

ABSTRACT

BURKETT, MELANIE LYNNE. *Australian Legend, Australian Lives: The Interplay Between Representations of Early Nineteenth-Century New South Wales and the Experiences of Free Immigrants.* (Under the direction of Brent Sirota).

The early nineteenth century saw both the onset of Great Britain's industrial revolution and a substantial wave of emigration to Britain's colonies. In the Australian colony of New South Wales, the population of free immigrants grew significantly for the first time with the advent of government-assisted emigration in 1831, a time when the colony continued to receive transported convicts from Great Britain. Why did these free emigrants take the bold risk of leaving behind their homes and, furthermore, choose a penal colony for their destination? An examination of information available about the colony in the British popular press and of immigrants' self-disclosed motivations (as recorded in diaries, reminiscences, and letters home) revealed an image of New South Wales as a place where immigrants could achieve financial stability, self-sufficiency, and access to the land. Following those personal documents through the immigrants' early years in New South Wales uncovered the depths of the adjustment immigrants faced. Expectations set by the popular press were not always realized and immigrants found themselves living among unfamiliar types of people, including convicts. These frustrated and confounded expectations endured by some of the earliest free immigrants to the colony shaped the set of cultural values the young society embraced. As the colonies in Australia matured, a literary representation – a self-image – developed. Russel Ward christened this definitively masculine archetype the “Australian legend” and argued it evolved based on the experiences of the convicts. Yet, this thesis argues that the archetype would not have become such a recognizable embodiment of what it meant to be “Australian” had it not contained elements that also rang true to the experiences of free immigrants. The struggles they overcame, the

characteristics they naturally possessed, and the value systems they developed also aligned with the archetype, revering personal independence, perseverance, egalitarianism, and a willingness to try anything. Thus, when examining free emigration to New South Wales, representation impacted experience, but the reverse was also true.

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Australian Legend, Australian Lives: The Interplay Between Representations of Early
Nineteenth-Century New South Wales and the Experiences of Free Immigrants

by
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BIOGRAPHY

As an undergraduate at Duke University (B.S., Psychology), Melanie Burkett spent a semester studying abroad at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, an experience which instilled in her a fascination with both intercultural learning and the discipline of history. Experiencing a culture that differed from her own in unexpected ways while simultaneously studying its history generated a curiosity about questions of national identities and cultural values, including how those phenomena develop and change over time. These interests drive Burkett professionally and intellectually. While completing her Master of Arts degree in History at North Carolina State University, Burkett also worked in the field of global education, helping undergraduate students have cross-cultural experiences, experiences not at all dissimilar from those of the nineteenth-century emigrants she studies. Burkett also holds a Master of Business Administration from Ohio University.

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INTRODUCTION

Because of “the love of a young woman.” That’s why George Suttor wanted to emigrate from London to the British colony of New South Wales, at least according to his patron, the famous naturalist Sir Joseph Banks. Suttor had been introduced to Banks by George Aufrère, Banks’s uncle and the employer of Suttor’s father (a gardener). The twenty-four year-old Suttor had not given Banks that reason for his interest in the distant colony. When Suttor and Banks met, they discussed mainly agriculture; Suttor had some training in the family business and had read Banks’s account of his journey with Captain James Cook during which Cook “claimed” Australia for the British. But, Suttor had also mentioned his beloved Sarah, his future wife whom he had chased with varying degrees of success for almost five years. According to the story passed down in family lore, Banks reported to Aufrère that he was struck by Suttor’s passion for this woman and thus arranged for George and Sarah to receive free passage to New South Wales as well as two hundred acres of land in the colony. In exchange, Suttor would care for plants Banks was shipping to New South Wales.¹

What might appear to be simply a sentimental story reveals much about Great Britain at the time. Suttor had wanted to join the theater, but Sarah swore she would never marry an actor, so he decided to give up his dream. His primary goal, above all, was to “provide for the comfort of that beloved being in whom I had long fixed my affections.” Though he may have been able to survive as an actor – he had made some money with a traveling theater group –

¹ Suttor was also Aufrère’s namesake. Suttor Family, Papers, 1837-1939, MAV/FM4/1390, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

mere survival was not acceptable in England's wealth- and status-conscious society. Indeed, Sarah's stepmother had always thought Suttor was too poor for Sarah. The pressure to provide at a prescribed level was so great and the opportunities available to the third son of a gardener were so unpromising that taking one's new bride to the other side of the globe to live in a nascent colony populated primarily by convicts seemed to be a risk worth taking. Altogether, it was a risk taken by over a quarter of a million people in the nineteenth century.²

George and Sarah Suttor were among the earliest free emigrants to New South Wales.³ The British ignored Aboriginal possession of the land when they established the penal colony in 1788. The Suttors arrived in 1800 when the colony was just shy of thirteen years old and was only home to under five thousand people of European descent.⁴ Over the next fifty years, however, the colony transformed from merely a jail to a fully functioning society, one which no longer received transported convicts and which boasted over 187,000 inhabitants.⁵ Free emigration was vital to this transition. The immigrants, along with the transported convicts, lay the foundation of Australian culture. Their expectations for the colony, the adjustment they faced upon arrival, and their social interactions both with each other and the convicts shaped a system of cultural values. As New South Wales came of age in the second half of the nineteenth century (achieving "responsible self-government" in

² Robin F. Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor: Australian Recruitment in Britain and Ireland, 1831-1860* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), Appendix 1.

³ "Free," as opposed to the legally forced convicts.

⁴ David Neal, *The Rule of Law in a Penal Colony: Law and Power in Early New South Wales* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Appendix 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Appendix 4.

1855), a national identity formed, a self-image based on those values. To understand what it meant to be “Australian” at that time – a key aim of this study – we must investigate the dreams, disappointments, and adaptations of the immigrants who helped establish the colony.

Migration in the Nineteenth Century

The nineteenth century was a unique time in migration history as massive populations moved in the face of disruptions caused by industrialization. Some estimates put the number of people leaving Europe between 1815 and 1930, at over fifty million.⁶ Emigrants came from every European country, represented every social class and a wide range of occupations, and went to a variety of destinations.⁷ Moreover, migration from the British Isles – a “people exporter *par excellence*”⁸ – was itself unique when compared to the rest of Europe. Between 1815 and 1930, an estimated thirty-six percent of European emigrants to all destinations came from the British Isles, whereas those same islands only accounted for approximately ten percent of Europe’s total population.⁹ Aside from the proportionally large volume of emigrants, Britain was also unique in its tendency to send such large numbers to locations within its own empire.¹⁰ And while dislocations caused by the birth of

⁶ Dudley Baines, *Emigration from Europe 1815-1930* (London: Macmillan, 1991), chap. 1; Eric Richards, *Britannia’s Children: Emigration from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland Since 1600* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), 4.

⁷ Baines, *Emigration from Europe*, chap. 1.

⁸ Richards, *Britannia’s Children*, 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰ John M. MacKenzie, ed., introduction to *European Empires and the People: Popular Responses to Imperialism in France, Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Italy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

industrialization often precipitated movements of Europeans, migration from Great Britain continued to increase as its industrial base matured for reasons that defy easy explanation.¹¹

Despite the enormous scale of these movements, the study of migration fell out of vogue in British historiography until the last decades of the twentieth century.¹² At that point, initial studies tried to quantify the scope of the phenomenon, a difficult task. Movement of people in the early nineteenth century was largely unhindered by legal restrictions (e.g., visa requirements), a fact which may have made it easier to migrate, but which left historians with incomplete and often contradictory records.¹³ For example, the “over fifty million departures” figure cited above pairs with a calculated fifty-four million arrivals in destination countries, a difference that cannot be explained by merely births on board ship.¹⁴ Methods of recording and categorizing the emigrants’ occupations were highly inconsistent and data on internal migration (migrating within one’s own country was often a preliminary step to a longer journey) are sketchy, at best, complicating attempts to determine whether emigrants came from primarily rural or urban areas, for example.¹⁵ Not until the 1880s were more concerted efforts made to track migrant movements more accurately.¹⁶ Thus, most emigration statistics from the first half of the nineteenth century – the focus of this study – should be taken as imperfect estimates.

¹¹ Charlotte Erickson, *Leaving England: Essays on British Emigration in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), Introduction.

¹² Kent Fedorowich, “The British Empire on the Move, 1760-1914,” in *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Sarah Stockwell (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 63-100.

¹³ Erickson, *Leaving England*, Introduction.

¹⁴ Richards, *Britannia’s Children*, 4.

¹⁵ Baines, *Emigration from Europe*, chap. 3.

¹⁶ Richards, *Britannia’s Children*, 4.

Nevertheless, quantitative studies provide a necessary perspective on the scope of migration. However, such methods also depersonalize a highly personal process. Hopes, fears, and aspirations are lost amidst tables of departures and arrivals. Thus, the turn of the millennium saw a call for more historical work connecting the statistical data to individual stories.¹⁷ “For emigrants/immigrants and their children,” Alexander Murdoch argues, “migration is not social science and it is not a quantifiable problem.”¹⁸ But since no completely common emigrant experience existed, the experience itself is difficult to analyze. Yet as Dudley Baines reminds us, the difficulty inherent in making generalizations about emigration is precisely what makes emigration an interesting and important subject of study.¹⁹

The more qualitative, personally-focused research on emigration has often concentrated on assimilation into the receiving community and much of that emphasizes the latter part of the nineteenth century. The transformative process of migration destabilized old identities and formed new ones. Cultural assumptions brought from home had to be refashioned within new communities.²⁰ Classic assimilation studies from the late nineteenth century involve southern Europeans arriving in major American cities by way of Ellis Island and accommodating themselves to American language and values. But what if the receiving community was still in the process of establishing itself? Emigrants to New South Wales in

¹⁷ For example, see Colin G. Pooley and Ian D. Whyte, eds., *Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants: A Social History of Migration* (London: Routledge, 1991); Alexander Murdoch, *British Emigration, 1603-1914* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Marjory Harper and Stephen Constantine, *Migration and Empire* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁸ Murdoch, *British Emigration*, ix.

¹⁹ Baines, *Emigration from Europe*, 74.

²⁰ Kent Fedorowich and Andrew S. Thompson, eds., introduction to *Empire, Migration and Identity in the British World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

the early nineteenth century – the emigrants studied here – arrived to a community that had not yet found its identity, a community whose social norms were still under negotiation. As our emigrants adjusted to their new home, they also played a role in shaping “Australian” culture.

Qualitative migration historians have been vocal in their call for more research into the motivations of emigrants.²¹ Understanding why emigrants like George and Sarah Suttor would undertake the dangers of ocean travel to relocate to a place from which it would be very difficult for them ever to return is particularly fascinating given “the unwillingness of many twentieth-century people, in more affluent societies, to take such risks.”²² The interest lies beyond the mere risk and novelty, however. Tension exists between the work of economic and social historians. Economic historians assume (not necessarily incorrectly) economic considerations to be the driving force in emigration and set about measuring the trends in both economic pressures and people movement.²³ Social historians seek to understand the opportunities and constraints that economic (and other) structures placed on people living under the influence of those structures.²⁴ For some, emigration became the best option in light of those opportunities and constraints, an alternative way to respond to the changes of the nineteenth century beyond “agrarian protest followed by political and trade

²¹ For example, see Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*; Murdoch, *British Emigration*; and Colin G. Pooley and Ian D. Whyte, “Introduction: Approaches to the Study of Migration and Social Change,” in *Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants: A Social History of Migration*, eds. Colin G. Pooley and Ian D. Whyte (London: Routledge, 1991), 1-18.

²² Erickson, *Leaving England*, 86.

²³ *Ibid.*, Introduction.

²⁴ Pooley and Whyte, “Introduction,” in Pooley and Whyte, 18.

union organization.”²⁵ As one reviewed these options (protest, union membership, emigration), one was forced to consider “one’s most important priorities and values, throwing into relief what really counted and what could be dispensed with.”²⁶ Thus, studying the motivation of emigrants sheds light on what emigrants wanted but did not receive from their home society and the lengths they were willing to go to get it. This, in turn, reveals much about both the social attitudes of the home society and the disparate impact of the structures controlling it.

Motivation for leaving and assimilation into the host culture are two important qualitative topics surrounding emigration, yet the two are rarely connected in the existing historiography. Many histories either stop before or shortly after the emigrants go ashore at their destination²⁷ or focus almost exclusively on life in the new locale.²⁸ This study attempts to connect the two, arguing that an emigrant’s motivation for leaving (and, by extension, his/her expectations for life in the destination) itself impacted the assimilation of the traveler (after arrival, now called an *immigrant*) into the recipient society, a connection found by Charlotte Erickson in her examination of American immigrants.²⁹

Methodology

Personal motivation and adaptation, however, are tricky to ascertain given both the dearth of sources and their subjective nature. Though not entirely free of methodological

²⁵ Erickson, *Leaving England*, 33.

²⁶ John Tosh, “‘All the Masculine Virtues’: English Emigration to the Colonies, 1815-1852,” in *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2005), 175.

²⁷ See Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, or Andrew Hassam, *Sailing to Australia: Shipboard Diaries by Nineteenth-Century British Emigrants* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1994).

²⁸ For example, Geoffrey Sherington, *Australia’s Immigrants, 1788-1988* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990).

²⁹ Erickson, *Leaving England*, chap. 1.

pitfalls, diaries and letters of emigrants would seem to provide the most direct insight into the emigrants' personal thoughts.³⁰ Andrew Hassam explores the psychological function served by shipboard diaries, a tool used by writers to help them make sense of the experience of emigration, especially the voyage out, which was a “stage between two worlds.”³¹ Eric Richards argues that migrants, due to the experience of migration itself, were more likely than the average person to be reflective about their lives.³² Indeed, as Charles Boydell, an emigrant to New South Wales, explained, he began his journal because “nothing can be more conducive to improvement than introspection.”³³ This certainly was not always the case,³⁴ but, in general, diaries and letters do provide rich insights into emigrants' hopes, disappointments, and struggles.

Of course, in order to be able to keep a diary, one must be able to read and write and thus these sources do not directly capture the experiences of the illiterate. However, in her detailed study of applications for government emigration assistance, Robin Haines finds that emigrants to the Australian colonies possessed the ability to both read and write at similar

³⁰ A view shared by Erickson, *Leaving England*; Murdoch, *British Emigration*; and Eric Richards, “Voices of British and Irish Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Australia,” in *Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants: A Social History of Migration*, eds. Colin G. Pooley and Ian D. Whyte (London: Routledge, 1991), 19-41.

³¹ Hassam, *Sailing to Australia*.

³² Richards, “Voices of British and Irish Migrants,” in Pooley and Whyte, 20. Dudley Baines, though, provides a corollary to that point. Diaries could also be skewed toward those who experienced a more difficult transition. Those writers used the diary as a way to work through their struggles. Baines, *Emigration from Europe*, chap. 2.

³³ Charles Boydell, Journal, 1830-1869, CY 1496, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, March 1, 1830.

³⁴ Hassam found that many shipboard diaries were little more than daily records of the weather and the ship's latitude and longitude. Similarly, teenaged Australian immigrant Mary Phoebe Broughton used her diary to record primarily various shopping excursions and lists of dinner guests, with none of the youthful whimsy one might expect given both her age and mentions of her future husband calling at the house. Hassam, *Sailing to Australia*; Mary Phoebe Broughton, Diaries, 1834-1838, MLMSS 756, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney; Mary Phoebe Broughton, Diary, 1839-1841, MLMSS 4010, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

rates to the general population at home,³⁵ thus mitigating though not completely eliminating that drawback for the population studied here. These sources also present an additional challenge: those that have managed to remain in existence for over nearly two hundred years tend to favor the wealthier emigrants. Wealthier emigrants had more time to keep a diary/write letters in the first place along with a greater ability to preserve such documentation over time.³⁶ This bias applies overall to the diaries, letters, and reminiscences used in this study. For example, some authors came to administer the colony³⁷ or to invest in entrepreneurial pursuits.³⁸ But, not all the authors came to New South Wales wealthy. Some relied on a military pension to make the journey,³⁹ others arrived with very little money and

³⁵ For example, she found that fifty-nine percent of emigrants to New South Wales from 1848 to 1860 could both read and write. Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, chap. 2.

³⁶ Many of the sources examined here were given to or transcribed for the libraries by descendants of the original writer.

³⁷ Dick and Anne Bourke accompanied their father, Richard, as he became the eighth governor of the colony; Mary Phoebe Broughton was the daughter of William Grant Broughton, the Bishop of Australia for the Church of England; and William Westbrooke Burton came to sit on the Supreme Court. See Bourke Family Papers, 1809-1855, M 1863, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney; Broughton, Diaries, 1834-1838; Broughton, Diary, 1839-1841; William Westbrooke Burton, Letters Sent to Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Austen, 1833-1835, MLDOC 2668, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney; Anne Deas Thomson, Journal of a Voyage to Australia, August-December 1831, MAV/FM3/743, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

³⁸ Henry Gilbert Smith, Papers, 1827-1857, MLMSS 660, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney; Alexander Brodie Spark, Diary, 1 January 1836-22 September 1856, CY 1507, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

³⁹ Frances Mary Jane Bowler, Diary of Frances Mary Jane Bowler, MAV/F4/1390, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney; Martha Mackenzie, "Reminiscences, 1825-1850, Sketches of Australian Life," MLMSS 944, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

prospered over time,⁴⁰ some were the sons of convicts,⁴¹ and at least one came as the servant to a wealthy settler.⁴²

Another critique of this methodological approach is its subjective nature. Given the pressures inherent in generating sales when journals or letters were intended for publication, historians prefer unpublished accounts, where available.⁴³ Even these, however, were not free from bias. Especially in letters home, the writer could have – intentionally or unintentionally – been “performing” for the recipient. The need to assuage the fears of those left behind could lead to an idyllic portrait of the immigrant’s life. Journals were also sometimes written for a specific person (and in those cases, took on a conversational tone)⁴⁴ or could appear to be notes toward an unrealized publishing project.⁴⁵ Even when the journal appeared to be kept solely for personal edification, it could not be accepted as completely objective. Authors sometimes wrote in coded language to themselves, as if they feared someone else might read the journal. When writing of his unrequited love, Thomas Callaghan wrote her name in an illegible squiggle. Only after he had been in the colony for several years could the reader

⁴⁰ Suttor Family, Papers; Thomas Callaghan, Diaries, 1838-1845, MLMSS 2112, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁴¹ Rev A. C. Lawry, Transcription of Robert Howe Diary, 1 August 1822-4 April 1823, B 846, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 1939; Cooper Family, Journal, 14 Feb. 1831-12 Dec. 1832, MLMSS 7666, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁴² John Brown, Diary by a Servant of the Scott Family, 8 Aug. 1821-Mar. 1824, MLMSS 7808, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁴³ Richards, “Voices of British and Irish Migrants,” in Pooley and Whyte, 20.

⁴⁴ Anne Bourke’s journal was addressed to her younger sister, Fanny, who remained at home and Robert Howe’s diary was kept at the request of and was intended for Howe’s friend, Walter Lowry, who had gone on a mission to Tonga. Deas Thomson, Journal of a Voyage to Australia; Lawry, Transcription of Robert Howe Diary.

⁴⁵ Annamarie Jagose, Transcription of the Diary of Daniel Adey Fowles, 1836, MLMSS 7668, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 2000.

discern her name was Caroline.⁴⁶ Alexander Spark's unfailingly daily journal provides another excellent example. Amidst detailed descriptions of his activities and the people he visited, the journal is riddled with obtuse references to unnamed people and events such as "Saw an old acquaintance after long absence for the first time in a house in Elizabeth Street."⁴⁷

Diarists and letter writers may not have been completely honest with their audiences or even themselves, but much can still be learned from these sources. With a particularly robust journal, like Spark's or Callaghan's, the historian comes to know the author's writing style, day-to-day routine, and general outlook. Deviations from those conventions spotlight events that challenged the author in some way. Furthermore, when reading across many journals or sets of letters, themes inevitably emerge, be they attitudes toward a particular group of people or frustrations over lack of economic opportunity. Thus, from examining personal reflections, the historian can discern common concerns and representative experiences of the larger society.⁴⁸

This study also includes the use of reminiscences,⁴⁹ a category of sources with its own unique challenges. Reminiscences have the benefit of providing a longer term perspective,⁵⁰ but since reminiscences were written long after the events described took place, specific details, including dates and even the order of events, must be considered with

⁴⁶ Callaghan, *Diaries*.

⁴⁷ Spark, *Diary*, June 22, 1838.

⁴⁸ Murdoch, *British Emigration*, chap. 10

⁴⁹ Most of the reminiscences used here – all unpublished – appear to have been written at the behest of the writer's descendants. Jones, "Some Reminiscences of My Past Life"; Mackenzie, "Reminiscences"; Suttor Family, *Papers*; and Samuel Thompson, "The Reminiscences of Samuel Thompson, 1821-1910," Q994.403/6, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 1905.

⁵⁰ Richards, "Voices of British and Irish Migrants," in Pooley and Whyte.

a certain degree of skepticism. Conversely, even if decades may have blurred details, an incident or anecdote remembered across time and included in one's life story clearly possessed some level of emotive power for the writer. Thus, reminiscences are useful in the study of emigration, a time of great emotional upheaval. The primary sources employed in this study – diaries, letters, and reminiscences – are admittedly subjective accounts; they record events not necessarily as they objectively happened, but rather through the perspective of the writer. It is with this very perspective, however, which this study engages. By exploring the self-recorded (even if, at times, self-deluded) goals, adjustments, and disappointments of emigrants, we can create a richer picture of the forces behind the nineteenth century's unprecedented movement of people, beyond mere numbers.

The Destination: New South Wales

New South Wales was famously founded as a penal colony, a dumping ground for the overflow from Britain's teeming prisons. The First Fleet arrived in 1788 to a land that had been minimally explored by James Cook eighteen years earlier. For the first several decades, the colony was dominated by convicts, their offspring, and, eventually, freed convicts (called "emancipists"). Most of the free, never-incarcerated colonists were military men who had come to police the convicts or civil officers who had come to administer the colony. A small number of merchants arrived, but very few of the early free immigrants came without a tie to the penal enterprise.⁵¹ The number of free immigrants arriving in 1793 was only *five*.⁵² The

⁵¹ Sherington, *Australia's Immigrants*, chap. 1.

⁵² R.B. Madgwick, *Immigration into Eastern Australia, 1788-1851* (London: Longmans, Green, 1937), chap. 1.

period of 1800 to 1806 saw the arrival of only 296 free immigrants,⁵³ two of whom were George and Sarah Suttor. Once the Blue Mountains were finally crossed in 1813 and the thousands of prime pasture land that lay behind them were revealed, however, suddenly New South Wales had viable commercial opportunities (namely, wool). This drew younger sons from the gentry who could afford the high fare and had enough capital to establish a flock.⁵⁴ But despite the availability of convict labor, they needed more workers.

Enticing emigrants to a penal colony was a tough sell, though, and by 1828, only thirteen percent of the population (4,673 people) was composed of free immigrants.⁵⁵ One major impediment to emigration for the type of laborer needed was cost; on account of the immense distance, a mid-nineteenth century steerage passage averaged seventeen pounds, almost the annual wage of a rural laborer.⁵⁶ To solve this problem, a program of “assisted emigration” was implemented. The colonial government artificially increased the price of land and used the proceeds to subsidize the passages of emigrants. Such schemes to subsidize emigration were not only used in the Australian colonies, but the Australian system was particularly innovative in linking the sale of land to emigration.⁵⁷ As such, assisted emigration was disproportionately important to Australia. Only an estimated ten percent of all European emigrants received government assistance; however, almost forty-five percent of the emigrants to Australia before World War II received a government subsidy.⁵⁸ One

⁵³ Sherington, *Australia's Immigrants*, chap. 1.

⁵⁴ Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, chap. 3.

⁵⁵ Neal, *The Rule of Law in a Penal Colony*, appendix 4.

⁵⁶ Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, 14.

⁵⁷ Madgwick, *Immigration into Eastern Australia*, chap. 4.

⁵⁸ Baines, *Emigration from Europe*, chap. 7.

positive outcome of this high incidence of assisted emigration for historians is the rich documentation it created. Through applications for assistance, emigration agent reports, and medical reports, more can be learned about emigrants to Australia than perhaps any other destination.⁵⁹

Despite the relatively strong data available about Australia's assisted immigrants, the historiography has not paid much attention to them. For over a century, shame over the "convict stain" led Australian society to minimize or ignore altogether the country's penal origins, avoiding the subject in school curricula in both lower schools and universities.⁶⁰ The assisted immigrants suffered a similar fate in the annals of history. Assisted immigrants were criticized early and persistently. Australia, it was assumed, received the lowest class of immigrants from Great Britain, paupers whose immigration was paid for by the colonies, but arranged by the Colonial Office in Britain as a way to, as in the case of the convicts, once again rid itself of its most undesirable subjects at Australia's expense.⁶¹

Scholarship at the end of the twentieth century worked to resuscitate the reputation of the assisted immigrants. Based on an extensive examination of emigration records, Robin Haines argues that assisted emigration policies were quite strict in demanding a "higher quality" of emigrant and, furthermore, a vast majority of the eventual recipients of aid met

⁵⁹ Though the data on unassisted emigrants remains sketchy. Richards, "Voices of British and Irish Migrants," in Pooley and Whyte, 19.

⁶⁰ Robert Hughes's opus *The Fatal Shore* aimed to rectify that omission and, indeed, it set off a flurry of work on the convicts. Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: The Epic of Australia's Founding* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986).

⁶¹ This sentiment is found throughout the twentieth century. See Madgwick's 1937 work, *Immigration into Eastern Australia*, 149; and Geoffrey Blainey, *A Shorter History of Australia*, 2nd ed. (South Melbourne, VIC: Macmillan, 2000), 53.

the requirements.⁶² Applicants had to fulfill occupation, health, and age criteria as well as provide the testimony of *four* witnesses. Furthermore, the institutionalized poor – those unable to support themselves at a subsistence level – were ineligible to apply.⁶³ Haines has found some isolated periods during which the indigent poor were sent straight from workhouses, but she concludes such emigration only occurred when enough volunteers to meet the colony’s needs could not be found.⁶⁴ Assisted emigration certainly opened up relocating to New South Wales to populations who would not have been able to afford the journey previously, but the distance alone required a high level of organization (through which paupers could not “sneak” through) and made the journey too expensive for the government to experiment with intentional mass exportation of paupers.⁶⁵

So who were the assisted emigrants? The typical assisted emigrant to New South Wales was more likely to have come from southern, rural counties of England than more urban or industrial areas.⁶⁶ While Australia was a minor destination within the scope of overall Irish emigration (only five percent went to Australia), a quarter of Australia’s immigrants were Irish. The emigrant to New South Wales was more likely to travel as a family than alone. This, along with deliberate recruitment efforts, resulted in a higher

⁶² Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*. See also Eric Richards, “How Did Poor People Emigrate from the British Isles to Australia in the Nineteenth Century?” *Journal of British Studies* 32, no. 3 (July 1993): 250-79.

⁶³ Robin F. Haines, “‘The Idle and the Drunken Won’t Do There’: Poverty, the New Poor Law and Nineteenth-Century Government-Assisted Emigration to Australia from the United Kingdom,” *Australian Historical Studies* 28, no. 108 (1997): 1-21.

⁶⁴ Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, chap. 5.

⁶⁵ Sherington contrasts this with Canada, emigration to which, he claims, *did* more often involve paupers. Sherington, *Australia’s Immigrants*, chap. 2.

⁶⁶ Characteristics given here shift between describing emigrants to New South Wales and emigrants to the Australian colonies, more generally, based on the data set. The information is taken from Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, chap. 2; Erickson, *Leaving England*, chap. 5; and Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, chap. 3.

representation of women among emigrants headed for Australia in comparison to the United States. Agricultural workers and general laborers were much more likely to go to New South Wales (and Canada), whereas textile workers were overrepresented in the United States, in part because they did not qualify for assistance to the Australian colonies. Women who came alone were likely to be domestic servants. When including those who could only read along with those who could both read and write, emigrants to New South Wales were highly literate.⁶⁷ When assessing this portrait in the aggregate, Haines concludes that these emigrants, aided by their high literacy rates, made informed decisions and chose a destination (one of the Australian colonies over the United States) where the opportunities best matched their agricultural skills.

A New Way of Life

These immigrants arrived to a place already inhabited by the convicts and their offspring as well as the Aboriginal people, populations which inevitably impacted all aspects of society. The legal system was *primarily* English, but English law, of course, did not make provisions for the presence of the Aboriginal people. Could Aboriginal people be tried in the colonial court for crimes against the British? What if a white man committed a crime against an Aboriginal person? As early judges grappled with such questions, the English law foundation was transformed into something uniquely Australian.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ For example, over eighty percent of the assisted emigrants arriving between 1848 and 1860 could read. Almost sixty percent could both read and write. Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, table 2.19.

⁶⁸ See Lauren A. Benton and Richard J. Ross, eds., *Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500-1850* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Bruce Kercher, "Creating Australian Law," in *Creating Australia: Changing Australian History*, eds. Wayne Hudson and Geoffrey Bolton (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1997), 106-110; and Neal, *The Rule of Law in a Penal Colony*.

The early dearth of free immigrants similarly created improvisations in the political realm. Because labor was so dear, convicts – especially educated convicts – sometimes were used to fill government posts, including clerks, bookkeepers, and lawyers. In the 1830s, emancipists (convicts whose sentences had expired) won the right to serve on juries; there simply were not enough people to run a fully functional jury trial system otherwise.⁶⁹ And as an elective legislative council for the colony was considered in the mid-1830s, leaders of the colony even advised Parliament via petition that “in New South Wales ... possession of property affords but slight proof of good character ... The petitioners therefore humbly submit ... property ought not to form the sole standard for the regulation of the elective and representative franchise.”⁷⁰ At the same time the franchise was slowly expanding in Great Britain, the use of the same determinant of that right – the value of property – in New South Wales would have expanded the franchise too far, at least according to some. Thus, because of the small population, traditional markers of status no longer sufficed. Political privileges were afforded to those who would have had none at home. Necessity weakened social divisions.

The colony’s distinctive circumstances impacted not only the structures which governed the colony, but also the cultural values and social standards that developed. Culture broadly defined – “the production and exchange of meanings” or “how we make sense of the

⁶⁹ Neal, *The Rule of Law in a Penal Colony*.

⁷⁰ Petition reprinted in James Mudie, *The Felony of New South Wales, being a Faithful Picture of the Real Romance of Life in Botany Bay: With Anecdotes of Botany Bay Society, and a Plan of Sydney* (London: Whaley and Company, 1837), 276.

world”⁷¹ – was under negotiation in New South Wales. The aristocratic hierarchy which shaped so much of British society was destabilized in the colony by the absence of gentry and the presence of immensely wealthy emancipists. Language, leisure, and standards of comportment were different. The writings of newly arrived immigrants are the best sites to explore these changes. As immigrants experienced culture shock, made the inevitable social missteps, and longed for the normalcy of home, they revealed the cultural transformation occurring in the colony.

But, these immigrants were not mere recipients of a new culture. In the time period examined here (primarily the late 1820s through 1850), the group of free immigrants grew into a significant portion of the population for the first time. The immigrants’ arrival in the colony did not merely introduce a new labor source or (sometimes) additional capital; they brought with them cultural and political values, as well.⁷² These values, along with their expectations and goals for immigrating, shaped how the Australian culture continued to develop. Thus, the production of meaning was a fluid, dialogic, ever-changing process.

A National Identity

When looking at culture in a settler colonial context, the historical debate often broaches the topic of national identity or nationalism. When did the colonists develop a sense of shared identity? When did they become an “imagined community,” to use Benedict

⁷¹ Catherine Hall, “Culture and Identity in Imperial Britain,” in *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Sarah Stockwell (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 202.

⁷² Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, 7.

Anderson's definition of "nation"?⁷³ What was the relationship between that identity and Great Britain? Between the identity and political independence? When searching for the moment a national identity was formed, historians arrive at different conclusions depending on the criteria they use. Some might equate the birth of identity to political independence and therefore, in the case of Australia, pinpoint the moment at federation in 1901. Others favor the "mental distancing" from Great Britain that began during World War II. Still others see an appeal to "Britishness" remaining prominent as late as the 1970s.⁷⁴

Those who argue over the moment when Australia could be said to possess its own identity are fighting over the wrong question. Identity is a highly subjective, fluid concept. Richard White skillfully traces the evolution of images that personified Australia's identity from representations that portrayed a "working man's paradise" to youthful symbols (e.g., a young shepherdess) to exaltation of the urban consumer culture.⁷⁵ Not only can identity change over time as White shows us, but the word itself is also used with many different meanings. All of the above timings (federation, World War II, 1970s) could be correct depending on the criteria sought in an "identity."

Perhaps a more useful way to view the concept of national identity when referring to settler colonial societies like Australia would be as a continuous spectrum. On one end of the spectrum lies the very foundation of a national identity: a shared experience. It is hard to imagine a national identity without some kind of shared connection, be it ethnicity,

⁷³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006).

⁷⁴ Neville Meaney, "Britishness and Australia: Some Reflections," in *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity*, eds. Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 121-35.

⁷⁵ Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity, 1688-1980* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1981).

geography, or circumstance. The emigrants to New South Wales all shared the experiences of leaving behind their homes and crafting a new life in a perplexing new land. On the other end of the spectrum lies the fervent nationalism that so intrigued Anderson by the end of his book, the willingness to die for one's country.⁷⁶ In between "shared experience" and "nationalism," the spectrum would progress through national consciousness (i.e., a sense of belonging to a distinct group) and an articulated national "type" or set of national values. The boundaries between these categories are hazy and movement along the spectrum is both fluid and bidirectional. For example, the nationalism felt during wartime understandably subsides when the threat is removed. Rather than search for *the* moment when *the* Australian identity formed, a better approach would be to describe the character of identity at any particular point in time.

The existence of multiple definitions and the tendency to view identities as static are but two of the difficulties in studying national identity within an historical framework. Identities also need not be exclusive; populations can feel affinity for more than one group. Many historians searching for the emergence of a truly Australian national identity seem to be looking for a moment when all affinity for Great Britain was concurrently lost.⁷⁷ According to this view, there was no "Australian" culture or identity separate from the home country's. A problem with this interpretation is that a British identity itself was developing at

⁷⁶ In Australia's case, most would argue such nationalistic feeling did not occur until at earliest the world wars of the twentieth century.

⁷⁷ Given Australia's continued membership in the commonwealth and the presence of the Queen's picture on its currency, it's safe to say that moment has not yet fully arrived.

the same time, as Linda Colley has richly detailed.⁷⁸ After the Acts of Union of 1707 and 1801, England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland were united under one crown, a “union of policy” not a “union of affection.” Subjects still saw themselves as “English,” “Scottish,” etc. rather than one coherent “British” nation. “British” was a term used more in the colonies than in Great Britain itself.⁷⁹ Those who discount the development of a distinctive Australian culture based on a perceived desire among the colonists to remain loyal to “British” norms fail to acknowledge that “Britishness” itself was in the process of forming at the same time. Thus, the Australian colonists were chasing a moving target. The culture they developed would inevitably differ from their model, which was changing concurrently and from which they were physically separated. Furthermore, as several historians have argued,⁸⁰ Australians could feel a sense of connectedness to each other based on shared territory and still remain loyal to the British Empire. Any land of immigrants most certainly retained characteristics of and an affinity for “home,” but that did not preclude a separate, though complementary, identity from developing.

In a land far from home, Britons in the Australian colonies in the early nineteenth century *were* developing their own set of cultural meanings. In the latter part of the century as Australia produced its first homegrown literature, that culture was celebrated in various

⁷⁸ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, rev. ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

⁷⁹ Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, “Mapping the British World,” in *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity*, eds. Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 3; John Hirst, *Sense and Nonsense in Australian History* (Melbourne: Black Inc. Agenda, 2005), “Australia’s Absurd History.”

⁸⁰ Stuart Ward, “Imperial Identities Abroad,” in *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Sarah Stockwell (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 219-44; Bridge and Fedorowich, “Mapping the British World,” in Bridge and Fedorowich, 6; Douglas Cole, “The Problem of ‘Nationalism’ and ‘Imperialism’ in British Settlement Colonies,” *Journal of British Studies* 10, no. 2 (May 1971): 177.

literary forms, including novels and ballads. Glorifying the experiences of the colonies' founding pioneers may have been part of a self-conscious effort to "overcome the embarrassment of the convict past"⁸¹ or it may have been an extension of the scientific obsession to categorize,⁸² but no matter the influences precipitating the practice, it resulted in the development of a national self-image. In the 1950s, Russel Ward named this self-image the "Australian legend" and described it thusly:

The "typical Australian" is a practical man, rough and ready in his manners and quick to decry any appearance of affectation in others. He is a great improviser, ever willing to "have a go" at anything, but willing too to be content with a task done in a way that is "near enough" ... He swears hard and consistently, gambles heavily and often, and drinks deeply on occasion ... he is usually taciturn rather than talkative, one who endures stoically rather than one who acts busily ... skeptical about the value of religion and intellectual and cultural pursuits generally ... he is a fiercely independent person who hates officiousness and authority ... Yet he is very hospitable and, above all, will stick to his mates through thick and thin, even if he thinks them in the wrong.⁸³

In short, according to the Australian legend archetype, the typical Australian was adventurous, adaptable, tough, perseverant, independent (i.e., self-reliant), practical, rough in manners, intolerant of affectation in others, egalitarian, suspicious of authority, and loyal to his "mates."

Ward merely gave a name to an archetype which had come to define Australia. His major intervention in the study of Australia's national identity has been in drawing direct ties between the archetype and the experiences of the convicts. In a nation which had for so long

⁸¹ Hirst, *Sense and Nonsense*, "Pioneer Legend."

⁸² White, *Inventing Australia*, chap. 5.

⁸³ The term "Australian legend" is used throughout this study as a short-hand for the self-image. Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1958), 1-2.

felt the shame of the “convict stain,” Ward claims that the most treasured characteristics of what it meant to be Australian were based on the very group of people the Australian nation had tried to ignore. But, if that were the case, how did an archetype based on those characteristics come to be revered by the broader society? As this study demonstrates, most of those same characteristics applied to free population of New South Wales, as well.

The nineteenth-century national identity has been criticized for lack of distinctiveness. Self-sufficiency and a value for hard work were hardly characteristic only of Australians. For example, Australians long claimed the warm climate made them healthier and more masculine while Canadians asserted they received the same benefits through the rigors of their winters.⁸⁴ Likewise, White parallels similarities between the circumstances and purported values of Australia and those of the United States. Indeed, the purpose of a national identity is to emphasize the nation’s distinctiveness,⁸⁵ but the importance of a national identity lies not in whether it bears no resemblance to any other nation. Rather, its importance lies in how the nation described sees itself. The Australian legend revealed a culture that valued self-reliance, toughness, and loyalty.

A key debate in Australian cultural history focuses on the reality of identities. While most would agree that national archetypes are never wholly accurate depictions of the societies they describe as “certain narratives of group identity ... inevitably overstate commonalities within a group and exaggerate differences with others considered alien,”⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Stuart Ward, “Imperial Identities Abroad,” in Stockwell, 231.

⁸⁵ Hirst, *Sense and Nonsense*, 123.

⁸⁶ Geoffrey Stokes, ed., *The Politics of Identity in Australia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 9.

historians remain divided on the degree to which an articulated identity is based on the day-to-day lives of those it describes. To put it another way, whence do the characteristics of a national archetype originate? Do they describe the cultural norms and values that have developed on the ground (albeit never wholly accurately)? Or, did the relevant power structures impact the ideal in a “top-down” manner? Post-structuralists tend toward the top-down view and argue that, in White’s words, “a national identity is an invention,”⁸⁷ a discursive exercise created to serve political purposes. Others, including Ward, place greater importance on lived experience. In Ward’s interpretation, the characteristics of the Australian identity specifically originated in the experiences of the convicts.

In this study, I argue for the interplay of the two forces.⁸⁸ Emigrants to New South Wales had their expectations colored by a very powerful “top-down” force: the media. In an effort to encourage emigration, published literature about New South Wales “sold” the colony to potential emigrants in a very positive light. It depicted a place where everyone might obtain access to land, financial stability, and “manly” independence. To those in power, emigration was needed in order to build the labor base of another hierarchical, capitalist society. However, as immigrants arrived to find their expectations frustrated and discover just how much adjustment their new home would require of them, the cultural value system that developed on the ground did not match what those in power had envisioned. Instead, the constructed image of the media came to be revered and an ethos of egalitarianism embraced. Expectations – and the identities created in the aftermath of disappointed

⁸⁷ White, *Inventing Australia*, viii.

⁸⁸ Colley agrees that national identities are “partly real, partly imagined.” Colley, *Britons*, xix.

expectations – can, indeed, be influenced by political purposes. But in New South Wales, there was a limit to what could be imposed on the colonists. The Australian legend archetype incorporated both “top-down” and “bottom-up” elements.

In an interesting twist, even if they feature a heavy dose of “bottom-up” elements, national identities can *become* part of the power structure. Indeed, Ward admits that national identities “colour men’s ideas of how they ought ‘typically’ to behave.”⁸⁹ Thus, the line between representation and reality is blurred. The Australian legend’s contribution to maintaining power structures generates much of the criticism it receives. The omission of women and non-whites marginalizes some groups while privileging others. Critics argue this nineteenth-century ideal cannot suffice for a modern, multicultural society.⁹⁰

* * * * *

The process by which this cultural image proliferated in the popular literature of the latter half of the nineteenth century and infiltrated its way into the Australian psyche is not addressed here. Instead, the cultural norms and values which developed in an earlier time period – the norms and values which the literary depiction aimed to capture, though perhaps imperfectly – are explored. Anderson defined the “nation” as a cultural construct.⁹¹ Accordingly, this study presumes, the culture – the ties which “held these communities together, and ... wield[ed] so powerful a collective influence”⁹² – developed before the conception of nationhood. The immigrants studied here were on the “shared experience” end

⁸⁹ Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*, 1.

⁹⁰ Richard Nile, ed., *The Australian Legend and its Discontents* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000).

⁹¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, chap. 1.

⁹² Stuart Ward, “Imperial Identities Abroad,” in Stockwell, 220.

of the identity spectrum. They did not yet think of themselves as “Australian;” however, they were aware of and commented on the differences from the culture they left behind. Over time, a “nation” did develop complete with an articulated “national archetype,” but this argument is not teleological. Shared experience does not necessarily create consciousness. The process by which that consciousness was created is simply not the focus of this study; it has been discussed elsewhere.⁹³ Instead, the developing cultural values are examined through the eyes of those who helped define them.

Ward argues very compellingly that the “Australian legend” was based off the experiences of the convicts. This study does not aim to dispute his argument. However, he glosses over the free immigrants, claiming (without displaying much evidence) that their experiences were similar. It is beyond the scope of his work to thoroughly investigate a second social group, but the omission is significant, nonetheless. The “Australian legend” would not have become such a recognizable archetype had it no emotive value for large populations within the community. The “convict stain” was perceived as tarnishing the colony’s reputation from the time of the earliest efforts to recruit free immigrants through to the mid-twentieth century.⁹⁴ Why, then, would free immigrants accept a national identity based on such a denigrated group? This study will show that the key characteristics encapsulated by the archetype also resonated with the experiences of the free immigrants and the values they had come to embrace.

⁹³ Most especially in Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*, and White, *Inventing Australia*.

⁹⁴ Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*, xiii.

Chapter one, “Expectations Set,” explores potential motivations for emigrating to New South Wales as motivations and expectations would inexorably color the new immigrant’s experience of and assimilation into the receiving community. Faced with a lack of opportunity at home, emigrants were drawn to New South Wales by the possibilities of financial security, access to land, and self-sufficiency. Chapter two, “Expectations Frustrated,” connects those goals for emigrating and the challenges faced in achieving them to the Australian legend archetype. The “typical Australian” of the image possessed the relationship with the land and manly independence which free immigrants so desperately desired, but did not always achieve. Finally, chapter three, “Expectations Confounded,” examines social interactions within the colony. Close interaction with disparate groups of people (convicts, emancipists, the Irish) distinguished life in New South Wales. These encounters complicated preconceived notions of social order. For many of the free emigrants, the pre-departure circumstances and goals for life in the colony were not so different from those of the convicts and the emancipists nor from an archetype based upon those groups. Furthermore, within a social hierarchy quite fluid and always under negotiation, the egalitarianism espoused by the Australian legend would have seemed refreshingly simple.

When studying culture, one key input in the production of meaning is certainly media.⁹⁵ Free emigrants to New South Wales would not have undertaken such a long, risky journey without any knowledge of their destination. A significant part of that knowledge came from the popular press, works which communicated to readers that they could achieve their goals through emigration coupled with hard work. These portraits of New South Wales

⁹⁵ A topic which Anderson discussed in depth. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

were not completely accurate – media portrayals never are – but they created expectations for life in the colony. In the space between these expectations and actual experience – a space occupied by confusion, disillusionment, and adaptation – a set of social standards and cultural values developed. As the colony matured, a literary representation of the “typical Australian” formed, an archetype which aligned with the struggles immigrants overcame and the value systems they created. Thus, when examining free emigration to New South Wales, representation impacted experience, but the reverse was also true.

CHAPTER 1: EXPECTATIONS SET

In the 1829 book *A Letter from Sydney*, the narrator visited his grandmother to inform her he was moving to the young British colony of New South Wales in Australia. Not knowing where it was, she made him show her on a map. In response, she exclaimed, “Why . . . it is terribly out of the way – down in the very right hand corner of the world.” In an effort to console her, he tore the map in half and turned the right-hand part upside down so that Australia was right next to Great Britain. “Ah! boy,” she replied, “you may do what you like with the map; but you can’t twist the world about in that manner, though they *are* making sad changes in it.”¹

In the early nineteenth century, Great Britain was in the midst of massive economic and social change; some might say “sad changes.” As the economic system transitioned to industrial capitalism and wage labor, a simultaneous population explosion left the country with high unemployment and soaring poor rates. One proposed solution to problems at home was emigration to the colonies. Removing some of the excess labor would improve wages at home. Plus, that surplus labor might be put to good use in the Empire’s fledgling societies.

Emigration may have made sense *economically* for the country, but why did it make sense *personally* for the emigrant? Why would one leave one’s home, one’s friends, one’s family, and the only life one had ever known? Why would one relocate to the “very right hand corner of the world”? The historiography has struggled with these questions for a

¹ *A Letter from Sydney* was published anonymously, but was widely attributed to E.G. Wakefield, a key figure in the emigration debates. Although presented as a true tale, it was a work of fiction, as Wakefield never visited Australia. Robert Gouger, ed., *A Letter from Sydney, the Principal Town of Australia: Together with the Outline of a System of Colonization* (London: J. Cross, 1829); Graeme L. Pretty, “Wakefield, Edward Gibbon (1796–1862),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/wakefield-edward-gibbon-2763/text3921> (accessed April 26, 2015).

number of reasons. Traditionally, historians have used a “push” versus “pull” framework, looking at those factors which would propel an emigrant away from his/her originating country (e.g., an insecure economic climate) and those which would draw emigrants toward a new home (e.g., the presence of family members who had previously emigrated). Class impacted the operation of this framework. For example, the economic climate produced a push factor for the working classes, unable to support themselves at home, while for men of capital, the opportunity to open new markets and exploit new sources of raw materials for industry worked as a “pull” toward the colonies. In general, pull forces were thought to predominate the decisions of the wealthier classes; for the poorer, the push factors presumably prevailed.²

Dudley Baines, however, rejects the push-pull dichotomy.³ To him, push and pull factors were not independent of each other; an emigrant made an *overall* decision. Furthermore, the “push” factors would not have been sufficient to cause emigration; the emigrant would have needed someplace to go and the means to make leaving possible. Once the Australian colonies, including New South Wales, began paying for a portion of immigrants’ passages in the 1830s (so-called “assisted emigration”), both of the latter conditions were fulfilled. Up to this point, New South Wales had received only a relative trickle of free immigrants, totaling just under 4700 people (thirteen percent of the population) by 1828. The rest of the population was composed of convicts, freed convicts, and the free-

² Eric Richards, “Malthus and the Uses of British Emigration,” in *Empire, Migration and Identity in the British World*, eds. Kent Fedorowich and Andrew S. Thompson. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), chap. 1.

³ Dudley Baines, *Emigration from Europe 1815-1930* (London: Macmillan, 1991), see especially chapters 1 and 3.

born offspring of the other two categories.⁴ From the commencement of assisted emigration in 1831 through 1860, New South Wales received over 174,000 free immigrants, seventy-seven percent of whom benefited from government assistance.⁵ Each of those 174,000 immigrants and countless others who chose *not* to emigrate made an individual decision based on a multiplicity of factors. The complexity and uniqueness of an emigrant's decision-making process makes motivation for emigration difficult to understand.

In primary sources like those consulted in this study (diaries, letters, and reminiscences), subjects tended to be relatively quiet – though not entirely silent – regarding their motivations for leaving home.⁶ Thus it becomes necessary to supplement the unpublished personal documents with published works including newspapers, magazines, and emigrant guides. Though the information contained in these representations was subjective, the messages about a place produced in published works influenced behavior through three connected components: information, attitudes, and values. These components were both cognitive (knowledge-based) and affective (feelings-based), each of which could influence and be influenced by behavior.⁷ And while it is impossible to draw direct links between a published depiction of New South Wales or of emigration, in general, these works

⁴ David Neal, *The Rule of Law in a Penal Colony: Law and Power in Early New South Wales* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Appendix 4.

⁵ Robin F. Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor: Australian Recruitment in Britain and Ireland, 1831-1860* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), Table 1.1.

⁶ As others who have examined emigrant diaries have also discovered, including Charlotte Erickson, *Leaving England: Essays on British Emigration in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Andrew Hassam, *Sailing to Australia: Shipboard Diaries by Nineteenth-Century British Emigrants* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1994); and John Tosh, “‘All the Masculine Virtues’: English Emigration to the Colonies, 1815-1852,” in *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2005), 173-91.

⁷ J.M. Powell, *Mirrors of the New World: Images and Image-Makers in the Settlement Process* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1977).

do reflect, at the very least, information and issues to which potential emigrants were exposed. Given the unlikelihood that one would have emigrated without *any* information about a destination and given the ability of a large proportion of early nineteenth-century Australian immigrants to read,⁸ it is reasonable to use impressions of New South Wales and attitudes toward emigration presented in these published works to infer possible motivations for emigration.⁹

In examining the published works, two contrasting arguments for emigration materialize. Middle- and upper-class publications which debated the soundness of emigration as *policy*, stressed the economic benefits to the nation. Britain's excess labor could be moved to the colonies in order to comprise the labor pool abroad while simultaneously decreasing competition for scarce jobs at home (which would lessen reliance on poor relief). Published works which were directed at the emigrants themselves, however, stressed the possibility of financial gain, access to land, and self-sufficiency. At times, these images of a more independent existence included implicit critiques of Britain's new economy or nostalgia for a bygone era. Thus, emigrants from the laboring classes were lured to New South Wales by visions of a lifestyle which was largely no longer available to them in Great Britain, while, paradoxically, the British and colonial governments aimed to establish abroad the wage-labor system that left emigrants dissatisfied with home. This tension between expectation and structural intention impacted the set of cultural values which came to represent Australia.

⁸ Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, chap. 6.

⁹ Though it is beyond the scope of this study to compare representations of Australia with representations of Britain's other colonies, Robert Grant undertakes such an analysis elsewhere. Robert D. Grant, *Representations of British Emigration, Colonisation and Settlement: Imagining Empire, 1800-1860* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

The Problem: Economic “Transition”

...the ejected tenantry suffered affliction which it was not in the power of language to describe. But this was called a state of transition. Call it pestilence, famine, death, and men would tremble; but call it transition, envelope it in a technical vocabulary of fiscal science, and a directory of economists will speak of it with tranquility.

*Richard Sheil*¹⁰

Great Britain was the first country to undergo an industrial revolution, the first to transition from a largely agrarian to an industrial economy, and, in the early nineteenth century, that shift to industrial capitalism profoundly impacted the lives of the working poor. Under the old paradigm, common land had helped provide basic sustenance. The poor could hunt and keep livestock on the commons, grow a small amount of crops, and use brush from the land to heat their homes. Enclosure of the commons took away that access and forced the poor to purchase all food and supplies. It resulted in total wage dependency.¹¹ With the introduction of steam power and industrial machines, the poor had an increasingly harder time maintaining the now necessary full employment. Unprecedented population growth further increased competition for jobs. Those “lucky” enough to have employment in a factory worked long hours in deplorable conditions for very low wages.¹²

Amidst these shifting conditions, the early nineteenth century saw the growth of class consciousness, of a sense of solidarity among the suffering workers.¹³ The radical press fostered that growth in consciousness as it worked to reveal the distress of the working poor

¹⁰ Excerpt from a speech in front of the House of Commons by MP Richard Sheil, reprinted in “Parliamentary Proceedings,” *Poor Man’s Guardian*, September 3, 1831.

¹¹ K.D.M. Snell, “Enclosure and Employment – The Social Consequences of Enclosure,” in *Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social Change and Agrarian England, 1660-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 138-228.

¹² E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963).

¹³ *Ibid.*

as well as advocate on their behalf.¹⁴ As the industrial economy grew, the *Poor Man's Guardian* pointed out, “fortunes, great fortunes [were] made, great piles of gold [were] raised, but ... left a wide waste of poverty and wretchedness all around them.”¹⁵ The free market rationale of the new economy did not provide much hope for workers. Their wages were low because of a decreased need for labor (as machines replaced the artisan) in the face of increased supply of workers (as the population grew). Activist William Pare revealed the dilemma: “If you (the labourers) continue in the market of labour during this glut, your wages must fall. What is the remedy? To go out of the market (Loud laughter).”¹⁶ The laughter sprung from the absurdity of the situation: the poor needed to work for wages in order to survive, but the present economy seemed to dictate that the only way to increase wages was *not* to work.

¹⁴ Many of the papers and periodicals more heavily consulted here were intended for mass distribution. William and Robert Chambers set out to produce a quality publication that the working classes could afford. The outcome of that aim, *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, achieved a circulation of 30,000 within its first year. Likewise, radical William Cobbett transformed his *Cobbett's Weekly Register* from a one-shilling periodical to a two-penny broadsheet to circumvent stamp duties and sold 44,000 in the first month. As he crusaded for universal suffrage, Henry Hetherington launched several illegal (unstamped) papers, for which he was prosecuted several times. These included the *Poor Man's Guardian* whose masthead declared it “A weekly paper for the people. Published in defiance of ‘law,’ to try the power of ‘right’ against ‘might’.” See Sondra Miley Cooney, “Chambers, William (1800–1883),” Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5084> (accessed April 25, 2015); Ian Dyck, “Cobbett, William (1763–1835),” Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5734> (accessed April 25, 2015); Joel H. Wiener, “Hetherington, Henry (1792–1849),” Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13136> (accessed April 25, 2015).

¹⁵ Jeremiah Dewhirst, “To George Poulett Scrope, Esq., M.P.,” *Poor Man's Guardian*, August 1, 1835.

¹⁶ “Meeting of the Co-Operative Congress,” *Poor Man's Guardian*, May 5, 1832.

A Solution: Emigration

Here, we have a country overflowing with people and with capital; there lies a fertile country, wanting only people and capital to render it productive and valuable. Why are not the three things – the land, the people, and the capital – brought together?

*Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*¹⁷

In the early 1820s, emigration surfaced in the mainstream media as a solution to this dilemma. Emigration, it was argued, would benefit the worker, the colonies, and the country. The condition of the laborer in Britain would be improved by decreasing the supply of labor. With additional labor, the colonies would be strengthened. Increased commerce with the colonies would help both Britain and the laborers.¹⁸

Parliament took up the matter in 1826, with the establishment of the Select Committee on Emigration, chaired by R.J. Wilmot Horton (a key figure in the emigration debate in the 1820s¹⁹). In three reports released over the next two years, the Committee concluded that Parliament should consider emigration as a means “for correcting the redundancy of population.”²⁰ In its first report, the Committee declined to give specific recommendations for emigration and rather delineated principles to be used should the House of Commons decide to enact systematic emigration. Among those principles were the following: emigration should only happen on a voluntary basis, those in a “state of

¹⁷ “A Word on Emigration,” *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, December 20, 1845.

¹⁸ “Thoughts on Emigration,” *The Farmer's Magazine*, November 1823.

¹⁹ Eric Richards, “Horton, Sir Robert John Wilmot-, third baronet (1784–1841),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13827> (accessed April 10, 2015).

²⁰ Indeed, at a later time, Horton would provide a Biblical justification for the use of emigration to alleviate a crowded population, citing the book of Genesis. Due to overcrowding, the land was not able to support the herdsmen of both Abraham and Lot. They fought over land until they decided to separate. In this example, “the inconvenience of a crowded society was avoided by separation, rather than by concentration.” R.W. Horton, “On Emigration,” *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*, March 6, 1830.

permanent pauperism” should not be allowed to participate, and any national funds used must be repaid.²¹ Thus, if the Committee was taken at its word, it did not consider emigration a method of ejecting the most destitute subjects from the country. The problem of overpopulation would be solved by the emigration of volunteers who were not (or not yet) in a “state of permanent pauperism.” Furthermore, one of its top concerns was to ensure that any emigration schemes employed be self-funded.

Later that year, the Committee reconvened to examine the extreme adversity experienced by the hand-loom weavers as the industry transitioned to power-loom weaving. While the resulting second report admitted that the weavers’ state “border[ed] upon actual famine” and that the distress was at least partially caused by a “temporary check in trade,” it defended the free-market system. Labor displacement commonly happens with new inventions, whose development “commercial countries” need to encourage, the report reasoned. Given the severity of the situation, however, the Committee recommended £75,000 be dedicated to relocating twelve hundred families to North America. Its former hesitancy to spend public money on the emigration project did not completely disappear; the report concluded that the improvements made on colonial lands would provide a return in the long run.²²

²¹ House of Commons, “Report from the Select Committee on Emigration from the United Kingdom,” *19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers*, 1826, 404, vol. 4.

²² House of Commons, “Second Report from the Select Committee on Emigration from the United Kingdom,” *19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers*, 1826-27, 237, vol. 2.

The Committee's third report²³ briefly entertained alternative solutions to the problems caused by overpopulation before strongly opposing the alternatives of wage regulation and the employment of paupers on public works. The Committee also called as a witness Thomas Robert Malthus, the demographer who believed that providing relief to the poor disrupted nature's checks on population.²⁴ Malthus did not whole-heartedly endorse emigration. He believed its benefits would be short-lived as population growth and internal migration would replace those who left, the so-called "vacuum effect." The Committee duly considered the vacuum effect and determined that any system of emigration would need to apply equally to Ireland in order to prevent the Irish from "filling the vacuum." In the report, even Malthus agreed that he saw "no other practical remedy" to the nation's woes aside from either emigration or his proposed solution of discontinuing poor relief to all able-bodied paupers. He supported emigration "*if* a bare probability existed of the vacuum not being filled up" (emphasis added).

Taken together, the reports of the Select Committee on Emigration provide an insight into government thinking on both emigration and the industrial capitalist system developing in Britain. At least ostensibly, the Committee was sensitive to the plight of workers and acknowledged the role of "new inventions" (i.e., machinery) in precipitating that plight, but showed no critique of industrial capitalism nor willingness to interfere with the system in its assessment. It was willing to propose a solution – emigration – to the destitution workers

²³ House of Commons, "Third Report from the Select Committee on Emigration from the United Kingdom," *19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers*, 1826-27, 550, vol. 223.

²⁴ For further discussion of Malthus in relation to emigration, see Richards, "Malthus and the Uses of British Emigration," in Fedorowich and Thompson.

faced, but made no recommendations to address the causes of that destitution and, in fact, worked to minimize the economic cost of its proposed solution.

Resistance to the Solution

We will not leave our country – we resolve to die on its shores ... We ask but for fair play – we are willing to work, to live in peace, and obey the laws – but not to starve, and not to “shove off.”

There are a million of us, and we will not go.

*Jeremiah Dewhirst*²⁵

The Committee may have argued strongly for the systematic use of emigration as a solution to the country’s current woes, but other solutions were also discussed and debated (largely within the radical-leaning press), including the levying of taxes on the use of machinery and using uncultivated land available within the British Isles. The radical penny weekly *The Poor Man’s Guardian* published a four-letter exchange between Jeremiah Dewhirst, the chairman of the hand-loom weavers’ central committee, and George Poulett Scrope, a member of Parliament who was known for his staunch support of emigration as the cure for social ills.²⁶ Dewhirst and the Committee had sent Scrope a request to support their petition calling for the restriction of the use of machinery. The hand-loom weavers argued that “emigration cannot cure our evils; and we feel equally certain that a protection for our

²⁵ Respectively, Jeremiah Dewhirst, “To George Poulett Scrope, Esq., M.P.,” *Poor Man’s Guardian*, August 1, 1835, and Jeremiah Dewhirst, “Political Economy v. the Hand-Loom Weavers,” *Poor Man’s Guardian*, August 15, 1835 (emphasis in original).

²⁶ George Poulett Scrope, “To Mr. Jeremiah Dewhirst,” *Poor Man’s Guardian*, August 1, 1835; Jeremiah Dewhirst, “To George Poulett Scrope, Esq., M.P.,” *Poor Man’s Guardian*, August 1, 1835; George Poulett Scrope, “Political Economy v. the Hand-Loom Weavers,” *Poor Man’s Guardian*, August 8, 1835; Jeremiah Dewhirst, “Political Economy v. the Hand-Loom Weavers,” *Poor Man’s Guardian*, August 15, 1835. For more on Scrope, see Martin Rudwick, “Scrope, George Julius Poulett (1797–1876),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24956> (accessed April 10, 2015).

labour would.”²⁷ Scrope, however, declined to support the petition, for if one began to tax machinery, where would one draw the line? Should ploughs and spades also be taxed?²⁸ “There is no stopping short of this in its application if it be once admitted,” he proclaimed.²⁹ Instead, his advice reflected the rationale of supply and demand. If demand for their labor was low in industry, the weavers should go where there *was* a high demand: in agriculture in the colonies. Instead of petitioning for a tax on machinery, they should petition for emigration assistance.³⁰ In his response to Scrope, Dewhirst countered: what would prevent the machinery from following them to the colonies? To the hand-loom weavers, emigration was a diversionary tactic; it would address the symptoms rather than the causes of the workers’ economic woes.

Another common refrain in the resistance to emigration was the availability of uncultivated land in the British Isles. Why should workers emigrate to obtain access to land when there was plenty of land at home? Enclosure had taken land out of agriculture for the aristocracy’s personal pleasure.³¹ How much? The monthly six-penny paper *The Moral Reformer, and Protestor Against the Vices, Abuses, and Corruptions of the Age* detailed the acreage available in various parts of the country, including (at its estimation) 300,000 acres in the Forest of Dean and 350,000 acres in Salisbury Plain. The paper called for the

²⁷ Jeremiah Dewhirst, “Political Economy v. the Hand-Loom Weavers,” *Poor Man’s Guardian*, August 15, 1835.

²⁸ George Poulett Scrope, “To Mr. Jeremiah Dewhirst,” *Poor Man’s Guardian*, August 1, 1835.

²⁹ George Poulett Scrope, “Political Economy v. the Hand-Loom Weavers,” *Poor Man’s Guardian*, August 8, 1835.

³⁰ George Poulett Scrope, “To Mr. Jeremiah Dewhirst,” *Poor Man’s Guardian*, August 1, 1835.

³¹ “Scheme for Australian Emigration,” *The Literary Gazette: A Weekly Journal of Literature, Science, and the Fine Arts*, September 23, 1848.

proprietors of that land to either sell it at a fair value or cultivate it themselves.³² Those who might argue that these waste lands at home were unsuitable for agriculture could be answered with scientific discussions of deep drainage and deep tillage, processes which would not only prepare the land to be productive, but would also employ workers in the meantime. While such rehabilitation of the land would require a capital investment, supporters argued it would yield long-term financial gains.³³ Opponents countered by questioning the estimates provided. The acreage numbers given were impressive, indeed, but it would be unrealistic to presume that any more than half of that land would be capable of supporting the population “*in the way in which human beings ought to be supported.*”³⁴

These two most frequently suggested policy alternatives to emigration – taxing the use of machinery and using the land in the British Isles to support the poor – were significant for the dissatisfaction they expressed with Britain’s new economic system. As sections of the radical press supported these alternatives, they advocated a return to what had come before, a time when workers did not have to compete with machines and when the laboring classes could access land for subsistence agriculture. This dissatisfaction was twofold in nature.

³² *The Moral Reformer* was published by Joseph Livesey, whose father was a hand-loom weaver. Livesey supported the temperance and anti-corn law movements through the various publications he supported. “Emigration,” *The Moral Reformer, and Protestor Against the Vices, Abuses, and Corruptions of the Age*, June 1832. For more on Livesey, see Brian Harrison, “Livesey, Joseph (1794–1884),” Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16796> (accessed April 25, 2015).

³³ For an example of such a scientific discussion, see D.C. [pseud.], “Employment or Emigration,” *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine*, June 1849. *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine* was aimed at a middle-class audience, though William Tait’s radical politics were reflected. Pam Perkins, “Tait, William (1793–1864),” Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26920> (accessed April 25, 2015).

³⁴ Vindex [pseud.], “On the Cause of the Distress,” *Poor Man’s Guardian*, December 11, 1833 (emphasis in original).

First, the press lamented the deleterious effects of industrialization. If British waste lands were left to the poor, Jeremiah Dewhirst argued in the *Poor Man's Guardian*,

we have no doubt that in a few generations, when our children have ceased to be torn from their beds at five o'clock every morning, and to be confined in the unwholesome atmosphere of these modern bastiles for thirteen or fifteen hours a day, we shall recover our strength both of body and mind, and be able once more to gain the honest point of our ambition – a fair reward for a fair day's work.³⁵

Critiques were not only leveled at the deplorable conditions within factories, but also at the free market foundations of industrial capitalism itself or, at least, the inconsistent manner in which free trade principles were applied. Free trade advocates, including George Poulett Scrope in his published debate with the hand-loom weavers' committee, argued that restrictions on free trade were the real cause of the workers' distress. "If you produce cloths and cottons faster than corn and meat," Scrope suggested to Dewhirst, "the remedy is not to pass laws to prevent people from producing so much cloths and cottons, but laws to enable people to produce more of corn and meat."³⁶ If this were the case, Dewhirst responded, then why do you place duties on foreign corn? Furthermore, if Britain became dependent on free trade with foreign countries, what would happen when Britain went to war with its trading partners? Free trade was often used as an argument in support of emigration. Emigration would facilitate the development of agriculture (specifically, corn) in Canada and the wool industry in Australia.³⁷ Dewhirst disagreed: "We cannot see of what use it is to go to foreign countries for any thing [sic] which we can produce in our own; nor can we see what good it

³⁵ Jeremiah Dewhirst, "To George Poulett Scrope, Esq., M.P.," *Poor Man's Guardian*, August 1, 1835.

³⁶ George Poulett Scrope, "To Mr. Jeremiah Dewhirst," *Poor Man's Guardian*, August 1, 1835.

³⁷ Vindex [pseud.], "The Remedy for the Distress," *Poor Man's Guardian*, January 25, 1834.

would do to pull down agriculture in England that we may build it up in Canada.”³⁸ Indeed, what would happen to that industry when Canada decided it wanted to be independent from Britain?³⁹

Not all propertied men nor all members of Parliament supported emigration; some worried about the costs and argued that funding emigration to Canada would be especially foolhardy as the emigrants would simply move on to the United States, wasting the investment.⁴⁰ Similarly, not all radicals were adamantly against emigration. William Cobbett claimed he released a new edition of his *Emigrant's Guide* not to make money, but out of moral obligation: “When I see so many worthy fathers and mothers, whose children *must* be miserable if they remain here under this system of taxation; and when I can see not the smallest chance of their escaping that ruin, it is my *duty*, and a sacred duty, to give the country the information I possess.”⁴¹ However, the debate in the public sphere possessed a palpable “us” versus “them” quality. Anti-emigration articles often employed a “we’ll go when you go” rhetoric, as in *Hunt's London Journal*: “We can never cease to wonder why colonization is not with us the passion of the great as well as the necessity of the humble ... Did the rank and wealth of this country once lead the way, the many forms of poverty and dependence would follow.”⁴²

³⁸ Jeremiah Dewhirst, “To George Poulett Scrope, Esq., M.P.,” *Poor Man's Guardian*, August 1, 1835.

³⁹ Jeremiah Dewhirst, “Political Economy v. the Hand-Loom Weavers,” *Poor Man's Guardian*, August 15, 1835.

⁴⁰ “Emigration on a Large Scale,” *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, April 15, 1837.

⁴¹ William Cobbett, “Emigration,” *Cobbett's Weekly Register*, May 8, 1830.

⁴² “Emigration,” *Hunt's London Journal*, September 28, 1844. For other similar statements, see “Parliamentary Proceedings,” *Poor Man's Guardian*, July 30, 1831; “Meeting of the Co-Operative Congress,” *Poor Man's Guardian*, May 5, 1832; and Jeremiah Dewhirst, “To George Poulett Scrope, Esq., M.P.,” *Poor Man's Guardian*, August 1, 1835.

Poverty as a Character Flaw

The deteriorating effects which such a dependence on alms must have on the moral character of so vast a proportion of the poor, is palpable and undeniable.

“F.W.J.”⁴³

Emigration was hotly debated simultaneously with the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, which came to be called the “New Poor Law.” The New Poor Law essentially criminalized poverty. In order to receive relief, the poor basically had to incarcerate themselves in workhouses, places in which conditions were kept intentionally deplorable so that the poor would have an incentive to seek employment in order to leave. The law institutionalized a shift in rhetoric which blamed the poor for their poverty.⁴⁴ This ideology rested heavily on the ideas of Malthus, who, as discussed, also testified before the Select Committee on Emigration. Indeed, this attitude was reflected in the Committee’s work. When the Committee’s report examined the distress of artisans, it concluded that the artisans needed to save when wages were high in order to support themselves when wages were low. Not saving, or “neglect[ing] prudential caution,” was the real cause of the artisans’ distress.⁴⁵ The Committee did not address the possibility that even “high” wages may have only been enough to survive, leaving little extra to set aside for a later time of lower wages.

The emigration and poor law debates had more in common than merely Malthus’s influence, as both were castigated in the radical press. The *Poor Man’s Guardian* cheekily

⁴³ F.W.J. [pseud.], “Emigration; How Possible for the Poor,” *The Rambler*, September 1848.

⁴⁴ Somers and Block explore this “perversity thesis” and the strategy by which the ideology was spread. Margaret R. Somers and Fred Block, “From Poverty to Perversity: Ideas, Markets, and Institutions Over 200 Years of Welfare Debate,” *American Sociological Review* 70, no. 2 (April 2005): 260-87.

⁴⁵ House of Commons, “Third Report from the Select Committee on Emigration from the United Kingdom,” *19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers*, 1826-27, 550, vol. 223, 13.

attacked the logic that providing relief for the poor was making them lazier: “Don’t be afraid of killing us with kindness. You capitalists are protected and not destroyed thereby; give us our share – it won’t harm us.”⁴⁶ “The capitalists” resisted spending money on poor relief at home,⁴⁷ but, in a pinch, they would *invest* funds to help the “excess population” emigrate. The irony was not lost on the editors of the *Poor Man’s Guardian*, which presented its readers with one interpretation of the manner in which the capitalists might monetize a poor man’s life: “A stout Negro is worth from 40l. to 80l. to his master, and cares not a fig for Malthus. A stout Englishmen is worth 30l. less than nothing, for so much was it gravely proposed in Parliament to expend out of a fund raised by mortgage on the poor’s rate, to expatriate him.”⁴⁸ The poor seemed to have two unsatisfactory choices: “imprison” themselves in a workhouse or leave Great Britain altogether.

Even as the *Poor Man’s Guardian* resisted the assertion that poor relief made the poor lazier and worked to reverse the causation, it did admit a deteriorated moral state among the poor. Because of the loss of the use of land as well as the loss of their jobs, “we have degenerated into women in physical strength, and into children of understanding.”⁴⁹ However, that demise was not due to laziness, but rather to the time demands placed on workers in the new industry: “Restrain the working of machinery to reasonable hours ... Give us time to worship God, to instruct our families and to learn our duties, as Christians

⁴⁶ Jeremiah Dewhirst, “Political Economy v. the Hand-Loom Weavers,” *Poor Man’s Guardian*, August 15, 1835.

⁴⁷ Well, except for spending money on building workhouses. I am grateful to Susan Thorne for making this observation.

⁴⁸ “British and West India Slavery Compared,” *Poor Man’s Guardian*, November 17, 1832.

⁴⁹ Jeremiah Dewhirst, “To George Poulett Scrope, Esq., M.P.,” *Poor Man’s Guardian*, August 1, 1835.

and as citizens.”⁵⁰ Such arguments conceded an increase in immorality among the poor, but blamed the increase on economic changes; the poor were either demoralized by the loss of their jobs or too busy working for meager wages to devote time to their spiritual well-being.

At the same time poverty became equated to laziness, a new standard lionized the opposite traits: the ideal man should be self-reliant, hard-working, and independent. Indeed, the language of “masculine independence” – later summarized as the “ability to live by an honest occupation and by one’s own energy”⁵¹ – contrasted sharply with the image of industrial workers’ “degenerat[ion] into women in physical strength.” Emigration was often explicitly presented as the means by which to attain that independence, a means of “exchang[ing] the mean and sordid condition of poverty and the workhouse of this country, for abundance and independence in ... its colonies.”⁵² Furthermore, once an immigrant arrived in a colony, “to be industrious and sober, is all that is wanted to ensure success.” If an immigrant failed to attain the expected level of success (e.g., obtaining a steady wage or a farm of his own), that failure was often explained due to a lack of “prudence.”⁵³ In every case, whether in Britain or abroad, the success or failure was attributed to the moral qualities of the poor/immigrant.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Tosh, “ ‘All the Masculine Virtues’,” 181.

⁵² C.R. [pseud.], “Colonisation and Emigration,” *Hood’s Magazine and Comic Miscellany*, July 1845.

⁵³ “To the Working Classes,” *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal*, June 7, 1834.

How to Fund the Solution

But where on earth is all the money to come from, that is to pay for all the ships employed by this system, and to confer wealth upon so many of the inhabitants of these extensive regions? ... from places where money already exists, but is employed with little or no profit; and, ultimately, from the divided labour of millions, who ... must [otherwise] ... die of slow starvation ... When I reflect that all the wealth that the world contains has been produced by the labour of man, the answer becomes quite satisfactory.

*E.G. Wakefield*⁵⁴

Despite the vocal opposition of the radical press, emigration of the working classes to the colonies remained an oft-cited solution to the economic crisis. The major obstacle to the plan was funding. The working classes obviously lacked the money necessary to pay for their passages to one of the colonies. Who should pay instead? Many felt government funding of unregulated emigration would be foolhardy and would merely send capital out of England. One debate centered on using the poor rates. Opponents to that suggestion objected on cost; emigration would cost more than the current poor rates and, as the wealthy were already reeling from increases in those rates, they were reluctant to pay more. Proponents of using the poor rates countered that emigration might be more expensive, but emigration was a one-time expense, whereas poor rates were annual. Another idea which gained popular approval (and was eventually implemented in the Australian colonies) was funding emigration by selling wasteland in the colonies themselves.⁵⁵ When viewing the various proposals in the

⁵⁴ E.G. Wakefield was a vocal proponent of selling colonial wasteland to fund emigration. His proposed system explicitly intended to reconstruct the class structure of England. Thus, the wealth he refers to in the quote would not entirely transfer to the laboring immigrants, though he did believe they would be better off (certainly not “dying of slow starvation”). The labor of the “millions” was needed to make the capital investments of the wealthy productive. The wealthy would then fund emigration through their purchases of additional wasteland. Gouger, ed., *A Letter from Sydney*, 189.

⁵⁵ “The Emigration Bill,” *The Examiner*, February 27, 1831.

aggregate, the policy rhetoric revealed a desire to alleviate the poverty which resulted from the shifting economic system, but not at the expense of investment in Britain or of the pockets of the middle and upper classes. The colonies, by virtue of their copious available land, would foot the bill.⁵⁶

E.G. Wakefield was a major proponent of emigration. His *A Letter from Sydney*⁵⁷ proposed using the sale of public lands in order to fund emigration to the Australian colonies. *A Letter from Sydney* described the exact opposite labor problem in New South Wales as existed in Britain. The colony had a very limited labor pool, on which early land policy placed further pressure. Initially, the colonial government distributed wastelands cheaply to a variety of people, including freed convicts. Immigrants and freed convicts would work until they had earned enough money to buy one of those cheap plots of land and start a farm. Then, they would do just that – become farmers – removing themselves from the labor market. Thus, a broad group of colonists was able to obtain land. To Wakefield, the sale of wastelands to fund emigration would not only help alleviate the overabundance of labor in Britain, but would also restore the natural order of society to New South Wales. Laborers would remain laborers and the wealthy would control the land. The scheme eventually implemented (based on Wakefield’s design) increased the price of land beyond the means of most working class men even with the high price they could demand for their labor. This proved beneficial to the men of significant capital, who now had both more potential laborers

⁵⁶ Of course, we must acknowledge that the “copious land” was only “available” because the claims of the Aboriginal peoples to the land were ignored.

⁵⁷ *A Letter from Sydney* was published anonymously, but was attributed to Wakefield. Gouger, ed., *A Letter from Sydney*.

(on account of the increased immigration) and a more reliable labor source (since their laborers could not leave to launch their own farms). Thus, selling wasteland not only created a new revenue source with which to pay the passages of much-needed laborers, but it also ensured that the primary landowners would be men of wealth.

In effect, emigration policies aimed to recreate Britain's industrial labor structure in the colonies, places which may not have had developed industry, but which needed a cheap supply of dependable wage labor for agricultural and pastoral pursuits. Australian colonial authorities and historians alike often assumed that Britain would select its most derelict subjects to be beneficiaries of assisted emigration schemes. In the case of the Australian colonies, however, assisted emigration policies were quite restrictive. Of all the colonies open to British citizens at that point, New South Wales was the farthest and, thus, most expensive. The monies provided by the Australian colonies were merely enough to make the cost of emigrating to Australia roughly equal to that of emigrating to North America. This left potential emigrants the task of raising funds for the remainder of the voyage, for transportation to the port of embarkation (which could be quite high, as many emigrants were from rural Britain), for the required amount of clothing and bedding voyagers had to bring with them, and for incidentals associated with closing down their homes with no intention of returning.⁵⁸ Thus, emigrants had to contribute money themselves in sums beyond the reach of the poorest segments of society. To pay for their portion of the journey, assisted emigrants

⁵⁸ John McDonald and Eric Richards, "The Great Emigration of 1841: Recruitment for New South Wales in British Emigration Fields," *Population Studies* 51, no. 3 (November 1997): 337-55; Eric Richards, "How Did Poor People Emigrate from the British Isles to Australia in the Nineteenth Century?" *Journal of British Studies* 32, no. 3 (July 1993): 250-79; Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*.

cobbled together a variety of funding sources, including assistance from employers, landlords, the parish, the church, emigration societies, family, and friends.⁵⁹ Not quite paupers, Haines characterizes the assisted emigrants as “under-employed” in an “unstable socio-economic environment.”⁶⁰ Likewise, unassisted emigrants, though not necessarily receiving a government-paid passage, often benefited from the support of others. Among the subjects whose diaries are examined in this study, George Suttor received patronage from the famous naturalist Sir Joseph Banks, the small landholder James Robinson sold off his land and all his possessions to pay for his family’s passage, and the Murchisons and the Bowlers received assistance by virtue of the military service of their patriarchs.⁶¹

Representations of New South Wales: Critiques of Great Britain

I would not go back to England if any one would pay my passage. England has the name of a free country and this is a bond country, but shame my friends and countrymen, where is your boasted freedom[?] Look round you, on every side there is distress, rags, want, and all are in one sorrowful state of want.

*Unidentified convict*⁶²

For those considering the bold step of emigrating, a wealth of information about New South Wales was available in the public sphere via newspapers, magazines, and emigrant

⁵⁹ Richards, “How Did Poor People Emigrate?”

⁶⁰ Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, 17.

⁶¹ Cobbett, while in support of alleviating the country of the “*whole of the deadweight*” of military pensioners, was strongly opposed to the program which advanced them two years’ pension in exchange for emigrating. See William Cobbett, “Emigration Work,” *Cobbett’s Weekly Register*, May 21, 1831. Suttor Family, Papers, 1837-1939, MAV/FM4/1390, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney; James Robinson, Papers, 1822-ca. 1868, MLMSS 1533, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney; Frances Mary Jane Bowler, Diary of Frances Mary Jane Bowler, MAV/F4/1390, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney; Martha Mackenzie, “Reminiscences, 1825-1850, Sketches of Australian Life,” MLMSS 944, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁶² William Breton quoted from a personal letter from a convict to his wife, asking her and their children to come to New South Wales. William Henry Breton, *Excursions to New South Wales, Western Australia, and Van Dieman’s Land during the Years 1830, 1831, 1832 and 1833 - 2d Ed., Revised; with Additions*. 2nd ed. (London: R. Bentley, 1834), 282.

guides. At times, these representations critiqued the state of affairs at home. One example relayed the tale of Jem Carden. Carden worked in England as a ploughman at a time when wages were decreasing and jobs were taken by new threshing machines. Upon hearing the news that his employer was bankrupt, Carden got drunk and joined a mob that destroyed a threshing machine at a local farm. They were caught in the act and Carden was sentenced to transportation to New South Wales, leaving behind his wife and young child. Government-assisted emigrants, in particular, who were in danger of approaching poverty themselves in Britain's shifting economic environment, might have been able to imagine themselves in Carden's predicament.⁶³

Though emigrant diaries did not often discuss extensively the writer's personal motivations, the diaries did provide occasional evidence corroborating the public frustration with the current economic state. In his diary, future emigrant to New South Wales James Robinson cited his growing frustration with Ireland's economic woes as a reason for leaving, lamenting that he could not "get paid without distressing the Tenants and driving them to desperation and this I cannot do." As a Wesleyan lay preacher and small landholder, Robinson was certainly not part of the poorest classes, but the financial pinch felt by those classes impacted him, as well.⁶⁴

⁶³ Though this story may have been fictional, its symbolic power holds. The journal in which this story appeared, *Household Words*, was launched by Charles Dickens and run largely by its sub-editor William Henry Wills, formerly of *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*. The weekly journal cost only two pennies, allowing it to achieve wide circulation (over 38,000). "An Australian Ploughman's Story," *Household Words*, April 6, 1850; Michael Slater, "Dickens, Charles John Huffam (1812–1870)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7599> (accessed April 26, 2015).

⁶⁴ James Robinson was fifty-nine years old when he arrived along with his "numerous family" from Fintona, Ireland. Robinson, *Papers*, June 15, 1838.

Sometimes this critique of the current state of Britain's economy took the form of nostalgia for the "old days." New South Wales was described as bearing resemblance to small English country towns and as possessing "the old-fashioned Sunday scenes and manners of England."⁶⁵ Literature on emigration, in general, regularly evoked pre-enclosure times, with images of new settlers felling trees in the forest and hunting game. Positively portraying the past implied a critique of the present, which was losing those features New South Wales reportedly had managed to preserve.

Representations of New South Wales: Land of Opportunity

[Emigrants] seem to be as happy as the day is long, obtain abundance of meat, drink, fuel, and clothing, with many comforts, and even luxuries, in return for the exercise of merely the lowest kind of industry – are often surrounded by their families and old friends – write to and hear from their friends and relations that remain here, very frequently, and enjoy perfect freedom, the protection of the British law and Government, all the benefits of British civilization, and ample facilities for religious worship; and all this under a healthy and agreeable climate.

*George Poulett Scrope*⁶⁶

In contrast to these critiques of present-day Great Britain, the colonies (at least as represented in the published literature) held out the possibilities of financial stability, access to land, and self-sufficiency. Published literature provided numerous examples of immigrants who achieved a stable financial existence. While the labor of the working classes might be

⁶⁵ "Pictures of Life in Australia," *Household Words*, June 22, 1850. See also Peter Miller Cunningham, *Two Years in New South Wales: A Series of Letters Comprising Sketches of the Actual State of Society in that Colony, of its Peculiar Advantages to Emigrants, of its Topography, Natural History, &c. &c.*, vol. 1 (London: H. Colburn, 1827), 50. Cunningham's two-volume work was quite popular with three editions and a German translation by the end of the decade. For more on the books, see L. F. Fitzhardinge, "Cunningham, Peter Miller (1789–1864)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cunningham-peter-miller-1942/text2325> (accessed April 27, 2015).

⁶⁶ Scrope was actually referring to Canada in this quote, but it is representative of sentiments expressed about emigration, in general. George Poulett Scrope, "Political Economy v. the Hand-Loom Weavers," *Poor Man's Guardian*, August 8, 1835.

underpaid or replaced by machinery in Britain, it was their primary asset in New South Wales. Within a year of his arrival in Sydney, the sawyer Alexander Harris had completed several jobs felling timber, put aside some money, hired an employee, and bought a few head of cattle. Eventually, he was able to leave the physically demanding life of the sawyer, becoming the proprietor of his own cattle station and general store.⁶⁷ Harris was no isolated example. The lieutenant William Henry Breton articulated the breadth of opportunity in contrast with Great Britain: “The squalid misery, and dreadful state of destitution so common in our own islands, is never observed in these regions ... The reason is obvious; where the population is small, and the price of labour high, no one need perish through want, as work is always to be found.”⁶⁸ Sometimes, the message came in an explicit statement, like Breton’s. Sometimes, the message was delivered via a personal story, like Harris’s. But always, the reader learned of the possibility for financial stability available to the hard-working immigrant.

Though the plan to fund assisted emigration to New South Wales by raising the price of land would ultimately prevent many from owning a plot of their own, land *was* touted as an incentive for emigrating. The image was enticing: “There is something so pleasant in the idea of sitting under one’s own vine, and under one’s own fig-tree, that men naturally incline to the country.”⁶⁹ Articles offered tips on the best manner and the best places to start a farm,

⁶⁷ Harris’s book was quite successful and was reprinted in England in 1852. Alexander Harris, *Settlers and Convicts, Or, Recollections of Sixteen Years’ Labour in the Australian Backwoods / by an Emigrant Mechanic* (London: C. Cox, 1847). For more information on the book and Harris’s other works, see John Metcalfe, “Harris, Alexander (1805–1874),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/harris-alexander-2160/text2763> (accessed April 27, 2015).

⁶⁸ Breton, *Excursions to New South Wales*, 399–400.

⁶⁹ “To the Working Classes,” *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal*, June 7, 1834.

providing the implicit understanding that it *was* possible for an immigrant to do so. Even if an immigrant did not have the capital needed to start a sheep farm, “the country in every direction presents facilities for settling on small arable farms,” potential emigrants to New South Wales were told.⁷⁰ The working classes had lost access to the land due to enclosure, but through emigration, they could once again have a piece of land of their own.

It was not only land that previous sojourners had obtained, at least as portrayed in the published literature. Meat and good health were also common themes. One author claimed to know an immigrant “with a comfortable house, and a clearing well cropped about him, his wife and children no longer looking haggard and half-starved, but all in the full vigour of health.”⁷¹ One newspaper reported that 64 million pounds of meat was to be wasted in New South Wales, enough to feed 1.1 million people in England and Ireland.⁷² A jovial dinner scene presented in “Pictures of Life in Australia” involved a comedy of errors that ensued as the family worked together to free a round of beef from a pot that was too small for it.⁷³ How powerful the thought of having a piece of meat *too big for the pot* must have been for laborers one step away from the workhouse or starvation.

Beyond the financial or material rewards presented, the highly desirable value of “self-sufficiency” was held out as a possibility. As discussed earlier, “independence” – in contrast to the dependency inherent in accepting poor relief – was highly valued in British society, a “masculine” virtue to which the poor were to aspire, though the economic system

⁷⁰ “Emigration to New South Wales,” *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal*, May 19, 1838.

⁷¹ F.W.J. [pseud.], “Emigration; How Possible for the Poor,” *The Rambler*, September 1848.

⁷² Given the importance of livestock (wool) to the Australian economy and the lack of refrigeration at this time, this claim was plausible. *Ibid.*

⁷³ “Pictures of Life in Australia,” *Household Words*, June 22, 1850.

prevented them from achieving. In the colonies, however, one might indeed become an “independent working man,”⁷⁴ whether that occurred through setting up a farm or exploiting the value of his labor. Before he stopped working for others and launched his own cattle station, the sawyer Alexander Harris told of a time when he idled in Sydney for a few weeks “without feeling much inclined to go to work.”⁷⁵ Imagine the tantalizing possibility that choosing *not* to work would have presented to either the underemployed artisan, desperate for work, or the underpaid factory worker, toiling away for long hours in a dirty factory. Additionally, Harris eventually hired his own employees; the laborer became the boss!

The image of New South Wales as a land of opportunity transcended class. While often lacking in detail, immigrant diaries do often give explicit statements of at least one goal for migrating: to obtain financial independence. In his diary, John Jones listed the motivations of other passengers who shared his cabin on the voyage to New South Wales. To a man, the motivation was economic opportunity, whether that hope lay in starting a farm, joining the wool trade, or aiming to practice law.⁷⁶ Some emigrants were young adults, leaving so as not to burden their families. For example, Thomas Callaghan’s mother had recently come into debt and, having just finished his legal studies, Callaghan assumed there would be more open positions in New South Wales. The son of a botanist, George Suttor had aspirations of becoming a professional actor, but wanted to provide for his new bride and

⁷⁴ Tosh, “‘All the Masculine Virtues’.”

⁷⁵ Harris, *Settlers and Convicts*, 155.

⁷⁶ John Jones arrived in New South Wales in September 1839. He was accompanied by his wife, children, and at least one servant girl. J. Russell Jones, *Transcription of Diary Kept by John Jones on the Voyage from Plymouth to Port Jackson on Board the *Sesostris* May-September 1839 and During his First Years in Sydney, 1838-1841*, MLMSS 8464, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 1991.

thought farming in New South Wales would better allow him to do so. Both Callaghan and Suttor arrived in the colony virtually penniless.⁷⁷

At times, the lure of financial opportunities was expressed by friends of the emigrant in hyperbolic terms, as obtaining one's "fortune." As recorded in his daughter's reminiscences, John Murchison's cousin gave him "ten years to make his fortune and return to England."⁷⁸ Murchison was among the discharged soldiers searching for opportunity now that their military service was complete. Likewise, Callaghan himself used the same rhetoric, but his true goal was more modest: "my family were involved in embarrassment which my expenses only calculated to continue indifferently, and therefore for the purpose of ending these expenses and of acquiring my own independence by my own exertions, I left home."⁷⁹ Faced with an economy in transition in the British Isles, emigrants from a variety of backgrounds – the laboring poor, discharged soldiers, young men from "middling" families trying to find their way as independent adults – sought a stable financial existence through their "own exertions" in New South Wales.

⁷⁷ Though Suttor did receive a land grant, he struggled to establish his farm with very little capital. Suttor's reminiscences were, in essence, a love letter to his wife, Sarah, who had just died when he wrote them. George and Sarah were among the early free settlers, arriving from London in November 1800. Traveling alone from Dublin, Callaghan arrived in February 1840, hoping for a government appointment and scratching out a meager existence until he received one in 1845. Suttor Family, Papers; Thomas Callaghan, Diaries, 1838-1845, MLMSS 2112, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁷⁸ Mackenzie, "Reminiscences."

⁷⁹ Callaghan, Diaries, November 27, 1841.

Representations of New South Wales: The Risks

Will you be contented to lie for a time on the bare ground, or at all events in a miserable turf hut, no better than a pig-stye? No. Then you must on no account go to Australia. Can you submit to live for years on mutton, damper, and tea? No. Then don't think of going to Australia. Can you go unshaved, and never entertain the notion of having your shoes brushed? No. Then we would recommend you not go to Australia. Can you submit to be tormented and half eaten up with insects? No. Then it is out of the question your going to Australia. Can you milk a cow? No; but I will try. Then our advice is, if you want a genteel and easy profession, lay out your money in cow-keeping and *stay at home*.

*Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*⁸⁰

Even though the published literature tended to focus on the opportunities for financial security and independence, the risks of life in New South Wales were not hidden. Many authors of published works claimed their travelogues were “true accounts” or aimed to provide readers with advice on how to avoid the pitfalls of emigration and, as such, they presented potential hurdles emigrants would face. For example, the Australian climate was pleasant enough for people, but it was not for agriculture as the continent is prone to raging bushfires and paralyzing droughts. In “An Exploring Adventure,” a stockman described the devastation caused by drought: “Our course ... lay over a very flat country, all burned up as far as the eye could reach, – a perfect desert of sand. The chain of pools which formed the river after rain, were nearly choked up by the putrifying carcasses of cattle, smothered in fighting for water.”⁸¹ The colonial economy had an abundance of employment opportunities (at least according to the literature), but the cooperation of the weather was far less certain.

⁸⁰ “The Disappointed Settler,” *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, May 10, 1845.

⁸¹ “An Exploring Adventure,” *Household Words*, July 27, 1850.

The counterpart of drought is flood, and Australia was no stranger to this menace, either. After a sunny day's work felling timber, the sawyer Alexander Harris awoke in the middle of the night to find himself knee deep in water. He and his partner barely had enough time to climb into a tree to escape the torrent, where they were stuck until nearly noon the next day. They were finally able to escape by pulling themselves along in the water from branch to branch. Harris was unfortunate to have a large portion of newly cut plank wash away in the flood, a reminder to the reader of the possibility of setbacks due to bad luck.⁸²

Nature did not provide the only threat. Unless the immigrant was planning to settle in Sydney or other town, he faced the risk of confrontation with the Aboriginal people. In the towns, the Aboriginal people were portrayed rather innocuously, aside from their propensity for swearing. Many in the city were beggars and reportedly quite dogged in their pursuit of charity, but were nevertheless polite and witty. They possessed a natural talent for mimicry and had a tendency to give people good-humored nicknames.⁸³ A nuisance maybe, but Aborigines in town were not to be feared.

If, however, the immigrant hoped to claim some land of his own in a more remote location, his chances of conflict increased. The literature did not hide examples of such violent encounters in the outer regions. "Two Letters from Australia" described a large-scale attack by Aboriginal people during the movement of cattle to better pasture. This attack was not happenstance; rather, the Aboriginal people were deliberate and strategic in the defense of their land. They scouted the area where the white settlers were moving the cattle, made a

⁸² Harris, *Settlers and Convicts*, 181-5.

⁸³ Cunningham, *Two Years in New South Wales*, vol. 2, letter 20.

weak attack to determine the strength of the settlers, and returned with around two hundred warriors, painted for battle. The storyteller commented on the increasing number of stations and widening distance from Sydney, but did not explicitly connect those phenomena to the attacks by the Aboriginal people. Instead, he remarked that the bush needed more civilizing and, accordingly, announced his plans to make a flower garden.⁸⁴ An astute reader, however, would surely anticipate increasing attacks with increasing population, flower gardens notwithstanding.

Another risk emigrants had to be willing to take was the risk that Australian society was not really as morally bankrupt as it was often portrayed. Due to its origins and continuing status as a penal colony, New South Wales had a stigma attached to it. Martha Mackenzie's grandfather was not happy with his son's choice of destination. She remembered him saying he "never thought a son of his would have to go to *Botany Bay* to make his fortune."⁸⁵ In an example from a published work, Peter Cunningham, a surgeon on convict ships, told of awkward moments back in England. In conversation, one would mention that he had been to Australia; at which time, his conversation partner would inevitably draw quiet and slightly bemused, until the man returned from Australia explained that he was not, in fact, a convict. Then, a nervous laugh would be shared by both.⁸⁶ In order to consider New South Wales as a destination, one would first have had to overlook the "convict stain" stemming from the colony's origins.

⁸⁴ "Two Letters from Australia," *Household Words*, August 10, 1850.

⁸⁵ Botany Bay was the site where Cook first landed and the planned site of the original penal colony, though it quickly was moved north to present-day Sydney. The term "Botany Bay," however, was commonly used to refer to the Australian penal settlements (emphasis added). Mackenzie, "Reminiscences."

⁸⁶ Cunningham, *Two Years in New South Wales*, vol. 1, 15-7.

The moral degradation associated with the colony was usually attributed to the convicts. They drank; they cursed; they committed new crimes once in the colony. Such behavior was not limited to the convicts, however. In the laborer Harris's otherwise positive account of his life in New South Wales, he admitted that "drunkenness, profanity, dishonesty, and unchastity are the prevalent habits which the [laboring] class has acquired."⁸⁷ Alcohol, specifically rum, was a widespread vice. Senior church minister J.D. Lang calculated that the average consumer drank seven gallons of rum per year.⁸⁸ Yet, emigrants were willing to risk their own moral character by joining that society. Perhaps they had great faith in their own integrity. Perhaps they viewed the portrayals cautiously, as exaggerated accounts. Or, maybe they merely possessed a more liberal view of social mores.⁸⁹ In any case, the people who did leave Britain were not dissuaded by the perceived vulgarity of Australian culture.

Leaving Home

This was indeed a bitter trial to part with my dearest widowed Mother without a prospect of ever beholding her again in earth.

*Martha Ford*⁹⁰

After assimilating all the information – positive and negative – about New South Wales and making the decision to leave, emigrants then had to begin the process of uprooting

⁸⁷ Harris, *Settlers and Convicts*, 414.

⁸⁸ For the details of Lang's calculation, see John Dunmore Lang, *Transportation and Colonization: Or, the Causes of the Comparative Failure of the Transportation System in the Australian Colonies: With Suggestions for Ensuring its Future Efficiency in Subserviency to Extensive Colonization* (London: A. J. Valpy, 1837), 84.

⁸⁹ For the poorer emigrants, perhaps they felt that if their poverty was to be blamed on their own moral failings, then they might as well join a society with a different standard of morality.

⁹⁰ Martha Ford, Journal of a Voyage from Gravesend to Sydney, in the "City of Edinburgh," 1836-37, MLMSS 7605, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, November 15, 1836.

their lives, enduring a four-month long voyage, and beginning anew in a strange land. As discussed above, even assisted emigrants had to raise significant funds for the journey. Aside from financial challenges and logistical issues, emigrants also faced the sad task of saying good-bye to friends and family, moments which were regularly described in diaries in poignant detail. Martha Mackenzie remembered traveling from London to Rochester with her mother to visit her grandfather one last time: “so we parted forever from the dearest and best old man that ever lived. I remember my dear Mother quite breaking down when we parted ... and told us to take a good look of the last of England.”⁹¹ That sense of finality, of presuming never to return, was common and, indeed, it was not until technological advances in transportation in the latter half of the century that return migration became more common. Even then, it was less common from Australia than from North America.⁹²

Emigrants may have been leaving their family behind in the pursuit of self-sufficiency, but the literature conveyed to them that they would not be without support in New South Wales. While New South Wales was portrayed as a society with vices, it was also lauded as a society with a deep sense of community. The “natives,” those of European descent born in Australia, were uniformly praised for their friendliness, spirit, and loyalty.⁹³ In this sparsely populated land, with people so spread out, hospitality was said to be doled out freely to travelers, free or convict, revealing a certain level of egalitarianism present in Australian society. Alexander Harris described a series of “mates” – some convict, some free

⁹¹ Mackenzie, “Reminiscences.”

⁹² Baines, *Emigration from Europe*, chap. 5.

⁹³ Cunningham, *Two Years in New South Wales*, vol. 2, Letter 21; Gouger, ed., *A Letter from Sydney*, 131-2. Several sources note that the “natives” differed visibly in appearance from Europeans and were quite handsome. They lost their teeth at a young age, though no possible explanation for this was presented.

– with whom he had worked on various jobs and formed very close bonds. “It is quite surprising what exertions bushmen of new countries, especially mates, will make for one another beyond people of the old countries,” he wrote, “I suppose what prevailing less in the new countries makes men less selfish, and difficulties prevailing more make them more social and mutually helpful.”⁹⁴ His barb at the “old countries” conveyed another implicit critique of the state of affairs in Britain.

Competing Visions

It seems to us that the great capitalists want the poor – the “burdensome” and the “discreditable,” to go to these wilds, and want to drive out also the little capitalist, to clear the woods, and gather out the stones and stumps “with their nails and fingers;” and then they, “the Gods,” – will come afterwards, with their long purses and golden scepters, and say to them, “These lands are ours – we will buy them – without our capital ye can do no good!”

*Jeremiah Dewhirst*⁹⁵

Research from the last two decades has challenged the long-standing view that, through assisted emigration, Britain was “shoveling out the paupers.”⁹⁶ In drawing such a conclusion, historians are delineating a very fine line. A clause in the New Poor Law (the law which essentially criminalized poverty) allowed for a brief period of assisted emigration to North America funded by county poor rates, which Norfolk chose to exploit. Gary Howells examines the applications submitted to the Norfolk Poor Law Commissioners for the three

⁹⁴ Harris, *Settlers and Convicts*, 318.

⁹⁵ Jeremiah Dewhirst, “To George Poulett Scrope, Esq., M.P.,” *Poor Man’s Guardian*, August 1, 1835.

⁹⁶ Robin F. Haines, “Indigent Misfits or Shrewd Operators? Government-Assisted Emigrants from the United Kingdom to Australia, 1831-1860,” *Population Studies* 48, no. 2 (July 1994): 223-47; Robin F. Haines, “‘The Idle and the Drunken Won’t Do There’: Poverty, the New Poor Law and Nineteenth-Century Government-Assisted Emigration to Australia from the United Kingdom,” *Australian Historical Studies* 28, no. 108 (1997): 1-21; Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*; Richards, “How Did Poor People Emigrate?”

thousand emigrants who benefitted from the scheme. He concludes that the vast majority of emigrants had not been habitual recipients of poor relief (they were “poor but not indigent”) and had received positive character references on their applications. Given that so many of the assisted emigrants in this case were “good moral industrious laborers,” Howells concludes that, in using the policy, the county’s goal was not merely “expulsion;” rather, the county “aimed at the improvement of the lives of the poor,” who now faced the new workhouse system if they remained in Norfolk, but perhaps had an opportunity for a better life in Canada.⁹⁷ Moreover, in the case of New South Wales, the journey was too expensive for the poorest members of society, even with assistance. Thus, scholars pursuing this line of inquiry differentiate between an “indigent,” habitual poor rate recipient (who presumably would need similar assistance from the destination colony) and a poor but able-bodied, potentially productive laborer. Both groups, however, faced the same economic paradigm shift in which Great Britain offered increasing desperation and growing moral condemnation of the poor. Assisted emigrants were “not quite paupers” yet, but prospects at home were not good. In the end, the financial possibilities presented by New South Wales won out.

These financial expectations were often in direct opposition to the role the working classes were expected to play in the colony’s developing economy. In encouraging relocation to the colonies, proponents of emigration hoped to alleviate some of the pressure on, and therefore solidify, the wage labor system required by industrial capitalism at home while simultaneously laying the foundation for the establishment of such a system in the colonies.

⁹⁷ Gary Howells, “Emigration and the New Poor Law: The Norfolk Emigration Fever of 1836,” *Rural History* 11, no. 2 (October 2000): 145-64 (quote from 159).

The colony needed laborers, not independent farmers. Early on, the radical press was not blind to this ulterior motive. *Cobbett's Weekly Register* printed a letter from William Lovett, a prominent Chartist. Lovett reported on a meeting he had attended during which “political economists” discussed emigration as a solution to the problem of rising poor rates. Though he did not receive answers, Lovett presented several questions to the chairman of the meeting, including whether emigrants would actually have the possibility of purchasing land and whether capitalists would “have the power of sending their sons and dependents to eat up the produce of the colonists, in the shape of governors, commissioners, legislators, bishops, parsons, teachers, excisemen, and collectors”?⁹⁸ Lovett foresaw the possibility of a colonial system which would once again relegate hopeful emigrants to the bottom of the social and political hierarchy.

Indeed, the system of selling land to fund emigration *did* keep much of the land in the hands of the wealthy. By the mid-1840s, the effects of the policy were evident and noted in the press. *Hood's Magazine and Comic Miscellany* traced the process a hypothetical immigrant would go through to try to purchase land.⁹⁹ First, he would travel many hundred miles to find a desirable plot of land. Then, he would give notice to the government surveyor, wait for the agent to survey the property, and wait further for the requisite three-months' notice of the sale of public land to pass. Finally, the immigrant would be able to bid for the land in competition with large capitalists and speculators. (All of this, of course, assumed the immigrant had the capital available to make the purchase.) Essentially, *Hood's* pointed out,

⁹⁸ W. Lovett, “Emigration Delusion,” *Cobbett's Weekly Register*, July 12, 1834.

⁹⁹ C.R. [pseud.], “Colonisation and Emigration,” *Hood's Magazine and Comic Miscellany*, July 1845.

speculators let the immigrant do the work of finding good land. This system was not set up in the laborer's favor. Even Alexander Harris, at the end of his book which relayed his rise from laborer to cattle station owner, noted the decrease in opportunity brought about by the land-sale system, warning: "At present he who wants to buy a farm must first get rich. Australia is no place for any poor man who wants to settle his little farm and gradually go on as his own master from little things to greater."¹⁰⁰ By the time the full effects of the assisted emigration scheme became fully evident, however, the seed of the idea of New South Wales as a land of opportunity had already been planted.

Given the disconnect between the policy goals of assisted emigration and the images presented to potential emigrants, one might wonder if emigrants were *deliberately* misled about their prospects in New South Wales, but it would be a stretch to see such a high level of collusion between the policy makers and the press. That assisted emigration would benefit the wealthy was not a closely held secret. In his *A Letter from Sydney*, Wakefield was very clear about the aim of his scheme to create a laboring class in the colony as opposed to a land of independent farmers. His work was available to the public along with accounts like Harris's and Cunningham's, which portrayed more opportunity for the working man. Equally, those latter works should not be taken as mere deceit. Due to the shortage of labor in the colony, the opportunity for a more stable financial life *did* exist, certainly when compared to the possibilities at home, just perhaps not in comparison to the yeoman ideal so often presented. This paradox does much to explain the seeming contradiction in the stances of radicals like Cobbett and the Chartists, who opposed emigration *as policy* but remained

¹⁰⁰ Harris, *Settlers and Convicts*, 406.

supportive of emigrants themselves.¹⁰¹ Though at times they may have set unrealistic expectations, the published accounts of New South Wales also provided something the laboring poor sorely needed: hope.

* * * * *

The process of emigrating was not easy. For what kind of person, then, would the economic possibilities outweigh the logistical hurdles and emotional upheaval of emigration? When considering the “pull” factors related to New South Wales as a destination, the potential emigrant would have had to weigh both positive and negative information available to him. The literature provided many examples of the strong sense of community and of working class individuals who were able to obtain a stable financial existence by moving to New South Wales. At the same time, cautionary tales were presented and the potential emigrant would have known that the journey would not be without risks. For those who emigrated, the desire for the perceived positive benefits of emigration outweighed their concerns for the downsides of life in New South Wales.

More importantly, those perceived positive benefits combined with the “push” factors present at home. While no two emigrants made their decisions in the exact same way, the apparent benefits of life in New South Wales – financial stability, access to land, and independence – stood in opposition to the changing world of laborers in industrializing Great Britain. The potential emigrant’s decision would hinge on weighing the pros of staying at

¹⁰¹ As reported earlier, Cobbett saw it his duty to share practical advice via his *Emigrant’s Guide*. William Cobbett, “Emigration,” *Cobbett’s Weekly Register*, May 8, 1830. For an analysis of the discussion of emigration in the Chartist press, see Gregory Vargo, “‘Outworks of the Citadel of Corruption’: The Chartist Press Reports the Empire,” *Victorian Studies* 54, no. 2 (Winter 2012): 227-53.

home (namely, staying with family and friends) with the cons (working long hours for meager pay or, alternatively, entering a workhouse) in light of the perceived positives of going to New South Wales (a fair, living wage and perhaps a plot of land) tempered by the colony's downsides (cost of the journey, potential for moral degradation, and fickle environment).

Though some may have had doubts about the actual possibilities available to the laborer in New South Wales, newspapers, magazines, and emigrant guides trumpeting the benefits of emigration overwhelmingly held out the promise of financial stability, access to land, and self-sufficiency. Given the precarious position of the working man in Great Britain's industrializing economy, emigrants clung to the possibility of acquiring what they had no hope for at home. This paradox – that emigrants were drawn to New South Wales for precisely the opportunities unavailable to them within the system the colonial government was trying to establish – set the stage for certain values (for example, masculine independence) to become synonymous with what it meant to be “Australian.”

CHAPTER 2: EXPECTATIONS FRUSTRATED

The Australian “bush” was not for the faint of heart. When Robert Scott came to New South Wales in 1822, he received a two thousand-acre land grant from the government.¹ Before Scott settled his grant, he logically wanted to do some exploring, to learn more about the land he was about to try to tame. In doing so, the travel party discovered just how unforgiving the Australian wilderness could be. Scott’s servant, John Brown, described frightening close calls on the journey.² At times, the party struggled to find water and ran dangerously low on food supplies. Brown detailed several encounters with Australia’s notoriously poisonous snakes, including one snake over nine feet long whose stomach contained “a small animal about the size of a Guinea Pig which they call a Bandykoot [sic] and several frogs.”³ Some men’s shoes wore out (clearly, English footwear was incapable of withstanding fifteen miles a day through tall Australian grasses), which they remedied by wrapping blankets around their feet. At one point, the party split up to go hunting. Half the party did not return for two days and, when it did, one man was missing, never to be seen again.

The frontier held a special place in the imaginary of early New South Wales, as it did in many settler colonies. It unquestionably impacted the development of Australia’s cultural,

¹ Nancy Gray, “Scott, Robert (1799–1844),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/scott-robert-2642/text3673> (accessed October 24, 2014).

² The diary referenced was written by an unnamed servant, but has been attributed to John Brown based on clues in the diary and shipping records. The Scott party left London in August 1821 and selected the site of Scott’s farm in June 1823. Brown did not like the loneliness of the bush and asked to be released from his position, but Scott refused. Brown ran away and managed to work his way back to England, departing New South Wales in February 1824. John Brown, *Diary by a Servant of the Scott Family*, 8 Aug. 1821-Mar. 1824, MLMSS 7808, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

³ For more on snakes, see “Snakes in Australia,” *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal*, October 14, 1848.

social, and political institutions. Russel Ward⁴ argues Australia's cultural values evolved from those of the convict bushmen while Geoffrey Blainey⁵ cites the "tyranny of distance" as the most important factor directing the development of political and economic structures. Both interpretations connect unmistakably to the land. Furthermore, both men's work owe much to Frederick Jackson Turner's American frontier thesis in that they, too, examine the ways in which Australia's unique environment shaped the development of Australian culture.⁶ Ward describes a literary representation of an early national archetype, which he named the "Australian legend." The "typical" Australian described by the archetype, he argues, was inspired by convicts and former convicts who worked for the pastoral industry in the remote areas of the bush. Their lifestyle and relationship to the land shaped a set of cultural values, including toughness, collectivity, adventurousness, and endurance.

The use of the frontier thesis in Australian historiography has undergone several shifts. Early work, including Ward's, was much inspired by Turner, but as the twentieth century progressed, Ward's vision of the frontier was often criticized for its omission of women and indigenous people.⁷ In the 1980s, Henry Reynolds set out to reclaim a place for the Aboriginal people in Australia's history, shifting much of the focus to frontier violence.⁸ More recent work has pushed back on this near-exclusive focus on violence in favor of the

⁴ Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1958).

⁵ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History* (South Melbourne, VIC: Macmillan, 1982).

⁶ Elizabeth Furniss, "Imagining the Frontier: Comparative Perspectives from Canada and Australia," in *Dislocating the Frontier: Essaying the Mystique of the Outback*, eds. Deborah Bird Rose and Richard Davis (Canberra, ACT: ANU E Press, 2005), 23-46.

⁷ See various articles in Richard Nile, ed., *The Australian Legend and its Discontents* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000).

⁸ Henry Reynolds, *Frontier: Aborigines, Settlers and Land* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

myriad ways the frontier has shaped culture, aiming to replace what had become a singular focus with the “intricacies of real life.”⁹ This multifaceted tactic is the approach taken by this study. How early settlers (both men and women alike) experienced their day-to-day lives (including interactions with Aboriginal people) influenced the set of cultural values that developed.

Most of the early settlers who were not convicts or ex-convicts were free immigrants and, within the historiography, there is room for work that more explicitly connects the frontier thesis to migration history. The connection is obvious. Land was often held out as a romanticized benefit of emigration to a variety of destinations. Life off the land was thought to be more virtuous than life in the cities, but the only way for many to obtain land in the midst of Britain’s enclosure movement was to emigrate.¹⁰ The popular press “sold” emigrants the dream of land ownership.¹¹ In New South Wales, that promise of land was not entirely a misrepresentation; in the early days of the colony, land was indeed distributed to free immigrants and used as an incentive to encourage former convicts to lead more virtuous, productive lives.¹² Judging from the assisted emigrants received by the colony starting in the 1830s, that message was heard. New South Wales was much more likely to receive agricultural workers than other common emigrant destinations, so much so that Robin Haines concludes that assisted emigrants deliberately chose the Australian colonies over the United

⁹ Deborah Bird Rose and Richard Davis, eds., preface to *Dislocating the Frontier: Essaying the Mystique of the Outback* (Canberra, ACT: ANU E Press, 2005).

¹⁰ Charlotte Erickson, *Leaving England: Essays on British Emigration in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), chap. 1; Karen Downing, *Restless Men: Masculinity and Robinson Crusoe, 1788-1840* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), chap. 5.

¹¹ See chapter 1.

¹² Philippa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education, 2013), 51.

States for Australia's immature economic development. They were attempting, she argues, to avoid industrialization.¹³

But, this was not the only difference between New South Wales and the United States. Some of the difference lay in the land itself. Even though proportionally more agricultural workers went to New South Wales, those workers faced a landscape less familiar and more arid than the United States.¹⁴ If a farmer did manage to grow crops successfully in that difficult environment, the relative lack of navigable rivers made it difficult to get those crops to local markets. Goods were transported largely by bullock teams, an inconvenient fact which selected for lighter goods, such as wool. Another major difference was land policy. With a shift in land policy in the 1830s, land in New South Wales became some of the most expensive in any of the British colonies. Combine this with natural conditions which selected for the already capital-intensive wool industry and the result was a pastoral – not agricultural – frontier. The agricultural frontier of the United States provided opportunity for the individual small farmer; the pastoral frontier of New South Wales favored the wealthy pastoralist. The result, as argued by historians such as Ward and Blainey, was a more collectivist, egalitarian outlook among the working men compared to the individualism so prominent in the United States.¹⁵

¹³ Robin F. Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor: Australian Recruitment in Britain and Ireland, 1831-1860* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 46.

¹⁴ John McQuilton, "Comparative Frontiers: Australia and the United States," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 12, no. 1 (July 1993): 26-46; Ward, *The Australian Legend*, chap. 9.

¹⁵ Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance*, chap. 6.

A fundamental assertion of the work of both Turner and Ward is the primacy of the frontier in forming national archetypes.¹⁶ By virtue of his labor and his skill in taming the bush, the man conjured up by the Australian legend always had the opportunity for employment, could choose (and did choose) when to work and who to work for, and spent his time working the *land*, access to which was largely cut off to laborers in Great Britain. Both Turner and Ward have been criticized for a perceived tendency to attribute the development of a national archetype to a single formative influence.¹⁷ In Ward's case, he painstakingly connects the elements of the archetype to the lives of early nineteenth-century pastoral workers, most of whom were convicts or ex-convicts.¹⁸ This study's argument supports the critique; a national archetype representative of only convict bushworkers would not have gained enough broad acceptance among the diversity of settlers in the Australian colonies to become a "national" type. The Australian legend may have been based on the experiences of pastoral workers with a convict past, but it captured the aspirations of free immigrants, as well. Furthermore, this study does not set out to argue that the land was the *only* formative influence, though it certainly was *an* important formative influence.

Deborah Bird Rose and Richard Davis explain the importance of frontier life in the formation of cultural schema: "the frontier is a site of ...productive assertions of dilemmas and of unexpected engagements toward change. It is, thus, a continuing site of cultural action."¹⁹ Indeed, the very same can be said of emigration, a process rife with dilemmas,

¹⁶ McQuilton, "Comparative Frontiers."

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ward, *The Australian Legend*, passim.

¹⁹ Rose and Davis, eds., preface to *Dislocating the Frontier*, iii.

change, and cultural negotiation. The processes of emigration and of taming the frontier ran parallel, overlapped, and reinforced each other. The frontier greatly influenced Australia's early national self-image, but so did migration. In fact, much of the published literature available to potential emigrants both evoked the frontier and captured the spirit of the not-yet invented archetype. The contemporary writer and sawyer Alexander Harris (whom Ward cites extensively) described the essence of the bush in his memoir thusly:

the success of the day, the prospect of a good cutting or an advantageously shaped log on the morrow, the pleasant perfume of the pipe, the cheering pot of tea again and again repeated, with each new yarn, or joke, or laugh, the busy and pompous excursions and barkings of the dog, the pattering shower, the clouds of fireflies that dance along in their countless angular courses where the cold stream tumbles among great stones in the bed of the creek – such are the objects which occupy [the] senses and thoughts.²⁰

Via emigration literature, experiences such as Harris's and his relationship to the bush became the expectations of future free immigrants.

As argued in chapter one, emigrants to New South Wales were drawn by images of financial security, access to land, and self-sufficiency. These same values later became integrated into the Australian legend archetype. But, land was actually quite difficult for most to obtain after the colonial government began using land sales to fund assisted emigration schemes starting in the early 1830s. Even if one managed to obtain land, he faced both a steep learning curve and the fickleness of Mother Nature, which could wipe all his gains away. Likewise, even those who did *not* aim to work the land experienced delays in obtaining financial security due to high prices in the colony. As reality revealed the difficulty

²⁰ Alexander Harris, *Settlers and Convicts, Or, Recollections of Sixteen Years' Labour in the Australian Backwoods / by an Emigrant Mechanic* (London: C. Cox, 1847), 85.

in obtaining the goals, the goals became venerated. The values of financial security, access to land, and self-sufficiency came to be viewed as opportunities every man *should* have. As they attempted to achieve those goals for themselves, immigrants had to possess – or at least develop – the virtues of self-reliance, perseverance, and a willingness to try anything, all values also recognizable in the Australian legend archetype. Thus, in a sense, the Australian legend reflected both the experiences and the *aspirations* of the free immigrants.

The Journey

I find that 13 weeks is the most I can keep my patience at sea. I am now so heartily tired of every thing on board that I count the days till we arrive, every thing must have an end.

*Anne Bourke*²¹

Emigrants' quest for land began at sea – four dull, uncomfortable months at sea. Many shipboard journals were little more than records of latitude and longitude with the odd sighting of a porpoise or a shark mixed in.²² Emigrants sold most of their possessions prior to leaving, but for the cabin passengers, what they endeavored to keep lived with them in their cramped ship's quarters. Sea sickness plagued the beginning of the journey (it is the rare journal that does not chronicle some degree of nausea at some point) and increasingly poor quality of food and drinking water beset the rest.²³ Alcohol was palatable to drink, but at the same time, it caused disturbances on board. Drunk passengers brandished weapons and

²¹ Anne Deas Thomson, *Journal of a Voyage to Australia, August-December 1831*, MAV/FM3/743, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, October 22, 1831.

²² For example, see James Robinson, *Papers, 1822-ca. 1868*, MLMSS 1533, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, September-December 1838.

²³ In 1831, Anne Bourke and her brother, Dick, accompanied their father, Richard Bourke, who was about to assume the position of the colony's eighth governor. Anne and Dick had to improvise a filtration system for their drinking water, which she described as "like weak coffee... [it] has a sediment at the bottom like coffee grounds." Deas Thomson, *Journal of a Voyage to Australia*, September 23, 1831.

sometimes forced the ship's crew to use their pistols in order to subdue the offenders.²⁴ That Anne Bourke's patience lasted thirteen weeks under such conditions is commendable!

Thus, the first challenge emigrants faced in starting their new lives was the process of getting there. After spending months uncomfortable, ill, sometimes drunk, sometimes irritated, and – more often than not – bored, land would finally draw within sight. *Any* interruption of months of visual deprivation would have been welcome, but as the ship sailed past the southern coast of the continent, journalists remained focused on their goals, admiring forests and assessing the suitability of the coastland for farming.²⁵ As ships approached the harbor (to this day the unmistakable icon of Sydney), praise was uniform. The young Irish lawyer Thomas Callaghan described it as “the most beautiful that I have ever seen: the entrance to the harbor is magnificent.”²⁶ The beautiful setting may have helped the immigrants believe, at least momentarily, that they had made the right decision in leaving home.

²⁴ For example, John Carter described a drunk passenger with a dagger, Martha Ford a man with a pistol, and John Jones a pistol shot in the air to subdue a drunk passenger. John Carter, *Diary, 1844-1850*, M 1618, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, November 3, 1844; Martha Ford, *Journal of a Voyage from Gravesend to Sydney*, in the “*City of Edinburgh*,” 1836-37, MLMSS 7605, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, February 19, 1837; J. Russell Jones, *Transcription of Diary Kept by John Jones on the Voyage from Plymouth to Port Jackson on Board the Sesostris May-September 1839 and During his First Years in Sydney, 1838-1841*, MLMSS 8464, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 1991, August 12, 1839.

²⁵ Andrew Hassam, *Sailing to Australia: Shipboard Diaries by Nineteenth-Century British Emigrants* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1994), chap. 6.

²⁶ Thomas Callaghan, *Diaries, 1838-1845*, MLMSS 2112, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, February 13, 1840.

The Transition

Everything here is certainly topsy-turvy compared with the same at home.

*Frances Mary Jane Bowler*²⁷

The initial relief upon landing was soon tempered by the process of adjusting to the new society. Certain personality traits (e.g., adventurousness, curiosity, and a sense of humor) aided adaptation. Frances Bowler and her husband, Bow, certainly possessed an ability to laugh at themselves.²⁸ Frances's journal is filled with funny stories and sarcastic comments about the alien world in which she found herself. At one point, she was unable to procure medicine for her son on a Sunday, which she noted in her journal thusly: "Memo: To petition Parliament to pass a bill that neither sickness nor accidents begin on Sunday for the future."²⁹ Despite the humor that pervaded their day-to-day lives, Bowler struggled to feel comfortable. She compared everything to home. Sydney seemed "more rude" than expected, the inhabitants "more depraved," and the wildflowers inferior to the flowers from home. The cockatoos "screech[ed] most horribly" and the Southern Cross was less beautiful than the northern constellations.³⁰ Her attempts at farming created more frustration. Her garden was a disappointment. She tried breeding turkeys and ducks, but they all died. "Either I was not made for farming, or farming not made for me," she proclaimed.³¹

²⁷ Frances Mary Jane Bowler, *Diary of Frances Mary Jane Bowler*, MAV/F4/1390, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, April 14, 1837.

²⁸ Bow had been a soldier. When they arrived in February 1837, the family stayed in the barracks for the first several months before obtaining a land grant and trying their hand at farming. *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, June 1, 1837.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, February 13, February 12, March 18, May 4, and March 14, 1837, respectively. I have to agree with her on the cockatoos.

³¹ *Ibid.*, May 30, 1837.

Frances Bowler's transition to life in New South Wales exemplified the depth of the adjustment that immigrants faced. Everything was different, "topsy-turvy" even, from the noises the birds made to the stars in the sky. Even with her normal brand of humor, it was difficult not to become frustrated. Eventually, though, she warmed up to her new home. At the end of the fourth month, she wrote, "I hardly ever expected to enjoy a garden as much as I do, but the evenings are so beautiful, and the air is so mild, one cannot be indoors."³² And like any good pioneer, she redoubled her efforts with poultry, giving guinea fowl a try.

As Bowler demonstrated, the qualities Ward identifies in the convict population as facilitating survival in the bush – "adaptability, toughness, endurance, activity and loyalty to one's fellows"³³ – were also required of the free immigrant population. Bowler had to learn to appreciate Australian flora and to persevere through several failed attempts at raising poultry. When these same characteristics appeared in the Australian legend archetype, many free immigrants would have recognized themselves.

The Original Inhabitants

One of the Aborigines ... I heard was lying very unwell... His name is James Burdale. He is the King of the Wollongong Tribe. His wife Sally, the Queen, is with him and is most attentive and affectionately attached to him ... Burdale says all these lands and Wollongong belong to him...

*James Robinson*³⁴

Immigrants' dreams of obtaining independence through working their own plot of land overlooked one inconvenient truth: the land was already occupied. Potential emigrants,

³² Ibid., May 24, 1837.

³³ Ward, *The Australian Legend*, 81.

³⁴ Robinson, Papers, August 4, 1842.

of course, knew that Aboriginal people lived in New South Wales. Emigrant literature described their migratory lifestyle, their state of undress, and their physical appearance (“the nose is flat, the nostrils expanded, the lips thick ... the complexion is black as that of the negro...”³⁵). Some published accounts described frontier violence between Aboriginal people and the Europeans.³⁶ Most often, the final assessment of the Aboriginal people categorized them as “savages” or more similar to animals than civilized man; William Breton concluded, “I entertain very little more respect for the aborigines ... than for the ourang-outang; in fact, I can discover no great difference.”³⁷ Overall, the message potential emigrants received portrayed the Aboriginal people as a barely-human “other” and, indeed, a potential threat.

The Aboriginal and British cultures were literally and figuratively a world apart until the First Fleet arrived in 1788. The figurative distance proved the more difficult to traverse as it provided the space for the British to discount the Aboriginal culture entirely. Among political thinkers, the eighteenth century saw a revival in the concept from Roman law of *res nullius*, which allowed for a land to belong to the first person who took possession of it.³⁸ Since the Australian continent was not devoid of people when the British arrived, they had to adjust this concept to what has come to be called *terra nullius*. This shift in rationale hinged on the cultivation, or presumed lack thereof, of the land.³⁹ In essence, since the Aborigines did not practice a recognizable form of agriculture, they did not “own” the land; they merely

³⁵ William Henry Breton, *Excursions to New South Wales, Western Australia, and Van Dieman's Land during the Years 1830, 1831, 1832 and 1833 - 2d Ed., Revised; with Additions*. 2nd ed. (London: R. Bentley, 1834), 163.

³⁶ See chapter 1.

³⁷ Breton, *Excursions to New South Wales*, 173.

³⁸ Andrew Fitzmaurice, “The Genealogy of *Terra Nullius*,” *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 129 (2007): 8.

³⁹ Lauren A. Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400-1900* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), chap. 5.

“roamed” over it. Thus, the official policy was to deny Aboriginal ownership of the land. As such and in contrast to its interactions with native peoples in North America, South Africa, and New Zealand, Britain never made any treaties with the Aboriginal people of Australia and never purchased or leased land from them.⁴⁰

In reality, Aboriginal people placed a very high importance on land, though in ways that the British failed to acknowledge. The Aboriginal people did not “own” the land so much as they served as custodians of the land. They believed that the land would not prove to be productive unless they fulfilled their obligation to perform specific ceremonies. Thus, as Europeans moved in, they could not just leave their homelands; they had to stay as close as possible for the purpose of ceremony. As the white men encroached, the Aboriginal people may have left the immediate vicinity of white settlement, but they did not go far; they simply moved to other sites within the boundaries of their territories. Furthermore, Aboriginal peoples *did* mix their labor with their land. Near the site of Sydney, the Dharuk cultivated wild yams, the Brewarrina built fisheries, and the Gandangara engaged in “fire-stick farming,” intentionally burning portions of the forest to create clearings and young growth to facilitate hunting.⁴¹ These practices, however, did not fit the British image of agriculture and the British did not recognize them as such.

⁴⁰ Peter H. Russell, *Recognizing Aboriginal Title: The Mabo Case and Indigenous Resistance to English-Settler Colonialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Bruce Buchan and Mary Heath, “Savagery and Civilization: From *Terra Nullius* to the ‘Tide of History’,” *Ethnicities* 6, no. 1 (2006): 5-26; and Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia, 1788-1836* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

⁴¹ Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770-1972* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996), chap. 1 and 2.

Very rarely was this “official” doctrine challenged in the public press. For the most part, land was portrayed as in abundance and not requiring conquest,⁴² but there were exceptions to this rule. The radical Chartist press criticized treatment of native peoples throughout the empire⁴³ and the missionary James Backhouse repeatedly referred to the “usurpation” of Aboriginal land by the British, which the Aboriginal people had “done nothing to forfeit.”⁴⁴ Overall, though, the ethics of appropriating Aboriginal land were not considered. Furthermore, public discourse perpetuated the assumption that the Aboriginal people would eventually die out, a sad fact, perhaps, but not anything which caused alarm in the popular press.⁴⁵

Together, government policy and public discourse worked to convince potential emigrants that they were completely justified in desiring Aboriginal land for themselves, an effort so successful that there was little conscious recognition of the land as belonging to the Aboriginal people at all. Free immigrants were so blind to the injustices of white settlement that even open declarations by Aboriginal people of their ownership of the land were dismissed out of hand. A popular story told of King Boongarre, who often greeted

⁴² John Tosh, “‘All the Masculine Virtues’: English Emigration to the Colonies, 1815-1852,” in *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family, and Empire* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2005), 182.

⁴³ Gregory Vargo, “‘Outworks of the Citadel of Corruption’: The Chartist Press Reports the Empire,” *Victorian Studies* 54, no. 2 (Winter 2012): 227-53.

⁴⁴ James Backhouse, *A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies* (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1843), chap. 43.

⁴⁵ By the time of this study, the Aboriginal people of Van Diemen’s Land had already seen their numbers dwindle sufficiently for extinction to seem imminent. In 1833, the roughly 200 remaining Aborigines were removed from the island under the guise of government protection. Reynolds, *Frontier*, 55. Backhouse, for example felt the general public assumed Aborigines would suffer the same fate as native peoples in other British colonies: “There seems a great willingness to suffer Aborigines to dwindle away, under the easy conclusion, that thus the Indians of North America, and the Natives of Van Diemens Land, passed away” (532).

immigrants on board their ship upon arrival. He would be barefoot and dressed in a blue military coat, complete with epaulettes on the shoulders, but without a shirt underneath. And then, “in a gentle and most dignified manner . . . he bids *massa* welcome to *his* country.”⁴⁶ The story was relayed as an amusing yarn, of an Aboriginal person in a comical outfit, wearing European dress but doing so incorrectly, and making laughable claims about *his* country. But, in an alternative interpretation, King Boongarre was not making a joke. Australia *was* his people’s land and he was making sure the immigrants knew the moment they arrived. Furthermore, he did so by adopting European symbols of authority: military dress and the title of “king.”

Even on a more intimate level, willful ignorance prevailed. While living in the bush, Ann Jones⁴⁷ developed seemingly friendly relationships with the Aboriginal people who lived near her family. “Their blacks” taught her children to swim and she gave them blankets and European clothing. The Aboriginal people even protected her in one instance when two suspicious white men were poking around the house while her husband was away. At times, though, their behavior puzzled her. They refused to go get help for her when her husband, Rees, was sick. In another instance, she was terribly frightened when an Aboriginal man she

⁴⁶ Quote is from Peter Miller Cunningham, *Two Years in New South Wales: A Series of Letters Comprising Sketches of the Actual State of Society in that Colony, of its Peculiar Advantages to Emigrants, of its Topography, Natural History, &c. &c.*, vol. 1 (London: H. Colburn, 1827), 43-4 (emphasis in original). The story of King Boongarre (Cunningham’s spelling) also appears in *Description of a View of the Town of Sydney, New South Wales, the Harbour of Port Jackson, and Surrounding Country, Now Exhibiting in the Panorama, Leicester Square, Painted by the Proprietor, Robert Burford* (London: J. and C. Adlard, 1829).

⁴⁷ Ann Thompson came to New South Wales in 1834 with her parents and siblings at the age of twenty-four. She married Rees Jones in 1838. Thereafter, the couple experienced many financial ups and downs with a string of failed businesses and failed farms. Ann Jones, “Some Reminiscences of My Past Life Written in 1887,” Q994.403/6, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 1887. For more on the Thompsons, see Penny Russell, “Travelling Steerage: Class, Commerce, Religion and Family in Colonial Sydney,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 38, no. 4 (November 12, 2014): 383-95.

did not know came into the house uninvited and took a nap in front of the fireplace. Jones remarked in her reminiscences that the local people came to them soon after they arrived to let the Jones party know that the land belonged to the Aboriginal people. But, she never connected these bewildering encounters with that declaration of rights.⁴⁸ It never seemed to occur to her that they might consider themselves justified in using a house on their land as a napping site or that they perhaps hoped the family would leave if Rees died.

Free emigrants were drawn to New South Wales by the possibility of access to land and the financial stability and self-sufficiency that came with it. They were told the Aboriginal people were of no concern, because they were not using the land properly. That logic fueled the imperial project at the same time it reaffirmed the virtue of the emigrants' intentions (i.e., agriculture). The rationale was so strong that it persisted even as immigrants were confronted with both Aborigines as people – rather than merely caricatures in an emigrant guide – and their clear, verbalized claims to the land. Among the immigrants, methods of self-delusion were varied. Daniel Fowles, who came to the colony temporarily as a surgeon on the *Prince Regent*, reasoned that, with the immense amount of land, the Aboriginal people could merely move away from the whites.⁴⁹ For working class immigrants, the sense of entitlement had the potential to be quite large. They had lost access to land at home; imperial lands were their chance to get back that coveted right. They had, in fact, risked everything for that chance. The sawyer Alexander Harris was more sympathetic

⁴⁸ Ann Jones, "Some Reminiscences of My Past Life," 18-29.

⁴⁹ The whites moving away from the Aboriginal people was not a possibility Fowles considered. Annamarie Jagose, *Transcription of the Diary of Daniel Adey Fowles, 1836*, MLMSS 7668, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 2000.

toward the Aboriginal people than most. He pointed out the injustice in making them hapless victims in a tussle over land that began half a world away: “They understand no theories about capital and labour, and pauperism and emigration: all they feel is that they are wronged.”⁵⁰ But even he agreed with the working class immigrant’s right to imperial land, claiming “the poor has more right to land than the rich in a new country; that his right is the true and more fundamental right. If his own country have borne him, but cannot find him food, he has the greatest right that there is below divine right to go elsewhere and seek it.”⁵¹

The migrating working class might have been expected to feel some cosmic bond with the Aboriginal people, as both groups were exploited by the British economic/imperial machine.⁵² However, it was not to be. At a time when conceptions of class became intertwined with conceptions of race, especially amidst the presence of indigenous populations in the colonies,⁵³ those working class white immigrants who left Britain, in part, because their access to land had been taken away failed to see the hypocrisy in their own usurpation of Aboriginal land. Or, more elegantly put, “and so it [was] that in Australia, as in other settler societies, the trauma of expulsion, exodus, and exile obscure[d] empathetic recognition of indigenous perspectives, of the trauma of invasion, institutionalization, and

⁵⁰ Harris, *Settlers and Convicts*, 421.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 419.

⁵² Henry Reynolds also points out the irony in the British use of ideas of absolute property rights to displace Aboriginal people when those ideas themselves were relatively new to British society and had displaced many of the settlers (who were now themselves displacing the Aboriginal people). Reynolds, *Frontier*, Conclusion.

⁵³ Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1-58.

dispersal.”⁵⁴ Instead, sentiments like Breton’s “ourang-outang” comment prevailed. Working class emigrants had left Britain because they had been denied opportunity, opportunity they fully intended to realize in their new home, regardless of whether their success required another group to suffer as they had. It is little wonder, then, that land came to be so highly venerated in the Australian legend, given the lengths to which immigrants had been willing to go to obtain it.

Taming the Bush

Who but myself would have selected a settler’s life; Have bartered the comforts and luxuries of home for either going between the plough handles, heaving the hoe or some other delightful occupation ... I begin this year encumbered with difficulties not very trifling, yet full of hope, and confident of success.

*Charles Boydell*⁵⁵

Those who achieved their goal of obtaining land soon discovered how challenging the Australian landscape could be: powerful, fickle, immense, and, above all, unfamiliar. Australia was “more a new planet than a new continent.”⁵⁶ The geological history of the continent had created very poor soils, but the gentle treatment the land had received by the Aboriginal people and the hoof-less fauna made it appear quite rich. As European farming techniques were applied to the land, the land was slow to recover. Meanwhile, introduced plants and animals wreaked havoc on the landscape. As the Bowlers’ struggles with gardens

⁵⁴ Ann Curthoys, “Mythologies,” in *The Australian Legend and its Discontents*, ed. Richard Nile (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000), 36.

⁵⁵ Charles Boydell, Journal, 1830-1869, CY 1496, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, January 1, 1831.

⁵⁶ Eric Rolls, “More a New Planet than a New Continent,” in *Australian Environmental History: Essays and Cases*, ed. Stephen Dovers (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994): 22-36.

and poultry illustrated, the skills to be learned were numerous.⁵⁷ In the early days of the colony, convicts were routinely given land (usually forty acres) when their sentences expired, but as most criminals were from urban areas, most (about three-quarters) also lacked agricultural skills. By 1821, two-thirds of the farms of the ex-convicts had failed.⁵⁸ Ann and Rees Jones went to the bush after Rees's business failed, but their luck on the land was not much better. Their first farm "was stocked with pigs, cattle and poultry, which," Ann admitted, "neither my husband nor I had the least idea how to manage."⁵⁹ After three failed farms, they gave up and set out to return to Sydney, but bush life still got the best of them. On the journey, they ran out of water, their food spoiled, and their horses wandered off in the middle of the night.⁶⁰ Despite several years in the bush, they still lacked some basic survival skills.

Even if one possessed the requisite knowledge, the length of time required to establish a successful farm could be longer than one's patience. One of the early free immigrants, George Suttor arrived in November 1800, the beneficiary of a land grant arranged by the famous naturalist Sir Joseph Banks. Trained by his father, a botanist, Suttor planted orange trees, which did not prove profitable until 1806. As he could not afford assigned convicts (food and clothing were too expensive), his children had to assist.⁶¹ He even gave up on the farm altogether for a time and accepted a five-year stint as

⁵⁷ Bowler, *Diary of Frances Mary Jane Bowler*.

⁵⁸ Geoffrey Sherington, *Australia's Immigrants, 1788-1988* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), chap. 1.

⁵⁹ Ann Jones, "Some Reminiscences of My Past Life," 4.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁶¹ The availability of cheap convict labor was often used as a selling point for emigrating to New South Wales. The convicts received no wages, but it was the responsibility of the immigrant to feed, house, and clothe them. To the small farmer of little capital like Suttor, even those expenses were too much to bear.

superintendent of the lunatic asylum at Castle Hill, a move he had hoped would bring greater prosperity. It did not. In fact, he returned to his land to find the orangery in need of a major rejuvenation.⁶² Having land did not make it instantly profitable.

Suttor's orangery would have taken several years to establish, even in idyllic conditions. The Australian bush, however, was far from consistently idyllic. Droughts, floods, and fires were not uncommon, to say nothing of the menagerie of poisonous fauna present. As she and her husband struggled with a lack of requisite farming knowledge, Ann Jones suffered further setbacks when one farmhouse flooded and the roof was ripped off of another by what she assumed was a cyclone.⁶³ The Australian legend archetype idealized both life in the bush and perseverance. Those who obtained land could identify with both aspects of the legend. They knew how difficult and precarious working the land could be. Potential obstacles were numerous: they may not have had the means to hire labor (convict or otherwise), the knowledge to productively work a farm, or the patience to wait for long-term improvements in the land to pay off. Even if all of those pieces fell neatly into place, an act of nature could wipe it all away. Australia's first national archetype spoke to the pride the immigrants no doubt felt for their hard-earned accomplishments and the respect owed to those who could tame the bush.

That pride was not only felt by small-scale farmers. Even large, capitalist landowners spoke reverentially of the land and often labored on it themselves; this was not a system of absentee plantation owners like those in Britain's Caribbean colonies. Charles Boydell (see

⁶² Suttor Family, Papers, 1837-1939, MAV/FM4/1390, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁶³ Ann Jones, "Some Reminiscences of My Past Life."

quote above) received a 640-acre land grant along with seven convict workers to assist him, but he himself participated in the hard labor, felling trees, sowing fields, cutting hay, and taking goods to market.⁶⁴ On the other hand, Alexander Spark did not work his land – he lived in Sydney, acting as a shipping agent and serving on the boards of several banks and insurance companies – but he reveled in his annual trip to tour the remote lands he owned. He would muster the cattle on his stockyards and search for land he had purchased but never visited. On his 1837 trip, he described “as rich a valley as I had seen ... All the variety of the beautiful vegetation which has so much delighted us is to be found here, & our guide informed us that there is a waterfall on it of 70 feet in height.”⁶⁵ The land obviously held a special allure for people from all economic strata.

Access to Land

Every new comer finds a great difficulty in obtaining a grant[.] it is said no more land will be given gratis but that government intend selling it.

*Henry Gilbert Smith*⁶⁶

Though the continent of Australia was over thirty times the size of Great Britain, land was not easy to come by for all. In the early days of the colony, a variety of people were able to procure cheap or even free land grants. The size of the land grant varied according to the

⁶⁴ A Welshman, Charles Boydell emigrated to New South Wales in 1826 at eighteen years of age. He received a land grant of 640 acres and seven convict servants. His farm was relatively close to that belonging to John Brown’s master, Robert Scott (see opening story of this chapter), and, indeed, Boydell was friendly with the Scotts. Boydell, Journal.

⁶⁵ Alexander Spark was the son of a Scottish watchmaker. He arrived in the colony in April 1823. Alexander Brodie Spark, Diary, 1 January 1836-22 September 1856, CY 1507, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, November 2, 1837.

⁶⁶ Henry Gilbert Smith to his father, September 27, 1828, Henry Gilbert Smith, Papers, 1827-1857, MLMSS 660, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

amount of capital one brought into the country or one's military rank.⁶⁷ While this gave the largest chunks of land to the richest settlers, it also provided an opportunity for the small-scale farmer, for the man who wanted to scratch out a secure living on the basis of his own labor. This was the image of New South Wales in many immigrants' minds.

Land policy, however, changed significantly in 1831 when the government artificially raised the price of land in order to use the proceeds to assist immigration. Initial prices started at a minimum of five shillings per acre and then steadily rose to one pound per acre in 1842. Since land was normally sold in lots of a minimum of 640 acres, even with the high wages one could demand for one's labor, it was highly unlikely an immigrant who came with no capital could save the amount needed for the land itself,⁶⁸ let alone the equipment, stock, and hired labor required to get a farm or station running.⁶⁹ Even with some capital, obtaining land took time. When Wesleyan lay preacher James Robinson⁷⁰ and his family arrived in the colony in March 1839, he was lucky to bring some capital with him. He tried his luck at a number of ventures, including selling goods he brought from Europe, buying shares in a steamer, and building and renting four stores. But through their first two years in the colony, his diary was riddled with mentions of his wife's concerns over his lack of "regular income" and their financial insecurity. He eventually accrued enough capital to buy a 307-acre spread and even managed to receive the services of a few assigned convict workers, but not without

⁶⁷ John C. Weaver, "Beyond the Fatal Shore: Pastoral Squatting and the Occupation of Australia, 1826 to 1852," *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (October 1996): 981-1007.

⁶⁸ Ward, *The Australian Legend*, 101

⁶⁹ Which Breton estimated at between three and four thousand pounds for a pastoral settler. Breton, *Excursions to New South Wales*, chap. 7.

⁷⁰ Robinson, Papers.

some shrewd investing and lots of patience. Robinson succeeded where many others failed. The net result of the land sales policy was to make the land more expensive than in any other colony and effectively eliminate opportunities for the small-scale farmer.⁷¹

A man now had to have a good amount of capital – approaching several thousand pounds – to pursue an agricultural or pastoral lifestyle. Legally, that is. The new policy resulted in a dramatic increase in “squatting.” Australia was so vast and so thinly populated that one could find a plot of unoccupied land, work the land for agricultural or pastoral purposes, and (sometimes) use the proceeds of that work to buy the land after the fact. Squatting was not unknown before 1831; the sizes of land grants were limited and settlers often moved beyond the official bounds. After 1831, however, there was a proliferation of squatting in unsurveyed areas that the government could not control. The common immigrant was not blocked out of the land grab – yet. But over time, wealthy landowners controlled more and more land and lobbied the government to make their possession legal through land leases.⁷² Furthermore, as land was claimed and squatters had to move farther from the towns, transport costs became more of a burden and opportunities for small-scale landowners decreased accordingly.⁷³ By mid-century, the definition of the term “squatter” had changed in common parlance to mean “wealthy pastoralist.”⁷⁴ From the mid-1830s onward, potential immigrants with visions of unlimited free land would be disappointed.

⁷¹ Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance*, chap. 7; Dudley Baines, *Emigration from Europe 1815-1930* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 24.

⁷² Weaver, “Beyond the Fatal Shore.”

⁷³ Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance*, chap. 6; Ward, *The Australian Legend*, chap. 4.

⁷⁴ Weaver, “Beyond the Fatal Shore,” 983.

Paradoxically, the monies from the sale of land were used to fund assisted emigration schemes to bring more immigrants to the colony, immigrants who were attracted to the colony for precisely the land they could no longer afford. That realization was a tough pill to swallow and free immigrants submitted petitions in protest to both the Colonial Office in Britain and the New South Wales government. These included an 1835 complaint that conditions in the colony were inferior to what had been promised⁷⁵ and an 1854 petition pleading for land.⁷⁶ Around the same time as the 1835 petition, the colonial press argued for adjustments in the relatively new land system. The *Hobart Town Courier* in Van Diemen's Land (later Tasmania) pointed out what hindsight made clear: the system of selling land for a minimum price was concentrating the land in the hands of rich pastoralists, thus leaving the island "mostly engrossed in large unimproved and unimproving sheep walks" and shutting out laboring emigrants.⁷⁷ The Sydney-based papers *The Sydney Herald* and *The Colonist* wanted adjustments to the land policies for different reasons. They were more concerned with attracting immigrants of modest capital and proposed the land grant system be reinstated for immigrants who paid their own passage. If emigrants who could not afford the voyage benefited from the land sales system, why shouldn't those people who brought capital into the colony's economy also benefit?⁷⁸ Such a system would have helped people

⁷⁵ Sherington, *Australia's Immigrants*, 51.

⁷⁶ Eric Richards, "Voices of British and Irish Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Australia," in *Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants: A Social History of Migration*, eds. by Colin G. Pooley and Ian D. Whyte (London: Routledge, 1991), 34.

⁷⁷ *The Hobart Town Courier*, October 16, 1835.

⁷⁸ See *The Sydney Herald*, February 23, 1835; *The Sydney Herald*, May 25, 1835; and "Final Report of the Committee on Immigration," *The Colonist*, October 8, 1835.

such as James Robinson and his anxious wife, but no such system was instituted and the suggestion resurfaced in 1854.⁷⁹

Despite the outcry, land remained difficult to obtain. Free immigrants had come to New South Wales with visions of living off the land, expectations which, for many, were quickly frustrated. When the earliest formulation of a shared national identity later developed, it idealized the unobtainable (access to the land) within the framework of existing possibility. The “typical” Australian described by the archetype did not own his land. He worked the land, felt comfortable in the often-dangerous bush, and made his living off the land, but he did not own it. Thus, the archetype incorporated immigrants’ aspirations while acknowledging the frustrating realities.

Financial Stability

Here in the course of two years I have made myself dependent on my own exertions alone & I have placed myself in a position by which I can maintain myself, but when in the course of time I rise to a higher position, my profits & receipts will only be a corresponding proportion to my increased expenses, so that my account by itself will scarcely ever enable me to live decently & to save money.

*Thomas Callaghan*⁸⁰

Land was seen as the path to a broader goal – financial stability – a goal shared not only by those who aimed to become farmers or pastoralists but also by those who were merchants or professionals. Though those who chose to settle in the cities and towns did not face the hurdles inherent in obtaining land and establishing a farm/station, they too struggled to launch their new lives due to high prices and the difficulties of breaking into established

⁷⁹ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, July 8, 1854.

⁸⁰ Callaghan, Diaries, November 27, 1841.

networks. When the surgeon Daniel Fowles first arrived, he sent the pilot who met the ship ashore for fresh tea and butter and, to his utmost delight, the pilot also brought back fresh fruit, which had long since been missing from their onboard diet. That joy soon faded when Fowles saw the bill; it was so high, he suspected his new friend was swindling him.⁸¹ In another example, new arrival Hugh Gordon reported that household items cost three to four times as much in the colony as at home and lamented that it would have been cheaper to pay to bring all his possessions with him.⁸² William Burton left a position on the Supreme Court of the Cape Colony to assume the same position in New South Wales, a move which turned out to be a financial setback. Within a year of arriving, he realized he had to pare down his household to save money, moving to a house with cheaper rent and discharging two servants.⁸³ New South Wales may have had the reputation of a place where a hard worker could make some money, but it was quickly evident that he would also be *spending* a lot of money.

Such were the woes of men of means who came to the colony. For those who came with little, the challenges were magnified. Thomas Callaghan⁸⁴ arrived with meager savings,

⁸¹ Jagose, Transcription of the Diary of Daniel Adey Fowles.

⁸² Gordon also noted that the rent for the cottage that he and Pat Leslie were sharing was 50 pounds per year and they paid their servant 25 pounds per year. Meanwhile, in the same year, Fowles's one grocery bill totaled over 15 shillings, or approximately three percent of the servant's annual salary. Hugh Gordon to William Leslie, July 20, 1836, Leslie Family, Letters from Members of the Leslie Family and Friends in Australia to Members of the Family in Scotland, 1836-1840, MLDOC 1414, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney; and Jagose, Transcription of the Diary of Daniel Adey Fowles.

⁸³ William Westbrooke Burton was transferred from the Supreme Court of the Cape Colony to the court in New South Wales and arrived in Sydney on March 1, 1832. However, he arrived before his appointment did and his letters expressed great frustration at his employment situation. His letters were written to the Austens in England. Dr. Austen had been his physician in the Cape Colony. William Westbrooke Burton, Letters Sent to Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Austen, 1833-1835, MLDOC 2668, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, September 30, 1833, and February 5, 1835.

⁸⁴ Thomas Callaghan was twenty-four years old when he arrived in 1839.

having just completed his legal studies in Dublin and presuming he would be able to obtain a government appointment. Callaghan possessed the requisite letters of introduction and he set about meeting many of the prominent lawyers in town, including Chief Justice James Dowling and Attorney General John Plunkett. Plunkett, in particular, took Callaghan under his wing, making the motion for Callaghan's admission to the bar and becoming a mentor to the young lawyer.⁸⁵ In spite of the acquaintances he made, however, Callaghan was heart-wrenchingly passed over for government appointment after appointment. Every time a crown prosecutor or judge died, left the colony, or was promoted, a frantic game of musical chairs would ensue, with Callaghan left standing at the end.⁸⁶ Every time he was passed over for an appointment, he consoled himself with the hope that maybe he would get the position left vacant by the person who *did* receive the initial opening, but to no avail. In the meantime, his diary meticulously noted the crisis each time he ran out of money and the deep-seated shame he felt at receiving loans from his landlord.⁸⁷ The occasional assignment to represent some of the most unappealing clients⁸⁸ was not enough to survive and he was forced to take a much-detested job writing summaries of court proceedings for the *Sydney Herald*. The Sydney legal community could, in some ways, be just as precarious and unforgiving as the bush.

⁸⁵ Callaghan, Diaries, February 1840.

⁸⁶ In March-April 1841, there was an open appointment in New Zealand and, in May, a death created an opening in Sydney. In July 1842, he had hopes of journeying to Norfolk Island to try cases, but was deemed too young. Later that year, a position was open in Port Phillip (modern-day Melbourne), but he was again left out.

⁸⁷ See especially the entries between March 1840 and May 1841. Ibid.

⁸⁸ Including an Aboriginal man accused of murder (August 12, 1840), a woman whose child burned to death while she was drunk (May 9, 1840), a prostitute (August 3, 1842), and a man accused of an "unnatural crime" in which the chief witness was a little boy (March 26, 1842).

The extent to which financial stability and self-sufficiency were valued was revealed by the deep shame felt during the economic downturn of the 1840s. In her reminiscences, Ann Jones recalled “nearly every tradesman in Sydney failed, merchants also ... Almost everyone was arrested for debt ... the debtors’ prison ... was filled with debtors, men of every trade and calling.”⁸⁹ She recounted various suicides: “A merchant living in Leads ... cut his throat. Another merchant after locating his family at Shoalhaven on a small farm shot himself.”⁹⁰ Her husband, Rees, actually ran away for a spell out of fear of arrest, which eventually happened. After he was released from prison following the passage of a new insolvency act, he made the decision to try his luck at farming and they set off for their ill-fated stint in the bush. Before they could leave, Rees’s creditors had to sign a certificate; the task of obtaining the signatures fell to Ann as Rees was too ashamed to do it himself. Rees was not the only one ashamed of his financial failures; family members were, too. Rees’s brother, David, refused to help them when they struggled on one of their farms, declaring “his brother had no business in the bush.”⁹¹ When they returned to Sydney, Ann’s father took in his daughter and grandchildren, but made Rees find somewhere else to live.

Rees Jones was a small businessman of middling wealth before the downturn, which affected all levels of society, including the wealthiest men. Shipping agent Alexander Spark fell quite far in economic crisis.⁹² He had guaranteed loans for friends who then went bankrupt. His inability to repay further destabilized the Bank of Australia and he was fired

⁸⁹ Ann Jones, “Some Reminiscences of My Past Life,” 1.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹² See entries from December 1840 through 1843. Spark, *Diary*.

from his position as managing director of the bank. The court mandated he sell all his shares in public institutions (including several insurance companies) and put his property under the management of an appointed trustee. Throughout the ordeal, his health suffered. He could not eat, he had trouble sleeping, and he experienced “internal pains.” Several cryptic entries in his diary hint that he was contemplating suicide.⁹³ The son of a Scottish watchmaker, Spark had achieved the ultimate immigrant dream: he had made his “fortune.” But the economic crisis reminded colonists of all classes just how precarious such success could be.

Lest it should appear that emigrating to New South Wales always resulted in dashed financial hopes, it should be noted that the colony *did* provide more opportunities than existed at home. Some immigrants *were* able to earn, just perhaps not to the degree or with the immediacy they anticipated. Wesleyan lay preacher James Robinson eventually pulled together enough capital from his various investments to buy land for a farm, which, in turn, was successful enough for him to buy a cattle station.⁹⁴ And after all of the young lawyer Thomas Callaghan’s agonizing over obtaining a government appointment, he finally received one in 1845. Over one hundred years after his death, the Australian Dictionary of Biography wrote about him: “From a humble and penurious beginning he acquired a lucrative practice and was considered a clever and capable barrister.”⁹⁵ One imagines he would have been pleased. Financial “independence” – more specifically, ample opportunity to exist off one’s

⁹³ For example, “Making preparations as if I were undertaking a journey never to return” (August 21, 1843); “Let not her [his wife], the love of my heart, be estranged from me. We must part – perhaps soon; no longer to look upon each other in this world, tho’ wish she hope of reunion in the world of spirits” (November 5, 1843); and “The day of trial is nearly past. The force is irresistible that bears me forward to the grave” (December 17, 1843). *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Robinson purchased the farm in April 1840; the cattle station in July 1841. Robinson, Papers.

⁹⁵ H. T. E. Holt, “Callaghan, Thomas (1815–1863),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/callaghan-thomas-1867/text2177> (accessed October 15, 2014).

own exertions – was a goal which drove many to the colony, which was sometimes achieved (to varying degrees) and sometimes lost, and which remained revered in the first national archetype.⁹⁶

“Masculine” Independence

Myself have been so industrious ... every day at work at something or other
and find myself all the better for it.

*Charles Boydell*⁹⁷

The independence extolled by the Australian legend was twofold, evoking financial independence and independence of spirit. Once again, emigrant literature influenced attitudes and expectations as it extolled an ethos of “masculine independence.” Land was often seen as the way to obtain that independent ideal; the ability to work the land successfully was proof of one’s masculinity. Somewhat paradoxically, working the land both required and could be the means by which one obtained manly physical strength.⁹⁸ Emigration was portrayed as the most likely way to obtain the land which was necessary to achieve masculine independence. The process of emigration itself required some of the attributes of the masculine ideal, including adventurousness, self-reliance, and perseverance. As immigrants arrived and adapted to life in New South Wales, those same qualities that embodied “manliness” found their way into the Australian legend archetype.

⁹⁶ Admittedly, the diaries consulted here do skew toward people who started out or ended up wealthy, for reasons discussed in the Introduction. For examples of immigrants who consistently struggled to make ends meet over long periods of time, see Tanya Evans, *Fractured Families: Life on the Margins in Colonial New South Wales* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2015) and Lucy Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady: Voices from the Australian Bush* (Fitzroy, VIC: McPhee Gribble, 1984).

⁹⁷ Boydell, Journal, June 4, 1834.

⁹⁸ Downing, *Restless Men*; Tosh, “ ‘All the Masculine Virtues’ .” See also chapter 1 of this study.

The praise of independence of spirit encapsulated in the Australian legend was perhaps an attempt to dignify the deep loneliness felt. The bush, with its vast open spaces and its small, dispersed (European) population, was too isolating for some to take. During their ill-fated stint in the bush, Ann and Rees Jones lost several hired workers, who left because they were tired of the loneliness.⁹⁹ Loneliness drove the servant John Brown to take a huge risk to his personal safety.¹⁰⁰ After twenty-five weeks at his employer's station, he begged to be allowed to go back to England, but his employer refused, saying it had been too expensive to bring him to New South Wales in the first place. Despite intimate knowledge of how unforgiving the bush could be,¹⁰¹ he ran away with only a few Spanish dollars in his possession. With the help of a few Aboriginal men, he made his way back to Sydney and worked aboard a ship in exchange for his passage home.

This sense of isolation also created fears over safety, for if one's safety were imperiled, there was no one nearby to turn to for help. Aboriginal people, of course, provided one threat. With their deep skill traversing the terrain, white settlers feared they could arrive en masse with no warning.¹⁰² One of several sons of a prominent Scottish family to emigrate to New South Wales, George Leslie described an incident in which one of the workers at his station had been speared in the arm as he washed clothes in the river unawares.¹⁰³ But,

⁹⁹ Ann Jones, "Some Reminiscences of My Past Life," 26, 30.

¹⁰⁰ Brown, *Diary by a Servant of the Scott Family*.

¹⁰¹ See the story that opens this chapter.

¹⁰² Reynolds, *Frontier*, chap. 1.

¹⁰³ George Leslie to Mary Ann and Patrick Davidson, November 19, 1840, Leslie Family, Letters. George noted that the spear went through the thick of the man's arm and he was not seriously hurt. An intentional miss to serve as a warning, perhaps? Aboriginal people were renowned for their accuracy in spear throwing even at long distances. Emily MacArthur wrote to Mary Ann on the same piece of paper writing perpendicularly

Aboriginal intentions need not be violent in order to induce fear. For example, Ann Jones had her uncomfortable encounter with the Aboriginal man who napped in her house.¹⁰⁴ In addition to the Aboriginal people, bushrangers – escaped convicts who lived outside the law and subsisted off of what they could steal – provided an omnipresent threat of danger. Martha Mackenzie, who immigrated when she was only five years old, was particularly frightened of bushrangers as a girl, recalling “My sister and I were in constant terror.” She remembered several second-hand stories from her youth, including that of a doctor and his wife who were robbed by bushrangers shortly after arriving in New South Wales. They, according to Mackenzie, turned around and went right back home to Europe.¹⁰⁵ As Mackenzie’s reminiscences illustrate, even when such encounters were not experienced personally, stories of them spread, reinforcing just how isolated people were in the bush and creating fear, fear that was vividly remembered even years later.

The bush was inherently lonely as was the process of emigrating itself. Separation from family and friends was just as challenging as learning to farm in Australia’s poor soils or grappling with the disappointment of goals unrealized. Despite his numerous financial successes as an entrepreneur and hotel owner, Henry Gilbert Smith regularly expressed in his

over top Leslie’s letter (a common paper-saving practice of the time) and assured her that the man was at a remote station, implying Mary Ann should not worry about their safety.

¹⁰⁴ See above.

¹⁰⁵ Martha Murchison (Mackenzie later became her married name) was born in Bermuda, lived in Halifax, and spent a brief period in England before arriving in New South Wales in 1833 at five years of age. The family’s travels were all related to her father’s service in the army. Martha Mackenzie, “Reminiscences, 1825-1850, Sketches of Australian Life,” MLMSS 944, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

letters his desire to return home to his family.¹⁰⁶ A very shy man, the young lawyer Thomas Callaghan often confessed his loneliness in his journal with statements such as “I sometimes wish that I was at home I feel so lonely but I cannot help it now: it was my choice.”¹⁰⁷ Moreover, it was the rare letter home that did not plead for more regular correspondence.¹⁰⁸ Loneliness and homesickness were pervasive for immigrants in New South Wales. Reverting “independence” – in the sense of the ability to survive without the help or support of others – was a coping mechanism by which an emotional challenge became a virtue.

This emphasis on “independence” was definitively gendered. Indeed, Russel Ward’s work has been criticized for channeling the historiography in directions that were exclusively masculine. The massive influence of his work made it more difficult for the stories of women or Aboriginal people to be told.¹⁰⁹ Within frontier studies, the focus on freedom and independence of men has often led to a portrait of the situation of women as “one of isolation, vulnerability and defencelessness.”¹¹⁰ Similarly, within migration studies, a woman’s agency has often been viewed as minimal due to the assumption that the decision to

¹⁰⁶ Among his other ventures, Henry Gilbert Smith started the first steam-powered ferry in the colony. He arrived in 1827 at twenty-five years old. He returned to England for a brief period from 1829 to 1830, for a ten-year stint from 1836 to 1846, and finally for good in 1866. Smith, Papers, February 12, 1831; December 3, 1835; January 15, 1847; July 1, 1848, December 2, 1848; November 21, 1854; January 24, 1855; May 18, 1856.

¹⁰⁷ Callaghan, Diaries, March 4, 1840.

¹⁰⁸ See Bourke Family Papers, 1809-1855, M 1863, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney; Burton, Letters Sent to Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Austen.

¹⁰⁹ Again, the goal of this work is not to critique the positive and negative impacts Ward’s work has had on Australian historiography, but rather to assess how closely (or not) the archetype described the experiences of free immigrants. For one extensive critique of the absence of women in Australia’s national identities, see Kay Schaffer, *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

¹¹⁰ Marilyn Lake, “Frontier Feminism,” in *The Australian Legend and its Discontents*, ed. Richard Nile (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000), 152-66.

emigrate was made by the husband.¹¹¹ Despite impressions given in the historiography, female migrants to New South Wales, especially those who took to the bush, needed to exhibit those same qualities all immigrants required to be successful: adaptability, risk-taking, toughness, and perseverance.

Bush women were not peripheral to their families' fates. Frances Bowler, as we have seen, was integrally involved in the establishment of the vegetable garden and in the maintenance of the poultry.¹¹² When George Suttor returned to England, Sarah had to maintain the orangery for two years. He returned to find the oranges thriving, the flock increased, and a new horse in the barn.¹¹³ Furthermore, both of these women made the voyage to New South Wales while pregnant and had to adapt to their new homes while caring for infants. Rees Jones left Ann and the children alone on a fairly regular basis (and he usually did not tell her where he was going or how long he would be gone). During these periods of his absence, she had to negotiate food shortages, pigs that had run off, and a roof torn off by a cyclone. On her own, she had to face his creditors, bushrangers, and unfamiliar Aboriginal people. She traveled back to Sydney to beg Rees's brother for financial help, accompanied only by an employee (who turned out to be a bushranger). She started several cottage industries of her own – at various times selling homemade butter, bacon, and bonnets

¹¹¹ Which was certainly *sometimes* true, but not always. Ann Jones had no say in Rees's decision to "migrate" to the bush, but Sarah Suttor definitely was an integral part of the decision-making process for her and George. When they decided to leave, they were not yet married. Given that George had already given up his acting career for her, it seems unlikely he would have attempted to force her against her will into emigration (or, for that matter, been able to). Marjory Harper and Stephen Constantine, *Migration and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), chap. 8.

¹¹² Bowler, *Diary of Frances Mary Jane Bowler*.

¹¹³ George returned to England in 1810 to testify on behalf of Governor Bligh, who had been overthrown during the so-called "Rum Rebellion" of 1808-1810. Suttor Family, Papers.

– but lost all her earned money in yet another failed store.¹¹⁴ These women themselves were tough, adventurous, and perseverant. As these qualities became embodied in the national archetype, the discourse became gendered, but the qualities applied to women, especially women who settled in the bush, as well.

* * * * *

Emigrants left for New South Wales with lofty, yet simple goals which they could no longer achieve in Great Britain's industrializing economy: financial stability, access to the land, and (masculine) independence. However, the nature of the land itself along with contradictions in the messages they received about emigration and in policies which determined the opportunities available to them repeatedly frustrated their goals. Personal independence was trumpeted, but the colony itself was still highly dependent on the mother country. Lack of industry may have drawn those displaced by the industrial revolution, but the high price of goods created a high cost of living which, in turn, made it difficult to save enough to launch that dreamed-of small farm. Those who were "industrious" were told they could succeed, but Australia's unfamiliar landscape created a steep learning curve even for those with an agricultural background to say nothing of the men like Rees Jones who possessed little farming knowledge at all. Above all, emigrants were led to believe that they would actually have the opportunity to test their agricultural knowledge – that they would be able to acquire land of their own – while, in fact, land policy, economic factors favoring the capital-intensive pastoral industry, and the aridity of the land itself all worked against the small farmer. Ironically, the expropriation of Aboriginal lands was justified because of the

¹¹⁴ Ann Jones, "Some Reminiscences of My Past Life."

Aboriginal failure to use the land “productively” through agriculture. But many of the European inhabitants failed to do so, as well, as they were unable to access the land for agricultural purposes. Land policy instead favored wealthy pastoralists.

In light of these frustrations, it is no coincidence that the earliest national archetype of what it meant to be a “true Australian” revered the traits that it did. Emigrants were lured to New South Wales by images of financial stability, access to land, and self-sufficiency. In order to undertake such a life-altering move, emigrants themselves had to possess a certain level of adventurousness and risk-taking. Once arrived, the adjustments of living in a new land required perseverance, adaptability, and toughness. All of these traits became incorporated into the Australian legend archetype. For those who managed to obtain land, they soon found that taming it would be more difficult than they imagined. The pastoral bushman of the archetype was respected because he had achieved just that. Despite the inherent loneliness, he felt comfortable in an unforgiving environment and, because of that, he achieved his independence. Notably, the “typical” Australian of the archetype was *not* a small farmer, because in fact, most working class immigrants were *not* able to obtain land. By 1850, Australia was (and still is) one of the most urbanized places in the world.¹¹⁵ The pastoral bushman of the legend did not own his land, either, yet he still managed to use the land to achieve the ultimate goal of masculine independence. Thus, the national archetype encapsulated immigrants’ natural propensities, acquired values, and unrealized hopes.

¹¹⁵ Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance*, 136.

CHAPTER 3: EXPECTATIONS CONFOUNDED

A surgeon on the *Prince Regent*, Daniel Fowles arrived in Sydney for a brief stay in 1836 at thirty-one years of age.¹ When the ship arrived in the harbor, it was met by a pilot, with whom Fowles eagerly struck up a conversation. Fowles was instantly amused by the man.² The pilot was good humored and cracked many jokes, but swore profusely. At every command issued, he would swear and “every now & then giving in to the cuddy to mix for himself a stiff glass of grog ... five I counted during the morning.” When Fowles noted the profanity, the pilot replied, “damn me if work does not go lighter when there is a little swearing – tis like oil to a steam engine and we can’t do without it here.” Fowles asked the pilot if he ever went to church to make up for all the swearing. His reply? “I have never seen the inside of a church nor the outside of a parson but once and that was when I was spliced with my old woman.” In the course of conversing with the man, Fowles inadvertently committed the faux pas he had hoped to avoid: he momentarily forgot he was in a convict colony and asked the pilot how he came to be in Sydney. Luckily for Fowles’s sense of good manners, the pilot had come as a free immigrant.

Fowles’s pilot was a walking Australian stereotype before such stereotypes fully existed. Fowles spent so much space in his diary describing the man because the pilot humorously confounded expectations of the way a new acquaintance (and one with such an important job as leading the ship safely into harbor, at that) should behave. Given that the

¹ Fowles wrote his diary as though intended for future publication. Annamarie Jagose, *Transcription of the Diary of Daniel Adey Fowles, 1836*, MLMSS 7668, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 2000.

² Though interestingly, Fowles never revealed the man’s name.

pilot was the first colonist Fowles met, it was undoubtedly clear to him quickly and unambiguously both that New South Wales had a culture and rules of etiquette all its own and that he must not forget its convict origins, even briefly. The swearing, the drinking, and the bristling at authority as well as the ambivalence about religion all found their way into the Australian legend archetype as did the more positive attributes of congeniality and good humor. A national type never described *all* Australians, but, in this case, it described at least *one* Australian.

In examining the development of colonial societies such as New South Wales, some historians have sought to minimize the “uniqueness” of the culture actually formed as the colonies, they argued, looked to the parent culture for standards of civility. Neville Meaney, for example, derides historians’ teleological tendency to see the creation of unique peoples who would ultimately become self-governing.³ According to John Hirst, the fixation on the uniqueness of a culture originated with nationalists, who sought to highlight the most “un-English” aspects of Australian culture in order to prove its distinctiveness.⁴ For historians like Hirst, the similarities to the parent culture outweigh the differences, because “the colonial organism lives and grows within the broader culture, and this remains so even when it develops distinctive features.”⁵ Such an interpretation fits the logic of emigration as migrants to a colony would understandably want to maintain ties to the home they

³ Neville Meaney, “Britishness and Australia: Some Reflections,” in *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity*, eds. Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 121.

⁴ John Hirst, *Sense and Nonsense in Australian History* (Melbourne: Black Inc. Agenda, 2005), 123.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

traumatically left behind. Indeed, cultural ties to Britain were maintained through fashion,⁶ etiquette guides,⁷ and the clergy.⁸

Still, most historians would position the new cultural system somewhere in between “largely derivative of the parent culture” and “a completely new culture bearing no resemblance to Great Britain’s.” The initial set of social and cultural values was imported from Great Britain.⁹ However, as colonists adapted to a new physical environment inhabited by a mix of people very different from home (including convicts and large numbers of people from other parts of the British Isles), those imported cultural values were bound to change, or, as Russel Ward puts it, “the stability of English society was not, and could not have been, carried intact across half the world by these new colonists.”¹⁰ Colonists may have hungered for and followed the latest fashion trends from England, but those trends were “late” in another sense of the word as they arrived at least four months behind London given the travel time between Great Britain and New South Wales. Etiquette guides may have dictated the

⁶ Cunningham commented on the manner in which women in New South Wales hungered after the latest fashions from “home” and Mary Phoebe Broughton noted in her diary every time the clothing shops received new merchandize. Peter Miller Cunningham, *Two Years in New South Wales: A Series of Letters Comprising Sketches of the Actual State of Society in that Colony, of its Peculiar Advantages to Emigrants, of its Topography, Natural History, &c. &c.*, vol. 1 (London: H. Colburn, 1827), letter 4; Mary Phoebe Broughton, *Diaries, 1834-1838*, MLMSS 756, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney; Mary Phoebe Broughton, *Diary, 1839-1841*, MLMSS 4010, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁷ Penny Russell, *Savage or Civilised? Manners in Colonial Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010), chap. 4; Karen Downing, *Restless Men: Masculinity and Robinson Crusoe, 1788-1840* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), chap. 6.

⁸ Hilary Carey notes the role of clergy trained in Great Britain and then sent to the Australian colonies in maintaining a sense of British identity among the colonists. Hilary M. Carey, “Religious Nationalism and Clerical Emigrants to Australia, 1828-1900,” in *Empire, Migration and Identity in the British World*, eds. Kent Fedorowich and Andrew S. Thompson. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), chap. 3.

⁹ Anthony Pagden and Nicholas Canny, “Afterword: From Identity to Independence,” in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, eds. Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 269.

¹⁰ Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1958), 29.

“proper” way to greet a stranger, but how would those rules apply in a place where even an obviously wealthy man might be a former convict? European-trained clergy may have provided a link to cultural values from “home,” but they filled that role for any number of denominations – Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist – in a society with a high degree of religious pluralism. Though they may have formed the foundation of the eventual system of Australian cultural values, British values could not have survived this society unaltered, because conditions in Britain under which they developed were much different than conditions in the colony. Thus, the middle ground interpretation of colonial cultural development could most aptly be described as “the history not of the creation but of the transformation of values.”¹¹

Furthermore, “British” culture itself was transforming at this time, if it could even be said already to exist. Linda Colley traces the process by which a political act – the 1707 Act of Union – slowly incorporated itself into a cultural identity.¹² England (along with Wales) and Scotland politically became one nation essentially overnight in 1707, but the formation of a sense of “Britishness” lasted well into the nineteenth century. The process by which these disparate peoples came to share a sense of identity was protracted and gradual. An act of government did not instantly create opportunities for greater interaction with or understanding of new countrymen. New South Wales, however, immediately boasted a diverse mix of the peoples from the British Isles, especially when including the Irish, who joined Great Britain to form the United Kingdom in 1801. Between 1837 and 1859, about a

¹¹ Pagden and Canny, “Afterword,” in Canny and Pagden, 269.

¹² Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, rev. ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

third of the government-assisted emigrants to New South Wales came from England and Wales, over half from Ireland, and just under twelve percent from Scotland.¹³ These people lived and worked together in close contact. Circumstances conspired to make the Australian colonies more “British” than Great Britain itself.¹⁴

According to Colley, the Empire played a critical part in the development of a sense of Britishness. As the Scots, in particular, took advantage of the Empire for self-advancement, the imperial state apparatus became a site for the disparate British nations to interact. Within the context of New South Wales, the machinery of empire brought many to the colony either to govern/police it or to claim land grants afforded to those who had served in the military. These arrivals reflected the “British” (i.e., mixed nationality) character of the Empire.¹⁵ Moreover, the Empire engendered a sense of Britishness in another way: via contact with alien peoples (including the Aboriginal people of Australia) against whom the British developed a sense of united solidarity. Some historians may feel that Australia lacked a unique culture of its own – and its culture was certainly not an entirely new construction – but Australia, by virtue of its position in the Empire, was shaping the very culture it purportedly sought to emulate.

¹³ Robin F. Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor: Australian Recruitment in Britain and Ireland, 1831-1860* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), table 2.4.

¹⁴ Hirst, *Sense and Nonsense*, chap. 1.

¹⁵ Early governors John Hunter, Lachlan Macquarie, and Thomas Brisbane were Scottish. Governor Richard Bourke was Irish. Of the two former soldiers receiving land grants whose family diaries are examined in the study, “Bow” Bowler was Irish and John Murchison was a Scot. Frances Mary Jane Bowler, *Diary of Frances Mary Jane Bowler*, MAV/F4/1390, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney; Martha Mackenzie, “Reminiscences, 1825-1850, Sketches of Australian Life,” MLMSS 944, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

Not only was “British” culture forming at the same time as the Australian, but the two cultures were also, in many ways, coalescing in opposite directions. First of all, “Great Britain” formed via political union and a national identity followed. European Australia, however, experienced over a century of shared experience and developed a national archetype before political federation in 1901. Colley cites numerous factors contributing to the formation of a British national identity, many of which did not hold in New South Wales.¹⁶ Of paramount importance to Colley is Great Britain’s Protestantism, which helped the British create an identity in opposition to a Catholic “other.” New South Wales, with its large Catholic minority, however, did not share a religious unity. And while prejudices against Catholics in the colony most certainly existed, there was no denying the place of Catholics in Australian society from the earliest days of settlement, long before British political acts such as the 1801 Act of Union or Catholic emancipation in 1829. Another of Colley’s key factors is a belief that Britons were “free.” Australian colonists – convict, formerly convict, and free – believed deeply in their legal rights and used the courts to protect them,¹⁷ but life in a penal colony and close contact with the decidedly “unfree” undoubtedly tempered that belief in British liberty. Given that British and Australian identities were developing at the same time and influenced by such differing forces, it seems disingenuous to characterize Australian cultural values as mere copies of the British.

¹⁶ Some of her factors do apply to Australia, including geographical unity (both were islands), a belief that Britain was more prosperous than other nations (Australia boasted a very high standard of living by the mid-nineteenth century), widespread newspapers, urbanization, and a sense of superiority over the Aboriginal people. See Colley, *Britons*, “Conclusions.”

¹⁷ David Neal, *The Rule of Law in a Penal Colony: Law and Power in Early New South Wales* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

For all the debate over how much Australian culture was distinct from British culture or how representative the “Australian legend” archetype was, historians are largely in agreement that Australian culture became more egalitarian than that of the British. Even Hirst, the usually contrary historian, agrees that Australians have long valued equality. Equality of opportunity, that is. In a highly capitalist society, unequal outcomes were accepted, as long as everyone had a “fair go.”¹⁸ Meanwhile, in Great Britain, the new middle class that formed along with capitalism tended to align with the aristocracy instead of the working class, reinforcing the acceptance of hierarchy. Perry Anderson cites empire as an explanation for the lack of bourgeois revolution in Great Britain.¹⁹ The most independent members of the working class had the option to leave – to migrate – rather than challenge the “ruling class.” If the absence of working class emigrants encouraged the alliance between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy (or, at the very least, did not impede it), then certainly the presence of those emigrants in their destination would be expected to foster the opposite. In New South Wales, immigrants – free or unfree – were largely working class and, indeed, a very small percentage of the convicts were even transported as political prisoners.²⁰ As we will see, British ideas of social interactions were transformed amidst the much different mix of people present in New South Wales.

Historians have disagreed on the origins of Australian egalitarianism. Russel Ward, as he does for all of the characteristics of the Australian legend archetype, locates it among the

¹⁸ Hirst, *Sense and Nonsense*, 149.

¹⁹ Perry Anderson, “Origins of the Present Crisis,” *New Left Review* 23 (January-February 1964): 26-53.

²⁰ Approximately one thousand of the 162,000 total prisoners transported to all of the Australian colonies were sent for political protests, including the “Tolpuddle martyrs” of 1834 who were convicted for attempting to form a trade union. John Rickard, *Australia: A Cultural History*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1996), 25.

pastoral (convict) bushworkers from whom he said it spread to the cities and free immigrants.²¹ Ronald Lawson, on the other hand, refutes Ward's theory by pointing out the great divide between the classes on pastoral properties. A clear (though certainly not beloved by the convicts) hierarchy existed between the workers and the station owners. Lawson instead situates the egalitarianism in the deeply fluid social structure of the cities.²² This study, as it argues for the influence of the free immigrants on the national archetype, leans more in Lawson's direction, though we must remember that location and convict status were not perfectly linked. Convicts lived in the cities, too, and free immigrants worked in the bush.

Egalitarianism and other social standards which developed in New South Wales could not be attributed solely to those in one location (bush versus urban) or those with a particular status (free versus unfree). Living among a truly "British" mix of people (English, Welsh, Scottish, and Irish), some of whom were or had been convicts, confounded the expectations of free immigrants. Disparate groups found much in common, as most colonists – both those arriving free and unfree – had belonged to lower economic classes in Great Britain²³ and thus sought the financial stability and self-sufficiency promised by representations of the colony in the public sphere. While the bourgeoisie eventually sided with the aristocracy in Great Britain in an alignment very much still under negotiation at this time, numbers in New South Wales undeniably favored the working classes. The transition to the new standard was

²¹ Ward, *The Australian Legend*, chap. 2.

²² Ronald Lawson, "Towards Demythologizing the 'Australian Legend': Turner's Frontier Thesis and the Australian Experience," *Journal of Social History* 13, no. 4 (summer 1980): 577-87.

²³ Though there were some aristocratic convicts (derisively called "specials"), the majority were driven to crime by economic conditions in Britain. Ward, *The Australian Legend*, 19. For the free immigrants, almost forty-five percent of Australia's immigrants before World War II received government assistance, an indication that they could not pay for the voyage on their own. Dudley Baines, *Emigration from Europe 1815-1930* (London: Macmillan, 1991), chap. 7.

certainly not smooth, as those who considered themselves among the colonial elite clung to British conventions, but the general trend across society was toward a more egalitarian ethos. This ethos arose from a combination of the unique mix of people present, the tendency of all groups to fight for respect and opportunity, and the absurdity inherent in attempts to establish a strict hierarchy.

The Irish

Meet an Irish person where you will, you will invariably find that, however happy and contented they may be, or at whatever distance from their country, they care not what happens to them so long as they reach “Auld Ireland” in time to lay their bones there; it may be infatuation, but there is not an Irish person untouched by it.

*Frances Bowler*²⁴

To claim that New South Wales developed an ethos of egalitarianism is not to claim that society was undivided. Categorizations and factions abounded, which new arrivals recorded in their journals. The colony was “British” in a way that Great Britain itself was not quite yet, with English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish all living amongst each other, but settlers were not blind to the country of origin of others. English immigrant Penelope Selby noted in a letter to her mother, “It is strange that my most intimate friend here is a Scotch woman, and the only English family near us I shall never become very sociable with.”²⁵ A distinction also existed between free and unfree, though the distinction was not as clear as one might expect; there was a third category: the “used to be unfree,” so to speak. Convicts whose sentences had expired were known as “emancipists.” A further division existed among those still under

²⁴ Bowler, *Diary of Frances Mary Jane Bowler*, May 10, 1837.

²⁵ Penelope Selby to her mother, December 15, 1848, quoted in Lucy Frost, *No Place for a Nervous Lady: Voices from the Australian Bush* (Fitzroy, VIC: McPhee Gribble, 1984).

sentence, who were either “specials” (educated convicts or convicts who came from high-ranking families) or “ordinaries.” Free settlers were either “currency” (people born in Australia) or “stirling” (people arrived from Britain). On the political front, for most of the first half of the century, battles were fought between the “Emancipists” (which included the emancipists themselves and their allies in their battles for full civil rights) and “Exclusives” (wealthy free settlers who wanted to keep power for themselves).²⁶ Despite the numerous categories and gradations of status, however, the unique conditions of life in the young colony both forced these various factions into close daily contact and made the distinctions between groups very fine.

The Irish (or, more specifically, Irish Catholics), however, stood out and struggled to escape the long-standing, deep-seated mistrust the English held for them. At times, the underlying discrimination was subtle. On one of her travels in the bush during her family’s several failed attempts at farming, Ann Jones asked the inhabitants of a hut if she could use their fire to boil water. When they obliged, she went in and found “to my disgust it was about the dirtiest hut I was ever in; they were Irish.”²⁷ (As if that off-handed comment fully explained the state of the hut.) Her brother, Samuel Thompson even took a principled political stand against Irish Catholics. Thompson had a difference of opinion with James Macarthur over their choices of candidates for the Camden district in the upcoming first-ever elections to the legislative council. Macarthur, part of the powerful landowning family of English/Scottish origins who had established Australia’s wool industry and who had been in

²⁶ Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: The Epic of Australia’s Founding* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986).

²⁷ Ann Jones, “Some Reminiscences of My Past Life Written in 1887,” Q994.403/6, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 1887, 38.

the colony since 1790, backed Roger Therry, the current Attorney General, who was Irish Catholic. Thompson, a Congregationalist, could not tolerate the thought of a Catholic representing his district and chose to back the Anglican Charles Cowper. Therry won, but Thompson and “several others” then encouraged Cowper to run against Macarthur himself in the Cumberland district. They actively campaigned for Cowper, who defeated Macarthur. Formerly a business partner, Macarthur now retaliated financially.²⁸ Thompson’s prejudice against Irish Catholics ultimately hurt his business.

The Irish did not idly accept such prejudices, however. The fact that Therry, an Irish Catholic, ascended to such a high position as Attorney General and, furthermore, was backed by a very prominent non-Catholic family, spoke volumes about the level of religious toleration – a key characteristic of a truly egalitarian society – already extant in the colony. Prejudice remained, though, which the Irish fought vocally against. In response to an inflammatory anti-Catholic article in the *Sydney Herald*, the normally timid young lawyer Thomas Callaghan penned a reply, addressing “those wretched bigots who are ever ready with these libels” and offering to show them just “who are deserving of and who shall receive religious toleration.”²⁹ The Irish were prepared to fight for equal footing in the young colony.

²⁸ Samuel Thompson was born in London and emigrated in 1833 at the age of eleven with his parents and siblings. At the time of the first elections (1843), he was running his father’s general store in Cowpastures, a suburb of Sydney in the Camden district. The Thompsons had built a mill on Macarthur land and the Macarthurs had granted them permission to use the firewood on the estate. After the contentious election, the Macarthurs revoked their permission, a blow to the Thompson business, though they were able to keep the mill going. Samuel Thompson, “The Reminiscences of Samuel Thompson, 1821-1910,” Q994.403/6, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 1905, 20.

²⁹ “Ireland and the Irish,” *Australasian Chronicle*, January 5, 1841. The article was published anonymously, but Callaghan referenced it in his journal and it contained a common phrase for him: “Gracious goodness!” It is interesting to note that Callaghan really did not like Therry, calling him, among other things, a “vulgar

The Convicts

If there were many things in these men [the convicts] which I could not approve, there was much more that I could not but admire. There was a sort of manly independence of disposition, which secured truthfulness and sincerity at least among themselves.

*Alexander Harris*³⁰

The Irish were not the only group discriminated against and prepared to fight for fair treatment. One such group, which contained a good proportion of Irish, was the convicts. In published literature about New South Wales available to potential emigrants, convicts were largely portrayed in a negative light. Indeed, in the early decades of the colony, government officials intentionally wanted to portray the penal settlement as brutal and loathsome in order to deter crime.³¹ The inhabitants of this colony – (presumably) depraved convicted criminals – were likewise portrayed. This convention only changed once the push for free emigration began in earnest, but even then, preconceived notions pervaded in the literature. While voyaging around the world on the *Beagle*, Charles Darwin felt quite uneasy about the penal function of the Australian colonies during his two month visit:

How thoroughly odious to every feeling, to be waited on by a man who the day before, perhaps, was flogged ... for some trifling misdemeanor. The female servants are of course much worse: hence children learn the vilest expressions, and ... if not equally vile ideas.³²

Similarly, immigrants' diaries were riddled with derogatory opinions of the convicts which match the common stereotypes. Wealthy shipping agent Alexander Spark only made note of

shallow person." Thomas Callaghan, *Diaries, 1838-1845*, MLMSS 2112, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, February 17, 1840.

³⁰ Alexander Harris, *Settlers and Convicts, Or, Recollections of Sixteen Years' Labour in the Australian Backwoods / by an Emigrant Mechanic* (London: C. Cox, 1847), 47.

³¹ Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity, 1688-1980* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1981), chap. 2.

³² Charles Darwin, *The Voyage of the Beagle* (1839; repr., New York: EP Dutton, 1936), 427.

his assigned servants in his diary when they behaved poorly. Drunkenness, thieving, and arrests were his most common complaints.³³ New Zealand-bound missionary Martha Ford lamented the negative impact on urban life: “The total destruction of domestic comfort thro’ the ill conduct of their convict servants renders Sydney a very unpleasant place to live in.”³⁴ In her eyes, convicts were unsuitable servants for the wealthy.

For others, close contact with hard-working individuals confounded these stereotypes. Martha Mackenzie remembered that her father (who emigrated with the assistance of a military pension) treated their assigned servants with justice and firmness. He was thusly rewarded with good conduct. “These prisoners behaved well when kindly and justly treated,” Mackenzie assessed, “but in most cases where gentlemen have been robbed . . . it has too often been from their [mis]treatment of these convicts.”³⁵ Likewise, with his assigned servants, the Wesleyan lay preacher James Robinson was “surprised very Much to see the attention and desire to do all they can for me, I must say more so than any two free Men I ever had in Ireland. I now see clearly when they are treated in a proper Manner, they are as

³³ The “assignment system” provided free colonists with convict workers. The free colonists had to clothe and feed the convicts, but the convicts received no wages. Alexander Brodie Spark, *Diary*, 1 January 1836-22 September 1856, CY 1507, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney. For drunkenness, see January 2, 1837, and August, 22, 1837; accusations of theft among the servants March 22, 1837, and November 20, 1837; and arrests of servants for various charges, January 2, 1838, and March 21, 1839.

³⁴ Martha Ford and her husband stayed in Sydney for several months in 1837 en route to New Zealand for intended missionary work. They tarried in Sydney rather than moving directly on to New Zealand awaiting the birth of their son. Martha Ford, *Journal of a Voyage from Gravesend to Sydney, in the “City of Edinburgh,”* 1836-37, MLMSS 7605, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, June 2, 1837.

³⁵ Mackenzie, “Reminiscences.”

careful and attentive as any free Servants.”³⁶ Clearly, not all convicts were “vile” and depraved.

Not only did the transportation system (the system of sending convicted criminals to the colony) force immigrants to live among the poor behavior of some convicts, but it also brought the immigrants into close contact with the cruelty such a system required of its administrators. Station owner Charles Boydell off-handedly mentioned seeing the preparations for an execution on one of his trips into town.³⁷ It was not improbable that he would happen upon such a scene given that New South Wales had an execution rate two hundred times that of England.³⁸ Short of execution, flogging or working in irons were the most common punishments meted out to convicts, even for seemingly trivial offences.³⁹ John Brown, Robert Scott’s servant who eventually ran away, described a flogging he witnessed en route to New South Wales: “[the offender] was tied up at the Gangway and after they had given him about a dozen[,] he began to cry out [“]Murder[”] when the lady in the Cabin began to scream and faint and the Ship was in quite an uproar. The Gentlemen begged that he might be taken down.”⁴⁰ Upon witnessing a flogging in the colony itself, Thomas Callaghan was suitably appalled: “I could not look at the ... unfortunate men’s backs ... I could not refrain from tears ... three of the men were flogged for having materials ... for making

³⁶ James Robinson, Papers, 1822-ca. 1868, MLMSS 1533, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, June 29, 1840.

³⁷ Charles Boydell, Journal, 1830-1869, CY 1496, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, April 29, 1830.

³⁸ Neal, *The Rule of Law in a Penal Colony*, chap. 2.

³⁹ Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*, chap. 9.

⁴⁰ Admittedly, it was not a convict who was flogged in this instance, rather a drunk carpenter. However, a convict flogging would have been very similar. John Brown, Diary by a Servant of the Scott Family, 8 Aug. 1821-Mar. 1824, MLMSS 7808, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, August 18, 1821.

hats.”⁴¹ The presence of such a despotic system offended free immigrants’ sensibilities and reminded them that they were in an inherently unfree society. How was a free immigrant to judge these men and women who had been expelled from their homeland as punishment? On the one hand, immigrants no doubt wanted to believe the convicts deserved any cruelty they received and, most likely, had seen some corroborating evidence for that belief. On the other hand, there were too many decent convicts and too much visible evidence of “the system” present in society for that belief *not* to come into question.

Despite their incarceration, convicts’ strength in numbers, combined with the low number of free settlers, provided opportunities for them to resist their subservient status. Such resistance commenced immediately upon arrival of the First Fleet in 1788. The convict couple Henry and Susannah Kable brazenly instigated the first civil suit in New South Wales, even though, as convicts, they would not have been able to sue in Great Britain.⁴² One simple power play was effected through terminology; convicts did not like the term “convict” and instead came to be called “government men.”⁴³

Much like slaves in the United States, convicts could exercise power by withholding their labor or by pilfering from their masters.⁴⁴ James Mudie, a former magistrate in New

⁴¹ Callaghan, *Diaries*, September 8, 1840.

⁴² They sued their ship’s captain for damages because a parcel of their belongings had been lost. Neal, *The Rule of Law in a Penal Colony*, chap. 1.

⁴³ William Henry Breton, *Excursions to New South Wales, Western Australia, and Van Dieman’s Land during the Years 1830, 1831, 1832 and 1833 - 2d Ed., Revised; with Additions*. 2nd ed. (London: R. Bentley, 1834), 274; Cunningham, *Two Years in New South Wales*, vol. 2, 117; Jagose, Transcription of the Diary of Daniel Adey Fowles; and James Mudie, *The Felonry of New South Wales, being a Faithful Picture of the Real Romance of Life in Botany Bay: With Anecdotes of Botany Bay Society, and a Plan of Sydney* (London: Whaley and Company, 1837), 37.

⁴⁴ Neal has an interesting discussion comparing and contrasting convictism with American slavery. Neal, *The Rule of Law in a Penal Colony*, chap. 2.

South Wales who supervised more than seventy assigned convicts, described a time in which thievery was so rampant, the government ordered all cattle to be mustered in order to be counted. Over a span of time, this was done station by station and, oddly, not one station was found to have a deficit of cattle. The exercise was tried once again; this time, all stations were checked on the same day. Suddenly, numbers did not add up. The convicts from different stations had been working together to dupe the government agents, “sharing” cattle from station to station with impressive accuracy. Their (intentional?) laziness was cause for great scorn, but clearly, they were quite capable of exerting a great amount of coordinated effort when motivated.

Some convicts wielded a more obvious power. In the first few decades of the colony before substantial free immigration commenced, convicts – especially educated convicts – were sometimes used to fill government posts, including clerks, bookkeepers, and lawyers. For example, George Howe was the first government printer and ran the only colonial newspaper at the time, the *Sydney Gazette*, while still under sentence.⁴⁵ When Justice William Burton became dissatisfied with the medical care his wife was receiving, he complained that his only other option for a medical attendant was a convict who had been transported for *homicide*.⁴⁶ Francis Greenway, who was transported for forgery, served as the primary government architect under Governor Macquarie, designing many of the early public

⁴⁵ The diary of his son, Robert, is used in this study. J. V. Byrnes, “Howe, Robert (1795–1829),” Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/howe-robert-2252/text2851> (accessed August 5, 2015).

⁴⁶ William Westbrooke Burton, Letters Sent to Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Austen, 1833-1835, MLDOC 2668, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, January 7, 1833.

and private buildings in Sydney.⁴⁷ Through their impact on the colonial press, the health of the colonists, and even the style of the architecture, convicts indelibly shaped the development of the colony.

The Emancipists

The wealthy emancipist ... looks out from his balcony with bitter feelings of hatred that he can never reach that equality of station in society which he has forever forfeited.

*Daniel Fowles*⁴⁸

Convicts did not remain convicts forever. After four years of good behavior while under the employment of a free settler, a convict could obtain his “ticket of leave,” which allowed him to work for wages for his own benefit anywhere in the colony. Eventually, a convict’s sentence expired and he became once again free, now with the new label of “emancipist.” Many used their ticket of leave earnings to better themselves and create a new life in New South Wales.⁴⁹ In the early days of the colony, they were able to achieve such wealth, in part, because officers from the military (a good portion of the free population) were unable to engage in trade (such activity was beneath their “gentlemanly” status).⁵⁰

These former convicts formed a sizable chunk of society in the early nineteenth century⁵¹ and held over half of the wealth in the colony by the 1820s.⁵² They unabashedly used their numbers to fight for rights afforded to never-incarcerated Britons. Emancipists

⁴⁷ Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*, chap. 10.

⁴⁸ Jagose, Transcription of the Diary of Daniel Adey Fowles.

⁴⁹ Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*, 307-11.

⁵⁰ Neal, *The Rule of Law in a Penal Colony*, 18.

⁵¹ In 1828, the emancipists comprised twenty percent of the population (outnumbering free immigrants, who only comprised thirteen percent). By 1841, the emancipist group had shrunk to sixteen percent and the free immigrant population, buoyed by assisted emigration, had risen to thirty-seven percent. Neal, *The Rule of Law in a Penal Colony*, appendix 4.

⁵² Downing, *Restless Men*, 126.

wanted to serve on juries (a right they successfully achieved by the mid-1830s), be enfranchised, and hold public office. They held public meetings and sent petitions to Parliament. Their enemies in society – the “Exclusives” – balked at such actions, no doubt for several reasons. First, extending such rights to emancipists would necessarily decrease some of their own power and influence. Second, former convicts did not hold those rights in Britain itself.⁵³ Why should the colony function under a different set of laws than Great Britain when many of the people in the colony had been sent there for violating those laws in the first place? Finally, some felt such efforts for equality were proof that the emancipists were not actually reformed; if they had been, they would have been so ashamed of their previous convict status that they would remain quiet and not draw attention to the fact that they had once been incarcerated.⁵⁴ Not only did emancipists often *not* remain quiet, but one – Samuel Lyons – also even sued for defamation. When he won the case, the court essentially “upheld the emancipist’s right to be considered a man of character.”⁵⁵ The Exclusives may have disagreed, but over time, the emancipists succeeded in obtaining their sought-after rights⁵⁶ and, in doing so, broke down social barriers the Exclusives tried to erect.

The various lower-status groups in New South Wales shared much in common. The Irish and convicts had attitudes predisposed against them; the Irish and emancipists sought

⁵³ Justice William Burton was appalled by “disregard to legal principles ... capricious adoption of some English Statutes and the libertine abandonment of others” and was particularly vocal about his desire to strictly uphold all laws. Burton, Letters Sent to Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Austen, June 19, 1833.

⁵⁴ John Dunmore Lang, *Transportation and Colonization: Or, the Causes of the Comparative Failure of the Transportation System in the Australian Colonies: With Suggestions for Ensuring its Future Efficiency in Subsidiency to Extensive Colonization* (London: A. J. Valpy, 1837), 53-4.

⁵⁵ Kirsten McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies: Sydney and Cape Town, 1820-1850* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 2005), 78.

⁵⁶ Rickard feels the Emancipists succeeded because the Exclusives were distracted by their own efforts to limit the government’s power. Rickard, *Australia*, 78.

equal footing politically; and though all groups had examples who confirmed the stereotypes, those stereotypes were also confounded by honest, hard-working , and/or successful individuals. Above all, none of the groups were content to be marginalized within their new society. They vocally fought to be treated with respect in the fluid, diverse environment of New South Wales.

The “Elite”

The humbler class of settlers should succeed in establishing themselves in comfort and independence ... and would thus ... eventually rais[e] up an aristocracy of virtue and talent, in a convict colony, than an aristocracy of birth, or wealth, or employment.

*J.D. Lang*⁵⁷

Emancipists, convicts, and the Irish transgressed boundaries, but then again, so did the colonial boundary makers. In describing the social hierarchy to his friends back in England, Justice William Burton displayed a certain cynicism about all levels of society.⁵⁸ At the bottom were “the most abandoned ones of our own country in the ranks of servants and labourers.” Next came “a class opulent and differential without Virtue considering money as the criterion of excellence.” Clearly, Burton did not wholeheartedly welcome the movement toward status determined by wealth as opposed to familial connection, a trend which was growing in Great Britain at this time and was greatly accelerated in the colonies. But, he also lacked enthusiasm for the next group in the hierarchy, which he described as “the usual mixture of Ecclesiastical civil & military residents who are pretty much the same as

⁵⁷ Lang, *Transportation and Colonization*, 188.

⁵⁸ Burton, Letters Sent to Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Austen, September 30, 1833.

elsewhere save that ... it is the nature of evil to work upwards... the highest are infested by the lowest.”⁵⁹

In these comments, Burton recognized a paradox in the New South Wales social world. Trying to establish a strict social hierarchy akin to that which existed in Great Britain was doomed to be a failed effort, because the colony provided much greater opportunity for social mobility than the home country. The distinctions between convict, emancipist, and always-free individuals seemed to be fairly clear cut, resting on whether one was, formerly was, or never was a convict; however, which group an individual fell under was often due to chance or bad luck. Many assisted immigrants were driven to leave their homes by lack of economic opportunity just as many convicts were driven to their crimes by the same forces. Before assisted emigration commenced, many of the free settlers came from the ranks of the military, those sent to police the colony and who chose to stay when their assignments were complete. But, the line between soldiers and the criminal class was often blurry. When wars ended, crime rates increased greatly as decommissioned soldiers faced a dearth of options.⁶⁰ Additionally, going to a penal colony on the other side of the world was not a coveted assignment. Many of the New South Wales Corps, the regiment which policed the colony from the Corps's arrival with the Second Fleet in 1790 until 1810, ended up in the Corps due to court marshals. Even many of the governors came from humble backgrounds; Phillip was

⁵⁹ Perhaps because the financial losses he suffered in leaving Cape Town prevented him from fully joining them. In New South Wales, he had to become more frugal, cutting back on two traditional markers of status: servants and a personal carriage.

⁶⁰ Geoffrey Sherington, *Australia's Immigrants, 1788-1988* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), chap. 1.

the son of a language teacher, King a draper, Bligh a customs officer, and Macquarie a poor tenant farmer.⁶¹

A similar trend existed among the elite. The men who amassed the great wealth in the colony had often been of decidedly middling status in Great Britain. The richest man in the colony and the father of the Australian wool industry, John Macarthur, was the son of a mercer and a draper;⁶² Alexander Spark was the son of a watchmaker;⁶³ and, James Mudie claimed to be a “Major,” but had, in fact, been dismissed from the army and came to the colony to reinvent himself after bankruptcy.⁶⁴ Mudie was not the only one to misrepresent himself in the colony. In one extraordinary example, a transported convict for a time successfully claimed to be Edward, Viscount Lascelles, and swindled money out of settlers who assumed the viscount would be able to repay.⁶⁵ Even those who actually were from elite families tended to be impoverished younger sons.⁶⁶ Thus, the pool of men from which a colonial “gentry” could be established varied significantly from the same at home. The very attempt to recreate Britain’s social pyramid by elevating those who, at home, would have occupied middle levels (at best) destabilized the hierarchy they were trying to establish.

⁶¹ Rickard, *Australia*, chap. 3.

⁶² Downing, *Restless Men*, chap. 6.

⁶³ Spark, *Diary*.

⁶⁴ Kirsten McKenzie, *A Swindler’s Progress: Nobles and Convicts in the Age of Liberty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 173.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* If anyone had had a connection to the Lascelles, they may have still believed him. The real Edward had been exiled to the European continent by his family until an ill-advised, secret marriage to a low-ranking woman could be handled. If a colonist in New South Wales knew that Edward was mysteriously absent from Great Britain, he would have been more likely to believe the imposter’s story. Amazingly, the convict (who was tried under the name John Dow) had been transported for perpetrating the very same crime (with a different alter ego) in Scotland, claiming to be estranged from his aristocratic father.

⁶⁶ Penny Russell, “The Brash Colonial: Class and Comportment in Nineteenth-Century Australia,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 12 (2002): 435.

Simply put, “inappropriate relationships and social inversions abounded in this twisted fragment of the British world.”⁶⁷

Building Up Distinctions

Neatness of dress and personal cleanliness certainly form a very marked feature among a great proportion of the Sydney inhabitants, even when moving in rather an humble sphere, which cannot but excite a pleasant feeling in the mind ... that those who delight in a good exterior are seldom either sottish or depraved.

*Peter Cunningham*⁶⁸

The colonial elite worked to protect their status in a number of ways. Those who could afford the expense sent their children “home” to Great Britain to be educated.⁶⁹ “Being seen” at the right events and in a sufficient standard of luxury took on great importance. Mary Phoebe Broughton’s diaries were little more than lists of attendees at various balls and dinners, plus a record of whether her daily ride occurred in the “open” or “closed” carriage.⁷⁰ The elite also used the courts to protect their reputations, bringing defamation lawsuits against those they felt had dishonored them.⁷¹ As the editor of *The Sydney Gazette*, Robert Howe was a frequent target of libel suits. In his diary, which covered only nine months, he mentioned two actions against himself and, five years later, he was publicly horsewhipped after he was found culpable in another libel case.⁷² But perhaps the most pervasive practice

⁶⁷ Russell, *Savage or Civilised?* 110.

⁶⁸ Cunningham, *Two Years in New South Wales*, vol. 1, 57.

⁶⁹ Ward, *The Australian Legend*, 18.

⁷⁰ Broughton came to the colony in 1829 at nine years of age with her father, William Grant Broughton, the first Anglican bishop for Australia. She later married William Barker Boydell, the brother of Charles Boydell (whose journal is also consulted in this study). Broughton, *Diaries, 1834-1838*; Broughton, *Diary, 1839-1841*.

⁷¹ McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies*.

⁷² Rev A. C. Lawry, *Transcription of Robert Howe Diary, 1 August 1822-4 April 1823*, B 846, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 1939, November 10, 1822, and December 28, 1822. Robert’s father, George (who we heard about earlier), worked in newspapers in London. After his sentence of

for marking status was the exacting use of manners and standards of comportment. The published literature available to potential emigrants presented the colony as a morally questionable society.⁷³ In a society tainted by the presence of convicts and wealthy former convicts, manners “represented a last bastion of civilization in a wilderness of social disintegration.”⁷⁴

The importance of manners was perhaps best exemplified by the derisive comments recorded in journals when others failed to meet those standards. In his reminiscences, sometimes political activist Samuel Thompson recalled a friend of his who took to swearing. He told his friend he would stop associating with the friend unless the friend changed his vocabulary.⁷⁵ Years later, when writing his reminiscences, Thompson still vividly remembered his friend’s objectionable behavior. Justice William Burton was appalled when a “practitioner” came into the courtroom, visibly drunk (according to him), and swore loudly enough for the judge to hear.⁷⁶ Anne and Dick Bourke, the children of Governor Richard Bourke, absolutely detested Mrs. Westmacott, the wife of a captain who came over on their ship and continued to associate with them after arrival. Her crime? She was “not quite as refined and delicate as might be wished” as she was “too country-town like, too fond of

transportation for shoplifting (when Robert was only five years old), George quickly began the *Sydney Gazette*, the colony’s first newspaper. Robert took over the paper after George died in 1821, transforming the paper into a mouthpiece for morality and religion. J. V. Byrnes, “Howe, Robert (1795–1829),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/howe-robert-2252/text2851> (accessed August 5, 2015).

⁷³ See chap. 1.

⁷⁴ Russell, “The Brash Colonial,” 431. For an extensive study on the role manners played in early Australian society, see Russell, *Savage or Civilised?*

⁷⁵ Thompson, “The Reminiscences of Samuel Thompson,” 2.

⁷⁶ Burton, Letters Sent to Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Austen, June 19, 1833.

gossip and much too fond of flirting particularly for a married woman.”⁷⁷ These transgressions revealed the standards of behavior colonists held for each other while at the same time they belied the reality of those standards. A *civilized* person was not supposed to swear, yet in this society, profanity could be heard from the pilot who greeted one’s ship to, in at least one instance, the officer defending one’s interests in court. A *civilized* person was not supposed to be too flirty, yet this was a society in which “being seen” in the right circles was of the utmost importance. The ideals surrounding manners and comportment were set to counteract the confusion created by an economically fluid society, but in doing so, they created a new kind of confusion: between the ideal and reality.

The tension of “reality” came not just in the form of how people behaved, but also in what was appropriate for the Australian physical environment. When Ann and Rees Jones moved to the bush, they sometimes lived under conditions that were completely alien to a city girl from a middling family. One of their early houses had only two rooms and earthen floors. The children’s beds were made on the floor and Ann’s own bed became infested with bed bugs.⁷⁸ Yet, she clung to the standards of civility ingrained in her, changing her dress every afternoon “according to custom.”⁷⁹ A memory from their rather disastrous retreat from the bush back to Sydney best illustrated the incongruity between standards of civility and the natural environment surrounding them. As previously described,⁸⁰ when the Joneses finally gave up on farming, the journey back to Sydney was arduous due mainly to human error.

⁷⁷ Dick Bourke to Fanny, March 10, 1833, Bourke Family Papers, 1809-1855, M 1863, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁷⁸ Ann Jones, “Some Reminiscences of My Past Life,” 5.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁸⁰ See chap. 2.

They lost their way, their food spoiled, and their horses ran off in the middle of the night. When they finally reached the coast, they walked along the beach. Leading the horses on foot, Rees took off his boots, removed his coat, rolled up his trousers, and replaced his hat (which the wind kept blowing off) with his nightcap. At this moment, Rees's appearance read like a description of the Australian legend archetype: practical, manly, at ease in nature. But, as Ann described the scene, she was not recalling a romantic image of her husband; she was rather embarrassed when they ran into acquaintances along the way, acquaintances who were in full dress with suits and "black toppers." The acquaintances asked Rees how stock keeping was going. "Well," he replied, "if you look at me and judge me from my appearance you will soon be able to tell how I have prospered."⁸¹ Laughter was shared, but within it lay undertones of several hues: shame over economic failure and embarrassment over what to a historically removed observer might seem like completely appropriate dress for walking along a beach. The social standards of comportment in this society were real (if not always practical), so real, in fact, that the men on the beach wearing suits and top hats were not at all seen as preposterous.

At times, the Aboriginal people reflected back to the elite the absurdity of their code of conduct. Dick Bourke relayed an anecdote of an Aboriginal man appropriating European manners. When dining with Bourke, Jackey was given a steel fork, to which he scoffed, "Black fellow ... he no eat grub with that" and helped himself to a *silver* fork. Bourke

⁸¹ Ann Jones, "Some Reminiscences of My Past Life," 37.

offered him a dish of food, but Jackey would not eat it, because it had no gravy.⁸² Widely criticized for their “savage” eating habits, the Aboriginal people could subtly let the Europeans know what they thought of refined European table manners.

The stubborn defense of status through manners and comportment concealed an underlying insecurity of the colonial “elite.” The society was small, so we might assume that status would be widely known and easily ascertained; nevertheless, the society was also diverse and uncertainty about a man’s place within it was actually heightened. With so much wealth available in the young colony, clothes could no longer denote difference. Thus, manners took on the task of maintaining boundaries. However, manners, like clothes, could be “put on” by those deemed inferior.⁸³ Manners could not adequately denote status, either, but they were the best option available and thus the colonial elite clung to them, sometimes despite impracticality.

Distinctions Breaking Down

Whether the circumstances are to be attributed to the class of people who form the society here or whether the society has changed the nature of the better classes, I do not know ... the tone of society & morals are so very low ... that I would prefer starving in Ireland to living here all my life.

Dick Bourke⁸⁴

In clinging to these standards of comportment, the colonial elite were swimming upstream. Just as the “lower orders” were destabilizing class distinctions with their

⁸² Was Jackey making fun of the Europeans? Was he asserting his own humanity in demanding treatment in accordance with “elite” standards? The answer probably contained a little of both, but in any case, Jackey understood the importance of manners in this society. Dick Bourke to Fanny, March 10, 1833, Bourke Family Papers.

⁸³ Downing, *Restless Men*, 111-14.

⁸⁴ Dick Bourke to Mary Jane, July 1, 1833, Bourke Family Papers.

successful upward mobility, so too were social standards influenced by practices from below. The “ludicrous straining after exclusiveness and gentility”⁸⁵ created a backlash, which Russel Ward argues led most free immigrants to take on the manners of the emancipists. In some ways, though, elite behavior was more similar to than different from that of “inferior” groups, even while elites derided the social mores of those deemed beneath them. Amidst the social confusion, a standard more closely resembling the “rough and ready manners” and abhorrence of affectation of the Australian legend archetype was competing with the strict expectations of gentility (as they imagined gentility, at least) adhered to by the “Exclusives.”

Pastoral workers, as Ward deftly illustrates, disdained the affectation assumed by the elites. When traveling through the Blue Mountains, disgraced former deputy surveyor general Samuel Perry recorded overhearing a bullock driver ordering a drink in a tavern. When the man was asked what kind of wine he would take, he replied, “The same as the swells has.”⁸⁶ In one simple, joking sentence, the bullock driver revealed his scorn for the elite through the cheeky nickname the “swells” as well as his belief that he himself was entitled to the best wine. Irritation for the affected air of gentility revered by the elite was not only displayed by the lower-status groups, however. In one example, newspaperman Robert

⁸⁵ Ward, *The Australian Legend*, 37.

⁸⁶ Samuel Perry arrived in the colony in August 1829, and had an ongoing contentious relationship with his supervisor in the surveyor’s office, Thomas Mitchell. Perry wrote his journal while traveling after his (forced) leave for ill health. Samuel Augustus Perry, Transcription of “Ostracism or Rambling Reminiscences,” 1831, 1847, 1853, MLMSS 5882, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 1902, emphasis in original. Biographical information from Bernard T. Dowd, “Perry, Samuel Augustus (1787–1854),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/perry-samuel-augustus-2546/text3465> (accessed August 5, 2015).

Howe complained that Methodist minister William Walker's sermon was too "full of dictionary words."⁸⁷

But perhaps the most vivid example of the colonial elite turning on one of their own who pushed a little too hard for exclusivity was the story of James Mudie. Following an armed uprising of a few of his convict servants, the remaining servants were permitted to lodge a complaint against Mudie for harsh treatment. Mudie, however, refused to recognize the legitimacy of this complaint. He declined to call witnesses on his own behalf, saying that he would never ask for a character witness from any "prisoner of the crown" and that his status in the colony was too high to necessitate any other kind of positive testimony.⁸⁸ Such assertions of status were highly ironic, as Mudie came to New South Wales following bankruptcy and dismissal from the army. His membership in the colonial elite was a self-invention; he even took the title of "Major" despite never holding that rank.⁸⁹ While he refused to address charges directly during the trial, he later wrote a book, *The Felonry of New South Wales*, and found it necessary to include a twenty-eight page appendix containing nothing but letters from peers vouching for the quality of his character. The veracity of his defense of his character matched the tenuousness of his claims to status.

Mudie was not found liable for unfair treatment of his assigned workers, but later, he did not have his magistrate position renewed. Wealthy shipping agent Alexander Spark commented on Mudie's state of mind at the news; six days after Mudie learned of his dismissal, he was still "fiery hot" and, by the end of the month, he had sold his farm and

⁸⁷ Lawry, Transcription of Robert Howe Diary, January 2, 1823.

⁸⁸ Mudie, *The Felonry of New South Wales*, 281-4, and Appendix.

⁸⁹ McKenzie, *A Swindler's Progress*, 173.

made plans to return to Great Britain. In general, Spark seemed amused by Mudie and his bombast. Spark attended a farewell dinner for Mudie before Mudie left the colony and Mudie sent him an early draft of *Felonry*, which Spark “read attentively” and distributed to a few others.⁹⁰ But when Mudie decided to return to the colony in 1840, he was not welcomed by the elite community. Inflammatory comments he had made in the book upset many, including John Kinchela who publicly horsewhipped Mudie in the street.⁹¹ Mudie won the resultant legal case, but the fifty pounds in damages he was awarded were promptly paid not by Kinchela, but by a subscription collected in court. A few months later, Spark wrote that Mudie had visited, “boring us with drivelling conversation to a late hour.”⁹² For Spark and other elites, there was a point at which defense of one’s all-important status became uncomfortably shrill.

Mudie believed he had absolute authority over his assigned workers; the convicts themselves clearly disagreed. This willingness to challenge authority was a trait shared by all levels of society. Caught in the middle were the colonial governors. Any efforts they made to accommodate the emancipists or positive reinforcements they implemented to encourage good behavior among the convicts usually led to backlash from the wealthy free settlers. Governor Macquarie employed convicts on public works – attempting to establish infrastructure for the colony and erect grand public buildings that would instill a sense of

⁹⁰ Spark, Diary, January 10, 1836; March 26, 1836; and October 26, 1840.

⁹¹ Kinchela was angry over Mudie’s negative portrayal of his father (also named John), the former attorney general and judge. Spark was called to testify in the case. Bernard T. Dowd and Averil F. Fink, “Mudie, James (1779–1852),” Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mudie-james-2487/text3345> (accessed August 18, 2015).

⁹² Spark, Diary, January 7, 1841.

pride – which drew the ire of wealthy landowners who wanted more access to cheap convict labor.⁹³ Early efforts to grant land to emancipists in order to encourage them to become productive, law-abiding members of society were similarly derided. Captain Francis Irvine told his family that the New South Wales government had a reputation for being “indiscreet friends to the convicts and enemies to the free settlers.” According to the government, convicts could not prosper if free settlers owned everything and, therefore, from Irvine’s point of view, “The Governor [meaning Macquarie] cannot be my friend as a free settler.”⁹⁴

Disagreement with policy was brazenly vocalized rather than discreetly communicated in a genteel fashion. Governor Darling was most unpopular with seemingly all factions of society, including his own executive council.⁹⁵ When Darling left the colony, William Charles Wentworth, a great advocate for emancipist rights who was the son of a convict mother, reportedly threw a large party (with lots of beer) for the convicts, who chanted “Thank God and Crown he’s off” and “away ye Despot.”⁹⁶ Darling’s replacement, Richard Bourke, was greeted with cautious optimism, though an alert sense of the great (almost king-like) power the governor held remained in the public sphere. The governor’s daughter, Anne, reported a comical sign she saw in front of a public house depicting the

⁹³ Patricia Grimshaw, et al., *Creating a Nation* (Ringwood, VIC: McPhee Gribble, 1994), 64.

⁹⁴ Irvine arrived in June 1820 with one thousand pounds and spent five days residing with Macquarie. Also in this letter, he complained about the length of time it seemed it was going to take him to obtain some land. But by March the following year, he had purchased a property for 740 pounds on which his brother-in-law had already built a house. Alexander Irvine, Letters Received from his Son Captain Francis Irvine in Sydney, 1820-1821, MLMSS 4375, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, September 5, 1820.

⁹⁵ “Darling, Sir Ralph (1772–1858),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/darling-sir-ralph-1956/text2353> (accessed August 18, 2015).

⁹⁶ Whether the convicts deeply shared Wentworth’s politics or just wanted the free beer is difficult to say. William Busby to George Busby, October 24, 1831, George Busby, Letters Received, 1816-1832, MLMSS 1019, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

“coronation” of her father: “it was a huge fat man, seated in an arm chair with a cocked hat put on broad ways, a man kneeling before him and a woman in the act of placing a crown on his head, and written under it, Governor B ... they always call him so in the papers.”⁹⁷ This representation of the crowning of a mere governor juxtaposed with the bestowal of a nickname (a rather chummy one, at that) revealed an uneasy relationship with authority. If this sign was an indication of larger sentiment, the segment of the population who would frequent public houses did not seem overly concerned with addressing the new governor with the due deference one might expect for such a high-ranking man.

While Anne found the caricature of her father amusing, she was less tolerant of the audacity of the public to give instructions to the new governor. For example, a group of prominent men in Sydney wrote and approved an address to welcome Bourke to the colony. In it, they claimed the new governor would not find “a people more easily governed,” as long as he met their lengthy list of demands, that is: representative institutions (their “birth-right as Englishmen”), a concerted effort by the Governor to correct abuses of the past, reformation of “useless bureaucracy,” impartiality in distributing public patronage, and the prioritization of immigration, to name a few of their concerns.⁹⁸ Anne found such “advice” impertinent: “they give him a great number of hints in the papers, indeed I should say

⁹⁷ Anne Deas Thomson, *Journal of a Voyage to Australia, August-December 1831*, MAV/FM3/743, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, December 12, 1831.

⁹⁸ The meeting to debate and approve the address was extensively reported in the *Sydney Gazette*. The demands on the governor were largely agreed upon; the only real debate occurred over whether to remove disparaging comments about Darling. The men in attendance included William Charles Wentworth, Reverend Christopher Dowling (representing the Catholic interests), solicitor Frederick Garling, and Edward Smith Hall (with whom Darling had feuded). “Public Meeting, To Address His Excellency General Bourke,” *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, December 24, 1831. Biographical information from Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/>.

instructions as to his behaviour ... You know I hate the liberty of the press and it is most terribly free here.”⁹⁹ Such public messages to the governor could be seen as transgressing hierarchy, but Edward Smith Hall, one of the men at the meeting to approve the address, proclaimed it their duty to inform the governor. “It would have been unmanly – bordering on hypocrisy – and not doing justice to General BOURKE himself, to withhold from him the feelings of the whole Colony,” he argued. Russel Ward details the (perhaps not surprising) distrust convicts and ex-convicts held for authority, but that same distrust resided among the elite free settlers, as well. In a colony run as a virtual autocracy and filled with expectations for advancement (note the reference to “manliness” in Hall’s statement), challenges to authority – or, to take the more mild view of the colonists, helpful suggestions of the issues the governor should prioritize – were deemed necessary. Furthermore, in speaking honestly to the governor as a matter of principle, Hall exhibited touches of egalitarianism.

Distrust of authority was not the only commonality between the colonial elite and the convicts, even if such commonalities went unrecognized amidst the zeal for gentility. Love of alcohol and good times, in general, were shared by both, attributes which (for better or worse) became enshrined in the Australian legend archetype. New South Wales had a reputation as “an awfully drunken place” and emigrants were warned not to go if they “couldn’t resist the drink.”¹⁰⁰ Drunkenness was problematic for the neat, genteel world the elite were trying to create, because it stripped men of civilized manners and precipitated a

⁹⁹ Deas Thomson, *Journal of a Voyage to Australia*, December 12, 1831.

¹⁰⁰ James Backhouse, *A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies* (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1843), 298.

loss of boundaries.¹⁰¹ Ironically, however, the drinking culture of New South Wales had its own rules of etiquette. Sawyer-turned-author Alexander Harris described a situation in which he was “attacked” by drunks for his rum. Startled at first, Harris quickly grasped the spirit behind the behavior: “Such affairs are pretty well understood to be only jokes, and no ill will is allowed to be borne about them afterwards.”¹⁰²

Those who considered themselves the elite of the colony loved a good time, too. Alexander Spark’s journal meticulously recorded all the dinners, parties, balls, races, and “musical soirees” he attended and – more often – hosted, each year tallying up the number of visitors he had received at his home, Tempe (he routinely topped 500 total annual guests). He frequently mentioned staying out as late as three or even five in the morning and, in 1839, declared he was “rather tired of parties & this was one of the longest as the bright morning shone & the birds were singing as we returned to Tempe.”¹⁰³ By living in town, Spark had easy access to friends and social events. When Welsh station owner Charles Boydell embarked on his annual, lengthy trip to Sydney from his farm, he made the most of the short period he had for social calls. He filled his evenings with visits to acquaintances and trips to the races, activities which often involved alcohol and sometimes led to cryptic admissions in his journal that he was “very ashamed” of the night before.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Russell, *Savage or Civilised?* 50.

¹⁰² The drunks later offered to pay for what they took, but Harris refused payment. Harris, *Settlers and Convicts*, 191.

¹⁰³ Spark, *Diary*, quote from November 29, 1839. For late nights, see April 17, 1838; May 24, 1838; August 14, 1838; August 23, 1838; September 7, 1838; March 14, 1839; March 18, 1839; and January 2, 1843. The practice seemed to abate after he was married in 1840.

¹⁰⁴ Boydell, *Journal*, July 13, 1833.

For rural men, whether they be convict workers or the proprietors of the land like Boydell, the loneliness and monotony of the bush fostered a practice of working hard for long periods of time and then partaking in short bouts of tremendous drunkenness when they went into town or had a break for a holiday.¹⁰⁵ Godfrey Mundy described the practice:

Every month of thereabouts comes an influx of bush-labourers to the town, with their pockets full of wages, for the express purpose of spending them. There is a glorious scene of drinking and riot for a few days or weeks; their money is soon exhausted ... and away they go again to their teams, their flocks, or their saw-pits, to earn money sufficient for another periodical debauch.¹⁰⁶

In this, their behavior closely resembled the pre-industrial traditions of England, before industrial workers became ruled by the time clock and when the physical work of subsistence farming was periodically interrupted by large, public celebrations.¹⁰⁷

In a similar way, other attitudes of this young society did not keep pace with new directions from an industrializing Britain, namely, the attitude toward the poor. In Great Britain, poverty was increasingly seen as a moral failing, a view reinforced by the New Poor Law of 1834, which essentially forced the indigent poor to incarcerate themselves in a workhouse or face starvation.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps because there were so few poor in the colony¹⁰⁹ or perhaps because the workhouses in existence were for the convicts, the colonial elites took a much more traditional, more paternalistic stance toward the poor. The bishop's daughter

¹⁰⁵ Ward, *The Australian Legend*, 9.

¹⁰⁶ Godfrey Charles Mundy, *Our Antipodes: Or, Residence and Rambles in the Australasian Colonies. With a Glimpse of the Gold Fields* (London: Richard Bentley, 1855), 96.

¹⁰⁷ E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present*, no. 38 (December 1967): 56-97.

¹⁰⁸ See chap. 1.

¹⁰⁹ James Robinson recorded with surprise in his journal: "Since I came to this place I have not been asked by a Beggar for an alms nor have I seen in instance a Beggar – or a box handed round in any place of worship for the poor." Robinson, Papers, January 1, 1842.

Phoebe Broughton and her mother were quite active in taking clothes to and volunteering on behalf of newly arrived immigrants and convicts.¹¹⁰ Alexander Spark described an August 1839 meeting regarding poor relief. The committee decided to distribute tickets to the poor that would allow them to buy food at half price. The distribution of tickets was discontinued in November when food prices normalized.¹¹¹ If Robin Haines's hypothesis that many assisted emigrants actively avoided industrialization through their choice of the Australian colonies is correct,¹¹² then the survival of pre-industrial attitudes would be expected.

* * * * *

Early nineteenth-century New South Wales was a mix of people who (save for the Aboriginal people) mostly came from the British Isles, but who, in the home country, would have had little interaction with each other. English, Welsh, Scottish, and Irish alike came either in search of opportunities not available to them at home or because that lack of opportunities led them to crime. In the colonial cities, less so than in the bush (where Russel Ward locates the growth of egalitarianism), a small, diverse population lived in close contact with each other with no choice but to interact in business, in church, etc. Preconceived notions of the other social groups (convicts, emancipists, the Irish) were confounded by such interactions.

Class (i.e., wealth) was an imperfect marker of status in New South Wales. The vast majority – both convict and free – had belonged to the lower to middling strata of British society. (For why would the contented wealthy leave Great Britain?) The increased

¹¹⁰ Broughton, *Diaries*, 1834-1838; Broughton, *Diary*, 1839-1841.

¹¹¹ Spark, *Diary*, August 1, 1839.

¹¹² Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor*, 5.

opportunity for economic advancement meant that the group of wealthiest settlers included disgraced military men, the sons of watchmakers, and former convicts. Though such men tried to create a social hierarchy with themselves at the top, those relegated to the lower rungs of the new social ladder refused to go quietly. The Irish ran for office, emancipists fought for equal legal rights, and convicts resisted in myriad passive-aggressive ways. The lawyer Alexander Harris described the feeling: “There is among working men a strong and ineradicable and very correct sense of what is fair. Unless you act fairly to them, they will assuredly endeavor to right themselves.”¹¹³

The elite’s efforts to establish themselves as a “colonial aristocracy” (of sorts) were paradoxical on several fronts. First, the elite was composed mainly of newly self-made men from middling British families who styled themselves after a tradition based largely on birth and long-standing wealth. That the elite aimed to distance themselves from others who were merely striving for the same social mobility the elite had achieved was hypocritical. Second, the colonial elite chased an outdated ideal. Notions of class in Great Britain were changing rapidly at the time. The tradition of the aristocracy was breaking down and complex class relations assumed new importance. Paternalistic attitudes toward the poor and cycles of work interrupted by celebration were quickly becoming relics of the past. Yet, the colonial elite retained these traditions. Finally, the standards of comportment expected were often absurd given the physical environment. Top hats on the beach? Changing one’s dress for dinner when one’s children were sleeping on a dirt floor? No wonder the Australian legend came to include an intolerance for affectation.

¹¹³ Harris, *Settlers and Convicts*, 416.

Russel Ward cites “upperclass exclusivity” as the reason free immigrants chose to “take the manners” of the emancipists.¹¹⁴ Penny Russell posits that the bush became so revered, in part, because it seemed like “a welcome refuge of unselfconscious egalitarianism.”¹¹⁵ The affected manners of the elite helped drive Australian cultural values toward the inverse ideal, toward egalitarianism. The willingness of the lower orders to fight for their position in society was crucial, as well. No matter how low their status had been in Britain, each group – convict, emancipist, Irish, assisted immigrants – saw New South Wales as their chance at a better life and, accordingly, they resisted attempts to keep them in a subservient position. The bottom line was that the distinctions of the old country could not be recreated in New South Wales. In the end, the Australian ideal embraced egalitarianism. It was an imperfect process subject to much negotiation and, like all aspects of a national archetype, never uniformly applied. But, an ethos of egalitarianism was perhaps the only way to accommodate the vocal desires of the various groups jockeying for position and opportunity in this new society.

¹¹⁴ Ward, *The Australian Legend*, 37.

¹¹⁵ Russell, *Savage or Civilised?* 48.

CONCLUSION

At times in the early nineteenth-century British popular press, New South Wales was described as “picturesque as fairy land,”¹ a place “where the industrious agriculturist or mechanic will obtain remunerating employment”² and whose people were characterized by “a general manly spirit and fairness.”³ Were a man to emigrate, he would be able to “wrest the fresh-fruits of victory from rugged nature, and found great empires.”⁴ Contrast this with life in Great Britain, where the working man faced “starvation on one side of him, and the workhouse on the other”⁵ and the growing middling classes were said to face taxation which “must bring to poverty all persons in the middle rank of life ... their children must be poor and miserable.”⁶ The choice between emigrating and remaining at home hardly seemed difficult.

The commencement of a century of exceptional migration coincided with Great Britain’s transition to a system of industrial capitalism. No longer able to access common lands for subsistence needs and forced into complete wage dependency, workers faced machines replacing them on the job or long hours in deplorable factory conditions (when they could find work). A faction of those in power believed emigration would help relieve the economic stressors created by the new system and advocated for emigration assistance to those who could not afford to go on their own. As revealed in the reports of the Select

¹ Alexander Harris, *Settlers and Convicts, Or, Recollections of Sixteen Years’ Labour in the Australian Backwoods / by an Emigrant Mechanic* (London: C. Cox, 1847), 9.

² “Emigration to New South Wales,” *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal*, May 19, 1838.

³ Harris, *Settlers and Convicts*, 187.

⁴ “Emigration,” *Hunt’s London Journal*, September 28, 1844.

⁵ C.R. [pseud.], “Colonisation and Emigration,” *Hood’s Magazine and Comic Miscellany*, July 1845.

⁶ William Cobbett, “Emigration,” *Cobbett’s Weekly Register*, May 8, 1830.

Committee on Emigration, the birth pains of the Industrial Revolution directly connected to a growing acceptance of plans for government-assisted emigration.⁷

The *government* may have seen emigration as a solution to the social problems caused by industrialization, but what factors would have led *individuals* to take such a large risk? One framework that has been used to examine motivations for emigration compares “push” versus “pull” factors. In Britain at this time, the main “push” factor for workers was clear enough: decreasing economic opportunity under industrial capitalism. The “pull” factors for New South Wales were conveyed through the popular press. On the one hand, published accounts of New South Wales promised potential emigrants they could regain that which they had lost under industrial capitalism: access to land, financial stability through fair wages, and self-sufficiency. On the other hand, such accounts also tantalizingly held out the possibility of the emigrants’ sharing in the wealth that capitalism could create. Indeed, many emigrants (with a touch of hyperbole) talked of their decision to leave for the colony in terms of making their “fortune.”

Ascertaining emigrants’ motivations for leaving home has proven a difficult task for the historiography to tackle. Though the diaries, letters, and reminiscences examined in this study form but a small sample skewed toward wealthier, literate emigrants, they reveal the same common themes of financial stability and independence which presumably drove the decisions of the workers who found their lives destabilized by the transition to industrial

⁷ House of Commons, “Report from the Select Committee on Emigration from the United Kingdom,” *19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers*, 1826, 404, vol. 4; House of Commons, “Second Report from the Select Committee on Emigration from the United Kingdom,” *19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers*, 1826-27, 237, vol. 2; House of Commons, “Third Report from the Select Committee on Emigration from the United Kingdom,” *19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers*, 1826-27, 550, vol. 223.

capitalism. Whether one wanted to provide for a new bride (George Suttor⁸), not further burden a mother who was sliding into debt (Thomas Callaghan⁹), find the next opportunity now that military service was over (the Bowlers and the Murchisons¹⁰), or increase one's station beyond the middling status of one's watchmaker father (Alexander Spark¹¹), emigrants – even those *not* in danger of entering a workhouse – overwhelmingly went to New South Wales in search of financial gain. The presented image of New South Wales as a land of opportunity was alluring to many, exciting the imaginations of groups beyond the working poor the government hoped to redistribute through assisted emigration. But, published literature did not present New South Wales as a utopic, risk-free destination. Emigrants should have known about the fickle environment, the possibility of confrontation with the Aboriginal people, and the questionable morality attributed to the convicts. For those who made the decision to leave, however, the upside of New South Wales and the downside of remaining at home combined to overcome the risks. The hope for a better life was stronger than any reservations the emigrants may have had.

While we might presume that the quest for a better life drove migration at any point in history, this time period is particularly important in the history of New South Wales, as the colony welcomed its first substantial wave of free immigrants and as it was still a fairly

⁸ Suttor Family, Papers, 1837-1939, MAV/FM4/1390, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

⁹ Thomas Callaghan, Diaries, 1838-1845, MLMSS 2112, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

¹⁰ Frances Mary Jane Bowler, Diary of Frances Mary Jane Bowler, MAV/F4/1390, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney; Martha Mackenzie, "Reminiscences, 1825-1850, Sketches of Australian Life," MLMSS 944, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

¹¹ Alexander Brodie Spark, Diary, 1 January 1836-22 September 1856, CY 1507, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

young society in the process of developing its own set of cultural norms and values.

Understanding the motivations for emigrating and the expectations emigrants had of their destination is important in understanding how the immigrants adjusted to and came to view their new society once they arrived. As they adjusted, they impacted the society's cultural development. That development was still in its early stages in New South Wales; colonists certainly did not think of themselves as "Australian" yet. If national identity is conceived of as a fluid spectrum with "fervent nationalism" denoting one extreme, this time period would lie at the other end, as colonists were negotiating life in this new space and creating conventions as they did so. While some historians disagree on just how "unique" or different Australia's culture came to be, it was developing in physical separation from Great Britain's, under a different set of circumstances from Great Britain's (less industry, greater access to land, different mix of people), and while Great Britain's culture was transforming rapidly itself. Some emigrants knew before they left – or at least hoped – that New South Wales was different than home in at least some ways; that's why they chose to leave. They sought more opportunity than early industrial Britain provided them and the culture they helped create preserved a few features more common in pre-industrial Britain than post-industrial revolution: hard work followed by equally "diligent" celebration and a more paternalistic attitude toward the poor.

Eventually, the conventions established moved along our imagined identity spectrum to a sense of shared identity and a fully articulated national archetype. Christened the

“Australian legend” by historian Russel Ward in the late 1950s,¹² Australia’s first national archetype initially appeared in literature and the popular press in the latter half of the nineteenth century, but was based on the cultural values created during an earlier time, the time period covered by this study (late 1820s to 1850) when free immigration first occurred on a large scale. As described by Ward, the “typical Australian” portrayed in the archetype was, among other things, practical, “willing to ‘have a go’ at anything,” very independent and loyal, “quick to decry affectation in others,” wary of authority, a “great improviser,” and very hospitable. The image conjured up by the archetype was most often that of a pastoral bushworker, many of whom were or had been convicts.¹³ However, as argued here, an archetype would not have acquired such wide purchase in the collective consciousness of Australia had it only described *one* group and a group often marginalized, at that. Convicts certainly impacted what it meant to be “Australian,” but free immigrants did, too.

With sometimes lofty expectations set by the published travel literature, immigrants arrived in New South Wales often to discover life more difficult than they had anticipated. At times, the published literature portrayed the different groups of people living in the colony (e.g., the convicts) in a negative light. Those same groups of people confounded immigrants’ expectations upon close interaction. Some convicts worked hard and were honest. Some of the richest men in the colony were former convicts. Irishmen held high, respected positions (including, for a time, the governorship).¹⁴ Cultivating one’s own plot of land was also more difficult than usually portrayed in the emigrant guides, guides which made it seem like hard

¹² Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1958).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴ Richard Bourke, who served from 1831 to 1837.

work and virtue were the only prerequisites for success. Inexperienced farmers like Ann and Rees Jones found themselves struggling mightily. Even experienced farmers had to learn to adapt to a much different soil, new native flora and fauna, and the ever-present risk of drought and flood. Given the high hopes of obtaining the yeoman ideal and the numerous obstacles preventing the realization of those dreams, it is little wonder that the national archetype came to revere a mythical man who was not only adaptable and perseverant but who also felt comfortable in the bush.

Taming the land was a challenge for those who managed to get it. Many immigrants arrived to find that obtaining land was much more difficult than they had anticipated. This was by design. Politicians and capitalists who supported assisted emigration did so not only because an exodus of people would help alleviate the pressures caused by the transition to industrial capitalism in Great Britain, but also because an influx of people was needed to establish the necessary labor base in New South Wales. In the colony, men from lower stations in life, including former convicts, were able to obtain great wealth because of the labor shortage. The assisted emigration scheme eventually implemented artificially increased the price of land beyond what the laborer could ever hope to save even with high wages. Proceeds of land sales were used to bring in more laborers, laborers who were attracted to the colony for precisely the land they could no longer afford. The Australian legend may have revered a man who worked the land and felt comfortable in the bush, but notably he did not own the land. Land policy obstructed dreams of land ownership.

Despite the best efforts of men like E.G. Wakefield (the brain behind many of the principles of Australia's land policies) to recreate Britain's highly stratified class system in the colony, the distance between economic classes in New South Wales was smaller and more easily traversed than at home. There *were* more opportunities in the undeveloped colony. Even with the influx of immigrants, there *was* a high demand for labor. Immigrants may not have obtained the "fortune" they expected and they may have had to take a different route to financial stability than the one planned (e.g., a small farm), but they often did find themselves better off (or at least no worse) than they would have been at home.

This increased opportunity for social mobility led to much jockeying for position within the still forming social hierarchy. Those who considered themselves among the colonial "elite" tried to maintain boundaries between themselves and others through manners and other standards of comportment. On some level, their efforts worked as the standards they set *did* have a demonstrable impact on behavior.¹⁵ However, the national archetype ultimately came to embrace an ethos of egalitarianism, a value very different from that for which they strove. The national identity came to revere the opposite ideal for several reasons. First, a strict social hierarchy did not fit the circumstances of the colony. It fit neither the financial circumstances which provided for more economic mobility nor the more prosaic physical environment. The bush and gentility did not naturally go together. Second, the elites' claims to belonging to the upper echelon often rested on a flimsy foundation. Many came from middling families (at best) and used their new money to fabricate an air of

¹⁵ For example, recall that Ann Jones changed her dress every afternoon even though she was living in a dirt-floor "hut" in the bush. Ann Jones, "Some Reminiscences of My Past Life Written in 1887," Q994.403/6, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 1887, 33.

gentility. Furthermore, some were aware of the tenuousness of their claims and fought hard – sometimes too hard – to defend them.¹⁶ Finally, and perhaps most importantly, New South Wales was populated by disparate groups who had all left home due to perceived low prospects.¹⁷ Once in the colony, they jealously guarded their access to opportunity and fought loudly for respect. In a land where many had found their high expectations for economic advancement frustrated to various degrees, the national identity came to value the right of everyone, no matter what one’s station at birth, to have a “fair go.”

Ward argues that this first national archetype derived from the lives of the pastoral workers, who were mainly convicts and ex-convicts. He makes a compelling case and the links are clear. However, the lives of free immigrants connect to the values espoused by the Australian legend archetype, as well. At times, those connections come from lived experience; at others, from frustrated expectations. For example, the archetype encapsulated the complex relationship to the land. Emigrant literature seemed to promise small farms to everyone, but land policy broke that promise. Ultimately, that which many immigrants expected but were not able to obtain – land – became venerated in the Australian legend archetype via the image of the pastoral worker who stoically and confidently tamed the bush. Notably, though, he did not own the land he worked.

The Australian legend archetype also incorporated characteristics that one would expect to find in immigrants, those people willing to leave behind their homes and families

¹⁶ “Major” James Mudie provided one example. James Mudie, *The Felony of New South Wales, being a Faithful Picture of the Real Romance of Life in Botany Bay: With Anecdotes of Botany Bay Society, and a Plan of Sydney* (London: Whaley and Company, 1837).

¹⁷ A statement equally applicable to convicts and free immigrants. The convicts’ prospects were so low, they turned to crime.

for a chance at something better. Emigrants already possessed the adventurousness, risk-taking, and courage so prominent in the archetype. Furthermore, in order to succeed in their new home, they had to be – or learn to be – practical, perseverant, and adaptable. One of the eventual values of the archetype – “manly independence” – was idealized at this time in the British popular press. Emigration was said to be one way to achieve it and, indeed, the tough environment of New South Wales seemed to require it.

The distrust of authority so prominent in the archetype made logical sense for the convicts; after all, they had been forcibly removed from Great Britain under the guise of the law and then policed via a military state until their sentences expired. But, a similar wariness of authority could be found among the free immigrants, as well, especially those who considered themselves elite. In an authoritarian society, those who had managed to obtain some level of power and status jealously guarded it. This tendency to defend one’s standing permeated all levels of society. Most colonists – convict and free alike – had belonged to the lower stations in Great Britain and aimed to make the most of the opportunities in their new home. Free immigrants had come specifically to improve their lives and they would not be quietly relegated to the bottom rungs of the social ladder again. This tendency of all groups in society to fight vocally for respect and access to opportunity contributed to Australia’s ethos of egalitarianism.

In the debate over national identities, historians have disagreed over the origins of such identities. Are they imposed by the structures in power or do they derive from the lived experiences of those the identity seeks to describe? In this case study of the first Australian

national archetype, the answer is “a little of both.” Power structures most definitely impacted the value system created. The effects of the new organizing principle of industrial capitalism left some so disaffected with home that they were willing to risk everything through emigration. This propensity for risk-taking became a crucial part of what it meant to be “Australian.” Another power structure – the media – created perceptions of New South Wales and set expectations for the emigrants, expectations which land policy (yet another power structure) worked to frustrate. Some of those expectations became revered in the national archetype.

However, a national identity, and the values that comprise it, cannot be wholly imposed by those in power. If the capitalists who argued for assisted emigration had been able to construct Australian society (and thus its values) as they wanted, what would the national identity have looked like? E.G. Wakefield, in many ways the father of Australia’s particular method of assisting immigrants, was very clear in his hopes for the Australian colonies. He wanted well-defined economic classes which peacefully fulfilled their roles within the capitalist structure.¹⁸ He certainly did not envision an Australia whose national archetype connected to the values of the convicts in any way. Australia most definitely became a capitalist society, but (perhaps to the chagrin of the architects of assisted emigration) it became a capitalist society with an ethos of egalitarianism.

This study examines an early period in the history of New South Wales and does not extend into the latter half of the nineteenth century, a time of gold rushes, responsible

¹⁸ Robert Gouger, ed., *A Letter from Sydney, the Principal Town of Australia: Together with the Outline of a System of Colonization* (London: J. Cross, 1829).

government, labor union formation, and continued assisted immigration. The time period considered here, though, saw the laying of the foundation of the value systems that would carry the colony through the rest of the century. Egalitarianism became enshrined into law with the enactment of universal manhood suffrage in 1858, and, in the 1860s, the government eventually capitulated on land policy, giving “selectors” (people with limited means) the opportunity to obtain small plots of land.¹⁹ Yet, the fierce independence of the Australian ethos did not translate into complete political independence from Great Britain, a seemingly odd contradiction that is beyond the scope of this study. A logical extension of this project would position the hopes, disappointments, and values of free immigrants into the political debates of the second half of the century.

New South Wales came of age at a time of great transition in Great Britain, a transition which resulted in massive movements of people without which its settler colonies would not have flourished. Those emigrants indelibly shaped the national identities established as the colonies matured. Free immigrants came to New South Wales expecting a piece of the capitalist pie for themselves. They wanted access to land, financial stability, and self-sufficiency. As their expectations were frustrated and they adapted to life in their new home, a belief developed that everyone should have access to opportunity. That belief – along with immigrants’ natural propensity for risk-taking and self-reliance, with the perseverance and adaptability their new home required of them, and with the reverence this

¹⁹ However, the land itself continued to beguile the selectors. Plots of land were too small to allow portions to lie fallow and, for those near rivers, the entire farm could be devastated by a flood. Many of these farms failed. John Rickard, *Australia: A Cultural History*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1996), chap. 4.

tempestuous and elusive land elicited – was later incorporated into the first national archetype, known to historians as “the Australian legend.”

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