Myths and Memories

Myths and Memories

(Re)viewing Colonial Western Australia through Travellers' Imaginings, 1850-1914

By

Cindy Lane

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

PREFACE

This book examines the perceptions of European travelling writers about southern Western Australia between 1850 and 1914. Theirs was a narrow vision of space and people in the region, shaped by their individual personalities, their position in society, and the prevailing discourses and ideologies of the age. Christian, Enlightenment, and Romantic philosophies had a major influence on their responses to the land—its cultivation and conservation, and its aesthetic qualities—and on their views of both indigenous and settler colonial society—their class and assumptions of race and ethnicity. The travelling men and women perpetuated an idealised view of a colonised landscape, and a "pioneer" community that eliminated class struggle and inequality, even though an analysis of their observations suggests otherwise. Nevertheless, although limited, their narratives are invaluable as a reflection of opinions, attitudes and knowledge prevalent during an age of imperialism. Their perspectives reveal unique viewpoints that differ from those of immigrants who wrote about their hopes and fears in making a new life for themselves. These travellers were economically secure, literate and educated; foundations which provide an insight into the way power and privilege, implicit in their writings, governed the way they imagined Western Australia in the colonial and immediate post-federation period.

In total, the diaries, letters, journals and memoirs of forty-one travellers are analysed. The British travellers (including a Canadian, an Anglo-Indian, and three eastern-Australian colonists) toured with typical colonial attitudes towards overseas "possessions", their observations influenced by British opinions and policies. The perceptions of three selected travellers from continental Europe and eleven women writers are included, and although representing a small fraction of the travellers under review, their voices provide a counterpoint to the more dominant perspectives of British and male writers respectively. Many travellers were experienced authors or journalists who planned to have their writings published. Likewise, writers of letters and journals composed their text for someone else to read. Consequently, writers illustrated, edited and embellished their memoirs to construct a sense of Western Australia that would satisfy their intended audience.

Analysis of the selected travellers' writings and illustrations is structured around two themes—space and people—divided by geographical regions, the southwest, the Swan/Avon River regions, and the eastern goldfields. Over a period of sixty-four years the travellers saw convict transportation come and go, the height of gold fever, federation, and the lead up to World War One.

The imagined space and people of southern Western Australia changed during this period as more land was cleared and developed, railways, roads, and towns were built, goldfields found, and the characteristics of the population altered with the arrival of convicts, t'othersiders, and migrants. However, the tinted lenses through which European travelling writers narrowly observed space and people, presented a mythical, imagined sense of southern Western Australia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

> Memory is life. It is always carried by groups of living people, and therefore it is in permanent evolution. It is subject to the dialectics of remembering and forgetting, unaware of its successive deformations, open to all kinds of use and manipulation sometimes it remains latent for long periods, then suddenly revives. History is the always incomplete and problematic reconstruction of what is no longer there…. [H]istory is a representation of the past.
>
> (Pierre Nora, 1984)[1]

> … a look something akin to Switzerland.
>
> (Leopoldo Zunini, 1906)[2]

How Leopoldo Zunini imagined Bridgetown is an example of the way that myths and memories were presented, embellished and edited by European sojourners and travellers visiting southern Western Australia in the latter half of the long nineteenth century.[3] As a "representation of the past", articulated in Pierre Nora's quotation above, sojourners and travellers constructed a sense of space and society through the unique lenses of their writings and illustrations. They arrived without the hopes, fears, or expectations of those who planned to stay permanently and make a new life for themselves. As the late historian Jan Bassett had pointed out, the perceptions of the person "who has left the land of his [sic] fathers, to rear his family and lay his bones in a different soil", are likely to differ greatly from those of the traveller who intends returning home.[4]

---

[1] Pierre Nora, ed., *Les Lieux De La Memoire: La Republique*, 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), xix.

[2] Leopoldo Zunini, *Western Australia as It Is Today 1906,* [Torino, 1910], trans/eds Margot Melia and Richard Bosworth (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1997), 86.

[3] The long nineteenth century (about 1789-1914) is considered to be a period of ideology, power, and hegemony of the west, which changed dramatically after World War One. It included the ages of Revolution, Capital and Empire as defined by British Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm.

[4] Jan Bassett, *Great Southern Landings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), viii.

Travelling writers were part of the colonial enterprise by virtue of their class and education. They visited Western Australia during an age when territories were partitioned, exploited and dominated by a few imperial states.[5] Colonisation created a cultural phenomenon by force, institution, and example that transformed images, ideas and aspirations, particularly for the Indigenous inhabitants. It was a time when non-Europeans were generally treated as inferior, undesirable, backward and infantile, fit for conquest and conversion to the supposed values of "civilisation". Ideological representations of exotic life by writers, intellectuals and administrators reinforced the sense of superiority of the "civilised" over the "primitive", even while inspiration was derived from exotic art and oriental spirituality.[6]

It was the colonial networks of transportation, administration, and tourism that enabled Europeans to travel to far off realms of their Empires.[7] Because Australia was colonised by Britain, the majority of selected travellers examined in this book were British, including five colonials (Frederick Ayres, Thomas Ward and May Vivienne from the eastern colonies of Australia, Norman Sligo from New Zealand, Gilbert Parker from Canada, and Anglo-Indian Henry Cornish from India), who were just as proud of their British heritage as the British, but there was also an Italian diplomat (Leopoldo Zunini), an Austrian aristocrat (Count Fritz Von Hochberg), a Dutch traveller (Gerrit Verschuur) and an American social reformer (Jessie Ackermann).

This book serves as a repository of the collective memory of these travellers visiting southern Western Australia between 1850 and 1914. In so doing, a sense of the region's past is assembled through their imaginings of space and people—the focal points that give structure to my analysis. The methodology, interpretations and parameters considered in constructing this sense of Western Australia are discussed as follows.

Who were the Travelling Writers?

This section introduces the travellers investigated in this research, and summarises the quantitative details regarding their mode of writing, length of stay, the period they travelled, the purpose of their travel, and their age.

---

[5] Mainly Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, and Japan.
[6] E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875 – 1914* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1995), 79-80.
[7] See Helen Gilbert and Anna Johnston, eds, *In Transit: Travel, Text, Empire* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 2002), 4-6. See also Helen Carr, "Modernism and Travel (1880-1940)," in, *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing,* eds Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 70.

For detailed background information about the travellers, see their biographies in the appendix.

Forty-one travelling writers have been referred to in this study. They have provided some wonderful insights into nineteenth and early twentieth-century society through their memories recorded in diaries, journals, letters and published books. The main criterion I considered when selecting them was that they had no intention of residing permanently in Western Australia, and that they departed after their stay, irrespective of how long their visit was.

There were eleven women writers who all published their stories. They shared the fashionable curiosity women had for travel during the colonial period, and are valuable as a representation of the feminine perspective. Only four travelled independently (Marianne North, May Vivienne, Mary Hall, Jessie Ackermann); the others accompanied their husbands, except sisters Rosamond and Florence Davenport Hill. The married authors rarely mentioned their husbands or children, as if unencumbered by any responsibilities or obligations.

Of the thirty men, only nine did not publish their travel journals or private letters (William Harvey, Frederick Mackie, Henry Richardson, Frederick Edelsten, Alfred Wood, Frederick Ayres, Sligo, Robert Tyler, Charles Hawes). As far as it can be ascertained, the only male traveller accompanied by his wife was Edwin Grew. Edwin and Marion Grew co-wrote a book about their travels. Independent travellers, women and men, rarely mentioned their travelling companions or servants, or any assistance they may have received from Indigenous or lower class people on their travels, thus intimating that they took them for granted. For indeed they would have had assistants; Mary Hall, for example, had up to forty porters and bearers on her earlier travels in Africa, and Albert Calvert travelled around Western Australia with a party comprising his young brother, seven servants, and five staff members. In fact most of this study's travellers revealed little of themselves in their writings, suggesting the limitations imposed by polite Victorian society.

Men were the main travellers to Western Australia in the years between 1850 and 1884, some seeking adventure (Wood, Edelsten, Henry Taunton) and others taking the opportunity to investigate various aspects of the new colony that interested them (Harvey, Mackie, Anthony Trollope, Ayres, Richardson). The only women to travel during this period were those accompanying their husband (Mrs Millett, Lady Broome) and Marianne North in pursuit of her interests in botany. The greatest proportion of travellers in this study visited between 1885 and 1900, which reflects their interests in the gold rushes. After 1900 and prior to

World War One, visitors with varying interests arrived, such as Hawes, Zunini, Hochberg, Mary Hall and the Grews.

One of the women, Lady Broome, was the longest staying visitor in this study. She stayed for six years, because her husband, Frederick Napier Broome, served as Governor from 1883 to 1889. Mrs Millett was the only other woman to have stayed a considerable time, because her husband Edward acquired a chaplaincy for five years in order to improve his health. Most of the remaining women only stayed for a couple of months. Rosamond and Florence Davenport Hill merely passed through King George Sound. The longest staying men—Jonathan Ceredig Davies, the travelling minister (four years) and Zunini, the diplomat (three years)—had temporary positions, while Sligo (one year), and David Carnegie (two years), were prospectors. Eight men (Edward Saunders, Rev. Robert Young, Edward Wilson, Charles Dilke, Cornish, Hume Nisbet, Verschuur, Harry Furniss) were passing through King George Sound, either heading for, or returning from the eastern colonies of Australia.

The travellers examined in this study were generally wealthy upper middle-class and upper-class men and women of European heritage. Among them were the titled, such as Count Fritz Von Hochberg, Baronet Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, Lady Mary Anne Broome, Lady Anna Brassey, and Hon. David Wynford Carnegie. Their wealth and connections greatly facilitated their ability to travel to Western Australia. Of the women, only Marianne North and Jessie Ackermann were identified as having an independent purpose for their journeys, other than planning to publish their experiences. Marianne painted unique plants and flowers destined for exhibition at Kew Gardens, and Miss Ackermann promoted the National Women's Temperance Union. The women accompanying their husbands—Mrs Millett, Lady Broome, Lady Brassey (travelling with her husband on a world voyage aboard their yacht), and Catherine Bond (assumed to be travelling with her husband)—seemed simply to take advantage of the opportunity to write about their experiences. May Vivienne (revealing an interest in promoting Australian colonies) and Mary Hall (a well-known lady traveller) visited with the intention of publishing accounts of their travels. By contrast, most of the men tended to have an occupational motive for their visit. These were as naturalists/botanists (Harvey, Ward, Hochberg), bird collectors (Ayres), commissioned illustrators, journalists and authors (Wilson, Trollope, Cornish, Nisbet, Parker, Julius Price, Raymond Radclyffe, Furniss), doctors (Richardson, Taunton), religious ministers (Young, Mackie, Davies), diplomats (Zunini) and MPs (Dilke and Hawes on their Grand Tour prior to their terms in office) and, after the gold rushes in the 1890s,

mining investors or miners (Carnegie, Sligo, Tyler, Calvert). Two male travellers, Wood and Cornish, chose to journey to Australia for health reasons.

All of the women travellers were aged in their forties and fifties; thus the independent women were able to travel without a chaperone, a nineteenth-century societal expectation for younger women. As well, they travelled later in the century indicating that travelling as single women was becoming more acceptable. Prior to the gold rush period, the male travellers were all of a similar age, being in their forties and fifties, except for Dilke (23) and Nisbet (36). This indicates that they needed to be financially well off to travel such distances (Dilke), or have their trip financed by interested parties (Nisbet by his publishers Cassell & Co.). Two younger travellers, Ayres and nineteen year old Bobby Tyler, travelled with their fathers. Once the gold rushes began the men tended to be younger, many in their early twenties, and at the end of the century the younger male travellers were looking for opportunities offered by the discovery of gold.

What can be expected when Interpreting Travellers' Texts?

The question of constructing a sense of southern Western Australia is implicit rather than explicit in this research. Jane Davis pointed out in her recent thesis concerning European migrants' feelings of belonging (or not) to the Western Australian land, that the term "sense" is an obscure word that is "difficult to define and establish empirically, and the term has been overused with insufficient critical application".[8] When discussing "sense" in this study however, it is an ideal term because Western Australia is assessed using ideas and feelings that suggest, rather than claim actuality. This is because when interpreting the illustrations and writings of travellers, their texts cannot be accepted at face value, or their works be regarded as equally valuable. For these reasons it is important to distinguish attitude. Travellers were selective in their choice of subject, setting, and material, and in their ways of identifying, classifying and naming, because of their social attitudes, viewpoints, prejudices or predispositions. The purpose of travel further delimited travellers' fields of observation.[9] Crucially, this study illustrates that individual personalities

---

[8] Jane Davis, "Longing or Belonging? Responses to a 'New' Land in Southern Western Australia 1829-1907." (PhD Thesis, University of Western Australia, 2008), 33.

[9] See Arthur Marwick, *The New Nature of History: Knowledge, Evidence, Language* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 186-187, for historiographical discussion

played a significant role in the way people responded to Western Australia.

Bearing this in mind, travelling writers reflected on the way people lived, their surroundings, and the social attitude at the time. By expressing interest in, and by providing insight into the experiences of other people, they, in effect, defined popular concepts of national character as well as the aspirations attributed to a given class in the community. However, the texts analysed here are largely those of relatively privileged, wealthy travellers. Consequently the activities of lower classes were usually excluded. Additionally, because this study only examines a written record, the illiterate and the uneducated do not fit the profile of an imperial traveller, therefore their memories are not directly heard in this study. At best, we catch in passing a reproach of their conduct and actions in the writings of their more privileged observers.[10] On the other hand, by their very absence from the selected texts, the travellers further reflect contemporary views and attitudes.

Vagaries in personality, opinion and knowledge,[11] contemporary views and attitudes shaped by personal and imperial interests, literature, Victorian and Edwardian culture; and intellectual trends in Europe such as the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and racial classification, were all significant influences in travellers' observations. For this reason it is considered here that the written memories of the travellers are imaginings, a term often referred to throughout this study.[12] Hence the title of this

---

on the use of cultural artifacts such as literature and film as primary sources in history.

[10] This point was also referred to in Annette Kolodny, *The Land before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), intro.

[11] Knowledge defined here is drawn from the work of Michel Foucault as adopted by Bain Attwood. 1. Knowledge is interpretive, an entity constructed or invented by human beings. 2. Knowledge establishes meanings but is contingent to circumstances and is situational to purpose, and is forever shifting. 3. Knowledge is constructed by relationships of power. See Bain Attwood and John Arnold, eds, *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines* (Victoria: La Trobe University Press in association with National Centre for Australian Studies), 1992, i-ii.

[12] These influences are discussed in detail in the following chapters. Romanticism was an intellectual/artistic movement encompassing human forms such as emotion, exoticism, religion, individualism, nature and nationalism; Enlightenment was a rational and scientific approach to religious, social, political, and economic issues and promoted a secular view of the world and a general sense of progress and perfectibility; racial classification includes Social Darwinism and its assumptions about race and human abilities.

book, *Myths and Memories,* invokes a sense—a feeling, an opinion, an imagining—of southern Western Australia's space and people. After all, as the late cultural critic Edward W. Said stated, "it is a fallacy to assume that the swarming, unpredictable, and problematic mess in which human beings live can be understood on the basis of what books—texts—say".[13] Nevertheless, Said also pointed out that narrative is crucial.[14] And in this research it certainly is, because the travellers' stories are at the heart of developing this study's sense of southern Western Australia, and are invaluable as a reflection of opinion and knowledge in the colonial and immediate post-federation period.

What's in a Name? Travel Nomenclature

The term "traveller" is used to classify the travelling writers in this research because it has a broad definition that includes the fact that the travellers had different agendas. Some were sojourners, a few were missionaries, a couple were explorers, all were essentially tourists, and many were a combination of these. However, to be identified solely by the term sojourner, tourist, missionary or explorer is not appropriate for the following reasons.

A "sojourner" stays at a particular place for a time, and can be a temporary resident, which could only describe Mrs Millett's, Lady Broome's, Davies' and Zunini's situations. In Australia the term can be particularly confusing because it is often associated with Chinese and Italian male workers in the late nineteenth century who sent the greater portion of their earnings home.[15]

The term "tourist" is not considered suitable because it is generally thought to be a twentieth-century phenomenon. James Buzard has also declared that it is often used in a derogatory sense without great precision and can conjure up in our imaginations a personality profile; "a dupe of fashion, following blindly where authentic travellers have gone" before. Buzard explained further, "Where tourists go, they go *en masse*, remaking

---

[13] Cited in James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to 'Culture' 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 215-216.
[14] See introduction in Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), intro.
[15] See for example Jacqueline Templeton, *From the Mountains to the Bush: Italian Migrants Write Home from Australia, 1860-1962* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 2003), intro.

whole regions in their homogeneous image."[16] Although the travellers depicted here displayed some similarity to tourists, as they are identified by class, led a particularly leisurely lifestyle, and at times pursued sights that inspired awe and wonder, their reasons for visiting Western Australia varied.

The term "missionary" is certainly not suitable as an overall identifier, although Young, and possibly Mackie and Davies could be considered as such. Michael N. Pearson argued that people travelling with a quest, such as a religious cause, try to immerse themselves in the culture of their destination, and those that travel on business are less likely to be interested in recreation or pursuits outside of their business interests.[17] This study finds that no matter their purpose, whether pleasure, business or religion, many travellers imagined that they were participating in Western Australia's pursuits and culture.

When the travellers who also considered themselves to be "explorers", such as Calvert and Carnegie, moved through remote areas away from European settlements, their observations were not included in this study because at these times they had a different agenda. They were driven by a desire to be trailblazers, even though many of the European explorers publicly celebrated in Australia led journeys of colonial exploration through land already occupied by Indigenous people, whilst ignoring their presence and glorying in imperial fortitude. However, sections of their writings have been drawn on because of their rich text in describing Albany, Perth and the eastern goldfields during the gold rush. Moreover, this study confirms literary historian Paul Fussell's point, that travellers mediate between being explorer and tourist whilst in search of the unique experience, but by frequenting similar places they move "toward the security of pure cliché".[18]

The people being investigated in this research sought trade, wealth, or adventure, pursued the curious or distinctive, observed sights as natural wonders, and generally followed paths already travelled.[19] Sometimes their purposes for travelling are vague, or are not mentioned at all by the

---

[16] James Buzard, 'The Grand Tour and after (1660-1840)," in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing,* eds Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 52.

[17] M. N. Pearson, "Pilgrims, Travellers, Tourists: The Meanings of Journeys," *Travellers, Journeys, Tourists: Australian Cultural History* 10 (1991): 127.

[18] Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 39.

[19] Bassett, *Great Southern Landings*, ix, and Julia Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder: How Australia's Landscape Was Explored, Nature Discovered and Tourism Unleashed* (Carlton, Vic. Miegunyah Press, 2005), 62-63.

writers, but can be deduced through the subject of their observations. Therefore, to gain a cross-section of impressions about Western Australia, all types of travellers: sojourners, tourists, and even explorers (when not on their "discovering" expeditions) are researched in this book. To simplify matters then, henceforth this book only uses the term "travellers" or "*the* travellers" when referring to the selected travelling writers.

Why Travel to Distant Australia?

Australia developed a reputation as a destination where travellers could expect to be inspired. Both men and women published books and journals that provided accounts of the journey, the Australian countryside, and its "curiosities", encouraging larger numbers of people setting out on their own tours of discovery.[20] The motivations for this interest in Australia were various.

A spirit of adventure and strength of character were highly valued in European middle-class culture, and the intrepid lady and gentleman traveller aspired toward these ideals. Consequently Victorian travellers did not mind the hardship a journey to, and through Australia entailed; it was proof of adventurousness. The "Grand Tour" was an important part of a young gentleman's education by which he might learn about political, social and economic matters—firstly in Europe, and later in the "New World"—or study natural history or geology, or train as an artist, and it had a continuing influence on gentleman travellers, even in their more mature years. Although mainly a pursuit for gentlemen, during this book's study period it was also generally acceptable for upper middle-class women to tour the Australian colonies, providing that social contacts, usually acquaintances of family or friends, had been arranged at their ports of call.[21]

The genteel status travel could bestow, and the desire to impress and influence, were powerful distorting factors in stories of travellers' experiences.[22] Excursions were often fabricated based on other people's journeys.[23] Also, the upfront retelling of other people's stories and experiences often occurred in travellers' writings. Such instances have generally been disregarded, because this study is only interested in what the writers have personally observed.

---

[20] Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder*, 31.

[21] Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder*, 62, 82.

[22] See Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, 107.

[23] The travellers' texts examined in this study have been checked as far as is practically possible for their authenticity, using passengers' shipping lists, private papers, and newspapers.

As writers, the selected travellers in this study can be defined as belonging to two groups: those travellers who published their experiences, and therefore were part of the production of travel writing; and those who recorded their travels through writing letters and journals, no doubt influenced by published writings in the form of travel books and guides.[24] Travel books on Australia were intended to excite, intrigue and inform European readers. They relied on story-telling ability to convey information, and usually included descriptions of possible difficulties and dangers. Guides were also published for a general readership back "home" interested in learning more about their colonies, and contained useful travel information such as conditions while on tour, typical costs, scenery, manners and customs, notes on colonial history, and economic and social prospects. These writings were also part of a broader image-making process sustaining representations of the bushman myth, of sheep, gold, and riches for the making. In their descriptions of the built and natural environments, a place of sublime and beautiful landscape was often represented.[25]

Travel writing in the nineteenth century often arose from travel undertaken for education, work, or health, or as botanist, missionary, or artist, as verified by the travellers' profiles in this study. Increasingly in the twentieth century, travel writing developed from travel undertaken specifically for the purpose of writing about it (for example Mary Hall, and possibly Edwin and Marion Grew), emerging as a more autonomous literary genre than it was in the nineteenth century. Although, as academic in literary studies Helen Carr stated, while the formal characteristics of travel writing changed over time, many themes did not.[26] However, fellow academic Jan Borm argued that *travel writing* is not a genre, "but a collective term for a variety of texts … whose main theme is travel".[27] It is in this context that *travel writing* is considered here: as an assorted collection of writings by travellers.

---

[24] James Duncan and Derek Gregory, eds, *Writes of Passage: Reading Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 1999), 3.

[25] Horne, *The Pursuit of Wonder*, 185, 194.

[26] Carr, "Modernism and Travel," 74-75, which also discusses how the genre changed to the modern day interpretation of travel writing. See also Roy Bridges, "Exploration and Travel Outside Europe (1720-1914)," in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing,* eds Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 53, 63-65.

[27] Jan Borm, "Defining Travel: On the Travel Book, Travel Writing and Terminology," in *Perspectives on Travel Writing,* eds Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2004), 23.

What was Western Australia's Historical Background?

At this stage it is important to point out that this study is not a critical survey of the textual practice of travel writing, although the reader is alerted to the complicated multifarious issues of the genre in Chapter One. Instead it uses travel narratives to compile a sense of southern Western Australia, of contemporary views, attitudes, and opinions. Hence the travellers' observations are examined in light of Western Australia's historical junctures after this part of Australia became a British colony in 1829 (originally known as the Swan River Colony). The periods the travellers visited are summarised here, loosely divided into transportation of convicts (including post transportation) from 1850 to 1884, gold exploration from 1885 to 1900, and federation (up to World War One) from 1901 to 1914.

Transportation

The recourse to convict labour from 1850-1868—when just under 10,000 male convicts were transported to Western Australia, along with more than 1100 Pensioner Guards and their families—played a large part in stimulating economic growth and increasing European population in Western Australia, which by 1884 had risen to just on 33,000 from a mere 4,622 at the first census in 1848.[28]

Convict labour was used on public projects constructing buildings, roads, bridges and jetties. Ticket-of-leave convicts—those who had gained a licence that gave them liberty under strict regulations—were employed privately as unskilled or semi-skilled labourers, shepherds, timber workers and farmhands. A small number of eligible convicts were utilised as white-collar workers.[29] The convicts were watched over by the Pensioner

---

[28] "Historical Census and Colonial Data Archive," *HCCDA Document "WA-1848-census" page 17*, accessed 4 Nov 2009, <http://hccda.anu.edu.au/pages/WA-1848-census-02_17>; Kevin Moran, *Sand and Stone: The Social History of Western Australia as Recorded by the Pioneer Police of the Eastern Frontiers* (Perth: Frickers International Publishing, 2000), xiii.

[29] Sandra Potter and Alfred Daniel Letch, "A White-Collar Convict," *Building a Colony, the Convict Legacy*: *Studies in Western Australian History* 24 (2006): 37; P.R. Millett, "Convicts"; Andrew Gill, "Convicts, Conditional Pardon"; Michal Bosworth, "Convicts, Travellers' Writings"; & Sandra Potter, "Convicts, White-Collar," in *Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia,* Crawley, eds Jenny Gregory and Jan Gothard, (University of Western Australia, 2009), 240-245. Although, as Sandra Potter and Alfred Daniel Letch pointed out, the term "white-collar" was not included in nineteenth century vernacular, a distinct group of educated transportees was formed in the colony.

Guards, a force of British Army veterans on half pay.[30] Security and isolation were important in the nineteenth century because of the issue of criminal "disease", articulated in a fear of infecting colonial society by "contamination". Architects and reformers were also concerned with preventing criminal contamination among the convicts, and therefore limited their opportunities for association. As a result a great many convicts were gainfully employed on erecting the infrastructure to support their incarceration, including the visually imposing Fremantle Establishment (known as Fremantle Prison after 1867).[31] Once systems of control and protection were well-established, other necessary repairs and constructions were undertaken.[32]

Although initially it was expected that the convicts sent to Western Australia would hold light convictions and be of good character—and popular historical representations maintained this illusion—historian Sandra Taylor has argued that many convicts were vicious, violent criminals.[33] The behaviour of the convicts in the early years of transportation was generally portrayed as good, and yet the residents of the colony emphasised the distinction between bond and free, socially and physically expressed by limitations in behaviour of the convicts, in the adoption of curfews for ticket-of-leave men, and in constructing buildings for confinement.[34] Increasingly during the period of transportation hardened criminals arrived, therefore social problems such as alcoholism

---

[30] Mathew Trinca, "Controlling Places: A History of Spatial Intent in Western Australian Convictism," *Historical Traces: Studies in Western Australian History* 17 (1997): 30.

[31] Mathew Trinca, "The Control and Coercion of Convicts," *Building a Colony, the Convict Legacy: Studies in Western Australian History* 24 (2006): 35. A British Parliamentary report written in 1864 indicated that the convict labour force had been "confined almost exclusively to the erection of buildings for their officers and themselves", while necessary road improvements between Perth and the port of Fremantle, and Perth and King George Sound had not ensued. See *British Parliamentary Papers* vol. 37, 1864, cited in Judith Robison, ed., *From the Sources: A History of Western Australia in Documents and Images* (Perth: Western Australia History Foundation, 1992), 117.

[32] Norman Megahey, "Convict Labour," in *Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia,* eds Jenny Gregory and Jan Gothard (Crawley: University of Western Australia, 2009), 237. They built many more buildings, an estimated fifty bridges, 1,100 miles of roads, and five jetties and harbour facilities.

[33] Sandra Taylor, "Who Were the Convicts," *Convictism in Western Australia: Studies in Western Australian History* 4 (1981): 19, 29.

[34] Barry Godfrey and David J. Cox, "'The Last Fleet': Crime, Reformation, and Punishment in Western Australia after 1868," *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 41, No. 2 (2008): 250.

and sexual crime multiplied, and fear of breakouts and reprisals by the convicts persisted amongst residents.[35]

Because only male convicts were transported, it has been argued that the governing classes in Western Australia in the 1850s sponsored female immigration in an attempt to equal the imbalance. However, according to historian Jan Gothard, this was more of a British perception of colonial need, and was not a concern to Western Australia.[36] Rather, the colonial government, responding to the demands by the colonists, only wanted females if they were domestic servants.[37]

Transportation to Western Australia ended in 1868 because of reformation of the British prison system, and pressure from the eastern colonies to which over a third of freed convicts made their way, despite official impediments in operation.[38] While convictism had provided a visual improvement to the towns, an economic infrastructure, and a viable

[35] Geoffrey Bolton, *The Land of Vision and Mirage: Western Australia since 1826* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 2008), 28; Robison, *From the Sources,* 101-106; Trinca, "Controlling Places"; Godfrey and Cox, "The Last Fleet", 249-251. Evidence of differing representations about the conduct of the convicts and a sense of the need to protect Perth society against claims of contamination can be seen in the following example. A letter, published in the *Western Australian Government Gazette* on 3 June 1856 by the Colonial Secretary's office, proclaimed that the good conduct of the people attested that society in Perth was not "tainted" by the presence of convicts. However, at the same time, counter to that report, the *Perth Gazette* detailed felonious crimes being committed. See Robison, *From the Sources,* 119-120.

[36] Jan Gothard, *Blue China: Single Female Migration to Colonial Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 9. On the other hand, Clare Midgley claimed that propaganda for female emigration to the British colonies developed from public debate in Britain over the gender imbalance in the British population, and the presence of large numbers of "surplus" single women. By contrast, in 1862 the Female Middle Class Emigration Society saw the problem as being one of limited employment opportunities for women in Britain rather than lack of marriage opportunities. See Clare Midgley, "Ethnicity, 'Race' and Empire," in June Purvis, ed., *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2004), 12.

[37] Gothard, *Blue China*, 12. Although later policy makers linked female selection requests with the numbers of unassisted male immigrants pouring into Western Australia in search of gold in the 1890s, Gothard argued that "goldminers were no keener to have women around them at the diggings than were the colonies' itinerant (and usually single) male rural workers". See p.15.

[38] P. R. Millett, "Convicts," in *Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia,* eds Jenny Gregory and Jan Gothard (Crawley: University of Western Australia, 2009), 242; Rica Erickson, *Old Toodyay and Newcastle* (Toodyay: Toodyay Shire Council, 1974), 203-207.

local market, Western Australia was far from economically prosperous. It was still a highly dependent economy in the early 1880s. The families that prospered were intimately linked to the financing and servicing centre of Perth where merchants and lawyers invested their own capital to fan commercial speculation. The old families continued to uphold their power in agricultural and political matters, with enormous influence in rural areas. Even though representative government was introduced in 1870, with only a two-thirds elected Legislative Council, responsibility was to the Governor, not to the people. [39]

Western Australia's penal history was buried as quickly as possible, according to historian Bob Reece. There was a negative legacy of shame and cover up by the colonial elite, with the convicts' descendants anxious to escape the stigma of their origins.[40] Although the economy slowed down during the years after transportation ceased, a number of advancements had been made towards minimising Western Australia's isolation, and in expanding its agriculture. Roads and bridges were continually being improved, and telegraph lines were laid linking Western Australia to the rest of the western world by 1877. A more reliable steamship service replaced the small sailing vessels on the western coastal routes in the 1870s, and shipping companies called regularly into King George Sound. Public railway construction began, a line being completed from Fremantle to York in 1879. Wool export doubled, although its quality and quantity lagged behind the national average, but wheat production was not so successful due to poor agricultural practices and soil infertility.[41] However, there was still considerable rural and urban poverty present in the colony. The well off and comfortable in Western Australia were the civil servants, and the land-owning elite.

Gold Exploration

Between 1885 and 1894 important gold discoveries were made in Western Australia. In particular the rich fields at Coolgardie (1892) and Kalgoorlie (1893) were of great significance to the social, economic, political and

---

[39] C. T. Stannage, *The People of Perth: A Social History of Western Australia's Capital City* (Perth: Perth City Council, 1979), 86.
[40] Bob Reece, "Writing about Convicts in Western Australia," *Building a Colony, the Convict Legacy: Studies in Western Australian History* 24 (2006): 113.
[41] Tony Fletcher, "Merchant Shipping," in *Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia,* eds Jenny Gregory and Jan Gothard (Crawley: University of Western Australia, 2009), 569; Bolton, *The Land of Vision and Mirage*, 44. All mail, cargo and passenger coal steamers with a draft of more than four metres could not berth at Fremantle and used Albany as Western Australia's port of entry until 1900.

legal framework of Western Australia's development. With self-government and a new independent parliamentary system being established in 1890 under the premiership of John Forrest, a surge of prosperity in trade, commerce and industry occurred, causing a flow of capital for investment.[42] From 1895 to 1904, a time when other Australian colonies were slowly recovering from a major depression, Western Australia was growing at remarkable speed with gold production increasing rapidly, and its population growing exponentially, especially with large numbers of people arriving from the depressed eastern colonies. With news spreading that Western Australia was the latest gold rush frontier, capital from overseas began pouring in. European investors were inspired with confidence in the future of the colony through the expansion of trade, through unprecedented public works (Fremantle Harbour, 1897, water pipeline to Kalgoorlie in 1903), through the laying of railway lines (Great Southern Railway between Perth and Albany in 1889, Perth to Coolgardie in 1896, and to Kalgoorlie in 1897), and through the demand for railway sleepers, which provided a significant boost to the local timber industry.

Perth was transformed overnight, with congested streets, overcrowded accommodation, and the formation of tent lands, all resulting in health and sanitation services being stretched to the limit. Banks multiplied and with these, commercial, administrative, clerical, transport, building industries, and the professions provided better employment prospects than anywhere else in Australia. Gas lamps, and then electricity lit the city streets, trams and trolley buses were introduced, followed by motorcars, and the city's limits expanded with the growth of residential suburbs.[43]

But while the urban areas benefited substantially from the boom, rural areas suffered from a low supply of labour for some time. Because of the continuing increase in demand for food and agricultural products due to more and more people arriving with the gold rushes, it became necessary

---

[42] Information about the gold rush period was gathered from the following sources: George Seddon, "Western Australia: Some Changing Perceptions," in University of Western Australia, ed., *European Impact on the West Australian Environment 1829-1979* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1979), 154-186; Bolton, *The Land of Vision and Mirage*, 52-55; Vera Whittington, *Gold and Typhoid: Two Fevers* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1988), 4.

[43] F. K. Crowley, *Australia's Western Third* (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1960), 107-8, 145-147; Department of Treasury and Finance, *An Economic History of Western Australia since Colonial Settlement: 175th Anniversary of Colonial Settlement 1829-2004* (Perth: Government of Western Australia, 2004), 12.

for the government to increase and diversify agricultural production subsidies, and to improve management skills and technology.[44]

Also, the booming economy did not disguise the unforgiving hardships the prospectors and investors endured on the goldfields. Gold prospectors moved from one gold field to the next forming partnerships to share the work, the risks, the capital and any profits made. They usually formed tent towns, more permanent towns only developing if gold was mined from below the surface, requiring machinery and additional workers. From the outset, and until condensers were erected, the shortage of water was the fundamental problem. Therefore the cost of water was astonishing.[45] The deficiency of water and the almost complete lack of sanitation, open drains and sewers, combined with poor hygiene also produced devastating outbreaks of typhoid fever in epidemic proportions, not only on the goldfields, but throughout Western Australia.[46] The Public Health Service was over-taxed in providing sufficient sanitary facilities and water supplies.[47] Typhoid deaths peaked in the years 1896 and 1897. At the time a major proportion of the population did not grasp the concept of germs

---

[44] See William E. Greble, "A Bold Yeomanry: Social Change in a Wheatbelt District, Kulin 1848-1970," in *From the Sources: A History of Western Australia in Documents and Images,* ed. Judith Robison (Perth: Western Australia History Foundation, 1992), 169-183. Various methods of overcoming the labour shortage were tried, such as the use of Indigenous labour, and emigration schemes and assisted passage for individuals or groups. Differing agricultural experiences and environmental conditions for the migrants, and their inability to adapt to the loneliness in rural areas were some of the reasons that led to failure of the schemes. However, agriculture endured because most of the early settlers lacked the resources to leave, and later the Crown helped it to progress, if somewhat slowly.

[45] It was needed not only for drinking by the townspeople, but also for horses and camels used for transportation, for livestock corralled for food supply, and for crushing and extraction of gold.

[46] N. F. Stanley, "Changing Patterns of Health," in *European Impact on the West Australian Environment 1829-1979,* ed. University of Western Australia (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1979), 103. Water shortage was because of very light and uncertain rainfall making surface water scarce and of poor quality, and high evaporative rates due to the hot temperatures. As well, residents could not escape the diseases of the old country, having brought with them the pathogens of smallpox, influenza, cholera and measles. These diseases thrived in Western Australia's celebrated climate and ravaged the Indigenous populations. Malnutrition, scurvy, dysentery and ophthalmia, the dominant early diseases of the isolated colony reflected the poverty of the lower socio-economic groups.

[47] Stanley, "Changing Patterns of Health," 111; see Marian Aveling, ed., *Westralian Voices: Documents in Western Australian Social History* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1979), Chapter 5, "Health."

and microbes, doctors themselves only gradually beginning to understand, which exacerbated the problem. Hence government action to improve sanitation was slow.[48] It was not until January 1903 that the needs of the Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie region were met, when a pipeline was completed that brought water from a weir built in Mundaring.[49] Along with sewerage and drainage systems, food handling regulations and better housing, epidemic outbreaks and deaths from typhoid were reduced, reverting to endemic levels by 1910.[50]

Federation

In 1901, with a population of 193,601,[51] Western Australia joined the Federation of the Australian colonies.[52] One of Australia's first acts as a federation was to create strict entry requirements—encapsulated under the slogan "The White Australia Policy"—that built upon earlier legislation enacted in some of the colonies including Western Australia; which prohibited immigration of mainly Asians, Africans and Polynesians.[53]

---

[48] Whittington, *Gold and Typhoid,* 6-8.

[49] E. P. O'Driscoll, "Groundwater and Its Importance to the Mineral Industry," in *Mining in Western Australia,* ed. Rex. T. Prider (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1979).

[50] Vera Whittington and Jenny Gregory, "Typhoid Epidemics," in *Historical Encyclopedia of Western Australia,* eds Jenny Gregory and Jan Gothard Crawley (University of Western Australia, 2009), 890; Whittington, *Gold and Typhoid,* 9.

[51] R. T. Appleyard, "Western Australia: Economic and Demographic Growth, 1850-1914," in *A New History of Western Australia,* ed. C. T. Stannage (Perth: University of Western Australia, 1981), 220.

[52] *An Economic History of Western Australia*, 11, 13. With thirty-two percent of the colony's inhabitants in the goldfields—Kalgoorlie-Boulder became the second largest town in the colony in 1901—as well as driving the economy with gold, holding sixty-one percent of total exports at the time, their influence in Western Australia joining the federation was overwhelming. The miners felt that the government had unfairly exploited them with high tariffs and foreign charges, and their lack of adequate representation in the colonial parliament had given them the incentive to swing the vote to join the federation. See *Coolgardie Miner*, 31 Jul 1900, *Bunbury Herald*, *Northam Advertiser* and *Voting Patterns* reproduced in Robison, *From the Sources,* 162-167.

[53] Because the British Government technically disallowed racist intention, an introduction of a literacy test in a specified European language was used to bar unwanted immigrants overcoming the need for officials to mention their race, colour or religion. See Catriona Elder, "Immigration History," in *Australia's History: Themes and Debates,* eds. Martyn Lyons and Penny Russell (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005), 107.

By 1904 the population of the state had risen to a remarkable 239,000.[54] However, it was about this time that gold production began to fall, gold field townships began to depopulate and in 1907 departures from Western Australia exceeded new arrivals.[55] Through legislation the Moore Government (1906-1910) was able to capitalise on the gains it had made in population and revenue by encouraging the new arrivals to stay in Western Australia by instituting schemes to open up wheat-belt areas.[56] Western Australia underwent somewhat of an "agricultural revolution" after the primitive farming methods used at the turn of the century. From 1909 to 1914, 30,000 assisted or nominated immigrants, mainly British, arrived to settle in the "Golden West".[57]

In 1911 the first Labor Government with a majority in its own right came to power under Premier John Scaddan, an indication that control was beginning to move away from the wealthy ruling families. It remained in power until 1916.[58] Following unprecedented growth and prosperity, it is estimated that the level of per capita income reached just prior to the beginning of World War One in 1914 (the end of this study period), was not surpassed until 1950.[59]

How is the book structured?

The examination and analysis of the travellers' observations during these historical periods is assembled into seven chapters. Chapter One reviews contemporary literature that examines travel writing as a genre. Although this book is not critiquing travellers' discourse as textual practice, as it would in literary studies, this chapter discusses the features of colonial writing that contribute to the travellers' imagined sense of Western

---

[54] Moran, *Sand and Stone*, xiii; Crowley, *Australia's Western Third*, 112.

[55] Bolton, *The Land of Vision and Mirage*, 86.

[56] See Greble, "A Bold Yeomanry", 169-183; Bolton, *The Land of Vision and Mirage*, 87; G. H. Burvill, "Rural Achievements," in *European Impact on the West Australian Environment 1829-1979* (Perth: University of Western Australia, 1979), 42. This necessitated efficient use of immigrant labour and extensive programs of railway building in the wheat belt. Inland settlement was therefore encouraged, supported by the development of a drought-resistant variety of wheat, the use of superphosphate and subterranean clover to overcome the dry infertile sand plains east of the Avon River, and the introduction of multiple furrow and stump jump ploughs and harvesters.

[57] Appleyard, "Western Australia: Economic and Demographic Growth", 230; Bolton, *The Land of Vision and Mirage*, 91.

[58] Seddon, "Western Australia: Some Changing Perceptions", 173.

[59] *An Economic History of Western Australia*, 15.