

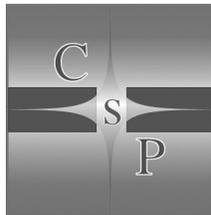
# Victorian Traffic



Victorian Traffic:  
Identity, Exchange, Performance

Edited by

Sue Thomas



Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Victorian Traffic: Identity, Exchange, Performance, Edited by Sue Thomas

This book first published 2008 by

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

15 Angerton Gardens, Newcastle, NE5 2JA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2008 by Sue Thomas and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-84718-455-3, ISBN (13): 9781847184559

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Images .....	viii
Acknowledgments .....	x
Introduction	
Sue Thomas .....	xii
<b>Part I: Home and Abroad</b>	
Gifts of Patchwork and Visits to Whitehall: The British Ladies’ Society and Female Convict Ships	
Lucy Frost.....	2
“I cannot see one without thinking of the other”: Slavery and Sexism in Barbara Bodichon’s American Diary	
Pauline Nestor .....	19
Authorising the Self: Race, Religion, and the Role of the Scholar in Anna Leonowens’ <i>The English Governess at the Siamese Court</i> (1870)	
Hao-Han Helen Yang .....	32
Exoticism in Anglo-Indian Women’s Fiction, 1880–1920	
Julia Kuehn.....	49
“Flashed from wire to wire, through the continents of the old and new world”: Trafficking in Imperial Information and Patriotism between Britain and Australia at the End of the Victorian Era	
Susan K. Martin.....	70
The Traffic in Gossip: Anglo-Australians Abroad	
Lucy Sussex.....	84
Anglo-Australians on Fleet Street, 1892–1905	
Meg Tasker.....	92

Frieda Cassin's <i>With Silent Tread</i> and the Spectre of Leprosy in Antigua and Britain, 1889–91 Sue Thomas .....	103
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

## **Part II: Performative Traffic**

Agents or Objects? Maori Performances in Britain Mandy Treagus .....	124
-------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Pauline Johnson-Tekahionwake: Trafficking Woman Anne Collett .....	143
-----------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Oscar's Wild(e) Year in America Nick Frigo .....	163
-----------------------------------------------------	-----

Female Pleasure and Muscular Arms in Touring Trapeze Acts Peta Tait .....	178
------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

## **Part III: Image, Circulation, Mobility**

Traffic in Pictures: The Circulation of Imagery in Nineteenth-century Australian Art and Illustrations Kerry Heckenberg .....	192
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Transporting Genres: Jane Porter Delivers the Historical Novel to the Victorians Peta Beasley .....	213
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

The Traffic of Identity: Reading Identity in Collins' <i>No Name</i> and <i>The Moonstone</i> Jenny Kohn .....	228
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Little Man Walking: Globalisation and Utopianism in Socio-Political Texts, 1875–1915 Robyn Walton .....	243
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

“The great and wonderful labyrinth”: Female Traffic through Melbourne Streets and Exhibition Spaces in Ada Cambridge's <i>The Three Miss Kings</i> Kylie Mirmohamadi .....	263
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Spectral Traffic	
Sage Leslie-McCarthy .....	273
Bibliography .....	284
Contributors.....	310
Index.....	314

## LIST OF IMAGES

Fig. III-1 .....	196
Thomas Tyrwhitt Balcombe, <i>Scene on the Murray</i> , c. 1849	
Fig. III-2 .....	199
<i>Talambé—a Young Native of the Bogan Tribe</i> , lithograph after a drawing by Thomas Mitchell	
Fig. III-3 .....	201
<i>Junction of the Supposed Darling with the Murray</i> , lithograph drawn by W. Purser, from a sketch by Charles Sturt	
Fig. III-4 .....	201
<i>The River Murray, and Dispersion of Natives, 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1836</i> , lithograph by J. Brandard and G. Barnard, after a drawing by T. L. Mitchell	
Fig. III-5 .....	202
<i>Mitre Rock and Lake from Mount Arapiles</i> , lithograph by George Barnard after a sketch by Thomas Mitchell	
Fig. III-6 .....	203
Frederick Grosse, <i>The Mitre Rock</i> , engraving	
Fig. III-7 .....	205
<i>View of the Gullies of the Grose River, From the Cataract named “Govett’s Leap,”</i> engraving after a drawing by William Romaine Govett	
Fig. III-8 .....	205
<i>Inaccessible Valley of the River Grose</i> , lithograph by George Barnard after a sketch by T. L. Mitchell	
Fig. III-9 .....	206
<i>Blue Mountain Scenery.—The Valley of the Grose</i> , lithograph by Geo. W. Lockwood	

Fig. III-10 .....	206
<i>The Valley of the Grose, Blue Mountains</i> , engraving by Charles Wilkinson	
Fig. III-11 .....	209
Frank Hurley, <i>The Upper Grose Valley</i>	
Fig. III-12 .....	211
Comparison of <i>First Meeting with the Chief of the Bogan Tribe</i> , lithograph by George Barnard after a sketch by T. L. Mitchell (above) and <i>Major Mitchell's First Meeting with the Chief of the Bogan Tribe</i> , lithograph by Geo. W. Lockwood (below)	

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The essays in *Victorian Traffic* are expanded and reworked versions of papers presented at the 2006 conference of the Australasian Victorian Studies Association, hosted by La Trobe University in Melbourne. Sue Thomas and the Australasian Victorian Studies Association thank the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, the School of Communication, Arts and Critical Enquiry, and the English Program at La Trobe University for financial support of the conference. The editor also gratefully acknowledges the encouragement of the Australasian Victorian Studies Association to develop the collection, and the invaluable help of Thomas Crosbie in standardising the documentation. She also wishes to thank the contributors for making their essays available for the collection, for their confidence in the project, and for responding so readily to editorial queries.

Many of the essays in the collection are drawn from larger projects, and contributors are grateful for the financial support of research grants. Pauline Nestor's, Peta Tait's and Meg Tasker and Lucy Sussex's research was supported by Australian Research Council Discovery Grants. Julia Kuehn expresses her thanks to the Hong Kong University Committee for Research and Conference Grants for help that enabled her to bring her project to fruition. Central Large Grants from La Trobe University and Research Enhancement Fund grants from the School of Communication, Arts and Critical Enquiry at La Trobe supported the larger projects from which Susan K. Martin's and Sue Thomas's essays are drawn. Mandy Treagus's project has been supported by grants from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Adelaide. Jane Grant has kindly granted permission for her to quote from the unpublished diary of Makereti Papakura. Peta Beasley wishes to thank Thomas McLean for permission to quote from his forthcoming article "Nobody's Argument: Jane Porter and the Historical Novel" and the National Library of Scotland for permission to quote from Jane Porter's letters to Sir Walter Scott.

Sue Thomas's essay "Frieda Cassin's *With Silent Tread* and the Spectre of Leprosy in Antigua and Britain 1889–1891" is reprinted from *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal* Volume 4, Issue 1 (Spring: 2006).

At Cambridge Scholars Publishing special thanks are due to Amanda Millar. Richard McGregor has prepared a fine index.

Sue Thomas particularly thanks Brendan Thomas, Anne Hannington, and Nathaniel Liam Thomas for their sustaining love and support, and the joys of their company.

# INTRODUCTION

SUE THOMAS, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

**TRAFFIC**, properly the interchange or passing of goods or merchandise between persons, communities or countries, commerce or trade. The term in current usage is chiefly applied collectively to the goods, passengers, vehicles and vessels passing to and fro over the streets, roads, sea, rivers, canals, railways, &c.

The origin of the word is obscure. It occurs in Fr. *trafique*, and *trafiquer*, Ital. *traffico*, *trafficare*, Sp. *trafago*, *trafagar*. Du Cange (*Gloss. Med. et. Inf. Lat.*) quotes the use of *traffigare* from a treaty between Milan and Venice of 1380, and gives other variants of the word in medieval Latin. There is a medieval Latin word *transfegator*, an explorer, spy, investigator (see Du Cange, *op. cit.*, s.v.) which occurs as early as 1243, and is stated to be from *transfegare*, a corruption of *transfretare*, to cross over the sea (*trans*, across, *fretum*, gulf, strait, channel). Diez (*Etymologisches Wörterbuch der romanische Sprachen*) connects the word with Port. *trasfegar*, to decant, which he traces to Late Lat. *vicare*, to exchange, Lat. *vicis*, change, turn.<sup>1</sup>

The entry in the 1911 edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, a summation of knowledge to that date, draws a distinction between literal (proper) and metaphorical and dialect usages of the noun “traffic.” Currently the *Oxford English Dictionary* also comments on the difficulty of establishing the “ultimate source and etymology” of the word, but observes that “verb and n[oun]. arose in the commerce of the Mediterranean, and in the language of one of the nations by or with whom this was carried on,” noting a suggested Arabic source in the word “*taraffaqa*, which sometimes means ‘to seek profit.’”<sup>2</sup> Samuel Johnson cites the French and Italian sources in his definition of traffic, pointing out, “*Traffick* was formerly used of

---

<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature and General Information*, vol. 27 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911).

<sup>2</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, online ed.,

<http://0-dictionary.oed.com.alpha2.latrobe.edu.au>. Hereafter abbreviated as *OED*.

foreign commerce in distinction from *trade*.<sup>3</sup> Traffic is a word associated with the development of “economic, cultural and technological connectivity” contingent on the “flow of capital, commodities, peoples, and ideas” in various “world-systems.”<sup>4</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that by 1325 “*trafficare* and *traffico*” were in “full established use” in the Mediterranean. This suggests that its origins may be traced to the rise of the world-system outlined by Janet Abu-Lughod in *Before European Hegemony: The World System 1250–1350*, “an international trade economy ... that stretched all the way from northwestern Europe to China; it involved merchants and producers in an extensive (worldwide) if narrow network of exchange.”<sup>5</sup> Traffic came into use in English “soon after 1500.”<sup>6</sup>

The *Oxford English Dictionary* records the emergence of new usages in English of the word traffic in the nineteenth century, usages contingent on commercial and imperial expansion, technological developments, population growth and urbanisation. Examples include “[t]he passing to and fro of persons, or of vehicles or vessels, along a road, railway, canal, or other route of transport ... the vehicles, etc., collectively” (1825); “[w]orthless stuff, rubbish, trash; also, rascally people; rabble. *dial.*” (1828); in telecommunications, “[t]he messages, signals, etc., transmitted through a communication system; the flow or volume of such business” (1878); “[t]he amount of business done by a railway ... the account of or revenue from this” (1883); and “[a] railway-traffic rate” (1899). The word features in new compounds—traffic-return (1858); traffic-manager (1862); traffic-laden (1871); traffic-choked (1886); traffic-entrance (1886), traffic blocks (1896), traffic instincts (1898)—and variations such as traffickery (c. 1810) and trafficless (1892). A poem Rudyard Kipling wrote for the chapter of *A School History of England* (1911) on the period 1815–1911 was “Big Steamers,” which rapidly became a popular school text for the propagation of imperial patriotism. Its verses celebrate imperial trade with the far-flung ports of Melbourne, Quebec, Vancouver, Hobart, Hong Kong

---

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language in which the Words Are Deduced from Their Originals and Illustrated in Their Different Significations by Examples from the Best Writers*, 4th ed. (London: Strahan, Rivington, et. al., 1873), vol. 2, 2044.

<sup>4</sup> Ali Behdad, “On Globalization, Again,” *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, edited by Ania Loomba, Suvir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinette Burton, and Jed Esty (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 63.

<sup>5</sup> Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System 1250–1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 8.

<sup>6</sup> *OED*.

and Bombay, and an economic division of empire in which Britain's colonies and ex-colonies trade primary produce; the poem also exhorts the need for naval defence of free trade.<sup>7</sup> Railways and sea traffic underpinned imperial expansion and subjugation (a "world map flushed pink," in Elleke Boehmer's formulation),<sup>8</sup> forced and voluntary diasporic movements of peoples, growing urban concentrations of population, and travel. The scale of diasporic movements was vast. In an argument against the novelty of globalisation in our contemporary world Ali Behdad cites comparative research on immigration that shows "that the greatest population movement occurred between 1815 and 1914."<sup>9</sup>

The essays in *Victorian Traffic: Identity, Exchange, Performance* variously address the cultural dimensions of traffic, both in its "proper" and figurative sense ("[i]ntercourse, communication; dealings, business"),<sup>10</sup> in the long Victorian period, the ways in which it shaped and was shaped by imaginations, representations, ideas, and identities-in-process. Central concerns include the representation and mediation of cross-cultural experience; negotiations and performances of identity; marketing of selves and texts; trade in metaphors, communications, texts and celebrity; and traffic in ideas of gender and cultural identity. The first essay by Lucy Frost opens onto a scene of travel to Hobart aboard a female convict transport ship in 1820; the last, by Sage Leslie-McCarthy, analyses the use of "[t]he metaphor of the spectral vehicle" in fiction as "a means of communication between the living and the dead and a way to traverse the boundaries between realms of existence." Mark Osteen and Martha Woodmansee point out, "all metaphors are in a sense economic, since the etymology of 'metaphor' contains within it the concept of transfer or exchange."<sup>11</sup> Literary critics speak of the tenor and the vehicle of metaphor. Some essays in the collection address the use of traffic as the vehicle of metaphor. Susan K. Martin, for instance, analyses how the telegraph functions metaphorically in selected Australian novels as the vehicle to represent ties of imperial patriotism. In this collection the

---

<sup>7</sup> Rudyard Kipling, "Big Steamers,"

[http://www.kipling.org.uk/rg\\_bigsteamers1.htm](http://www.kipling.org.uk/rg_bigsteamers1.htm) (accessed July 31, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 12.

<sup>9</sup> Behdad, 68.

<sup>10</sup> *OED*.

<sup>11</sup> Mark Osteen and Martha Woodmansee, "Taking Account of the New Economic Criticism: An Historical Introduction," *The New Economic Criticism: Studies at the Intersection of Literature and Economics*, ed. Martha Woodmansee and Mark Osteen (London: Routledge, 1999), 22.

concept of traffic, too, underpins historical interpretation and theoretical formulations, and the rhetorics of trade in Victorian usage are contextualised. Essayists' understandings of identity emphasise the performative, the traffic of everyday, literary, autobiographical and professional stagings of identity. Contributors highlight the negotiation of agency in relation to social and cultural scriptings of gender, class, ethnicity, and community, using ideas of self-fashioning, self-invention, and performativity.

The essays are organised in three sections: Home and Abroad, Performative Traffic, and Image, Mobility, Circulation.

## Home and Abroad

In "Gifts of Patchwork and Visits to Whitehall: The British Ladies' Society and Female Convict Ships," Lucy Frost analyses the benevolent activities of a society dedicated to prison reform, as revealed in a Minutebook of its meetings between 1822 and 1838. The Society was founded in 1821. She argues that its "spatially expansive project mimicked the national project of empire." Society members visited female prisoners about to be transported to Australia as convicts, and brought them religious literature and a range of gifts they thought would be useful on the voyage abroad and in their new home, most interestingly patchwork pieces to make a quilt. On the voyage, quilt-making, Frost notes, "would break the boredom, and upon arrival in the colonial port, the convict could sell her quilt and keep the profit." By the mid-1830s the proselytising function of the visits had become more pronounced. The Ladies acted in the political sphere using the instrument available to them, influence. Frost explores the ways in which the Ladies of the society negotiated their assertive movement into public and politicised spaces, and their gendered relation to the "ideological structure of benevolence" in the period. She charts a growing conservatism in their trafficking across these terrains, a transformation from being "risk-takers" to becoming "an orderly company."

In the next essay, "I cannot see one without thinking of the other": Slavery and Sexism in Barbara Bodichon's *American Diary*," Pauline Nestor addresses a formative experience of leading British women's rights campaigner Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon. After her marriage in 1857 Bodichon travelled to America on a year-long honeymoon. While there, she kept a diary intended for publication. Nestor reads the diary as a piece of "feminist or heroic self-fashioning" around Bodichon's new roles as bread-winning wife and forceful investigator of the everyday realities of

racial slavery. Bodichon's observations of slave trafficking and its cultural legacies led her to make analogies between the exploitativeness of racial slavery and the position of women in society. By contrasting passages from the original diary with parallel sections of articles on racial slavery published by Bodichon, Nestor shows her "displacement of her feminist anger into more acceptable forms of opposition to racial slavery" and the subtleties of public self-censorship.

Hao-Han Helen Yang also explores the formative influence of cross-cultural encounter and autobiographical self-fashioning. In "Authorising the Self: Race, Religion, and the Role of the Scholar in Anna Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* (1870)," Yang analyses Leonowens' performance of the role of authoritative observer of King Mongkut, his wives and children in the harem, his court, and Siamese culture. She argues that it is Leonowens' assumption of racial and cultural superiority that grounds her stance of objectivity and facilitates her forthright handling of the gendered dimension of her position as educated foreigner. The stance of objectivity, Yang points out, would later contribute to and enable scholarly recognition of Leonowens as a commentator on Asia and lecturer in Sanskrit.

In "Exoticism in Anglo-Indian Women's Fiction, 1880–1920," Julia Kuehn surveys the production of the exotic in the Anglo-Indian domestic novel, a popular genre from the 1880s to the 1920s. Following Chris Bongie, she draws a distinction between the imperialist exotic and the exoticising exotic, analysing novels by Maud Diver as examples of the former, and novels by Alice Perrin as instances of the latter. Both women had lived in India and turned to careers writing popular romances with Indian settings. Reading against the grain of standard accounts of the Anglo-Indian domestic novel, Kuehn elaborates the rhetorical strategies of exoticism, and the complexities of the traffic between self and other in the discourse of the exotic.

The telegraph line between Britain and Australia features in varying ways in the next three essays in Part I. In "'Flashed from wire to wire, through the continents of the old and new world': Trafficking in Imperial Information and Patriotism between Britain and Australia at the End of the Victorian Era," Susan K. Martin shows the ways in which a maternal imperial emerges in discourse around the new technology of the telegraph. The telegraph becomes one of the colonial "structures of surveillance and order." The intercolonial telegraph cable is represented as an umbilical cord between mother country and colony; its traffic features in fictional plots around affective ties in empire and public spectacles of patriotism. In Elisabeth Boyd Bayly's *Under the She-Oaks* (1903) the spectacles are

Queen Victoria's Jubilee and funerary commemoration of her death; in Mrs H.E. Russell's *Joyce Martindale* (1894) the show of patriotism is occasioned by news of General Gordon's death in Khartoum. These are seemingly conservative, yet complex texts that valorise colonial difference. Lucy Sussex's "The Traffic in Gossip: Anglo-Australians Abroad" and Meg Tasker's "Anglo-Australians on Fleet Street, 1892–1905" emerge from the same large research project. They both examine the work of Australian journalists based for varying periods of time in Britain; part of their focus is the traffic in news between Britain and Australia, a traffic facilitated by the intercolonial telegraph cable, steamers, and the mobility of journalists. As Sussex points out, colonial newspapers found the telegraph expensive, and less pressing news was carried by mail steamer.

Sussex examines the rise of "Australians Abroad" and "London News" columns in Australian newspapers, and the ways in which the traffic in gossip for these columns became a form of surveillance of middle- to upper-class Australian expatriates and expatriate communities in Britain. The success stories retailed became a means of "colonial self-validation," a "Good News Weekly," as Sussex puts it. The gossip was often gathered by freelance journalists who travelled between Australia and Britain or garnered from family letters. Tasker analyses the "organising tropes" of the autobiographical narratives of Australian journalists who tried their luck forging careers on Fleet Street in the fin-de-siècle. Their self-fashionings in memoirs of and letters about this cross-cultural experience, she shows, take on generic qualities. Many, for instance, affirm their masculinity by shaping their stories around the exhibition of stereotypical qualities of "pluck and enterprise" in "overcoming barriers."

The death in 1889 of Father Damien de Veuster at the leper asylum at Molokai in Hawaii galvanised a renewed global panic over leprosy. The panic was organised largely around fears of global disease networks created by colonisation, imperial trade, travel and migration and a push for the segregation of lepers. There was intense public anxiety in Britain about leprosy "coming home" from the colonies, one manifestation being Henry Wright's polemic *Leprosy: An Imperial Danger* (1889). A group of Antiguans petitioned Queen Victoria in 1890 for compulsory segregation of lepers. In "Frieda Cassin's *With Silent Tread* and the Spectre of Leprosy in Antigua and Britain, 1889–91," Sue Thomas addresses the stakes of Cassin's engagement with debates over the contagiousness of leprosy and the means of infection, and the figuring of colonial/British relations in those debates. Cassin's *With Silent Tread* is the first known novel from Antigua.

## Performative Traffic

Each of the essays in Part II addresses touring performers, and the cultural and/or intercultural dynamics of their performance careers. Mandy Treagus looks at two separate Maori tours of England, the first in 1863–64 organised by William Jenkins, and the second in 1911 by Te Arawa people led by Maggie Papakura. Pauline Johnson-Tekahionwake, a performance poet of Mohawk and English ancestry, is the subject of Anne Collett’s essay. Nick Frigo analyses the ways in which Oscar Wilde honed his performances as aesthete, lecturer, and celebrity on his 1882 tour of America. Peta Tait’s essay “Female Pleasure and Muscular Forearms for Trapeze” focuses primarily on trapeze performer Adelina Antonio and on cross-dressed male trapeze performance as a circus practice.

Challenging standard readings of the human displays of colonised peoples at various exhibitions and trade fairs, Mandy Treagus’s archival research shows that “some native participants prove to have been active and enthusiastic constructors of their own images, tours and performances, even taking on entrepreneurial roles themselves,” that they were not “simply trafficked objects in the schemes of others.” Members of the tours analysed in “Agents or Objects? Maori Performances in Britain” saw themselves, for instance, as cultural ambassadors, and travellers abroad. Treagus explores the delicate negotiations of racialised and cultural identities by the tourists as they dealt with life on board ship, everyday movement around Britain, press attention, assumptions about racial authenticity, regal patronage on the 1863–64 tour, and British anxieties over the colour-line in 1911.

Extending Gayle Rubin’s influential theorisation of a “traffic in women” among men, Anne Collett offers a subtle reading of Pauline Johnson-Tekahionwake’s trafficking of gender, race, nation, heritage, and ideas of authenticity in a stage act toured through Canada and England. On stage she would

dramatise poems of Indian myth and legend costumed in buckskin and moccasin (modelled on a sketch of Minnehaha from an illustrated edition of Longfellow’s *Song of Hiawatha*), change costume whilst her male colleague was performing comedic foil to her drama, and return to stage in evening gowns of satin, taffeta and lace (modelled on those worn by Lillie Langtry) to recite sentimental love lyrics and twilight nature pieces.

As the word trafficking in the essay’s title “Pauline Johnson-Tekahionwake: Trafficking Woman” suggests, Collett works to reassess

signs of Johnson-Tekahionwake's agency as performer, published poet, and celebrity.

In "Oscar's Wild(e) Year in America," Nick Frigo demonstrates how Wilde learnt during his 1882 lecture tour of the United States to "traffic in his greatest commodity, himself," inventing and styling himself for the public as a flamboyant lecturer, epitome of the aesthete, conversationalist, and wit. Frigo shows how the making of celebrity on the tour capitalised on railroad travel, railroad advertising, and the use of the telegraph to syndicate newspaper stories. Wilde's delivery of his lectures "The English Renaissance" and "The House Beautiful," and versions of them, improved through his experiences of working to engage his many audiences.

Peta Tait argues that "[a]ccompanying circus on its travels were provocative ideas of cultural identity, of gender, geographical and sexual identity, which became entwined with the sensory, visceral reception of performance." In "Female Pleasure and Muscular Forearms in Touring Trapeze Acts," she explores the gendered meanings of the athletic physique of the female trapeze artist for the performer and the spectator, and the perceived sexual dynamics of a woman performing close body-to-body work with male trapeze partners. She draws attention to the visceral dimension of female performance and male spectatorship, and to the ways in which male performers would occasionally cross-dress to play to a spectatorship for mixed-sex trapeze combinations.

## Image, Circulation, Mobility

In "Traffic in Pictures: The Circulation of Imagery in Nineteenth-century Australian Art and Illustrations," Kerry Heckenberg looks at the ways in which Australia was represented in illustrated travel writing and descriptive books. A limited number of images was commodified, recycled, copied, and sometimes plagiarised. Heckenberg discusses the artistic theory that underpinned particular images that gained iconic status and adaptations of them, and its role in producing ideas of the accurate and the truthful.

"Transporting Genres: Jane Porter Delivers the Historical Novel to the Victorians" offers a study of the eclipse of the reputation of Jane Porter as a pioneer of the historical novel, especially in relation to the rise of Sir Walter Scott's celebrity as an author. Porter's best-known novel was *Thaddeus of Warsaw* (1803). Scott, who was personally acquainted with Porter, dismisses her work in a language that renders it feminine, and in mythologising his own career fails to acknowledge her influence on his writing of historical fiction. Peta Beasley shows that while mid-Victorian

critics, and particularly women, paid tribute to Porter's historical significance, Scott's popularity and the reprintings of his novels with his prefaces obscured her role in the development of the genre.

The next essay, "The Traffic of Identity: Reading Identity in Collins' *No Name* and *The Moonstone*," turns to the genre of the sensation novel. Jenny Kohn sets the genre's interest in "transgressive identity" in the context of "the Victorian desire to fix identity," reading it from the body through phrenology and physiognomy, and formalising the registration of births, deaths, and marriages. Kohn argues that in *No Name* and *The Moonstone* Wilkie Collins suggests

the possibility that there is no such thing as the legible self; far from a world in which identity can be read on the body as suggested by physiognomic theory, these novels portray a world in which the body is often a sign that cannot be pinned down, that is open to interpretation, and that can be misinterpreted.

She highlights the use of theatrical metaphors and of make-up as a plot device in developing themes of deception.

Robyn Walton draws out in her essay, "Little Man Walking: Globalisation and Utopianism in Socio-Political Texts, 1875–1915," the rise of a new type in fiction, a type she names "the Little Man," typically a fragile political dissident or social visionary. Walton argues that the emergence of the figure as a type was a

conservative reaction to revolutionary and rebellious socio-political movements, particularly those international pluralising and democratising movements which were visibly altering the balance of power.

She outlines the provenance and features of the Little Man, and the generic aspects of the fiction in which he appears. The scope and development of the Little Man's political and social views are often represented through the device of self-fashioning walks down streets and roads as part of pedestrian traffic.

In "'The great and wonderful labyrinth': Female Traffic through Melbourne Streets and Exhibition Spaces in Ada Cambridge's *The Three Miss Kings*," Kylie Mirmohamadi analyses the performance of middle-class gender in the movement of women of this class outside the home in Ada Cambridge's *The Three Miss Kings*. These spaces include the streets of Melbourne, the 1880 International Exhibition hosted by the city, and Melbourne's suburbs. The walks and public excursions of the female characters familiarise their urban and suburban worlds, yet also open the

women to the threat of anxiety, the foreign, danger and flux. The Exhibition, Mirmohamadi shows, is both “public and private; international and domestic.” The commodification of the international and the exotic for consumption at the Exhibition domesticates them, producing the Exhibition Building as a site of relative safety for women.

In the final essay, “Spectral Traffic,” Sage Leslie-McCarthy examines the use of ghostly or phantom vehicles in supernatural stories. These vehicles are often read as expressions of cultural anxieties about new technologies like the railway and automobiles. Leslie-McCarthy sets the device in the context of Victorian and Edwardian interest in spiritualism and the business of the spiritual medium. She argues that the device of the spectral vehicle was used in fiction to explore the relation between the everyday and the spiritual realm, and states of human consciousness. She highlights two registers of the word “traffic,” the commercial in scepticism about spiritualism as a trade, and the communicative in stories which thematise “‘travel’ between various planes of existence or modes of understanding.”



# Part I

## HOME AND ABROAD

# GIFTS OF PATCHWORK AND VISITS TO WHITEHALL: THE BRITISH LADIES' SOCIETY AND FEMALE CONVICT SHIPS

LUCY FROST, UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

These women are no longer the wild and abandoned creatures known throughout the prisons of England;—they are now an orderly company, more like sisters in one family than persons thrown together by accident or misfortune.<sup>1</sup>

These were optimistic words from the Surgeon Superintendent on the *Morley* (1820), the man responsible for the health and management of 121 women aboard the first female convict transport sailing directly to Van Diemen's Land. But the voyage from London to the Australian penal settlement was far from finished, and the Surgeon Superintendent had yet to record the nights he and the ship's Master were to spend on guard with their pistols at the ready, listening for sailors bent on helping women eager to escape their confinement, if only for a night. The floating prison which Thomas Reid (1791–1825) hoped to manage as a transformative site where new identities were forged could be all too easily breached, and the veneer of reform quickly vanish. This was the discouraging side to the work the young naval surgeon had “undertaken chiefly at your instance,” as he wrote in dedicating his published account to Elizabeth Fry, the prison reformer who had become a celebrity.<sup>2</sup> In 1817 Fry had ignited a

---

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Reid, *Two Voyages to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1822), 169.

<sup>2</sup> Described by June Rose, her most recent biographer, as “a portly matron with ten children” who “had gatecrashed into public life” (June Rose, *Elizabeth Fry* [Macmillan, London, 1980], unpaginated preface), Fry represented the belief that convicts could be reformed because they were fully human and not irrevocably criminal. Like the anti-slavery campaigner Harriet Beecher Stowe 30 years later, this physically unremarkable middle-class woman became a “celebrity” in middle age, an early instance of the persona who “provides a powerful condensation of meaning which can be attached to commodities and issues” (Graeme Turner,

crusade to reconfigure London's Newgate prison as a space in which Reid's "wild and abandoned creatures" could be socialised into an "orderly company" if they were treated with kindness, taught the value of work, and imbued with religious and moral counsel. Fry and the other Ladies who visited the prison as members of the Newgate Ladies' Association exerted what Annemieke Van Drenth and Francisca de Haan call "caring power"<sup>3</sup> by improving the appalling physical circumstances suffered by the prisoners, and giving them something to do while they waited through interminable days. Initially Fry and the Ladies enjoyed such success that they silenced their critics. Buoyed by that experience, they extended their mission to the next phase of convict experience, the voyage into colonial exile.

Little is known about exactly how these "Ladies" intervened in the lives of female convicts for whom voyaging meant incarceration, the experience of being reduced to physical bodies transported as cargo within the traffic of empire. Within the massive archive of convict transportation, however, a modest Minutebook survives to tell the story of this small group of London women dedicated to visiting every female convict ship anchored in the Thames, bringing gifts which would make the voyage more "bearable," to use Judith Butler's simple but evocative term.<sup>4</sup> This is a text written by women whose interests it served, women whose reports to the quarterly meetings of the British Ladies' Society at the Friends' Meeting-house in St Martin's Lane were copied neatly into a Minutebook now held in the Archives of the City of Hackney, in London's East End.<sup>5</sup> The Minutebook, recording meetings held between 1822 and 1838, covers the period when the British Ladies' Society exercised its greatest influence, years when Elizabeth Fry was at the height of her personal and public prestige. While the organisation survived Fry's death by almost half a century, its history has been absorbed into her biographies, which never mention the Minutebook,<sup>6</sup> and as the text disappeared from sight, so too

---

Frances Bonner, and P. David Marshall, *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 166).

<sup>3</sup> Annemieke Van Drenth, and Francisca de Haan, *The Rise of Caring Power: Elizabeth Fry and Josephine Butler in Britain and the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 12.

<sup>4</sup> Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 17.

<sup>5</sup> British Ladies' Society Committee Minutes 1821–38, Rose Lipman Library, Hackney Archives Department, D/S 58/3/1, Hackney (London), England. Quotations from the unpaginated manuscript notebook are referenced by date.

<sup>6</sup> I learned of the Minutebook's existence from the searchable electronic version of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) in which Amanda Phillips

did the memory of women who undertook the day-to-day work of the Society. Most of these women, though not all, were members of the Society of Friends, and the British Ladies' Society is among the organisations of prison reformers whose records are dismissed by Elizabeth Isichei in *Victorian Quakers* as “defective and meagre.”<sup>7</sup> This seems an unfair judgment.

Among the many intriguing aspects of the Minutebook is its revelation of how a small group of middle-class women whose meetings never attracted more than 25 members, and on occasion dipped to eight, affected the lives of thousands of other women, and of how some of the benefactors most involved were in their turn energised—and in one case undoubtedly humiliated—through the endeavour. As a chronological narrative, the Minutebook tracks the shifting dynamics within a group for whom femininity was a given, but not a certainty. Identifying themselves as “Ladies,” they moved into spaces where their performances were not conventionally scripted. To do so required considerable bravado. Ironically, the Minutebook tells the story of how the Ladies themselves set limits on bravado, and in so doing prepared for a closing-in of space available for performing “femininity.” By the end of the Minutebook, a group of feisty women had reined themselves in. No longer dreaming up initiatives for improving the lot of the transportees, or advocating their causes in a manner that might be deemed strident, the Ladies were turning “Victorian.” The Minutebook is an account of how they too became “an orderly company.”

### The Innovative Years: 1822–30

In their first interventions into convict life, the Ladies were thoughtful and practical. When they discovered that prisoners at Newgate customarily got drunk the night before they were transferred to the sailing ships, and broke “windows, furniture, or whatever came within their reach,”<sup>8</sup> the Ladies responded not by censorious finger-waving, but by sympathising with prisoners who were steeling themselves for the next day's bawdy

---

mentions the British Ladies' Society in her entries for Hannah Marishall Bevan (née Bennett), Catherine Fraser, and Lydia Irving, and cites the Minutebook among her sources.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Isichei, *Victorian Quakers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 249.

<sup>8</sup> [Elizabeth Fry], *Memoir of the Life of Elizabeth Fry, with Extracts from Her Journal and Letters*, [ed. Katharine Fry and Rachel Cresswell née Fry], (London: Charles Gilpin, 1847), 1:319.

spectacle when they were

conveyed from the prison to the water side in open waggons [sic], went off shouting amidst assembled crowds, and were noisy and disorderly on the road and in the boats.<sup>9</sup>

Fry believed that the women behaved as their circumstances invited, and early in 1818 she persuaded the prison governor to accord the convicts a dignified departure, proposing that members of the Newgate Ladies' Association should accompany the transportees from prison to ship in closed hackney coaches. In the first trial of this experiment, the reformed identities held, and women travelling through London streets to the *Maria* "behaved well upon the road."<sup>10</sup> When Fry and the Ladies accompanied their charges on board ship, however, they "were distressed to see so many women and children herded together below deck."<sup>11</sup> "Herded" was the key concept. Shipping convicts to the other side of the world might be an inevitable part of the British penal system (and the Ladies never protested against transportation itself), but this was a cargo of women and children, not animals, and should be treated as such. From this moment, the Ladies added female convict transports to their burden of prisoner reform.

Their interventions are almost invisible until 1821 when the project of visiting Newgate was separated from the Ladies' burgeoning interests beyond the prison, and what was originally called the "British Society" was formed to encourage the establishment of similar organisations of prison visitors, aiming "*generally to promote the reformation of female prisoners in our own and foreign countries.*"<sup>12</sup> According to Van Drenth and de Haan, the Society "seems to have been the first nationwide women's organization in England,"<sup>13</sup> evidence that as Amanda Vickery has recently argued, the early nineteenth century, far from being "the nadir of women's public and political assertiveness"<sup>14</sup> assumed in most histories of women's politics, was actually a period of considerable activity. The Minutebook supports Vickery's contention that "female associational life

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> *A Concise View of the Origin and Progress of the British Ladies' Society for Promoting the Reformation of Female Prisoners* (London: Samuel Bentley, [1839]), 8–9.

<sup>13</sup> Van Drenth and de Haan, *Rise of Caring Power*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> Amanda Vickery, ed. *Women, Privilege, and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 1.

expanded most markedly in the 1810s and 1820s.”<sup>15</sup> Within a decade, the geographic ambitions of the female prisoner reformers stretched from Edinburgh to Plymouth, west to Dublin and east to St Petersburg, as the London *Times* reported in its coverage of the Society's Annual General Meeting for 1830.<sup>16</sup> In miniature the spatially expansive project of these Ladies mimicked the national project of empire, and the Navy played its part.

Shortly before the Ladies discovered the desperate state of women “herded” with their children below the decks of convict ships, the Admiralty had introduced a “New System of sending properly Qualified Naval surgeons in charge of the convicts.”<sup>17</sup> The “System” in its early years was little more than a collage of improvisations, an immediate response to the arrival in New South Wales during 1814 of three ships “with their convicts sickly and emaciated, the majority suffering from the ravages of scurvy or typhus,” a situation which “rudely shattered” the complacency of the British authorities.<sup>18</sup> While the authorities were struggling to deal with these issues of health aboard the transports, the Napoleonic Wars came to an end, and in 1815 “the size of the navy was cut from 145,000 to 19,000,”<sup>19</sup> leaving vast numbers of men to be removed from the payroll, put on half-pay, or re-deployed. A naval surgeon who might well have practised medicine exclusively on a Man-of-War, his practice including no experience in delivering babies, or caring for infants, or diagnosing menstrual complications, was suddenly made responsible for scores of women and children on a convict transport. His instructions for exercising a duty of care were devised by officials within the Admiralty, another relentlessly male institution unaccustomed to considering how best to keep women and children alive on crowded ships sailing from the river Thames down through the tropics to the icy southern oceans and east to Australia. On board the transports, according to the Admiralty's instructions, the Surgeons Superintendent constituted the ultimate authority in all spheres except navigation, but because of their low status as non-commissioned warrant officers, their authority was often

---

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>16</sup> *Times* (London), 10 June 1830, 3A.

<sup>17</sup> *Historical Records of Australia*, Series I: Governors' Despatches to and from England, January 1816–December 1818 (Sydney: Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1917), 9:344.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Bateson, *The Convict Ships 1787–1868*, 2d ed. (Glasgow: Brown, Son and Ferguson, 1969), 48.

<sup>19</sup> National Archives website, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/> (accessed November 17, 2005).

disputed by the Master, and even by the sailors.<sup>20</sup> The shakiness of their authority must have been dramatically exacerbated when row boats ferrying Ladies with gifts from the Society pulled alongside the ship, and sailors were required to haul up cumberdously dressed females, whether the Surgeon Superintendent wanted them on deck or not.

The gifts brought by the Ladies were personal and homely, the kinds of things the Admiralty (which did not even provide clothing for the transportees at this stage) completely ignored: a bag for the convict's clothes, two aprons, a comb, black cotton cambric to make a cap, spectacles for those who needed them, a work bag with scissors, thimbles, pins, needles and thread. Every mess received a knife and fork, a ball of string, two coarse tidy aprons for cooks, and two large bags to hold the most surprising item in the gift allotment, two pounds (almost a kilo) per woman of patchwork pieces so that during the voyage each convict could make a quilt. Quilting would break the boredom, and upon arrival in the colonial port, the convict could sell her quilt and keep the profit. Today the single most significant artefact surviving from the voyages of 25,000 women transported to the Australian colonies is the patchwork quilt made collectively by convicts on board the *Rajah* during 1841, and inscribed with a dedication to the Ladies of the British Society's Convict Ship Committee.<sup>21</sup> While the *Rajah* quilt belongs to the National Gallery of Australia, is listed on Australia's National Quilt Register, and has attained iconic status, I have never seen a reference to the earlier individual quilt-making.

The gifts of patchwork seem to have begun sometime between Thomas Reid's voyage on the *Morley* (1820), and the opening pages of the Minutebook in 1822 (the pages for the first meetings in 1821 are missing) when the arrangements were apparently in place and taken for granted. For the *Morley* the Ladies sent "on board a supply of straw materials for bonnets, hats, and the like,"<sup>22</sup> which Reid continued to distribute "among

---

<sup>20</sup> Naval surgeons held the same rank as masters—and carpenters, boatswains, gunners, cooks, engineers, and pursers (National Archives website).

<sup>21</sup> The dedication embroidered into the quilt reads: "TO THE LADIES Of the Convict ship committee This quilt worked by the Convict [sic] of the ship Rajah during their voyage to Van Diemens [sic] Land is presented as a testimony of the gratitude with which they remember their exertions for their welfare while in England and during their passage and also of proof that they have not neglected the Ladies kind admonitions of being industrious \* June \* 1841 \*" (National Quilt Register, <http://amol.org.au/nqr/> [accessed March 30, 2006]).

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Reid, *Two Voyages*, 21.

the most deserving”<sup>23</sup> during the voyage until “unfortunately, the materials being all worked up, the mischief of idleness returned.”<sup>24</sup> Straw must have been cumbersome to deal with, especially on the windy decks of sailing ships. Patchwork was more controllable, and quilts far more marketable than straw hats in colonies a long way from blanket factories. The rationale for the patchwork project is explained by Katharine and Rachel Fry in the two-volume *Memoir* of their mother published in 1847, two years after her death in October 1845:

The ladies were told, that patchwork and fancy work found a ready sale in New South Wales. They accordingly made it known that they required little pieces of coloured cotton, for this purpose; and in a few days, enough were sent from the different Manchester houses in London, fully to supply them with work, aided by some knitting. The time and ingenuity required in patchwork, rendered it a particularly suitable occupation; and as the convicts were to have the things when done, to sell for their own profit on arrival, it was evidently their interest to turn their skill to the best account.<sup>25</sup>

Having something to sell when they disembarked was particularly important during the early 1820s when “no factory or barrack of any description existed, for the reception of the women ... not so much as a hut in which they could take refuge.”<sup>26</sup> Women who sold their quilts could “obtain shelter until engaged as servants, or until they could find some respectable means of subsistence.”<sup>27</sup> Quilting as work was not punishment, not the sort of mind-numbing labour meted out to those later “sentenced to the wash tub” in the laundries of colonial Female Factories. Like the needlework of Hester Prynne in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), quilting involved “skill” and gave a woman under punishment the opportunity to exercise her imagination, what the Fry daughters astutely called “ingenuity.”

Within the ideological structure of benevolence the patchwork project complicated the power relations between the Ladies and their beneficiaries. To distribute “Bibles from the Bible Society” and “reading lessons from the Sunday School Society” (October 25, 1823) was a matter of telling the less enlightened what to think and how to behave. To give out pieces of cloth and implements for sewing was enabling rather than

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>25</sup> Fry, *Memoir*, 1:319–20.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 320.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.