like some fair white flower;
 Whose courage, patience, self-denial,
 Shone brightest in need's darkest trial.
 With Saxon eyes and sunny hair
 He smiles - the highest spirit there!

Thus, under auspices as bright
 As the pure August day,
 Through all Victoria's pleasant land
 The explorers take their way-
 Past town and hamlet, hill and plain,
 By mine-pierced slopes of Castlemaine,
 Through Terrick Terrick's pastures wide,
 Across the Murray's silver tide.

But ah, though fair the outward show,
 Within doth discord lurk,
 And petty feuds and laggards vex
 The ardent soul of Burke.
 Ere Darling's lessening stream is passed
 The spring towards summer hastens fast,
 And withering herbage, torrid days
 Proclaim the sun's swift-strengthening rays.

The heavy-labouring column left,
 Its slower way to seek,
 The leader with a trusty few
 Speeds on to Cooper's Creek.
 Here, by design form'd long ago
 He chooses out his main depot,
 And, halting by the plain of sand,
 Impatient waits his lingering band.

But days and weary weeks go by,
 And he looks forth in vain;
 Still empty, morning, noon, and eve,
 Stretches the southward plain.
 At last, of dull inaction tired,
 And still with hope and longing fired,
 He cries:- "Give me but comrades three
 And I will gain the northern sea!"

And at the word step forth young Wills,
 and gallant King and Gray;
 Where'er their leader's foot may go
 As bold to follow they.
 Northward may wait them perils dire,
 A savage race and tracts of fire,
 But they are of true British breed,
 Prepared to die or to succeed.

Just think! Of all that goodly train
 From Royal Park set forth,
 Four men, six camels and a horse,
 Now front the unknown north!
 Certes, not for emprise like this
 Was treasure pour'd like rain I wis;
 But all that Care and Foresight plans'd
 Soon scatters Folly's reckless hand.

A last farewell to comrades said
 (Whom three shall see no more)
 With steadfast hearts and resolute steps
 Set out the dauntless four.
 The little party left behind
 Long watch them o'er the desert wind,
 As men may watch some frail bark sink
 Below the ocean's glimmering brink.

Day after day, week after week,
 Endured that toilsome march-
 'Neath blazing suns, o'er stony tracts
 The tiring feet that parch;
 Through tearing scrub, through flooded fens,
 O'er dreary flats of salt-bush dense,
 Through forests where dim twilight broods,
 O'er rivers swain with tropic floods.

Yet sometimes cheer'd their weary eyes
 Scenes fair as dreesland knows;
 Wide uplands, gay with flower and bird,
 Green valleys of repose;
 And spirits rose, and hopes grew bright
 Besides the camp-fire's ruddy light,
 While shiver'd on the broad lagoon
 The silver arrows of the moon.

Eight weeks have passed. Two haggard men
 By a lone inlet stand
 (Where Carpentaria stretches south
 a cold and glittering hand);
 Their frames are hunger-worn and weak,
 But triumph's flush is on their cheek,
 And triumph's light is in their eye-
 For lo, at last, the sea is nigh!

Though mangroves veil the ocean's breast,
 They hear its low deep tone;
 Their feet the Continent have crossed,
 The victory is won!
 Forgot are peril now and pain,
 Forgot the dangers that remain;
 The thought alone leaps up like flame-
 Gain'd is a proud immortal name!

The stately forests they have pierced
 Will fall 'neath Labour's blows,
 The trackless deserts they have crossed
 Will blossom like the rose;
 Cities will rise with spire and dome
 Where now the pelican makes its home:
 But ne'er shall fade with rolling years
 The glory of these pioneers!

Southward once more with joyful hearts
 The feeble party turn'd-
 God grant the guerdon now to win
 Their doughty deed hath earn'd:
 But want and sickness haunt their way,
 Still hovering round like beasts of prey,
 Till, rack'd with famine, pain, disease,
 Gray finds in death a glad release.

With hands that scarce the task fulfil
 His lonely grave they heap-
 In that far silent wilderness
 Soft be our brother's sleep!
 A few brief prayers; then onward still,
 With weakening step but stubborn will.
 'Gainst Time and Death they wage the fight,
 Nor stay the struggle in the night.

At last comes Cooper's Creek in view.
 "Hurrah!" the leader cries,
 "Our comrades' moving forms I see
 Against the sunset's dyes."
 Vain mirage! vision sweet, that flies
 Ere grasp it quite the aching eyes!
 No lonelier spreads the desert's face
 Than lies the long'd-for camping-place.

Too cruel Fate! to dash the cup
 Just rais'd to their parch'd lips!
 At victory's noon to veil the sun
 In sudden black eclipse!
 Cheerless and wan Despair's cold breast,
 Bitter his bleak face at the best;
 But when so dread his stony eye
 As when the heart with hope beats high?

Only a few short hours too late!
 That very morning saw,
 Hope lost, the party left in camp
 With slow sad steps withdraw.
 A few short hours! To these doom'd men
 It might eternity have been,
 Who, worn with hunger, pain, distress,
 Already taste death's bitterness.

But hero-hearts not even Despair
 Can quell; 'gainst hopeless odds
 They struggle still while glows one spark
 Of life - the rest is God's.
 Engraven on a gum-tree's bark
 Wills the brief mandate "DIG" doth mark,
 And, soon revealed, a scanty store
 Of food doth hope with strength restore.

Two days for rest. Then on once more
 They press with step elate -
 But who may dream, how'er he fight,
 To 'scape the shaft of Fate?
 The secret by the desert lost
 'Twas doom'd three gallant lives should cost.
 Its grasp may loose the ravening sea,
 But not the hand of Destiny.

'Twould wring thy gentle heart, my child,
 To hear in sad detail
 All that those brave men nobly bore
 In efforts doomed to fail;
 Now by the friendly natives fed,
 Now starving on the nardoe seed;
 Ragged and shoeless, shivering 'neath
 The bitter June-wind's wintry breath.

Two months of misery. Then the end.
 Beneath a gunyah lies
 Heroic Wills, the light of life
 Slow fading from his eyes.
 Great to the last that noble heart!
 He bids his sorrowing friends depart:
 "Once chance remains, - to find again
 The kindly children of the plain."

Full loath, though other hope was none,
 They leave him there - to die!
 Alone, beneath the pitying stars,
 He breathed his latest sigh.
 Sad lot for youth so promise-full!
 But mortal eyes, my child, are dull
 To scan God's ways. Death summons all.
 As ready few to hear the call.

And ere thrice more had set the sun,
 Brave Burke had join'd his friend;
 A soldier, like a soldier he
 Fell fighting to the end.
 And martial memories were heard
 Still lingering in his latest word:
 "My weapon place in my right hand;
 Leave me unburied on the sand."

That is their story. Fate was kind
 That not in vain they fell;
 Faithful devoted King was spared
 Their moving tale to tell.
 Nor left to bleach on desert sands,
 Their sacred bones, by reverent hands,
 While many a heart-wrung tear was shed,
 Were laid among the honoured dead.

Dead! But their spirit is not dead;
 The indomitable will,
 The courage high that shames despair
 Inspires Australia still.
 Nor could more fit memorial rise
 To meet her ardent children's eyes,
 Than that which tells of duty done,
 Though life be given in desert lone.

LYND, ROBERT

Lines Addressed to the Party Proceeding on the track of
 Dr. Leichhardt.

Ye who prepare with pilgrim feet
 Your long and doubtful path to wend,
 If - whit'ning on the waste - ye meet
 The relics of my murder'd friend -
 His bones with rev'rence ye shall bear
 To where some mountain streamlet flows,
 There, by its mossy bank, prepare
 The pillow of his long repose.

It shall be by a stream, whose tides
 Are drunk by birds of ev'ry wing;
 Where ev'ry lovelier flower abides
 The earliest wak'ning touch of Spring!
 O meet that he - (who so carest
 All beauteous Nature's varied charms) -
 That he - her martyr'd son - should rest
 Within his mother's fondest arms!

Its dreary course along, his life and strength
 Are ebbing fast away, until at length
 He can no longer rise, no longer cope
 With hunger or with pain. Now their chief hope
 Of succour rested on the savage race,
 Whose tribes in those great wilds, in war and chase
 Are wont to waken echoes, although now
 No sign of their approach was seen. The sough
 Of the low wind when murmuring through the trees,
 The cries of some lone bird that swiftly flees
 Unto its nest, beside a great still marsh,
 Is all that breaks the quiet. Then keen and harsh
 The night-wind smote upon them, through the hours
 Of the cold nights. Pierce rays and driving showers
 In turn assailed them, while their garments hung
 In thin worn rags. And still to life they clung,
 While daily Burke and King the nardoo-seed
 Gather and crush for food.

"Men soon must speed
 To us with help," Burke hopeful still would say,
 "And even now, Wright must be on the way,
 And may arrive at any hour." Alas!
 For the deluding hopes, which as days pass,
 Still fainter wax. Then, when the light had flown
 One sombre evening, and great clouds lay strown
 In troubled masses, over east and west,
 Wills, who had seemed all day as if opprest
 By an unspoken grief, looked on the light
 Of the pale moon, and murmur'd, "This one night
 Longer mine eyes upon my fellow-man
 May rest." He turned his face, then sadly wan,
 In silence to his comrade. Ere Burke laid
 Him down to rest that night, Wills slowly said,
 "Upon the morrow, when the morning breeze,
 Warm with the sun's rise, passes through the trees,
 Burke, you must leave me, while you yet have strength
 To seek for help. Yes, friend, the hour at length
 Has come that bids us part - nay, hear me speak;
 It is our last one chance. Worn out and weak,
 I feel my life is ebbing fast away;
 And I must wax more helpless day by day,
 Unless soon succoured; therefore, for my sake,
 Should you at once, the journey undertake;
 For life is sweet, and I would fain still cling
 To it, O friend."

As when the night winds bring
 Across the seething, fiercely troubled waves,
 Faint signals of distress, from those whose graves
 Await them in the deep - to friends who stand
 Helpless to save, upon the rock-bound land-

So fell those words upon the sinking heart
 Of him who heard them. Silently apart
 He turned, and musing for a long sad while
 He paced beneath the trees. Faint as a smile
 That lingers wanly on a dying face,
 The moonbeams fell upon the still vast space
 That lay in sombre shadows on each side.
 "It must not be, - whatever may betide
 I cannot leave him thus to die alone"-
 Burke bent his head with a low bitter moan
 Of helpless anguish. Oh to see that form
 Wasted, unsheltered, from the sun and storm-
 Intently gazing on it, Burke stood long
 With tearless wistful eyes. Then mid the throng
 Of sad thoughts, full of bitter doubt and fear
 Which filled his mind, this one rose sharp and clear-
 "Though I should now remain beside him, he
 Must die, unless soon rescued; upon me
 Then rests his only hope of life"-

Wills woke

Here suddenly, slowly, half rose, then spoke
 In a low faltering tone - "Ah! you are yet
 Beside me then - nay, think not I regret
 The purpose I have formed, but as I slept
 I dreamt that you had gone." Burke quietly crept
 Nearer to Wills, but answered not. The sky
 Was overcast; the winds rose cold and high,
 And keenly swept through the frail timent
 Of rustling boughs, beneath which they sat bent
 And silent. Then Wills quietly spoke again:
 "It avails not that we conceal the pain
 And anxious fear which must weigh on each heart
 When soon in sad uncertainty we part-
 Each greatly worn and weak. Let us not seek
 To hide our thoughts, as those who dare not speak
 Nor whisper them, from overwhelming shame."

"Oh, but I fear, my boy, that though our name
 Cannot be linked with aught unworthy those
 Chosen for a great task, that as time shows
 What fell disasters met us on the way,
 There will be no lack of those who'll say-
 "Poor fellows! one was rash, the other young;
 When the fate of such an undertaking hung
 On such a pair, what wonder that success
 Did not attend them." Harsh and merciless
 Will be some men's speech. O! I seem to hear
 The shallow pratings of those who make clear
 The course we should have taken, and the cause

Why danger and distress were ours. The flaws
 Of our policy will be passing plain to
 The most obtuse intellect. The pain,
 The anguish, and the dull wearying care,
 Which weighed on us, while none were found to share
 Our aims and wishes, in the Exploring band,
 That still decreasing, we led through the land-
 All may be little heeded, and less known:
 To you as unto me, life must have shown
 That failure is an error, deem'd by men
 More culpable than sin. We know that when
 Its shadow falls on man or enterprise,
 The qualities, which are lauded to the skies
 When allied with success, are in this case
 But ground for bitter shame. Few pause to trace
 The adventitious accidents which place
 The crown upon the victor's brow. The race
 We know, is not at all times to the swift,
 Yet he who lags behind, need never lift
 His eyes with hope to the loud-shouting mob,
 Whose plaudits seem to make the great sky throb.
 "Ah well, what boots it all, we two alone
 Upon this last sad night, need not make moan
 As to the world's opinion. You lease of all
 Whom love of gain, nor fame, could not enthrall
 From the pursuit of science. For my part
 I know that love of fame found in my heart
 A favoured resting-place. E'en as a boy
 I well remember yet, it was my joy
 To hear of doughty deeds, done in old times
 By my forefathers in far distant climes.
 How often in the rapturous day dreams,
 In which the youth of ardent soul, oft seems
 To be uplifted from prosaic life,
 Have I gone forth, to wage immortal strife-
 To win the conqueror's resplendent crown,
 And leave my name, embalmed in the renown
 That lives in history, and the poet's song,
 As one whose life, above the common throng
 Was fruitful in great deed, and noble aim!
 How oft our early aspirations shame
 The records of our life! How oft the prize,
 More coveted than aught beneath the skies,
 Seems to elude our over-eager hands!

"When grown to man's estate in foreign land
 Following a soldier's life I lived. At last
 I sought this country. Do you know the past
 Rises with a strange vividness to night

Before me. And the events which the flight
 Of years has hurried out of mind, again
 Seem fresh as scenes of yesterday. How vain
 Our dearest hopes at such an hour as this
 Appear! Man at the height of earthly bliss
 Seems still but the mere puppet of blind chance;
 One moment revelling 'mid wine and dance-
 The next groping in the charnel-house of grief,
 Without a hope, a joy, or a belief,
 Beyond a rigid form, which in its shroud
 Will never heed the voices, low or loud,
 That rise in the hoarse accents of despair
 Beside it. Death and pain, and wearying care
 Seem ever lurking round man's toilsome way."

Thus Burke wiled the sad, lingering hours away,
 Till he had sunk to sleep. But all that night
 Wills lay with throbbing brow awake. The light
 Of the returning day now broke the gloom.
 Stern and mysterious the great woods loom
 Again around. At last the hour drew near
 For Burke and King to leave. Undimmed and clear
 The sun once more made summer in the sky,
 The shadow in the woods. The moments fly
 Apace. Doubts crowd anew into Burke's mind-
 But on Wills' patient face, calm and resigned,
 There was no cloud of fear. Yet in his heart
 The thought was strong, that when he now would part
 With his two comrades, he would never hear
 The sound of human speech again. Burke rose
 to go. His pallid cheek more pallid grows.
 In vain he tries to speak a last farewell
 In quiet and measured words: his low tones fell
 and trembled, and at last he looked away;
 But all around was strangely blurred and grey.
 Then, for some moments as he thus stood there,
 The crushing weight of dark and wild despair
 Fell on his soul. Love, faith, and trust in God
 Were scattered in that hour, like an abode
 That safely stands beneath an Alpine rock
 Till a great avalanche, with thundering shock
 Sweeps it to ruin. Or, as waves might roar
 With tidal force across a shore,
 Sweeping each ancient landmark from the way,
 While naught is heard but cries of birds of prey
 That flap their ominous wings above the dead,
 Greedily gazing on the banquet spread:
 So, hopeless doubt and dark rebellion swept
 Over his tortured soul. And still he kept

His wistful eyes fixed on the wilds around,
 As though in that last hour, the sight and sound
 Of nearing forms might break the dreary blank.
 Again his gaze upon his comrade sank;
 No aid from God or man was drawing near--
 No hand to rescue and no voice to cheer,
 And he must thus be left - alone, alone--
 Without a soul to heed his dying moan;
 Alone with famine, pain, and nakedness;
 Alone, in the last hour of dire distress.

At last, Wills softly said, "Delay is vain,
 The day is wearing on." Now once again
 Burke grasps his comrade's hand, then turned away
 Slowly, as one, that in a deadly fray,
 Has been sore smitten, and who fain would creep
 Unto some spot, where peaceful shadows sleep,
 To hide the pangs of failure and of pain,
 Knowing that cry for help must be in vain.
 Thus, spirit-broken Burke went on his way,
 With faltering steps; but on the third day
 After he had left Wills, all strength was spent.
 Till the last hour was past, King by him bent.
 He died as he had lived - brave, fearless, true:
 Naught, save the trees, a shadow o'er him threw;
 He lay alone beneath the lonely sky,
 Unpall'd, uncoffined. With his last faint sigh,
 He breathed a prayer of resigned faith
 Unto his God. And lying thus in death,
 King left him, and in awful loneliness
 Wandered for many days. But his distress,
 His sufferings, and rescue, have been told,
 And are well known to all.

NEILSON, JOHN

Ernest Giles

The last day's march is o'er;
 He needs no guard around the camp to-night.
 Closed are the eyes that through long nights before,
 Wearied with watching for the coming light.

Eastward and westward far,
 O'er many a mountain-chain and desert sand,
 Through evening shades and 'neath the morning star
 He trod the length and breadth of all the land;
 And when the desert's toils
 Closed round him and his faithfuls, none looked back,
 Though hundred, and yet thousands, of long miles
 Lengthened, and grew upon the wanderer's track.

Perchance in dreams once more
 He saw the dust-cloud where his camel train
 Came winding down, and on the distant shore,
 The sunlit billows of the welcome main,
 Or smiled to see beneath the azure skies
 The white roofs of the settlement arise.

And, as the slow months passed,
 With ebbing strength he earned the scanty dole
 His country gave. Unmurmuring to the last
 In patience he possessed his gallant soul.
 Still faithful to the end he did endure,
 And perished, unrewarded and obscure.

And thus the wanderer died,
 His desperate marches o'er, and it was meet
 Such ending - he, the true and sorely tried;
 The desert stretching at his weary feet,
 His spirit passed to join the noble band
 Within the dim, uncharted borderland.

Shall we not honour him,
 Who stormed the desert's stronghold, him who warred
 For us with thirst and pain and famine grim;
 Who marched right through where every danger barred,
 And traced the paths that guide in the lone west
 The keen gold-seeker on his venturous quest.

Oh, not in courts of ease
 Are trained the master spirits, strong and good.
 They hear a voice upon the swaying seas
 That calls them forth, and in the darksome wood
 They read the signs we cannot understand;
 Our vision fails, they see the beckoning hand.

Land of the sable swan,
 When thy historians, in the coming years,
 Tell of the dauntless souls who led the van,
 The heroes of thy wastes, the pioneers,
 'Mid those who led afar their slender files,
 No braver heart was there than Ernest Giles.

NIXON, FRANCIS

Burial of Burke and Wills; Funeral Ode

Weep, Victoria - weep!

Let these dry bones -
 Bleached by the tropic sun and desert blast
 Through months of lone un-burial - be warmed
 And moistened by a sorrowing nation's tears;
 Ere the cold grave, late-yawning, shall receive
 The dust of heroes altogether thine!
 Mourn, then, Victoria! Check not the throb,
 The dumb pulsation of thy swelling heart,
 The frequent sigh - for there is here today
 That awes the timid, bids the manly weep,
 And sanctifies each separate tear that falls.

Dead - both dead!

Not as in common die,
 The life-spent travellers of every day,
 On tended couch and pillow fondly smoothed
 By friendship's hand; but on the scorching plain,
 Far from the reach of help, at duty's beck,
 Gave they their precious lives - these martyrs. They
 Whose country sent them forth "to do or die,"
 Achieved! - and perished when the task was done.
 All uncomplaining, undismayed they met
 Their cruel fate. Gaunt hunger dogged their steps,
 And feasting slowly on his costly prey,
 Left but these bones, Victoria, for thee!

Cherish the legacy! for dust more rich
 Hath never yet returned to whence it rose.
 Guard well the legacy! it is a gift
 Than which the proudest nation may desire
 No grander. Here is that which typifies
 All that is brave, enduring, martyr-like,

High-toned, heroic! Here are the precious signs
 Of patriot spirits passed from earth away
 To soar in other spheres and guard thy fame,
 Victoria! These dry, unburied bones
 Are thine to boast by, thine to sow as seed
 In soil from which new heroes shall arise,
 As fabled Phoenix from the smouldering pile.

Raise high the bier! that in the sight of all
 This proud example to the world be shown.
 Bury their dust within the sculptured tomb;
 And when thy children yet unborn shall ask,
 What sacred relics rest beneath the stone?
 Tell them, - and, telling, let thy words strike deep,
 Deep as the sufferings they once endured -
 How glorious BURKE and no less noble WILLS
 Gave their last breath, Victoria for thee!

O'HARA, JOHN BERNARD

Pioneers

Wild wastes of wildest seas by winds upcurled,
 The Cape of Storms to bar their dauntless way,
 Strange perils at the portals of our bay
 When first the flag of England was unfurled;
 And now the strength of Britons boldly hurled
 Against dark battlements of wilds that lay
 In dim magnificance from Time's first day;
 And lo! the cosmic thrill of a new world!
 What words august for those brave hearts of old,
 What song supreme to shine their deathless deeds,
 What monumental memory to rear? -
 Sufficeth they will live in sons as bold
 That still shall scatter o'er the world the seeds
 Whose harvest swells from ripening year to year.

PROVIS, C.

Untitled

Australia - mourn! thy brightest star is fled,
 Thy hero of explorers now lies dead;
 That spirit once so ardent, brave, and true,

Has breathed to all on earth its last adieu.
 With fearless heart he led the dang'rous way,
 No perils could his outward progress stay;
 Privations could not force him to retreat,
 Until his arduous journey was complete.
 He forced a passage through that desert land,
 And reach'd in safety Carpentaria's strand.
 For this great feat give BURKE a hero's due,
 A feat which many tried, but none could do.
 With weaken'd frame his steps he then retraced
 Across that dreary, trackless, desert waste;
 Sanguine of hope at Cooper's Creek to find
 The few companions he had left behind.
 But what his thoughts to find his party gone,
 And he by far too weak to journey on!
 What cruel hearts thus to desert their chief,
 When most he stood in need of their relief!
 Had they a few short hours prolong'd their stay,
 The gallant Burke had been alive today.
 With feeble, tottering steps, and almost nude,
 He vainly sought, amongst the natives rude,
 To find that succour which his friends denied,
 But, finding none - exhausted nature died!

There none were near him with Religion's pow'r,
 To sooth the anguish of his dying hour.
 No grieving friends were there - no pitying tear -
 To mitigate his pangs while ling'ring here!
 No loving wife received his dying breath,
 Or fondly press'd the hand now cold in death;
 No anxious mother, when the spirit fled,
 Perform'd the last sad office for the dead.
 No downy bed was there where he reposed;
 No father's hand his quiv'ring limbs compos'd;
 No sorrowing brother closed his glazing eye;
 No weeping sister watch'd the suff'rer die.
 He died alone! in regions far away,
 Where still he lies to moulder in decay,
 Go! bring his bones, and o'er them raise a tomb,
 And there lament thy hero's mournful doom;
 Where all who live may read his honor'd name,
 And thousands yet unborn may learn his fame.

SYLVESTER, E.K.

Stanzas. (The following lines were written on the return of L. Leichhardt, Esq., on the 25th March, 1846, from an Expedition through the unexplored Regions of Australia, between Moreton Bay and Port Essington)

Thy footsteps have return'd again, thou wanderer of the wild,
Where Nature from her lonely throne, in giant beauty smiled.
Pilgrim of mighty wastes, untrod by foot before,
Triumphant o'er the wilderness, thy weary journey's o'er!

Thou hast battled with the dangers of the forest and the flood,
And amid the silent desert - a conqueror hast stood:
Thou hast triumph'd o'er the perils of the mountain and the
plain -
And a nation's smiling welcome, is thy greeting home again!

Long had we mourn'd with sorrowing, and plaintive dirges sung,
For fate a wild mysterious veil around thy name had flung,
And hope's declining energies, with feeble effort strove,
Against that boding voice of fear, which haunts the heart of love.

And rumour, with her hundred tongues, her vague and blighting
breath,
Had whisper'd tidings sad and drear - dark tales of blood and
death;
'Till tortur'd fancy ceased to hope, and all despairing, gave
Thy name a hallow'd memory - thy bones a desert grave.

But no! that proud intrepid heart still held its purpose high,
Like Afric's martyr traveller - resolved, "to do or die;"
Like him, to find a lonely grave in desert sands of flame,
Or win a bright eternity, of high and glorious fame!

Oft in the silent wilderness, when meaner spirits quail'd,
Have thy unfailing energies, to cheer and soothe, prevail'd;
For well thy hope-inspiring voice, could speak of perils past,
And bid each coming one appear, less painful than the last.

And oft e'en that brave heart of thine, has sadden'd to despair,
When o'er some wild and lonely scene, the moonlight shining fair,
Hath bid thy soften'd spirit feel, how lonely were thy lot,
To die - thy mission unfulfilled - unknown, unwept, forgot.

And when beside thy comrade's grave, thy stricken heart ⁵¹² bow'd
down,
And wept o'er that glad spirit's wreck, its dream of young
renown -
There was bitterness of soul, in the silent prayer that rose,
Ere they left him in the desert, to his long and lone repose.

At length the hour of triumph came, the white man's track
appear'd
Visions of bright and holy joy, thy toil-worn spirit cheer'd;
A glorious pride lit up thy heart, and glow'd upon thy brow,
For Leichhardt's name among the great, and good, is deathless
now.

Thou hast wrought thy work of victory, by deeds of blood
unstain'd,
For man's appointed purposes, a glorious world obtain'd;
Thy step upon the wilderness, the harbinger of peace,
Hath bid that wild and savage night of solitude to cease.

Proud man! In after ages, the story shall be told,
Of that advent'rous traveller, the generous, the bold,
Who scorning hope of selfish gain, disdaining soft repose,
First taught the howling wilderness to blossom like the rose.

THOMAS, MARGARET

Death in the Bush (Suggested by the death of Burke and Wills)

To die, to perish in the bush alone,
With but the wilds to hear thy parting groan;
With but the winds to catch thy parting breath,
And mock the last long agony of death;
To feel some message to the true and dear
Clamour for utterance, yet with none to hear;
To long with anguish health can never know
For the last solace human hands bestow;
Yet hear no gentle tone, no soft caress
Soothing thy spirit's last and worse distress;
To feel a thousand thoughts for language rise,
Yet which must perish when the body dies;
Where no kind voice can quell the rising fears,
No gentle hand wipe off the bitter tears;
To face the awful king unarmed, alone,

Thy loss unnoticed, and thy fate unknown;
 To know not if thy wasted form shall lie
 And shrivel 'neath the sun's all-scorching eye;
 Or if the varrigal with rapture grim
 Shall tear thee piece from piece, and limb from limb;
 To know thine eyes may gaze unclosed to Heaven,
 Till from their orbs by crows and swamp-hawks riven;
 Which to their prey, while still thou'rt conscious, rush;
 God grant we face not death while in the bush.

THOMPSON, LAMBERT

On the Burke and Wills Monument

Not as we see them here in the full strength
 Of life, but prone and stretched at length
 Upon the desert ground alone they died,
 Slowly with gasping breath did they subside
 In all the agonies of mad'ning thirst
 And gnawing hunger, - yet having traversed
 Almost from shore to shore, their work was done,
 Their task fulfilled, the crown and honour won.

And now they stand for ever 'mid the hum
 Of men, a sign to reverence and to love;
 Their bones are laid not far from here, above
 We trust their souls in Christ's elysium;
 So not only in the forms this bronze gives,
 But each within our living hearts still lives.

WINTLE, S.H.

Leichhardt

'Twas not for wealth, mere solid gain;
 (That which the million would attain).
 He left the social hearth to roam
 The forest wild, the boundless plain,
 For years to know no other home!

Ah! no, for science sake he dared
To part from all affection reared,
 To leave his fatherland and smiles
Of kindred love, he freely shared,
 To tread Australia's hidden wilds.

Undaunted by experienced toil
O'er burning sands that even broil
 The shrinking flesh; again he sought
With fearless heart that knew no foil,
 Fresh dangers, but with new hope fraught.

Long years have passed, he comes not yet
Hath hope quite vanished to let
 The heart be darkened by despair?
A lingering ray, though eyes be wet,
 Is left, that we our arms may bare!

That we our arms may bare and strive
To learn if he be yet alive,
 Or e'en one of his gallant band.
Hope whispers that he does survive
 To gladden his adopted land!

But if like him whose fearless soul
Dared the dread dangers of the Pole,
 He hath a martyr fallen too;
And found untimely life's dark goal
 A deathless name is then his due!

Then let all tongues proclaim his fame!
Deep in the marble grave his name,
 That ages hence may learn,
For all men's good he hither came;
 But came not to return!

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