Receding visions of pastoral idyll: An ethnographic and photographic study of marginal farming in the Maranoa.

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Certificate of Authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.
Acknowledgement

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1 Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book 8.
The names used in this project are pseudonyms. Personal details corresponding to property names, relatives, and ancestors have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The images from the fieldwork images have been de-identified. However the place names of towns and cities have remained the same.
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Farming is a practice that is exemplified by a set of particular activities, which include purposeful engagements with things, background knowledge, know-how, emotions and goals. From the formation of a British colony in New South Wales, this practice has been framed by a particular conception of ideal engagement with the land. Political support for this ideal led to the generation of an economic environment within which family farming was first underwritten by successive Australian governments and later abandoned. Within the marginal farming landscapes of the Maranoa, in south west Queensland, progressive depletion of soils that are unsuited to intensive production, within a landscape subject to drought, has left the heirs to this ideal without any possibility of realising the ‘good life’ for which they have been striving. Both the land, and the families that work it, are exhausted.

This thesis presents an extended ethnographic and photographic documentary study of marginal farming families in south west Queensland. It draws on history, especially narratives and images made of farming landscapes in colonial Australia, to account for the disposition of these farmers for hard work, self-reliance, and frugal living, as well as their commitment to an ordering of the landscape in the service of production.

Interpretation of the fieldwork data has been informed by theoretical texts from phenomenology, philosophy of technology and practice theory. The desperate circumstances of small family farmers, who have been marginalised within the physical, economic and political landscapes that they inhabit, are communicated in this thesis through documentary photography and ethnographic exegesis.
Introduction
Introduction

The questions and assumptions that framed the initial stages of this research arose out of an engagement with documentary photography. They were also shaped by my political and theoretical positioning as a feminist; operating from a privileged position within the late twentieth-century, urban, tertiary-educated mainstream of western critical culture.

Inspired by the documentary photography that recorded, in compelling detail, the lives of 1930s American family farmers, and persuaded that feminism must be positively impacting the lives of contemporary women on farms, I initiated an ethnographic study of family farmers on marginal land in the Maranoa district of south-western Queensland, Australia. In hindsight, the initial stages of this project were driven more by assumptions than by questions. Over the course of the long, and often painful, engagement with family farming that followed, I learned as much about myself, and my own cultural positioning, as I did about those I had set out to portray.

Initially, the outcome of the study was envisaged as a photographic collection documenting the lives of women on marginal, Australian family farms; supported by an ethnographic exegesis. The final thesis, as here submitted, differs from this initial conception in significant ways.

First, it proved impossible to separate the women of these farms from others in their family. Their family unit was understood as indivisible. The distinctness of the roles assigned to different family members bound them to the family as a whole, rather than providing each member with a separate identity. These families perceived my feminist agenda as both objectionable and problematic. For this reason, my feminist stance needed rethinking and careful negotiation.

Arriving at an approach to interpreting the fieldwork material that did not do violence to these women and their families meant moving away from a lot of the theoretical positions that I had

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1 I am referring specifically to the Farm Security Administration (FSA) project. This project preceded the Works Progress Administration (WPA) of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal and included the work of documentary photographers Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Arthur Rothstein and Ben Shahn (Stott 1986).
brought to the project. Thus theorists that shaped my initial engagement with the material, such as Judith Butler, Hannah Arendt and Adrianna Cavarero, do not appear in the finished work. Instead, a combination of practice theory, cultural theory, phenomenological approaches to narrative and technology, and some actor-network theory came together in shaping the interpretation.

Second, I had embarked upon the fieldwork with a preconception about the kind of images that I would make. Inspired by the work of Walker Evans, Robert Frank, Lauren Greenfield, Chris Killip, Josef Koudelka, Dorothea Lange, Markéta Luskacova, Mary-Ellen Mark, and Larry Towell among others, who evoke closeness with their subjects, and produce portraits both unguarded and intimate, I began the project with aspirations to produce similar work. However as the fieldwork unfolded, the sympathetic relations between photographer and subject that are necessary to the making of such images, did not arise. Rather, a much more difficult relationship, requiring ongoing and careful negotiation, developed. This impacted on the photography. For this reason, rather than the photography forming the centerpiece of the submission, the thesis took shape around the process of coming to terms with who these people were, and what it was that I was portraying. Unexpectedly it was history, especially narratives from the journals of early women farmers in Australia, and images made of farming landscapes in the colony that first opened a sympathetic view of the orientation to the world inherited by these family farmers.

The written thesis is arranged in two parts; the first presenting my re-making of a history of early farming in Australia (1788-1900). This re-making was driven by my need to feel my way to an understanding of the disposition of the farmers that I had lived with in the Maranoa. The second part focuses on the Maranoa. It is in this part that the fieldwork and the photographs are given a place, enabling the voices of the farmers to be present. The fieldwork chapters are interrupted by Chapter 8, that focuses on the shifts in farming that took place during the twentieth century. This interruption is a device that allows the fieldwork chapters to orient themselves to different historical material. The first fieldwork chapter, Chapter 7, displays the extent to which the farmers are heirs to the early history of farming in the colony, recounted in Part 1. The second fieldwork chapter, Chapter 9, by contrast, speaks of the pain that currently dominates the lives of these family farmers.
The two parts of the thesis could, in fact, be read in reverse order. This would perhaps correspond more closely with my own journey. However an historical sequencing of the narrative allows for a more gently unfolding picture of the heritage to which the family farmers are the heirs. Any reader impatient to get to the fieldwork, which is, after all, the heart of the thesis, is encouraged to move straight to Part 2, revisiting Part 1 at leisure.

Accompanying the written dissertation is an electronic visual submission of selected photographs from the fieldwork. This collection of images encapsulates the emotional tenor of the fieldwork experience, and provides for a more intense engagement with the photographs than is possible through those included in the written thesis, alone. This collection can be found on the Digital Video Disc (DVD) located in a sleeve inside the cover of the thesis.

The Project

The project began with an extended ethnographic study of marginal farming families in south west Queensland.

I had previously been involved in two ethnographic and photographic documentary projects involving farming women, one based in the Gippsland district in Victoria and one in the Cowra district, in western New South Wales. The idea for the Maranoa project evolved out of a conversation with 'Kathy,' a farmer from south west Queensland. We met at the annual Women of the Land gathering in Yanco in 1995 where I had been invited to exhibit work from Cowra. Kathy showed enthusiasm for the exhibited work, and offered to introduce me to her local branch of the Country Women’s Association (CWA) with the idea that I might pursue a similar project in her area. Following from Kathy’s introduction, I became a regular visitor at various branches of the Queensland CWA in the Maranoa, in the years 1996 and 1997.

2 The first time I use a pseudonym, the name will appear in inverted commas [i.e. ‘Kathy’]. There after the name will appear as simply [Kathy].

3 The CWA is one of the oldest voluntary women’s networks in Australia (Teather 1992a; 1992b). The association consists of a national body, and seven independent associations, one in each state and territory. Founded in New South Wales in 1922, the Country Women’s Association emerged out of a ‘Bush Women’s Conference’ called by Florence Gordon, a journalist with the Stock and Station Journal (McIntyre, 1967). Grace Munro of Keera Station, Bingara, in the Northern
The rural electorate of Maranoa is 480 kilometres west of Brisbane and 1,050 kilometres north west of Sydney. The Maranoa covers an area of approximately 731,297 sq km and is the largest electorate in Queensland (Australian Electoral Commission, 2010). Due to the vastness of the electorate and the diversity of its agricultural output I decided to focus on the Balonne and Paroo Shire areas in the south and west of the Maranoa. These areas are dominated by broad acre farming (beef, wool and crops). The Balonne Shire is 31 119 square kilometres in size and, at the time of the fieldwork supported a population of 4850. Its major towns are St George, Dirranbandi, Bollon, Thallon, Mungindi and Hebel. The Paroo Shire is further west and covers an area of 46 647 square kilometres, with a population of 2231 at the time of the fieldwork (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] – Regional Population Growth, 1998-99). It supports the towns of Eulo, Yowah, Wyandra and Cunnamulla.

Like many Local Government Areas in remote rural Australia, the population of the Maranoa is in decline, and this process has accelerated in the years since my fieldwork was undertaken. In Paroo the population has been steadily declining by 1.8% per year since 2004. The population in Balonne has declined 1.2% per year in the same period (ABS, Regional Population Growth, 2010). The total number of small farms in the Maranoa has been gradually decreasing since 1998, as these small holdings have failed and have been subsequently bought up and incorporated into larger, commercial holdings.

Between 2002-2008/9 the Balonne and Paroo Shire areas were hit by one of the severest droughts on record. Many struggling farmers did not survive. In 2010/11, the same area has been flooded. The period in which my fieldwork was undertaken, during 1998 and 1999, marked a point at which many small farmers were reaching the end of their resources. The trials of the subsequent decade were greater than many could have withstood. The unrelenting climate, both economic and physical, has accelerated a process already well under way at the time of my study.

Contacting participants

The first three women to volunteer for participation in the project had met me and heard about the project through the CWA. These three women introduced me to friends of theirs, who also volunteered to participate. This ‘snowball’ effect is a common practice in traditional ethnography where participants are acquired through previous contacts. Although my original intention had been to stay in rural towns and visit farmers on their properties, all of the families who volunteered invited me to take up temporary residency in their homes. I agreed, on the basis that I would help them with whatever chores were within my abilities as a means of making some return for their hospitality.

Before arriving on each property I briefed the participants fully about the nature of the project. This briefing included discussion of my role as a participant observer. I brought to these meetings a portfolio of photographs that I had made during previous projects with rural women. I talked about the kind of work that I do, so that potential participants would be fully aware of the likely process and outcomes of the project that they were volunteering for. We agreed that I should live with them for several weeks before beginning any documentation of their lives. This plan had come out of my discussion with the first two women to volunteer. These women suggested that I should become familiar with them and their routines before beginning to document. This would give them an opportunity to get to know me, so that by the time I began to photograph or take notes from our conversations I would be familiar to them, and they to me.

In these introductory discussions with the participants, it was agreed that I would not make audio recordings of our conversations, as they felt uncomfortable about being recorded in this way. Instead I would keep a journal in which notes could be made during and after discussions. I explained that they had the right to ask me not to record, either in notes or photographs, anything that they were uncomfortable about. I also made it clear that they could terminate my stay with them at any time. I told them that their real names, and the names of their properties, would not be disclosed. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the thesis to refer to the fieldwork participants and properties. All participants understood that the outcome of the project, both photographic and written, would be presented as a doctoral thesis. It was agreed that I would not further exhibit or publish the photographs without their permission.
The men participating in the project were all third or fourth generation Maranoa farmers, in all but one case working and living on their family farm. Three of the men were working on properties they had inherited, and two were working with their fathers on their parents’ property, which they hoped to inherit. Both the latter had borrowed money to purchase very small (unviable) holdings adjacent to their parents’ land, and were working this land in addition to the parent property. The only farming couple not to be working their family property were ‘Don and Ann Evans.’ Don’s father had lost the property that Don was to have inherited, during the wool crisis of 1993, several years before the study began. Don and Ann, who had lived and worked on Don’s parents’ property prior to its sale, had not wanted to leave the area and so had become managers of another, commercially owned, property. Three of the six women participating in the project had been born and raised in the Maranoa. Of the other three, two came from farming families (one in north-western Queensland and one in western Victoria) while the third had been brought up in a large rural town west of Brisbane. Thus all but one of the participants came from a long farming heritage, and for all but two this heritage lay in the Maranoa.

Of the six properties taking part in the project, three were located near the Balonne, Culgoa, and Moonie Rivers, respectively. Although these properties were slightly less vulnerable to drought, and the families were consequently more financially secure, all properties were considered marginal in that the average yearly precipitation rate was below 800mm which is considered minimal for cropping and keeping livestock.

Of the six farm families that participated in the project three grew a combination of wool, beef and wheat with two extending their pasturage to include lucerne, chick peas and barley. Of the remaining three, energies were focused exclusively on wool and beef.

Altogether 16 adults, 4 teenagers and 9 children took part in the project.
Data gathering

All up I spent nearly eighteen months travelling to and from the Maranoa. The bulk of the data was collected between 1998 and 1999. I made several subsequent visits in June 2000 and January 2001, during which I was able to discuss some of the material I had produced.

Living with the families allowed me to gain some important insights. Through being-with and engaging in their every day practices in almost all farming and non-farming contexts, I was able to partake in their conversations among themselves about their lives, take photographs, and ask numerous questions about their life on the farm. When appropriate, I volunteered to work on local organisations and committees and attended as many events as I could, as well as participating in work connected to the farm. I conducted many informal and formal interviews and kept two journals, one recording my interactions with the farmers and the other my reflections of them. In addition I kept a diary of the day’s events, that included the people I had met, activities undertaken, and other information.

As a participant observer working in a documentary tradition, I adopted an ‘active’ role in the field. Active participation involves near total immersion enabling the researcher to learn from exposure to, and involvement in, the day-to-day activities of the participants (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002; Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; 2004). Goffman (1989, p. 125) in particular insists that field research involves “subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals” in order to see how these individuals respond to events and experiences.

Carrying out such research involves two distinct activities. First, the researcher enters a social setting, participating in the daily routines and developing ongoing relations with the people in it, all the while observing what is going on. Second, the researcher writes down, in a regular and detailed way, what she has observed by participating in the daily lives of those around her. This written record of observation and experience is a critical part of any ethnographic project. It involves recording as well as interpreting peoples everyday lives and activities.
Deciding when and where and how to write can be difficult (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995, p. 20). In the Maranoa, I switched between jotting notes openly in the field to writing notes later in private. Both modes of writing have their strength and weaknesses. The latter allows for an intense immersion in the daily rhythms, often increasing and preserving the trust between you and the participants while the former can produce a more detailed, closer to the moment record of that life. However it can also have the effect of interrupting the flow of the activity. Taking notes in the field is not always practical. In the Maranoa, the work the participants were keen for me to focus on was predominantly physical and out of doors. This made note taking difficult but not impossible. Despite the difficulty, I remained committed to keeping a journal both in and out of the field. The type of notes I took varied widely and often reflected the nature of the activity and the setting within which the activity was taking place. To minimize disruption I kept a small, discreet note-book in my pocket at all times. I also developed a personalized short-hand style that enabled me to make a record of conversations had in the field. Often these short in-field conversations produced insights that I could later go back to in a more comfortable setting. In many situations, I was able to describe a situation briefly and as it occurred. This practice (although limited) became so common that many farmers would anticipate the appearance of my note-book and joke about it “Are you writing this down too?”

Field notes were written immediately after the event. This was important as it enabled me to make extensive written records of the day’s events. Often this writing up of events would occur at the end of the day and would require extending on or elaborating on the jot notes taken in the field.

Informal interviews were frequently conducted whilst I was participating in the day-to-day lives of the farmers. These interviews, although unanticipated, gave the farmers an opportunity to explain a particular situation that had arisen or grievance they had referred to. In such an event the interview would often take place over a meal or afternoon tea.

Reproducing dialogue through direct and indirect quotations, through reported speech and paraphrasing became central to my note taking practice. In many instances to preserve the flow of the spoken interaction, I recorded broken fragments of quoted speech in my jottings.
As I participated in the lives of the Maranoa farmers, I inevitably began to reflect on and interpret what I had experienced and observed. Initially I had to make sense of my experiences by intuitively selecting, highlighting and ordering details. I also included extended reflection on certain episodes in the field.

Reflection on my own interpretive process was also necessary. To capture these reflections and make them available for further thought and analysis I had to produce commentaries, and memos to myself about how I was responding to things (keeping a reflective journal). This journal was later read alongside my descriptive field notes.

As noted, I endeavoured to reflect on all field notes and interview material while it was still fresh, usually later on the day the notes were taken. However arriving at an overall understanding of the material, and an interpretive stance towards it, was much more difficult than anticipated, and was not achieved until some time after my return from the field. My experience in the field had been so different to my expectations, and so contrary to the interpretive positions that I had brought to it, that I was at first quite unable to know how to do justice to the material or to the farmers who had participated in the project.

As a photographer I drew on both documentary and ethnographic practices in the field. These traditions share (albeit differently) an interest in empowering the participants. However they differ in the weighting they give to the researcher’s own agendas. Documentary photography has often been a vehicle for giving expression to a particular agenda of the photographer (Renov 1993). Ethnography, on the other hand, while acknowledging the researcher as inevitably bringing her own prior positions and understandings to the project, emphasizes the negotiation of these in such a way as to promote collaboration and a reciprocal quest for understanding (Atkinson 2007 [2001]).

Unlike the experience of previous projects, where I had been easily able to find resonance between my own agenda and the agenda of the participants, in the Maranoa this process was far more difficult. I had brought to the project an ideological commitment to feminism as a political agenda, as well as a principled way of working. In previous projects this coupling had been unproblematic, but in the Maranoa my intended feminist framing of a political message to
be communicated by the photographs, was completely unacceptable to the project participants. The principles developed within feminist approaches to ethno-graphy, of reciprocity, honesty, accountability, responsibility and equality, demanded of me that I rethink my initial conception for the content and message of the photographic project. Hence my methodological approach, which remained feminist, became divorced from my documentary agenda, which could no longer be explicitly feminist.

On later reflection, and after coming to know the women of the Maranoa through the field work, it was clear that their rejection of feminism was in fact a declaration of their independence from such ‘self-indulgent’ and ‘urban’ strategies. The strength of these women was impressive. Not only did they play a crucial role in ensuring the survival of the family farm, but they deliberately down-played their own roles in order to support the self-esteem of their husbands. It was the men, not the women, who seemed closest to breakdown on these farms. By back-grounding themselves, the women foregrounded their men as ‘in control’, at least within the space of the family; and, by releasing the men as far as possible from care for anything outside the immediate demands of the farm, the women lightened the men’s burden insofar as it was possible. The activities of the women were often mundane, and provided the woman with no other identity than that of a help-mate, yet without the work of these women the farms could not have survived. I have referred to the women as ‘boundary riders’ to try to capture their efforts to create a secure space within which their men could achieve control and enact the role of heroic tamer of the land, to which they were heir. Although I have not interpreted the fieldwork in feminist terms, as to do so would have done violence to these women, I have nevertheless wished to forcefully convey the strength of these women and their centrality to the survival of their families as well as their farms.

Hence the lack of detail around the care practices of the women is a function of the way the families and the women themselves back-grounded their work. From the beginning the women took an active role in directing the ethnographic gaze towards men (and away from themselves). I was rarely allowed to spend much time watching the women work, but rather was directed to accompany the men out onto the farm. Much of the day-to-day work of women was done while I was out with the men, at the instigation of the families. Whenever I tried to talk to them about their role on the farm, the women answered that there was not much to say. This
made it impossible to attain any kind of detailed record of the women’s activities. Perhaps this was a function of their own feelings of insecurity (anxiety) around men’s work. Physical roles for men were fast diminishing on the farm. This was partly a function of the way technologies had replaced manual labour and had delegated humans to the role of overseer and manager. This role of overseer and manager was easily transferable and, where it had become necessary for a sharing of this role, women had taken up the role with ease. As a result of the shift from physical labour to managerial roles, women are now far more likely to take an active role on the farm, however the idea of ‘farm work’ has remained a masculine domain. Representations of men’s and women’s roles as distinct from each other seem to be important to the maintenance of the farm as a family unit. The farming men would have been left in a vacuum had they relinquished their role on the farm, or indeed had they allowed even a slight relaxation of those boundaries and distinctions.

In practice, I realized, I had previously seen myself more as a documentary photographer than as an ethnographer. I was not immediately able to let go of my projected vision for the photographic work. The photographs taken still carry an echo of the influences that I had brought to the field. However the participants, who were as aware of the conflict as I was, took a very active role in driving the project in directions that they wished it to go. The result was an interesting one. Although interpretation of the outcomes of the project demanded a different route to that anticipated, and in fact required enormous effort, the project represented an engagement with otherness that I had formerly complacently theorized, but had never before had to truly negotiate.

The ethnographic principles guiding my work were informed by feminists Ruth Behar (1996), Kum Kum Bhavnani (1994), Donna Haraway (1991), Lila Abu Lughod (1998), and Judith Stacey (1988), amongst others. The common thread in these women’s work was the notion of building an ethical approach to research. Not only does an ethics of care take issue with both positivist and absolute relativist approaches to the question of researcher objectivity, but it also recognizes the disempowerment of the subject - rather than trying to right the imbalance, the researcher takes responsibility for not repeating it. Bhavnani argues that the crucial question for all feminists is ‘does the analysis re-inscribe the researched into powerlessness, pathologised, without agency?’ (1994, p. 30)
Bhavnani’s challenge is difficult. However recognising the dimension of the challenge in the context of farming – a practice that has traditionally inscribed power to men has been another of the important learning experiences that I have gained from undertaking this work. I have had to face some of my own prejudices as a researcher about how power is evaluated and made visible. At a fundamental level my stance as a researcher originates in my outlook on life. Prior experience, education and training, and commitments influence my stance, not only in writing notes but also the way I think and act and respond to people in their settings. The effects of this stance appear in my writing in subtle ways; they can range from the way I identify with the women to the way I distance myself from the participants and write about them empathically (or not) to the kinds of activities I give attention to and write detailed descriptions about. The extent to which I have been forced me to examine my own prejudices and orientations has been among the most important outcomes of this project, in terms of my development as a photographer.

The incorporation of questions around researcher objectivity raised issues around the research process for me, from the choice of topic to participants, to negotiating access, to developing relations, to interpretation, and representation. Haraway’s description of ‘feminist objectivity’ as being ‘about limited location and situated knowledge… which allows us to become answerable for what we learn to see’ was useful at this point (Haraway 1988, p. 583). It is not ‘partiality for its own sake, but, rather, for the sake of the connections and unexpected openings situated knowledge make possible.’ (Haraway 1988, p. 590)

**The Photography**

As a researcher with a background in documentary photography I am used to carrying a camera around with me at all times. My camera is a part of me, an extension of who I am in the field. In the Maranoa, however this practice was slightly modified in response to the participants’ wishes. During the first weeks on each property I kept my camera and journal in my bag.

It is often the case that there is a degree of awkwardness in my relations with participants at the beginning of an ethnographic project. Participants feel awkward at being the subject of study, and feel unsure of the way that they will be represented. In my earlier work with rural women in Victoria and in western NSW, and also in projects with Indigenous Australians, this early
awkwardness had dissipated rapidly as participants got to know me. The Maranoa project was unique in my experience, in the levels of discomfort that remained between the participants and myself.

In hindsight I realise that I had not recognised the extent of the isolation of these families and the impact that that would have upon their ability to welcome my urban disposition and orientation to the world, into their lives. By the time I began documentation of the lives and practices of the Maranoa families, they had developed clear agendas to steer the project in ways that they felt more comfortable with. For this reason they remained very active in controlling my movements around the property. At no stage did I wander around on my own or negotiate the property without escort. Every morning, my movements for that day would be carefully choreographed by the farmers. Rather than me spending my time chiefly with the women, as I had originally envisaged, they insisted on ensuring that I get a rich picture of life on a farm. Further, what I photographed and the degree of attention that I gave each subject, was largely determined by the farmers. In some instances, a farmer might point to or direct my attention to a particular situation or event, requesting that I recorded it.

Acutely aware of the ethical issues attached to ethnographic practice, I abandoned my plans to make an intimate record of the lives of these farmers. Rather, I allowed them to establish a distance between them and me. This is evident in the photographs I took, which often present the farmers from a distant vantage point. My usual preference for using a wide angle lens (24mm) exacerbated this effect. Normally using a lens traditionally reserved for landscapes meant getting very close to the subjects so as not to make them appear far away. However in the Maranoa this technique resulted in the subjects appearing much further away.

Once I returned from the field the process of developing and preparing the photographs for analysis began. Having used traditional archival black and white film in a Canon Eos 5 SLR camera, this involved processing and proofing the images in a wet dark room. The sheer number of photographs made it difficult to print each one separately so I decided to digitize them for ease of use. Once the photographs were digitized I was able to sort through them individually. The process of sorting and categorizing the images into themes was a labor intensive one and the categories were often difficult and slippery to pin down. It wasn't until I began to engage
with the historical material more deeply that I began to see resonances between the history and the photographs. Themes started to emerge that in turn informed the research and writing up.

**Influences informing the photographic work**

Despite its relatively short history, documentary photography has undergone a broad and complex evolution since its inception in the nineteenth century. The values, aims and principles that informed this practice, from early examples exemplified by the work of American sociologist and photographer Lewis Hine in the first decade of the twentieth century, to the grainy and turbulent street photographs of Garry Winogrand in the 1960s, explicitly evoke agendas of social reform and political reflection.

Post-modern and post-structuralist debate of modernist documentary photography has shifted the focus from the subject matter alone (and the status of photography as an objective medium) to the relations between the photographer and subject (Tagg 1988).

An account of the relations between the photographer and the subject and the power structures that mediate them is a constant topic amongst theorists of documentary photography (Grundberg 1990). In the interest of portraying, and subsequently improving, people's lives, photographers have often rendered subjects into 'passive sufferers rather than active agents of their own lives.' (Wells 2004, p. 178)

Of these critical positions I have been particularly influenced by the work of Stella Bruzzi (2000) and John Corner (1996) who challenge some of the prevailing maxims of documentary critique and appraisal (albeit in film and television).

As these theorists have shown, documentary photography can explore significant themes beyond the strictly visible, building an argument by using content and form, and by tapping into possibilities brought about by resonances, repetition, absences and juxtapositions. Individual photographs can also play a role in apprehending meaning, which can be literal, allegorical, didactic or conceptual.
The documentary projects that have directly influenced my practice as a photographer include *The Americans* by Robert Frank, *Gypsies*, and *Exiles* by Joseph Koudelka, *In Flagrante*, by Chris Killip, *Photographs of Spitalfields*, by Markéta Luskacova, *Streetwise* by Mary Ellen Mark, and *Girl Culture* by Lauren Greenfield.

What is common to these projects is the bringing of a documentary style of photography to portraying those who live on the margins of society. The subjects of these projects are pariahs, people whose culture no longer has resonance with the mainstream, and whose way of life is rapidly disappearing. Greenfield’s project differs significantly from the others in that its focus is not upon the marginalized, but on a re-conceptualisation of the representation of women in popular culture. Initially a strong influence for the project, Greenfield’s work became back-grounded as the feminist representational agenda for my Maranoa work was re-examined.

My photographic approach has also been informed by the work of Larry Towell (1997; 1998; 2002), in particular his book *The Mennonites*. This is a thoroughly post-modern photographic work, hinting at understandings and meanings beyond those which can be spoken or figured. *The Mennonites* is an example of ‘third generation’ documentary photography, with the New Journalism behind it, changing tone and strategy from section to section. Towell’s images differ significantly from those of the photographers cited above, as he offers the viewer a combination of both the ‘strangest’ of hard-edged reportage and disarming suggestiveness. He is operating in a world in which meanings dissolve into each other, where dream and matter are indistinguishable.

While engaged in the field work I had been conscious of the influence of certain photographers, in particular Robert Frank, Josef Koudelka, Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans in my framing of the images. As I began to know the farmers, certain photographic styles were instinctively felt to be more appropriate and evocative of their lives. Again the work of Larry Towell stands out here for the way he captures a sense of something hidden within the images themselves, hints at understandings and meanings beyond that which can be spoken or figured. In the introductory section of his book *The Mennonites*, for example, which concludes with an apparently serene image - there is a sense of absence, of something elusive and of lives lived beyond the frame.
While later engaging with the printed photographs I recognised the extent to which certain photographic approaches especially of those who elude to subliminal subjectivities, beyond reach of the camera’s gaze had shaped my style. However the photographs taken in the Maranoa differed from those that had influenced me in that they communicated, to a greater extent than I had intended, the tension between intimacy and strangeness in my relations to the farmers. The pride that the farmers wrapped around themselves like a defensive shell, that could not hide their vulnerability and sense of defeat, was captured in the photographs. They had invited me in, but sought to control and keep me at bay. These tensions colour the photographs in ways I did not expect and only fully recognized during the process of interpretation.

Interpreting the fieldwork

To make sense of the way farmers have orientated themselves to the world I have drawn on a body of philosophical, sociological and design-oriented work that focuses on practices. ‘Practice theory’ has a long and heterogenous lineage (Warde 2005, p. 132) drawing on some of the major western theoretical traditions of the twentieth century such as phenomenology, hermeneutics, science and technology studies and postmodern cultural analysis. The term ‘practice’ first becomes an explicit focus in Bourdieu’s *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972), appearing again in Giddens’s *Central Problems in Social Theory* (1978) and MacIntyre’s *After Virtue* (1981). More recently, Theodor Schatzki (1996) *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social* and Andreas Reckwitz’s *Towards a Theory of Social Practices* (2002) have extended the field putting it at the forefront of some of the most interesting forms of social analysis to emerge at the turn of the twenty-first century. In the fields of sociology and design this body of theory has been variously referenced by Elizabeth Shove (2005; 2007), Jack Ingram (2007), Matthew Watson (2005; 2007), Martin Hand (2007), Alan Warde (2005), Mika Pantzar (2003; 2005), Jaap Jelsma (1999), and Susan Sherringham and Susan Stewart (2011), among others.

Reckwitz refers to a practice as a ‘particular way of understanding the world’ that embraces ‘forms of bodily and mental activities,’ ‘things and their use,’ ‘background knowledge’ [which is historically and culturally specific], ‘know-how’ and emotions and goals (p. 249). This interpretation of a practice is coherent with that of MacIntyre who understands a practice to be
‘...any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity’ (2007, p. 187). Sherringham and Stewart draw on these thinkers in their argument that ‘practices are not just clusters of related activities and associated know-how, but are rich collections of associations, embodied experience, and engagements with the world through designed things, environments, and interpretative frameworks.’ (Sherringham and Stewart, 2011)

Applying this body of definitions to farming, we can see that it is a practice exemplified by a particular activities, know-how and embodied experience, that are encountered through interpretive frameworks, given through an inherited body of shared narratives, visual traditions and other associations.

Thus it can be seen that the practice of farming includes, but is not limited to, activities such as grazing, harvesting, irrigation, shearing, parasite control, animal genetics and so on. Farmers share a body of know-how that enables them to recognize threats to their land or crops, such as soil erosion or insect attack. They know when to rotate grazing to allow plants to rest and regenerate and develop deep roots systems for long term sustainable farming; how to maintain correct stock density, develop cost effective short term fencing to minimize stock movement, and develop bore and trough water systems that will reduce risks to stock in times of drought.

Significantly, however, in becoming proficient at farming, the farmer also becomes ‘disposed’ to particular ‘pleasures and pains, bodily disciplines and sensitivities.’ (Sherringham and Stewart, 2011) For the farmers that I stayed with, the practice of farming delivers intense visceral and sensuous pleasures. They spoke with feeling of such things as the smell of rain after a dry spell, or feel of the ground on a frosty morning. Practice theory also emphasizes the disciplines imposed by a practice. For the farmers of the Maranoa these disciplines are essential to their ability to endure the hardship of life on a marginal farm.

Practice theory suggests that to gain insight into why farmers feel and act as they do, why they persevere in the face of severe adversity, and why they cling to their practice and to their land with such a strongly felt love for where they are and what they are doing, we must first understand the stories, traditions and dispositions they have inherited, that give context to their striving and their experience.
The role of history

Practice theory’s emphasis on the way inherited narratives can shape a disposition pointed to the role of the historical material I was engaging with.

As already noted, the journals and images that first provided a point of resonance with the fieldwork experience, led me to immerse myself in historical accounts of agriculture in Australia.

In particular, I consulted nineteenth century military accounts recording the settlement of the colony by Arthur Phillip and Watkin Tench, the journals of explorers Thomas Mitchell [Maranoa], Gregory Blaxland, W. C. Wentworth, William Cox and John Edward Eyre; surgeon A. Bowes Smythe, the reminiscences of early squatters by J. C Byre, Edward Curr and J. Nisbit, the personal memoirs of early settlers Mary McManus from the Maranoa, Mary McConnel and Louisa Meredith, pioneers G. Barton, A. J. Boyd, ‘Milky White’ Emerson, Herbert Gibson, Richard Jefferies and Roger Therry. I have also drawn on colonial letters from Peter Cunningham, John Glover, and Samuel Sidney as well as writers Barbara Baynton, Henry Lawson, A. B. Paterson, and in the twentieth century William Lane and Steele Rudd. References have been drawn from colonial inquiries and police reports, as well as from early governors in the Historical Records of Australia.

Attitudes around issues such as squatting and selecting were gleaned from letters in newspapers such as the Bathurst Free Press, the Bulletin, the Colonial Observer, the Sydney Illustrated Press, the Sydney Gazette, and the Sydney Morning Herald to name but a few. In the twentieth century I drew on the Australian Town and Country Journal and the Pastoralist’s Review for examples of technological innovation and images of the technological sublime.

In addition to these primary texts I consulted a range of secondary sources on Australian history. The most significant of these were Paul Carter’s The Road to Botany Bay, which alerted me the importance of boundaries. In the Maranoa boundaries were used not only to distinguish one property from one another but also to define political and social relations within the family. Boundaries distinguished zones of responsibility between men and women, and demarcated the
house and garden from the productive landscape. They were a central technology of ordering and control within the practice of these farmers.


The English eighteenth century art historian, John Barrall, was also critical. In his book *The dark side of the landscape: the rural poor in English painting 1730-1840* ([1980] 2006) the role of pastoral art in molding our understanding of the rural at a time when rural cultures were disappearing emerged as a key focus.

My views of colonial women were informed by the work of historians, Lake (1986), Murphy (2006), Rowley (1989), and Schaffer (1988).

The combination of practice theory and history proved to be a vital source of theme creation when analyzing the photographs. It enabled me to draw out themes that only became apparent as a result of understanding farming as a practice. However once the initial themes were developed, the images started to talk back. This was particularly the case when I was developing Chapters 7 and 9 (the field work chapters). Not only did the images capture and reinforce the immense importance of the family to the survival of the farm but they also started to show signs of breakdown. Evidence of breakdown was everywhere.

**Philosophies of Technology**

According to Borgmann the technology of our time differs from that of earlier periods in that it diminishes people's engagement with the world around them. Agricultural technologies, in particular, are affected by what he has termed the 'device paradigm.' Contemporary agricultural technologies not only remove the farmer from the land, but increasingly alienate him or her from direct, sensuous participation in the cycle of growth and replenishment.

Latour, Callon and Law argue that both human and non-humans are actors and collaborators in maintaining, or bringing into being, particular dispositions of the world. A bore that supplies water to the property and to the house can be seen as a collaborator in the farmer's project of harnessing the productive capacity of the land. Similarly, both the farmer and his machinery can be seen as disciplined actors in a larger network of production and consumption. The arguments of these theorists is important for understanding the irony of the farmer's relationship to technology within a landscape of increasingly intensive, technologised farming.

**Social theory**

The work of social and cultural theorist Zygmunt Bauman (1989; 1991; 1992; 1998; 2004; 2007) has been influential in the thesis. Bauman metaphorically characterizes those who are free to move, motivated purely by personal or corporate gain, as 'hunters.' He emphasizes their difference from the place-based 'gardeners' who were nurtured within earlier political and technological regimes. If the family farmer is a 'gardener,' the transnational corporation is the archetypal hunter, detached from any specific nation or place and intent upon maximization of profit.

The power of the hunter within 'liquid' modernity has many implications for the future of Australian farming. It is especially destructive for family farmers, who are bound to the particularity of their land and yet are forced to operate within a global financial environment dominated by, and privileging, a free-roaming hunter.
Chapter Overview

Part 1 maps the disposition that the Maranoa farmers are heirs to.

Chapter 1 Risk and Enterprise shows how the Maranoa farmer is heir to a cultural disposition that thought strategically and was prepared to embark on risky enterprises for future benefit. In particular it shows how agriculture was a highly valued practice and the extension of this practice was considered important enough to take risks for. The reason agriculture was so highly valued was because of its ability to generate wealth, as well as its capacity to sustain not only the colonists (thus promoting individualism and independence) but also other important colonial enterprises such as the military. In addition agriculture was seen as the foundation of civil society.

Chapter 2 Work: the ordering of landscapes and souls shows how hard work is seen as virtuous and the right path to the realization of rewards. It is understood as the driver of an ordering of both the world and the soul. Order is a technology that controls, regulates and makes things predictable. The physical ordering of the landscape was achieved alongside a political ordering of relations within society and an ethical ordering of individual desires.

Chapter 3 The fruits of order: visions of a compliant nature demonstrates how the ordering of the landscape is directed towards the realization of nature’s bounty. Within an ordered and compliant landscape, civility can be cultivated. The attainment of a bountiful and compliant natural order as the setting for civil society was the goal of the early settlers. In the Maranoa this striving is directed towards achieving the ‘good life’ and ordering the landscape to release its productive potential.

Chapter 4 Domesticating the sublime: heroic endurance and the pursuit of independence examines personal qualities such as courage, endurance, independence and prudence (the ability to survive without material or bodily comforts) that are necessary for encounters with the sublime, and the eventual subordination of the sublime to domestic purposes. These qualities were exemplified by the early squatters who went out beyond the bounds of the colony and governance, endured loneliness and hardship, lived frugally and courageously took on nature
in its most sublime state. The squatters also embodied the spirit of risk and enterprise in their pursuit of reward. These qualities are still considered important in the Maranoa today.

Chapter 5 A moral order: families and responsibilities outlines the social and political contexts within which the life of the selector in the Australian bush was promoted and idealised. The selector is a direct forebear of the family farmers in the Maranoa. The moral disposition of the Maranoa farmer, and the shape of their farming practice, is a legacy of the selectors.

Part 2 The Maranoa: Family Farmers and the legacy of the yeoman ideal

Chapter 6 Settling the Maranoa traces the history of settlement in the Maranoa. It examines the fluctuating history of government driven closer settlement policies which have left a legacy of small unviable family farms (many farms were located on ill-considered land prone to drought and flooding). These farms are the legacy of over a century and a half of deliberate policy based on ideological commitment to fostering a particular type of farming community. Belief that small-scale farms would be the site of virtuous family life; nurturing generations of hard-working, independent, sober and productive citizens, drove policy decisions by governments that failed to take account the productive limits of the region.

Chapter 7 Family farmers and the embodiment of the yeoman ideal in the Maranoa is the first fieldwork chapter and it looks at the shared disposition, possessed by family farmers in Maranoa, for enduring hardship and for taking pride in hard work, self-reliance, autonomy and prudence. Possession of these qualities is essential to their self-definition as farmers, as is their determined independence and the strength of their ties to family and place. By using practice theory I am able to demonstrate that these farmers are heirs to a narrative of virtuous engagement with the land, shaped by the early history of agriculture in Australia. Their history is embedded in a tradition of struggle. Their disposition to endure a frugal and physically demanding life, and to take pride in such endurance, is not only essential to their sense of self, but also necessary to their survival.

Chapter 8 Globalisation and the fate of the marginal family farm focuses on the escalation of technological systems of production and consumption throughout the twentieth century, and
the impact of this escalation on family farmers. It draws on the work of Borgmann, Latour and Bauman to understand the paradox of the farmer’s relationship to technology within a landscape of increasingly intensive, technologised farming.

Chapter 9 *Breakdown* returns to the fieldwork data to illustrate the legacy of a century of participation in technologised agricultural production and consumption systems.
Part 1

Agriculture and the cultivation of values in colonial Australia: the history of a disposition
Lord Sydney wrote: It may not be amiss to remark in favour of this plan that considerable advantage will arise from the cultivation of the New Zealand hemp or flax...
Risk and Enterprise

1

A correspondent writing in the St. James Chronicle, in
787, was even more explicit in identifying agriculture as the pathway to civilisation: The expedition to Botany or in all the islands of the South Seas, there is not a four-footed Animal to be found but the Hog, the Dog a
The history of farming in Australia begins with the establishment of a British penal colony on the shores that the colonists knew as New South Wales.

**The Origins of the First Fleet**

Phillip's fleet of convict transports (the 'First Fleet') had its origins in the American Revolution (1775-83), which had put an end to the traffic in convicts that had sent about fifty thousand people to the American colonies as involuntary indentured labourers (Shaw 1977). Convicts had been used to augment the labour force in the American colonies from early in the seventeenth century, and by the middle of the eighteenth century contractors were shipping British convicts across the Atlantic and selling them to employers in Georgia, Maryland and other regions (Frost 1974, p. 263). This was an especially lucrative business for tobacco merchants who shipped convicts to America then returned to England with a cargo of tobacco. For these merchants the Revolution was a catastrophe (Pybus 2007, p. 92).

When transportation to America ceased after 1776, Britain was forced to seek other modes of accommodating her felons. As the courts continued to pass sentence of transportation to America, regardless of the closure of that destination to convicts, every kind of carceral institution was quickly filled to overflowing (Pybus 2007, p. 92).

**Africa**

On January 5, 1785 the undersecretary of the British Home Office, Evan Nepean, began investigating the transportation of convicts to the island of Lemaine, about four hundred miles up the Gambia River. It was thought that this island might be able to sustain a settlement of about four hundred convicts. Sending convicts to Africa made economic sense. Slave ships from English ports usually sailed empty to the coast of Africa, and it would be advantageous for them to be stocked with a cargo of convicts, just as ships bound for America had carried convicts and returned with tobacco. However few commentators had any doubts that Africa would make short work of all who were abandoned there (Pybus 2007, pp. 94-6).¹

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¹ Edmund Burke was one of the members of the House of Commons who had raised the alarm about the Lemaine Island Bay comprehends in it more than the mere banishment of our Felons; it is an Undertaking of Humanity; and the Rat, nor any of the Grain of the other Quarters of the World...
Botany Bay: Convicts and Trade

An even more radical proposition was to create a convict settlement at Botany Bay, thirteen thousand miles distant on the coast of the isolated southern continent that the explorer James Cook had named New South Wales. The imagined benefits of a colony in New South Wales would be twofold. A key benefit would be the continuation of the policy of transportation as a way of dealing with Britain’s over-burdened prison system. In addition, many believed that the establishment of a colony in New South Wales would provide many opportunities for trade. Here, too, the example of America was invoked. As Phillip, the future Governor of New South Wales, pointed out:

The [American] colonies received by it [convict transportation], at an easy rate, an assistance very necessary; and the mother country was relieved from the burthen of subjects, who at home were not only useless but pernicious; besides which, the mercantile returns, on this account alone, are reported to have arisen, in latter times, to a very considerable amount. (1970 [1789], p. 3)

The advocate of one scheme for a colony in New South Wales argued:

At this juncture- when the ties of exclusive commerce with America are dissolved: when the trade to the East Indies is in a declining if not in a precarious state; when our trade to the Mediterranean has been long interrupted, and almost annihilated, and when that to Africa and the West Indies does not promise to be what it has been without a change of measures- it will be highly commendable in any individual to point out a new source of trade, and form any probable scheme for encouraging attempts to lay the foundation of future sources. (Anonymous 1783-86, p. 359)²

² See Appendix A ‘Records belonging to the period covered by Vol. I, Part 2 - Phillip, 1783-1792.’ An Anonymous Proposal

proposal and persuaded Parliament to establish a committee to investigate the scheme. One after another, experts told the committee that Africa was a place of ‘disease and death’ (Pybus 2007, p. 97). As Burke observed, transportation to Africa was in reality nothing less than a ‘singularly horrid’ death sentence and Gambia was ‘the capital seat of plague, pestilence and famine’ where ‘the gates of Hell were open day and night to receive the victims of the law.’ (Burke 1785, Journal of the House of Commons, Vol. 40, pp. 954-59 cited in Pybus, p. 97)
In his 1783 proposal James Matra suggested that a settlement in New South Wales would foster trade in furs, between the Aleutian and Foxes islands, and China; in English woollens, with Japan and Korea, and in spices (Matra 1892 [1783], pp. 4-5). Sir George Young, who substantially repeated Matra’s proposal in 1784, ‘thought that with settlement in New South Wales “a lucrative Trade would soon be opened with the Creole Spaniards for English Manufactures.’ (cited in Frost 1974, p. 260) Lord Sydney, who drew up his ‘Heads of a Plan’ in August 1786, thought that ‘most of the Asiatic productions may also without doubt be cultivated in the new settlement, and in a few years may render our recourse to our European neighbours for those productions unnecessary.’ (cited in Frost 1974, p. 260) Frost also notes that the writer of An Historical Narrative of the Discovery of New Holland and New South Wales (1786) observed that:

When we consider the number of populous islands, in the Southern Ocean, which have been visited by the British flag, under the auspices of our most gracious sovereign; the importance of a permanent settlement in that part of the world, in order to continue the friendly intercourse we have already had with the inhabitants, as well as enable us to enter into some commercial connections with them, will immediately appear to the mind of every intelligent person. (cited in Frost 1974, p. 260)


4 [Sir George Young], 1785, A Rough Outline of the many Advantages that may result to this Nation, From a Settlement made on the Coast of New South Wales, London, p. 1.


7 1975 [1786], An authentic journal of the expedition under Commodore Phillips to Botany Bay with an account of the settlement made at Port Jackson and a description of the inhabitants, &c. With copy of a letter from Captain Tench of the marines, and a list of the civil and military establishment. To which is added an historical narrative of the discovery of New Holland, or, New South Wales / by an officer, Melbourne, Marsh Walsh, p. 32.
Naval Strategy

Many also envisaged for New South Wales an important role in Britain's global naval strategy. In his 1783 proposal, Matra, who had sailed with Captain James Cook on the first voyage to Australia, pointed out that:

The place which New South Wales holds on our globe might give it a very commanding influence in the policy of Europe. If a colony from Britain was established in that large tract of country, and if we were at war with Holland or Spain, we might very powerfully annoy either State from our new settlement. We might, with a safe and expeditious voyage, make naval incursions on Java and the other Dutch settlements; and we might with equal facility invade the coast of Spanish America, and intercept the Manila ships, laden with the treasures of the west. (Matra, pp. 4-5)

New South Wales also represented a strategic naval opportunity in another way. The loss of the American colonies threatened Britain's supply of naval stores, especially hemp, flax⁸ and timber⁹ (Galloway 1780, pp. 3-4, 25-6, 29-31). New South Wales seemed to promise a new source.¹⁰ In the 1770s, Cook, botanist Joseph Banks, and others had pointed to the potential value to England of New Zealand flax and timber, and of the Norfolk Island pines (flax occurred on Norfolk Island also); and in the 1780s Matra, Sir George Young and Lord Sydney stressed this consideration when they advanced their plans for a settlement in New South Wales. Sydney, for example, wrote:

8 Hemp and flax were transformed into canvas, cables and cordage for ships (Frost 2003, p. 269).
9 Timber was needed for warships, 'forming wooden walls about Britain and protecting it from enemies….' (Frost 2003, p. 269)
10 Nepean made sure that the New South Wales colonists were equipped to harvest the flax. He engaged Roger Murley (or Morley), a 'master weaver,' to go out; the convicts selected included some hemp dressers and rope makers; for them, the Navy Board ordered: '9 hackles for flax, 9 hackle pins, 3 flax-dresser brushes, 127 dozen combs, 1 machine for dressing flax, with iron and brushes.' (Frost 2003, p. 279) See several articles with viewpoints pro and con the flax theory collected from various sources in 1978 in *The Founding of Australia: The Arguments about Australia’s Origin* edited by Ged Martin. See also E. C. K. Gonner's 1888 thesis on developing a new and more important source of hemp, flax and timber for Britain's vital naval needs in Botany Bay, in Mollie Gillen, 1982,'The Botany Bay Decision, 1786: Convicts, Not Empire,' *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 97, No. 385, pp. 740-766. An excellent source is also Alan Frost's most recent book *Botany Bay: The Real Story*, published in 2011.
It may not be amiss to remark in favour of this plan that considerable advantage will arise from the cultivation of the New Zealand hemp or flax-plant in the new intended settlement, the supply of which would be of great consequence to us as a naval power, as our manufacturers are of opinion that canvas made of it would be superior in strength and beauty to any canvas made of the European material... It may also be proper to attend to the possibility of procuring from New Zealand any quantity of masts and ship timber for the use of our fleets in India. (cited in Frost 1974, p. 262)\textsuperscript{11}

**The colony as a site for agriculture (Imagining Virgin Soil)**

That New South Wales was imagined as a compliant and productive site for agriculture well before Phillip's arrival in 1788 is evidenced by descriptions of the prospective colony as 'virgin' territory. This rhetoric evoked an image of a land ripe for insemination, a land that would respond eagerly to the shovel and the plough, a land that would guarantee a return on labour and investment. As a correspondent in the *St James Chronicle* put it, in 1787, New South Wales, being 'formed of a Virgin mould, undisturbed since creation,' would be richly productive '... and our Ships which may hereafter sail in that Quarter of the Globe, must receive Refreshment in greater Plenty than from the exhausted Soil of Europe.' (Correspondent in the *St James Chronicle*, 16–18 January, 1787)\textsuperscript{12}

It was imagined that this rich agricultural terrain would not only benefit Britain by supplying the needs of the navy far from home, but would also provide a site for the cultivation of virtues within the souls of the felons who worked the land. Georg Foster, writing in 1787, put the argument in favour of convict employment in agriculture in the following way:

> Even disregarding the fact that thieves in general are the deplorable victims of a senseless education, of a dead and petrified jurisdiction and a deficient political system- it is sufficiently


proved by ancient and modern history that they cease to be enemies to society whenever they regain their full human rights and become proprietors and cultivators of land. (cited in Frost 1974, p. 264)\textsuperscript{13}

The emergence of scientific agriculture was of such significance to the development of Britain that it was at the heart of the mythic construction of empire, a metaphor for civilisation (Casid 1997, p. xxii). The economic and social significance of agriculture also provided a basis for imaging New South Wales as, in the words of Georg Foster, the ‘future home of a new civilised society.’ (cited in Bodi 1950, pp. 358-9)\textsuperscript{14} A correspondent writing in the \textit{St. James Chronicle}, in 1787, was even more explicit in identifying agriculture as the pathway to civilisation:

The expedition to Botany Bay comprehends in it more than the mere banishment of our Felons; it is an Undertaking of Humanity; for in all the islands of the South Seas, there is not a four-footed Animal to be found but the Hog, the Dog and the Rat, nor any of the Grain of the other Quarters of the World... [B]y the number of cattle now sending over of various sorts, and all the different Seeds for Vegetation, a capital Improvement will be made in the Southern part of the New World. (16-18 Jan 1787)\textsuperscript{15}

Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802) English philosopher, physician, poet (and grandfather to naturalist Charles Darwin) was another writer to view the foundation of the settlement at Sydney as the beginning of a new civilisation. A poem entitled ‘The Visit of Hope to Sydney Cove,’ which was full of crowning scenes of civility (“stately walls,” “proud arch[es]” and “embellish’d villas”) was also full of scenes relating to a flourishing agricultural industry: “solid roads” passing through a “cultur’d land” and “farms [which] wave with gold.”

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. p. 359.
There shall broad streets their stately walls extend,
The circus widen, and the crescent bend;
There ray’d from cities o’er the cultur’d land,
Shall bright canals, and solid roads expand. –
There the proud arch, colossus-like, bestride
Yon glittering streams, and bound the chafing tide;
Embellish’d villas crown the landscape-scene,
Farms wave with gold, and orchids blush between. –
There shall tall spires, and dome-capt towers ascend
And piers and quays their massy structures blend;
While with each breeze approaching vessels glide,
And northern treasures dance on every tide. (cited in Frost 1974, p. 270)

The emphasis on agriculture as the basis for an imagined flourishing of civilisation in New South Wales was also modelled on North America. Men like John Pinkerton suggested that ‘transferring the English race and name to such a distant and important region of the globe’ would lead to the genesis of ‘another America, a country of rising knowledge and civilisation.’ (cited in Frost 1974, p. 256)

Influenced by such arguments, and drawing on the evidence from Cook’s voyage to show that the climate of New South Wales was healthy and the land fertile enough to produce abundant crops, Lord Sydney shed his previous objections to the settlement at Botany Bay. On August 18, 1786, he asked the Lords of Treasury to provide shipping to transport about eight hundred convicts to this distant shore (Pybus 2007, pp. 97-8).

16 ‘The Visit of Hope to Sydney Cove’ was written to accompany a medallion fashioned by Josiah Wedgwood from a sample of clay brought from Sydney by Sir Joseph Banks. The poem together with an engraving of the Wedgwood medallion, was used as a frontispiece to The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay. The medallion portrayed four women Hope, Art, Labour and Peace at Sydney Cove, 1789.

oil, in this instance, is celebrated through the figure of the ploughman. Thomson (1794) writes: 

*Joyous, the impatient husbandman perceives*

*Loosened from the frost. There, unfailing, to the harnessed yoke They lend their shoulder, and begin their toil.*
Relenting Nature and his lusty steers Drives from their stalls to where the well-used plough Lies in furrow, oil.

On the 26 September 1788, only eight months after landing, Phillip reported to Banks: …we have now near twenty Acres in Tillage & the Corn in particular
laces when the ground was well clear’d is as fine as any I ever saw. I have some Oranges, Figs, Vines, Pomore Roses, Apples, pears, and conducted on a proper plan tend more towards the moral improvement of Convicts than any other species of labor in which they can be employed.... (William Howe to Bigge, 22nd January 1821, cited in Ritchie, II, pp. 5
Phillip’s voyage

Arthur Phillip weighed anchor from Portsmouth, on the south coast of England, at daybreak on the 13th May 1787. The small fleet consisted of eleven ships: His Majesty’s frigate *Sirius*, under Captain John Hunter, his Majesty’s armed tender *Supply*, commanded by Lieutenant H. L. Ball, three store ships, the *Golden Grove, Fishburn* and *Borrowdale*, carrying provisions and stores for two years; and lastly, six transports, the *Scarborough* and *Lady Penrhyn* from Portsmouth; the *Friendship* and *Charlotte* from Plymouth; and the *Prince of Wales* and *Alexander* from Woolwich (Phillip 1970, pp. 7-8).¹

The whole complement of marines, including officers, amounted to two hundred and twelve men and women. In addition twenty-eight women, wives of marines, carrying with them seventeen children, had been permitted to accompany their husbands. The number of convicts was seven hundred and seventy eight; with just over a quarter of these being women (Phillip, pp. 7-8).²

Phillip’s voyage took eight months. They sailed south from Portsmouth to the Canary Islands and south west to the Cape Verdel Islands. From there they turned to the south and the west. Following the same winds that had carried eleven million West Africans into slavery, they arrived in Rio de Janeiro on 6th August 1787 (Rediker et al. 2007, p. 8). After sailing south, down the east coast of South America, the fleet then turned towards the east, heading back across the Atlantic. Taking advantage of the prevailing trade winds they reached the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa, in good time. From here, with winds ‘as favourable as could be wished, blowing generally in very strong gales from the north west, west and south west,’ the fleet sailed across the bottom of the Indian Ocean (Phillip, pp. 21-22) towards the west coast of Australia.

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¹ *The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay with Contributions by other Officers of the First Fleet and Observations on Affairs of the Time by Lord Auckland* was originally published in 1789 as the official account of the expedition to New South Wales and the founding of the Australian Settlement.

² Two, however, on board the Alexander, received a full pardon before the departure of the fleet, and consequently remained in England.
The *Supply*, with Phillip on deck, arrived in Botany Bay on 18 January 1788. Finding the harbour to the north (named Port Jackson by Captain James Cook) far more protected, Phillip issued orders for the removal of the whole fleet there. In his view Port Jackson was the ‘finest harbour in the world.’ Although the surrounding area was rocky and thickly timbered, several places appeared suitable for cultivation (Governor Phillip to Lord Sydney, 15 May 1788, pp. 16-32).

In the evening of the 26th [January] the colours were displayed on shore, and the Governor, with several of his principal officers and others, assembled around the flag staff, drank to the king’s health and success to the settlement, with all that display of form which on such occasions is esteemed propitious, because it enlivens the spirits, and fills the imagination with pleasing presages. (Phillip, p. 29)

Eleven days later, on 6th February, Phillip mustered the convicts. Thirty-six convict men; four women and five children had died on the voyage (Phillip, p. 67). The following day all were summoned to hear the governor as he read out his commission and instructions to appoint a criminal court, with David Collins as judge advocate, assisted by six military officers (Phillip, p. 34). As Cassandra Pybus describes it, Phillip then turned his attention to the bedraggled convicts, encircled by the marines as they sat in the mud. He told them he was convinced that most were incorrigible and they needed to understand that they were in New South Wales to work; if they did not work, they would not eat (Pybus 2007, p. 104).

The moral worth of agricultural work

Philip's exhortation of the convicts to work may have been prompted by immediate need, but it also gave voice to a more far-reaching agenda. The convicts were to work not only for the survival of the colony, but also for the sake of their souls. The moral efficacy of agricultural work had been firmly established within the English imagination by the success of the eighteenth century. The most ignorant man, and those who have not been accustomed to labor will produce a Considerable Surplus. (Hannibal Macarthur to Bigge, 8th June 1820, cited in Ritchie, p. 68.)

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3 Published in the *Historical Records of Australia*, hereafter cited as HRA.
century agrarian revolution. It was in the context of this revolution and its accompanying poetic, that the notion of convict reform within an agricultural colony had taken root.

The foremost technology to have given impetus to the agrarian revolution in England had been that of enclosure. As a technology, enclosure used property boundaries to clearly demarcate zones of responsibility and reward. Numerous small farms were consolidated into single, large properties, each with a single owner; that owner being responsible for decision making concerning his land, and entitled to the rewards that flowed from it. This was a radical break from the traditional practice of farming on communal fields where village tradition had determined the rotation of crops. Usufruct and customary usages along with commoners’ and occupant’s rights were abolished, leading to radical transformation of the physical and social landscape of the English countryside (Porter 1990 [1982], p. 210).

Agricultural techniques associated with enclosure included the effective rotation of crops and animals to maintain soil fertility, more widespread use of animal fodder, such as leguminous grasses (clover, rye-grass, lucerne and sainfoin) and roots, especially turnips, swedes and potatoes, which both enabled an increase in the number of animals and averted the need to leave land fallow and unproductive. These techniques not only improved the quality of soil by adding fertiliser or improving the balance between clay and sand, but the use of horses instead of oxen and the gradual introduction of better tools, such as Jethro Tull’s seed drill also increased the possibility of success (Gascoigne 2002, p. 70).

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5 Early examples of enclosing the land can be traced back to the sixteenth century, where they were made by lords of manors or their farmers upon the land over which the manorial population had common rights or which lay in the open arable fields (Tawney, 1913, Agrarian Problem, p. 150) While the actual area originally affected appears to have been small a substantial amount of land formerly subject to customary rules was becoming land to be used for the discretion of the individual. These habits accelerated after the Civil War and continued until the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

6 ‘Usufruct’ which is taken from ancient Roman law (and now a part of many civil law systems), means the rights to the product of another’s property.

7 Many of these techniques were first introduced in the Low Countries in the mid-seventeenth century, and were popularized by Charles ‘Turnip’ Townshend and other improving landowners and were widespread by the 1750s. Their impact was of major importance. First they allowed large waste areas to be brought into cultivation but also the areas that had previously been bare, fallow. See G. E. Fussell, 1952, The Farmer’s Tools, 1500-1900, Melrose, pp. 68-9.
As a consequence of the new efficient and rationalised techniques of production, the level of agricultural output in England increased dramatically. The centuries old “Malthusian trap” was broken. With food production assured, and surplus generated, energies were released for other enterprises. The agrarian revolution therefore formed the basis of England’s rise to supremacy and power in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Gascoigne 1994). In the wake of this revolution the English came to associate agriculture with nation building and prosperity.

**Idyllic representations of agricultural work**

There were winners and losers in the process of enclosing the land. Prior to enclosure peasant classes had been able to exist on subsistence methods of farming, sharing common land. The clarification of property boundaries meant the end of the more ambiguous, open arrangements, which had enabled peasants to eke out a living in favour of a more black and white system. Enclosure brought about a dramatic improvement in levels of production, but narrowed the range of ways that people were able to relate to and engage with agricultural land. Many who had once had access to common lands on which they could grow their own crops were reduced to the status of landless labourers. Their previous habits of self-determination and collaboration needed to be replaced by a willingness to accept direction, and to work hard for an employer. Those that could not reconcile themselves to employment as agricultural labourers on the properties of the landed, drifted to the cities and added to the numbers of urban poor.

The social upheaval following from the radical redistribution of fortunes and roles between rural landed and labouring classes was managed and tempered by recourse to idyllic representations of agricultural life. Depictions of agricultural workers as noble participants in a harmonious pastoral idyll played an important rhetorical role in reconciling the populace to the new order.

One of the primary vehicles for the valorisation of agricultural work was a school of painting and poetry known as the Georgic. The Georgic, which flourished from the first decade of the eighteenth century through to 1770, celebrated the rewards and rigours of rural life. It drew on moral lessons that can be traced back to classical antiquity, specifically Virgil’s *Georgics*.

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8 See Thomas Malthus 1798 essay ‘An essay on the principle of population.’
Work: the ordering of landscapes and souls

Part 1  Chapter 2

(a poem on farming), in which ‘toil conquered the world.’ (Georgics I, 136-46)9 These Georgics represented rural work as noble, and working life as full of peace and plenty.

The most famous examples of English poets drawing on Virgil’s celebration of agricultural labour include James Thomson’s sequence of poems called The Seasons (1730),10 John Gay’s Rural Sports (1713, revised 1720) and John Dyer’s The Fleece (1757). Thomson’s poem Spring (1728), from the Seasons sequence, celebrates the rewards of work. It suggests that ‘in England the means of life may be amply secured, but only by those who work for them: there is no room in “Happy Britannia” for the indolent, whatever station in life.’ (Barrell 2006 [1980], p. 38) Toil, in this instance, is celebrated through the figure of the ploughman. Thomson (1794) writes:

Joyous, the impatient husbandman perceives
Relenting Nature and his lusty steers
Drives from their stalls to where the well-used plough
Lies in furrow, loosened from the frost.
There, unrefusing, to the harnessed yoke
They lend their shoulder, and begin their toil.

The eighteenth century Georgic representation of agricultural labour was designed to foster a culture of industry and work. There was, as John Barrell writes, an important prescriptive component to this school.

This insistence on a workaday actuality becomes indistinguishable from a demand that rustics must be shown as industrious, so that we have no way of telling a ‘straightforward’ image of the poor at work from a prescriptive image of them as they should be, working. (2006, p. 13, original italics)

Thus this poetic invested the labour associated with agriculture with moral worth. Insofar as agricultural activities themselves were considered good, it must be good to participate in them.

9  See Theocritus 1982, Idylls and epigrams, Translated from the Greek by Daryl Hine, with an epilogue to Theocritus, New York, Atheneum. The earliest collection of Theocritus’ poetry which is known is called the Boukolika and this is the title that Virgil adopted for his pastoral poetry.
10  Winter (1726); Summer (1727); Spring (1728); and the complete year, including Autumn in 1730.
At the time that the settlement in New South Wales was being planned, agriculture was to the fore in the English imagination, both as a site of nation building and the production of prosperity, and also as an idyllic setting within which a simple communion with nature would promote the virtues most valued in this protestant nation, virtues of honesty, industry and the advancement of prosperity. This poetic suggested a path by which convicts could move toward respectable citizenship within the new colony. Agriculture was to provide the setting and work the means.

Belief in the reformatory power of virtuous activity can be traced to the ongoing influence of Aristotle’s *Ethics* in eighteenth century thought. According to Aristotle, moral goodness is the effect of a well-disposed soul. The key to the ordering of the soul is ‘habit,’ and good habits are the source of ‘moral excellence.’ (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103*16) Good habits come from good actions. In other words, good actions produce good dispositions and similarly bad actions lead to a bad disposition. Aristotle wrote:

> by doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other men we become just or unjust, and by the acts that we do in the presence of danger, and being habituated to feel fear or confidence, we become brave or cowardly. (1103*12-17)

Aristotle likened the moral part of the soul to ‘soft wax,’ upon which action could impress a disposition for further similar actions. Thus it was believed that participation in agriculture, with its emphasis on industry and physical work, would dispose the soul to be industrious and to engage in further productive activity. Through immersion in agricultural work the soul could be habituated to virtuous activity, and so (it was argued) become ‘disposed’ to lead a good life.

Belief in the moral efficacy of work and its capacity to foster a disposition for virtuous activity, may well have informed Philip’s exhortation of the convicts, as they sat in the mud of Sydney Cove. The Georgic valorisation of agricultural work, in particular, may have informed his hopes and vision of a possible future for his bedraggled charges in this alien land.
Agriculture in the colony

Plans for the development of agriculture in the colony were evident in the many plant species transported by the First Fleet. As Joseph Banks described the fleet's cargo:

Seeds of every common vegetable and salad green were included, and of some (e.g., beans), several varieties; of grains were wheat, barley, oats; of herbs were basil, fennel, marjoram, thyme, chives, mint, parsley, among others. Among the vines and shrubs were raspberry, gooseberry, strawberry, grape. Of citrus there was orange, lemon, lime. The other fruit trees included apple, peach, nectarine, pear, plume, apricot, cherry. (Banks quoted in Frost 1996, p. 59)

Banks also included 'hemp, flax, rhubarb, tobacco and potatoes and maize and acorn' for 'commerce.' (Frost 1996, p. 59) Phillip added to this store along the way. At Rio de Janeiro he took abroad 'every seed I think likely to grow in New South Wales and likewise fruits and plants, particularly the Indigo, Cocoa, Coffee, Jumbo or Pomme Rose, cotton, tobacco, vines &c.' (Phillip to Banks, 21 August 1787 cited in Frost 1996, p. 60) After sailing back across the Atlantic to the Cape of Good Hope he took on board (besides 'cattle and stocks') 'trees, plants and seeds of every sorts which the season would admit.' (Phillip to Banks 21 August 1787, cited in Frost 1996, p.60). Francis Masson, Scottish botanist and the first official plant collector for the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew England described Phillip's cabin as being like 'a small Green House.' (Masson to Banks cited in Frost 1996, p. 60)
Labour

On their arrival in New South Wales, however, the settlers did not find a land that was virgin or suitable for agriculture. Rather, they found a land resistant to the will of the settlers; a land that was recalcitrant and rebellious.

Phillip described the area at Sydney Cove, where the settlers disembarked, in the following way:

The coast, as well as the neighbouring country in general, is covered with wood; and though in this spot the trees stood more apart, and were less encumbered with underwood than in many other places, yet their magnitude was such as to render not only the felling, but the removal of them afterwards, a task of no small difficulty. (Phillip, p. 29)

The work of clearing this land would be unremitting and back-breaking. Phillip described the effort of labouring as being ‘greater than can easily be imagined by those who were not spectators of it.’ (Phillip, p. 29) The initial returns on agricultural labour were thus few and intermittent. Captain Tench of the Marines remarked; ‘Had it not been for a stray kangaroo, which fortune now and then threw in our way, we should have been utter strangers to fresh food.’ (1996, p. 65)

11 The convicts soon became hungry and restive. Towards the end of February a criminal court was convened to try six convicts for stealing food. They were found guilty and condemned to death (Phillip, p. 40).

By the middle of May, four months after arrival, progress remained slow. A barracks for the men and hut for the officers remained unfinished, as did a hospital and a storehouse. Phillip himself was still lodged in a temporary canvas house, ‘which was not perfectly impervious

11 First published as two separate volumes: A narrative of the expedition to Botany Bay, London. Printed for J. Debrett, opposite Burlington-house, Piccadilly, in 1789, and A complete account of the settlement at Port Jackson, in New South Wales, London in 1793. Tench gives a first hand account of the scarcity of food in the colony.

12 Thomas Barret, who was the head of the gang, was executed the same day; of the rest, one was pardoned, the other four were reprieved, and afterwards exiled to a small island within the bay, where they were kept on bread and water. See Phillip’s dispatch of 15th May 1788 in HRA. For an account of the opening of Australia’s Law Courts see J. F. Watson (ed.), 1913, The Beginning of Government in Australia, Sydney.
either to wind or weather’ (Phillip, p. 36) The situation with respect to clearing the ground for sowing remained dire. Phillip wrote:

From the great labour which attended the clearing of the ground, it proved to be impracticable to sow at present more than eight or ten acres with wheat and barley: and it was apprehended that even this crop would suffer from the depredations of ants and field mice. (p. 60)

**Facilitating Labour**

Given the centrality of ‘enclosure’ to English understandings of productive agricultural practice, the first technology to be employed in the attempt to make visible and so facilitate the productions of labour was the ‘boundary.’ As Paul Carter has argued, the boundary demarcated a hitherto undifferentiated spatial uniformity. It created a distinction; a point of difference. As such, it allowed the land to be talked about (1987, p. 152). Henceforth, the space outside the boundary would become the space outside, the untamed, the bush. At the same time, the boundary transformed the space inside. As a result, labour would have a more specific, defined object and would proceed more clearly and easily. Physical markers were the catalyst that transformed an imagined space of colonisation into a project for taking possession of, and establishing control over, that space. At the same time that boundaries, in the words of Carter, allowed the colonists to speak, they also allowed the colonists to work. Writing about the Gippsland pioneer W. W. Johnstone, Carter suggests:

In order to communicate the act of settling Johnstone has to invent a boundary. He has as it were to delineate a potentially nameable zone. Only having denominated the space in this way, can he pass on to other things: only once the site of his future history has been cleared in this way, can the physical process of clearing be taken for granted (p. 152).

The antecedents of these property boundaries were the maps, charts, coastal profiles and descriptive views that were produced by the officers as information to accompany journal entries and reports.
The use of visual records as aids to navigation and colonisation was a well-established practice by the time of Phillip’s departure for New South Wales. They were, as Bernard Smith (1979) so aptly described them, ‘art as information.’ Jeanette Hoorn has traced the importance of drawing for naval practice back to the ‘curriculum of the Portsmouth Naval Academy in 1733.’ (2007, p. 16) This practice followed training already well established in the military academies of Sandhurst and Marlowe.

The value placed upon observation and an ability to ‘draw’ is evident in contemporary commentary upon the skills required of a ship’s officers (Hoorn 2007, p. 16). John White, the chief surgeon of the First Fleet, wrote of his captain, John Hunter:

Captain Hunter has a pretty turn for drawing, which will enable him, no doubt, to give such a description of this coast as will do credit to himself and be of singular advantage as well as to those whose lot it may be to visit hereafter this extensive coast, as to navigation at large.’ (White cited in Hoorn 2007, p. 17)

Officers William Bradley, John Hunter and George Raper on the *Sirius*, were responsible for the bulk of the topographic drawings produced in the years before the arrival of convict artists Thomas Watling, Joseph Lycett and John Eyre. An early map of the settlement at Port

15 In July 1791 Thomas Watling was one of 410 convicts on the *Pitt* who sailed for New South Wales. As the first professional artist to arrive in the colony on the 7th October 1792 he was assigned to Surgeon-General John White from his arrival until White’s departure from Sydney in December 1794. It is believed that Watling produced hundreds of natural history drawings for White who was also an ardent naturalist. He then appears to have worked for David Collins. As Judge-Advocate and Secretary to the Governor, Collins had a close relationship with Governor Phillip and his role of keeping official records and drafting dispatches made him very well informed to document the state of the colony. Both these men published accounts of the colony. Watling received neither payment nor credit for his work (*Letters from an Exile at Botany Bay, to his Aunt in Dumfries*, Penrith, Scotland, printed by Ann Bell, ca. 1794, pp. 26-7).
16 It is believed that Joseph Lycett, a forger assisted Captain James Wallis. Wallis published *An Historical Account of the Colony of New South Wales* in 1821.
17 Another major convict artist of the period was John Eyre. He reached Sydney in the transport *Canada* in December.
Jackson, credited to convict Francis Fowkes and titled 'Sketch and Description of the Settlement at Sydney Cove Port Jackson in the County of Cumberland' on the 16th of April 1788 illustrates this topographical style [Fig 2.1].

It sketches the line of the coast and includes references to ships and the buildings as well as land use. The artist has also included symbols to mark out areas devoted to the cultivation of grain and the storage of hay (Hoorn 2007, p. 18).

While these early views were seemingly characterless (devoid of human figures), they were, in fact, powerful devices for instituting the colonising process. They imagined the colony or, at the very least, marked out a space for it, long before it came into existence. In the words of the historian Thongchai, these maps 'anticipated spatial reality, not vice versa.' (cited in Anderson 1991, p. 174)

Paul Carter has called the type of space created by these maps 'empty space.' 'Empty space,' he writes, could be 'accountably and equally subdivided,' and therefore promised 'returns that could, more or less, be computed in advance.' (1987, p. 203)

Immediately after settlement of the colony the officers began to add sketches and views to the maps that they were drawing. Arguably the purpose of these sketches was very similar to the maps. The role played by fences in these early views is notable.

Fences were the most common of the boundary markers employed by the colonists and are prominent in views of the colony painted by the early colonial artists. One example is 'West View of Sydney Cove taken from the Rocks at the Rear of the General Hospital,' by an unknown artist, painted between 1793-1794 [Fig 2.2].

This view is taken from 'the Rocks' looking back,

18 Topography is originally a cartographic term that has been used since medieval times to accurately delineate townscape and their nearby rural landscapes. It is often distinguished from landscape art, 'by the fact that topographical art is closer to craft whose object is to supply information whereas landscape is a branch of fine art which exists primarily for aesthetic enjoyment.' (Osbourne 1993)


20 Pen ink and wash on wove paper (26 x 42 cm). Not signed. Not dated. Previously attributed to Thomas Watling and is in
Figure 2.1
Attributed to Francis Fowkes

*Sketch and Description of the Settlement of Sydney Cove Port Jackson in the County of Cumberland taken by a transported Convict on the 16th of April, 1788. Which was not quite 3 months after Commodore Phillip's Landing there.*

1788, Hand coloured engraving
20 × 32 cm

Title below image
Inscribed “F. F. delineavit Publish'd July 24 1789 by R. Cribb
no. 288 High Holborn Neele sculp. Strand Sydney Cove lies 3 Leagues to the Northward of Botany Bay which is situated in Lat 34 S: Long. 151 E. Price 1 s. plain 2 s. Coloured.”

only way, by which it [moral improvement] can be effected, it breaks their [convicts] old habits, and it does away the spirit of the Corps, by which they are much influenced and at the same time teaches them a way of earning an honest living. (Gregory Blaxland to Bigge, 12th January

moral subjects of society. He wrote: Give them [convicts] a few acres of ground as soon as they arrive in New South Wales, in absolute property with what assistance they may want to till them. 

26
east, on to the settlement. The gaze takes in the vegetable gardens at the rear of the hospital complex, the hospital itself and then travels over Sydney Cove to Bennelong Point and on to, in the far distance, a flag flying at the South Head Look out. The colony appears as a series of fenced enclosures. It is the fence at the rear of the hospital, in the foreground of the picture that is the most theatrical. The fence itself is a simple construction. Yet the distinction it draws is profound. Inside the fence is a scene of regulated order, gardens arranged in a neat geometric squares. This orderly scene is light and lively, at once young and ageless. Outside the fence the colour scheme changes dramatically; the view becomes dark and gloomy, the density of the foliage is burdensome, exhausting and threatening. Here there is no symmetry and no order. As James Atkinson wrote in his *Account of agriculture and grazing in New South Wales*, ‘Fencing and enclosing land, is the greatest and most important improvement that can be effected upon it… it is the foundation and basis of every other improvement to be afterwards expected.’ (1844, p. 132)

Indigenous Australians were also widely employed as a boundary trope, a marker distinguishing the settled and the civilised from the unsettled and uncivilised. One example is ‘View of Sydney’ 1795-6, attributed to Thomas Watling [Fig 2.3]. This view is taken from the north west side of Sydney Cove, looking back onto the settlement, with Government House off to the far left. Once again, the settlement is bathed in light while the foreground, at the edge of the painting, is shrouded in darkness. Appearing in the corner of the painting, as if from beyond, is a group of three Indigenous Australians around a fire. In many Sydney views, Aboriginal people were relegated to the margins as decorative elements or curiosities, in a visual displacement as the white settlement grew. Their very liminality celebrates the effectiveness of the settlement’s boundaries.

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21 Water colour on wove paper (39.5 x 60 cm). Not signed. Not dated. The only drawing attributed to Watling to show the verandah on Government House, indicating a date from late 1795 (McCormick, 1987, p. 68). Mitchell Library V1/1794 +/-.

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1820, cited in Ritchie, Vol. II, p. 70) James Matra, in his 1783 proposal for the colony, suggested that free grants of land would produce...
Figure 2.2
Artist Unknown
West View of Sydney-Cove taken from the Rocks, at the Rear of the General Hospital
1793-94, Pen ink and wash on wove paper
26 x 42 cm
Not signed. Not dated.
Title in ink below image in a contemporary hand
Inscribed “1789” erroneously in faint pencil in a later hand below image
Dixson Galleries, State Library of New South Wales
Figure 2.3
Attributed to Thomas Watling (1762-?)
View of Sydney
1795-96. Water colour on wove paper
39.5 x 60 cm
Not signed. Not dated.
Title from library catalogue
Mitchell Library, Sydney, New South Wales

Toil, in this instance, is celebrated through the figure of the ploughman. Thomson (1794) writes: Joyous, the well-used plough Lies in furrow, loosened from the frost. There, unrefusing, to the harnessed yoke They
The Point of View

A second technology imported by the Europeans for enabling an appropriation of the landscape was the point of view. The point of view from which these early landscape pictures were painted was another way in which the space of the colony was defined as an abstract, rational space (suitable for agriculture). The scene of the settlement was very often painted from a view point outside and above, looking down and in, onto the settlement. This perspective, from the outside looking in, adopted the point of view of Clio’s scribe, and documented a natural process of progress and civilisation. This view, like the panoramas that were invented and popularised in the same period, gave mastery to the eye, foregrounding a poetic of control and mastery through detachment and abstraction (Oettermann, 1997, p. 5).

As Derek Gregory writes:

“Landscape is a way of seeing, a composition and structuring of the world so that it may be appropriated by a detached individual spectator to whom an illusion of order and control is offered through the composition of space according to the certainties of geometry. (1990, p. 74 cited in Best, 1995, p. 100).”

From this point of view the colony, abstracted through distance, becomes timeless and placeless. It appears as an established part of the landscape, as having always been there, inevitable and permanent.

A clear illustration of the power of this perspective to transform the act of settlement into an inevitable, linear history of progress comes from Phillip himself. He wrote:

“There are a few things more pleasing than the contemplation of order and useful arrangement arising gradually out of tumult and confusion, and perhaps this satisfaction cannot any where


be more fully enjoyed than where settlement of civilised people is fixing itself upon a newly
discovered or savage coast....(Phillip cited in Flannery 1999, pp. 83-4)

Phillip's verbal description of a view of the colony is reflected visually in George Raper's 'View of
the east side of Sidney Cove, Port Jackson: From the Anchorage. The Governor's House
bearing S.b.E.1/2 E & the Flag Staff S.E b.E1/4 E.' [Fig 2.4] The image depicts Government
House in the early years of settlement, as well as the settlement extending down to the water.
Raper was an officer on the *Sirius* and the view in the painting is seen, as its title suggests, from
the water. Despite the apparent located-ness of the point of view of the painter, sitting on the
water looking up at the hill, the experience of looking at the painting is one of looking down on
the settlement from above. Once again the gaze is omniscient. From this perspective, the future
of the colony seems assured.

Amongst the most widely reproduced views of Sydney Cove in the early nineteenth century
were John Eyre's *Views of Sydney*, painted in 1806 and 1808 (Dixson, 1986, p. 51). One view
was a depiction of Sydney taken from the point of view of the rocks, on the west side of Sydney
Cove, looking south and east [Figs 2.5 & 2.6]. The spectator's point of view is established
by a series of dark angular rocks in the foreground. This is a pictorial device that creates an
impression of looking in on the colony from the outside. From this position the spectator
adopts the point of view of history's scribe, documenting an inevitable progression towards
order and harmony. These qualities are represented through an emphasis on geometrical town
planning, in which space is composed by the straight lines of neatly arranged houses situated
behind carefully arranged streets and fences.

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24 Pen ink and water colour on laid paper (27 x 43cm). Not signed, not dated.
25 They form two panoramas (four sheets). First issued separately on unfolded paper some months before the publication
of D. D. Mann's volume. The views which were issued with the text have centre-fold marks. The text contains a
description or key of architectural features appearing in the aquatints. Mann left the colony in 1809.
26 'View of Sydney from the west side of the cove ca 1806. Water color on wove paper (36 x 67 cm). Signed 'J.E. Delt'. Lower
left. Not dated. Dixson Galleries DG V1/75. 'New South Wales. View of Sydney from the East Side of the Cove No. 1.' Hand
Figure 2.4
George Raper (ca 1768-1797)
View of the East Side of Sidney Cove, Port Jackson, from the Anchorage. The Governor's House bearing S.b.E ½ E & the Flag Staff S.E. b.E ¼ E
Ca 1789, Pen ink and water colour on laid paper
27 x 43 cm
Not signed. Not dated.
Title in ink below image in a contemporary hand
British Museum (Natural History), Du Can Godman Collection

William Howe to Bigge, 22nd January 1821, cited in Ritchie, II, pp. 54-55
I am of the opinion that Agricultural labour in its most extended sense, and those who have not been brought up to labor, may be taught to provide themselves with food...
Similarly, in Eyre’s second view, which is taken from the East side of Sydney Cove, the image is observed from the point of view of a spectator sitting on top of the present day Mrs Macquarie’s Chair [Fig 2.7 & 2.8]. From here the colony is perfectly framed by the broad sweep of Sydney Cove, which would later become the Royal Botanic Gardens. Here, as in the previous view, the eye travels easily across the space of the settlement. This omniscient sense is enhanced by an image of a group of Aboriginal people in the foreground. They seem to offer a point of comparison, which casts the colony in terms of progress and civilisation.

The final view is Joseph Lycett’s image of ‘Parramatta, New South Wales,’ published in 1824 (but sketched in 1822) [Fig 2.9]. In this image, the scene is even more expansive. The view is taken from the top of a hill overlooking the whole township. On the far left stands the symbol of temporal power, Government House, whilst to the right is the Reverend Samuel Marsden’s Palladian Residence. In the middle lies Parramatta, with its twin-towered church, St. Johns, named after Governor John Hunter (the towers were designed by John Watts, AC to Governor Macquarie). Behind the town a great and prosperous valley stretches to the horizon. The side of the valley is clearly demarcated by a line of trees which mark the extent of cleared land. It is as if the woodlands have been sheared off. In this picture, the immediate foreground is inhabited by a well-dressed couple, who stand gazing at the view. The couple can be understood to represent the ordered nature of the landscape. The fact that they are well dressed and at leisure represents the extent to which the land has been transformed from land left waste in its natural state to land that bore more, better and increasingly diversified fruits as a consequence of improvement.

The technology of representing the colony from a detached point of view, like the technology of the boundary, enabled an envisioning of progress that was a necessary support to the labours of those who worked to achieve it. These views were also important in retaining the support of those who were distant to the colony but necessary to its survival.

Another feature of the visual representations of the colony from this period is that they are bounded by the limits of settlement. That is, the colony was never situated in its environment.

27 Hand coloured aquatint (17 x 27cm). Inscribed “I. Lycett. Delt et Execute. London. Published September 1, 1824 by I. Souter 73, St Paul’s Church Yard”. Published in Joseph Lycett, Views of Australia, London 1824, pl. 11.
Figure 2.5
John Eyre (1771-?)
New South Wales. View of Sydney from the West Side of the
Cove No. 1
Ca 1808, Hand coloured aquatint
34 x 50 cm
Title below image
Booth Duke Street Portland Place, London’ below image
Published in D. D. Mann, Present Picture of New South Wales,
London, 1811.

Bigge, 8th June 1820, cited in Ritchie, Vol. II, p. 69) I have not any doubt on my mind of its [agricultural work] being the most proper, if not the only way, by which it [moral improvement] can be effected, it breaks their [convicts] old habits, and it does away the spirit of the proposal for the colony, suggested that free grants of land would produce ‘moral subjects of society.’ He wrote: Give them [convicts] a fo...
Figure 2.6
John Eyre (1771-?)
New South Wales. View of Sydney from the West Side of the Cove No. 2
Ca. 1808, Hand coloured aquatint
34 x 50 cm
Title below image
Published in D. D. Mann, Present Picture of New South Wales, London, 1811.

James Matra, in his Corps, by which they are much influenced and at the same time teaches them a way of earning an honest living. (Gregory Blaxland to Bigge, 12th January 1820, cited in Ritchie, Vol. II, p. 70)
Figure 2.7
John Eyre (1771-?)
New South Wales. View of Sydney from the East Side of the
Cove No. 1
Ca 1808, Hand coloured aquatint
34 x 50 cm
Title below image
Booth Duke Street Portland Place, London’ below image
Published in D. D. Mann, Present Picture of New South Wales,
London, 1811.
Toil, in tilling Nature and his lusty steers Drives from their stalls to where the well-used plough Lies in furrow,

(Matra’s Proposal recorded in Phillip 1970, p. 429)
Figure 2.9
Joseph Lycett (1774?-ca 1828)
Parramatta, New South Wales
1822, Hand coloured aquatint
17 x 27 cm
Title below image
Published Sep. 1, 1824. By I. Souter 73, St Pauls Church Yard"
Published in Joseph Lycett, View in Australia, London, 1824, pl. 11

loosened from the frost. There, unrefusing, to the harnessed yoke They lend their shoulder, and begin their to
laces when the ground was well clear’d is as fine as any I ever saw. I have some Oranges, Figs, Vines, Pomore Roses, Apples, pears,
De Certeau sees such framing as an attempt to ‘repress all the physical, mental and political pollutions that would compromise it.’ (1984, p. 94)

This technique is evident in works like ‘The Entrance of Port Jackson and Part of the Town of Sydney New South Wales,’ painted by Major Taylor in 1821 [Fig 2.10]. Here, signs of convict labour abound. A man is carrying firewood to the Government House, and to the left, on the rocks, a gang of convicts can be seen quarrying, dressing and barrowing away stone for building. However these convicts are not the subjects of the drawing. The subject is the progress of the colony which is represented by a 360 degree view of the settlement from Observatory Hill. The convicts whose labour is enabling the colony to develop have no individual character (they are faceless and have their heads turned away from the view of the observer) and the effort of their labours is minimised (no sign of sweat, exhaustion, concentration, degree of difficulty is evident etc). In this way, too, the space of the colony was defined as an abstract entity, divorced from its location in time and space.

Progress in the colony

In many respects progress in establishing the colony was rapid. On the 26 September 1788, only eight months after landing, Phillip reported to Banks:

…we have now near twenty Acres in Tillage & the Corn in particular places when the ground was well clear’d is as fine as any I ever saw. I have some Oranges, Figs, Vines, Pomore Roses, Apples, pears, Sugar Cane, & Straw berrys that I brought from Rio de Janeiro and the Cape in fine order. (pp. 37-38)

28 While the power implicit in this gaze was enormously seductive throughout the nineteenth century, it has been a focus of post-structuralist critique in the second half of the twentieth century.

29 Hand coloured aquatint, 39 x 58 cm. Title below the image. Inscribed, “Dedicated to R. I. Wilmot Horton Esqr. M. P. under Secretary of State for the Colonies by Major Taylor 48. Regt. Engraved by R. Havell & Son Chapel St. Fitzroy Sqr. Plate 1. London. Published August 1823 by Messrs. Colnaghi & Co.” below image. The image is observed from a spot just to the south of the present-day Observatory, Fort Phillip.
Conducted on a proper plan tend more towards the moral improvement of Convicts than any other species of labor in which they can be employed…. (William Howe to Bigge, 22nd January 1821, cited in Ritchie, II, pp. 5...
There were six acres of gardens at Government House in Sydney. At Government Farm there were stables and storehouses, and convicts grew vegetables, fruits and maize. At Government House in Parramatta ‘six acres of maize and other grains, four acres of vines and two planted with potatoes’ ensured that the colony would not starve. (Frost 1996, pp. 63–4)

Emphasis on agricultural labour as the path to a realisation of social good played an important ideological role in attempts to expand agricultural production throughout the first decades of the colony. The connection between agricultural labour and the cultivation of civility in the disordered soul was a theme of many of the responses to Commissioner John Thomas Bigge’s investigations into the effectiveness of transportation in the colony. Bigge had been commissioned specifically to examine the effectiveness of transportation as a deterrent to felons. To gather evidence he sent a circular (questionnaire) to twenty-five individuals. Of these individuals all but one were landed proprietors and only three were emancipists. Given the reliance of this landed class on convict labour, it is unsurprising that every one of the return letters emphasized agricultural labour as an important element in convict reformation. William Howe said:

Agricultural operations… do certainly when conducted on a proper plan tend more towards the moral improvement of Convicts than any other species of labor in which they can be employed…. (William Howe to Bigge, 22nd January 1821, cited in Ritchie, II, pp. 54 - 55)

Others amongst Bigge’s informants repeated this sentiment. They said:

I am of the Opinion that Agricultural Occupations afford the best means of Employing Convicts, and have a greater Tendency to Reform them than any other Species of Labour. (William Lawson writing to Bigge’s on the 24th June 1820, cited in Ritchie, Vol. II, p. 53)

I am of the opinion that Agricultural labour in its most extended sense may be considered to afford the best means of employing Convicts. The most ignorant man, and those who have not been brought up to labor, may be taught to provide themselves with food, and a Man accustomed to labor will produce a Considerable Surplus. (Hannibal Macarthur to Bigge, 8th June 1820, cited in Ritchie, Vol. II, p. 69)
Finally settler Gregory Blaxland said:

I have not any doubt on my mind of its [agricultural work] being the most proper, if not the only way, by which it [moral improvement] can be effected, it breaks their [convicts] old habits, and it does away the spirit of the Corps, by which they are much influenced and at the same time teaches them a way of earning an honest living. (Gregory Blaxland to Bigge, 12th January 1820, cited in Ritchie, Vol. II, p. 70)

Governor Brisbane, who took over from Governor Macquarie on December 1, 1821, described the 'greatest leading principle' of his tenure as an attempt to 'render labour of every kind productive, & to couple improvement of moral condition, with moral amendment.' (Atkinson 1971, p. 182)

There were a range of factors associated with the emphasis on agriculture as a civilising influence on convicts. Firstly, agriculture suggested an implicit connection between work and reward; if you worked hard you would be rewarded by nature's bounty. Moreover, as Archibald Bell was to comment on in his correspondence with Bigge this kind of work, carried out under the clear skies and fresh air of the natural environment, would produce a happy fatigue, which would work against immoral thoughts and actions. (Bell to Bigge, undated 1820, cited in Ritchie, Vol. II, p. 62)

Another aspect of agriculture which lent itself to convict reformation can be seen in Bell's praise of the way in which agriculture employed convicts 'singly,' as opposed to the kinds of groups or gangs employed in the construction of roads. These 'singly' employed convicts, Bell wrote, were 'afford[ed] opportunities for reflection...’ He continued: stating 'insomuch as few men are, generally, employed on a farm & meet only at stated times of refreshment and rest, their morals if not improved, are not so likely to be injured, as in large associations.' (Bell to Bigge, undated 1820, cited in Ritchie, Vol. II, p. 62)

Another viewpoint is presented by Friedrick of Maitland in the Sydney Morning Herald (1842) who states that rural life can have the opposite effect. Instead of reforming convicts the isolation can make them worse. (Hannibal Macarthur to Bigge, 8th June 1820, cited in Ritchie, Vol. II, p. 70) James Matra, in his 1783 proposal for the colony, suggested a way of earning an honest living. (Gregory Blaxland to Bigge, 12th January 1820, cited in Ritchie, Vol. II, p. 70)
Others echoed this sentiment

Those… who are employed in the various operations of Agriculture, are divided into smaller bodies and scattered through the Country removed from facilities to vice which the towns afford, and in many instances placed with regular and respectable families. In these circumstances their individual characters become better known, so that the well disposed are rewarded, and the worthless punished and disgraced, they themselves if so inclined are better enabled to separate themselves from the more profligate, temptations are weaker and less frequent; and the good example set before them is more likely to produce its due effect on their habits and dispositions. (William Howe to Bigge, 22nd January 1821, cited in Ritchie, II, pp. 54 - 55)

The tendency of Agricultural occupations to separate the Labourers from each other, whilst it gives them constant employment, must, I conceive, promote reformation amongst the Convicts Much More than Such occupations as necessarily congregate them in greater numbers. (Hannibal Macarthur to Bigge, 8th June 1820, cited in Ritchie, Vol. II, p. 69)

The beginnings of an emphasis on individualism can be detected within this focus on the desirability of removing convicts from the influence of their fellows. The idea that certain settings and associations had a corrupting influence, and that people once removed from these influences could realise their individual potential for good, was widely accepted.

**The yeoman as a vehicle of convict reform**

Some prominent colonists such as Colonial Secretary Lord Hobart (1803),31 pastoralist John Macarthur (1806)32 and Governor Brisbane33 argued that an emphasis on agricultural labour in the colony of New South Wales would eventually transform an unruly collective of convicts into a citizenry of yeomen.

31 Lord Hobart to Governor King, 24 February, 1803, HRNSW, V, p. 45.
32 Address to Governor Bligh, 14 August, 1806, HRNSW, VI, p. 165.
The ideal conception of a yeoman was transported to New South Wales from England. One of the more ambiguous figures in the history of enclosure, the yeoman, who possessed a modest property, managed to avoid the plight of the cottager. The cottager had been dispossessed of rights to common lands and relegated to a fate of landless labour. Most observers believed that those rural poor who continued to enjoy a stake in the land were better off. Agricultural expert Arthur Young wrote revealingly of the inhabitants of the unenclosed Isle of Axholme in Lincolnshire; 'though I have said they are very happy, yet I should note that it was remarked to me, that the proprietors work like Negroes and do not live so well as the inhabitants of the poor house; but all is made amends for by possessing land.' (Porter 1990, p. 210) The possession of property, then, offered a panacea to the rigours of poverty and hard labour. However the interests of the wealthier landowners were to the fore in recommendations that the property of the yeoman should remain insufficient for complete independence.

... a quarter of an acre of garden-ground will go a great way towards rendering the peasant independent of any assistance. However, in this beneficent intention moderation must be observed, or we may chance to transform the labourer into a petty farmer, from the most beneficial to the most useless of all the applications of industry. When a labourer becomes possessed of more land than he and his family can cultivate in the evenings... the farmer can no longer depend on him for constant work, and the hay-making and harvest... must suffer to a degree which... would sometimes prove a national inconvenience. (Commercial and Agricultural Magazine cited in Thompson 1976, p. 243)

The yeoman was to be self-supporting and hard working, leading a life of simplicity and productive harmony far removed from the well-springs of political and economic power. The yeoman thus posed no political threat. Indeed, he was a rather impotent figure. 'I regard these small occupiers as a set of very miserable men,' wrote Arthur Young. 'They fare extremely hard, work without intermission like a horse... and practise every lesson of diligence and frugality without being able to soften their present lot' (cited in Porter, 1990, p. 69). Those who projected the virtuous life of the yeoman as an ideal destiny for the convict, reformed through agricultural labour, must have been reassured by a vision of a productive order unruffled by claims to power or political leverage.
The intention that convicts, along with other colonists of modest means, might become yeomen stemmed from the belief that this model would constitute a process of reform, producing an orderly and law-abiding colonial population and, most importantly, creating a self-sustaining pool of wage labour.

James Matra, in his 1783 proposal for the colony, suggested that free grants of land would produce ‘moral subjects of society.’ He wrote:

Give them [convicts] a few acres of ground as soon as they arrive in New South Wales, in absolute property with what assistance they may want to till them. Let it be here remarked that they cannot fly from the country, that they have no temptation to theft; and they must work or starve. I likewise suppose that they are not by any means to be reproached for their former conduct. If these premises be granted me, I may reasonably conclude that it is highly probable that they will be useful; that it is very possible they will be moral subjects of society. (Matra’s Proposal recorded in Phillip 1970, p. 429)34

To this end, Phillip’s Commission as Governor, dated 2nd April 1787, authorised him to grant land to former convicts (Fletcher 1976, p. 14).35 Provided they had behaved well while under sentence, former convicts were to receive land at the rate of ‘thirty acres for a single man, fifty acres for a married couple, with an additional ten acres for each child born at the time the grant was issued.’ (Fletcher 1976, p. 14) These grants came with the promise of material assistance in the form of seed grain for the first sowing, implements and livestock and provisions and clothing for the first twelve months of their operation.36

Writing in the aftermath of his tenure as Governor of New South Wales (which finished in 1791), Arthur Phillip reflected on the advantages of the system he had instituted. He particularly focused on the sense of promise associated with yeomanry:

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34 See also ‘A proposal for establishing a settlement in New South Wales’, HRNSW, I, Pt II, pp. 4-5.
35 This was Phillip’s second Commission. His first Commission was to Captain the First Fleet.
36 Phillip increased the period of assistance from twelve to eighteen months (Phillip to Grenville, 5 November 1791, HRA, I, p. 272).
The individuals themselves, doubtless, in some instances, proved incorrigible; but it happened also, not very unfrequently, that during the time of their legal servitude, they became reconciled to a life of honest industry, were altogether reformed in their manners, and rising gradually by laudable efforts, to a situation of advantage, independence, and estimation contributed honourably to the population and prosperity of the country. (Phillip 1970, p. 3)

**Small farms for emancipists**

Although Phillip had early recognised the value of the Hawkesbury as a potential site for agriculture he hesitated to settle the area for lack of suitable people to oversee the enterprise, equipment to transport produce to Sydney, and fear of dispersing the population too widely (Phillip to Grenville, 17 June 1790, pp. 179-80). Thus, in 1791, when the first convicts to have served their sentences were released, they were granted farms near Parramatta (King 1959, p. 14).

By the time Philip left the colony, in 1792, at least sixty-eight settlers had been placed on small farms, each of twenty-five or thirty acres, in six separate clusters (Perry 1963, p. 20). These were at Parramatta, Prospect Hill, Kissing Point, the Northern Boundary, the Ponds and the Field of Mars.

In the following two years farms were established at Toongabbie, Liberty Plains, Concord, Bulanaming and Petersham (Perry 1963, p. 20). The number of these farms grew steadily in the succeeding years. Although these farmers were severely disadvantaged by their lack of farming experience, and their methods of husbandry were crude, they were able to produce a number of optimum harvests. In 1794, for example, the crop was so successful that Lieutenant Grose of the New South Wales Corps was able to report that ‘the publick [sic] and private farms… yielded in such abundance as to secure us from any other distress than that of being forced to live on bread only.’ (Grose to Dundas, 29 April, 1794, p. 468)

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37 See Perry, p. 21 for a map of these settlements. See returns of lands granted and cultivated in *Historical Records of Australia*, Vol. 1, pp. 279-82; 401-2; 472-3. Several grants were made between the tie of the last of these returns and Phillip's departure for England.
These success stories were more often the exception than the norm, however. Many areas which were settled during this period were far less fertile than the alluvial land along the Parramatta and Hawkesbury rivers and proved more recalcitrant to agricultural improvement and the development of a class of yeomen farmers. In a letter that captures the fragility of the colony’s agricultural endeavour in these early days, an officer wrote in 1790 to a fellow of the Royal society that ‘we every day become more and more sensible of the impossibility of our ever being able to make anything of this country; because ‘we cannot raise grain sufficient to feed even a few… nor have we yet discern’d one natural production that we can make the least use of.’ (Captain James Campbell to William Farr, 24th March 1790 cited in Gascoigne 2002, p. 72)

On the 15th September 1796 Macarthur wrote to Portland:

A great number are settled on farms without any means being adopted to ascertain the quality of the soil that is to be cultivated, the consequence of which is, that after a year’s labour has been expended it is discovered there is no prospect of such land ever supporting its owner. (p. 92)

Not surprisingly the less fertile soils soon became exhausted under the system of continuous cultivation practised on small farms (Perry, p. 22). Many of these farms ceased to deliver worthwhile returns and were abandoned (Atkinson, p. 31). The situation was further exacerbated by what was ‘regarded as the slovenly ways of Australian colonists who had only a very shaky notion of rotating their crops.’ (Gascoigne 2002, p. 74) This view of the local situation was echoed by the more sanguine Watkin Tench who pointed out that ‘slovenly husbandry’ was ‘perhaps necessary’ in a ‘country where immediate subsistence [was] wanted.’ (1996, p. 154)

Other problems facing ex-convict farmers with small land grants were symptomatic of a fledgling colonial society. The first plough did not arrive until 1796 and the horses or oxen that were necessary to pull the ploughs and other agricultural equipment took time to multiply (Blainey 1980, p. 23). Many of the early farmers had to rely on hand-held hoes and when the ploughs were put to use, the stumps, which sprawled across the recently reclaimed forests, significantly limited their utility (Gascoigne 2002, p. 75).38 Their lack of capital, and inability refusing, to the harnessed yoke They lend their shoulder, and begin their toil. On the 26 September 1788, only eight months after is as fine as any I ever saw. I have some Oranges, Figs, Vines, Pomore Roses, Apples, pears, Sugar Cane, & Straw berrys that I
to obtain sufficient convict labourers or to employ free men and ignorance of agriculture also contributed to their hardship and ruin.

When Governor Hunter assumed control in late 1795 the future of the colony looked bleak. Much of the land had been 'so reduced in value that the expenditure of seed was no longer justified.' Government clearing of land was a thing of the past, 'and to so low an ebb had matters come, that “to ensure bread to the settlement” was once more a vital matter.' (Hunter to Portland, 28 May 1796 cited in Roberts 1968, p. 7)

**Conclusion**

The task of this chapter has been to trace the role of work, both agricultural and rhetorical in the establishment of the colony in New South Wales. The valorisation of agricultural work, and its role within the rhetoric of the colony, was to leave a lasting legacy within the self-understanding and representation of the farming community in Australia.

In the first instance, agriculture fulfilled a necessary role in helping the colonists to survive. It was also assumed, from the beginning, that agriculture would ultimately provide the basis of a flourishing export industry for the colony. This idea was informed by the experience of the agrarian revolution of the eighteenth century, whereby developments in agricultural practices made possible by processes of enclosure, had provided a platform for the emergence of Britain as a global imperial power.

Artists and poets working within a Georgic tradition celebrated agricultural work as a site of promise and future prosperity. In the context of the settlement of New South Wales, it was believed that agricultural labour would socialise convicts into an appreciation of the productivity and rewards associated with hard work. Agriculture, that is, would operate as a site of convict reform.
Following Paul Carter, I argued that an important technology employed by the colonists to enable work in the colony was the boundary. The boundary provided a point of reference in an otherwise undifferentiated landscape. It distinguished here from there, self from other. In doing so it created a space where an idea of home might take root, and belief in the future of the colony could be fostered. Henceforth, work would be endowed with meaning; an object and a trajectory. The visual artists affirmed this ordering of space and meaning within the colony, employing the visual rhetoric of the disengaged view to give their vision power and performance within the colonial imaginary.

This chapter has introduced a number of themes of importance to this thesis. In the colonial imaginary, bounded space, as the site for productive labour, was also to be the site for the realisation of the projected ‘goods’ that the colony sought. The labour of ordering an untamed landscape, and harnessing its productive potential to the colony’s ends, was to simultaneously effect a productive ordering of the labourer’s soul. This dual ordering of landscape and soul would bring civility and bounty to the colony. Thus the back-breaking labour that was necessary to establish and maintain agriculture in the recalcitrant Australian landscape was celebrated as a sign of participation in the striving of colonial society towards these glorious ends. In the two centuries that followed colonisation, the rhetorical power of the yeoman farmer, worn but not broken by unrelenting labour, would guide both the politics and the poetics of Australian identity. At the close of the twentieth century, farmers struggling for survival on marginal farms still understand their endeavour in these terms. I shall return to the themes of boundaries, labour and self-fruition in analysing my findings from field in the Maranoa in Part 2 of the thesis.
Louisa Anne Meredith, who lived in New South Wales from 1839 to 1844 wrote that: **Many of their houses are elegant villas, with rooms of noble dimensions and environed by beautiful gardens, where every description of fruit, both European and tropical, is cultivated.**
The fruits of order: visions of a compliant nature

sions, expensively furnished with almost every luxury to be found in a gentleman’s residence in England, ed. (Meredith 1849, p. 53) Speaking of Burwood Villa, the artist Joseph Lycett wrote: artificial Grasses were growing, in aid of the natural Pasture;
and a Garden of four acres was in full cultivation containing upwards of three hundred Trees, bearing the following choice fruits, — (see text accompanying Plate 5) Cunningham was one among many commentators to eulogise the views of nature that the new road to South Head afforded. He wrote:
If ordering the landscape was important to perceptions of progress in the colony, an ordering of society was equally important. It allowed colonists both to place themselves within an articulated social landscape, and to envisage the possibility of individual social betterment. The possibility of upward mobility through a social hierarchy was an important motivator, giving hope to those at the bottom of the social scale. This was particularly desirable in the context of a convict settlement. If the bulk of the citizens were to have a convict past, the only hope of forming a respectable society lay in the capacity of ex-convicts to move beyond this past. A visible emphasis on social improvement was also important in attracting free migrants who came to Australia in search of opportunity.

The most famous exponent of this liberal view of social mobility in the colony was Lachlan Macquarie, Governor of New South Wales from 1810 to 1821. Macquarie’s policy on land grants was shaped by his belief that ‘when a man is free, his former state should no longer be remembered, or allowed to act against him.’ (Inglis 1974, p. 13)

The emphasis on upward mobility of men like Macquarie met with fierce opposition from a significant reactionary conservative element in New South Wales society. Many in power, including administrators and landowners, retained deeply held prejudices about class difference. Indeed even the spectre of social mobility was enough to introduce a radical conservatism into the social politics of New South Wales. This conservatism became embedded in a society in which the convict taint threatened not only emancipists and their families, but also the status of friends, connections and acquaintances extending to include even those who refused to conform to this doctrine of exclusion (Therry 1974 [1863], p. 58). It was reflected in the practice of awarding the best and largest lots of land to commissioned officers and privates of marines who had completed their tour of duty, while smaller portions were allotted to emancipists (Fletcher 1976). Thus ownership patterns in the early colony closely reflected social origins.

The contest between the principle of social progressivism and more conservative social ideologies continued into the 1820s. Outrage over Macquarie’s liberal policies led to the commissioning of an inquiry by Thomas Bigge (1819-21). Bigge’s subsequent report reflected...
the conservative belief that Macquarie had been both too lenient on the convicts and too extravagant in the land grants made to emancipists. The report was widely seen by progressives as a contrivance to keep the emancipists in a state of vassalage (Inglis 1974, p. 13). Macquarie's initial successor Sir Thomas Makdougall Brisbane (1821-25) conscientiously implemented the recommendations of Bigge's reports. However it was Brisbane's successor Ralph Darling (1825-1831) who entirely reversed Macquarie's policies on emancipists, rigidly observing the right to exclude them from positions of influence within the colony (Therry 1974, p. 54).

Despite these reactions, the principal of upward mobility was powerful within the colony, and remained central to the self-understanding and motivation of small farmers.

**Land grants**

During the first twenty years of development in the colony agriculture gradually spread throughout the Cumberland Plain, bounded by the Georges River to the South, the Nepean River to the West and the Hawkesbury River to the North. Some of the best agricultural opportunities in this area were available on the Dharuk lands to the west, along the Parramatta River, where there was good soil and ready access to water. It was here that the nucleus of a colonial landed gentry emerged.

A trend towards large landholdings became clearly apparent in the forested areas of the Cumberland Plain. Writing in his journal of a tour of Parramatta and the Minto district made shortly after his arrival in 1810, Macquarie described the properties of the late Mr Thompson (St Andrews) and Dr. Robert Townson (Botany Bay and Varro Ville farm) near present day Minto as possessing 'by far the finest soil and best pasturage I have yet seen in the colony.' (Macquarie 1979, p. 2) These large estates on fertile soils sealed the influence and prosperity of such men.

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2 In 1811 Macquarie granted Townson 1680 acres (680 ha) at Botany and added 1000 acres (405 ha) near Minto. This became the famous Varro Ville farm.
Large landowners in New South Wales typically ran their estates in much the same way as wealthy English landowners. They relied heavily on experienced and trusted farm managers (in Australia these managers were often convicts or emancipists). The landowners themselves, meanwhile, spent a great deal of time entertaining, with a view to consolidating the networks and position that gave them access to the power and social privilege associated with agricultural production.

**Small Grants**

In addition to these larger grants, however, the early history of land grants in the colony was characterised by an emphasis on small grants. Following Phillip's return to England in late 1792, his successor, Lieutenant-Governor Francis Grose, distributed land liberally, chiefly to emancipists (Fletcher 1974, pp. 47-9, 57). In less than three years Grose, followed by his interim successor, Lieutenant-Governor Paterson, granted 15,639 acres throughout the Cumberland Plain (Roberts 1968, p. 7).

The year 1794 marked the beginning of the second phase of the settlement of the Cumberland Plain. Following the establishment of Parramatta, settlers moved in to take over the indigenous yam beds set in the rich alluvial soil along the Hawkesbury River. The first twenty-two settlers to take up this land found the soil to be particularly rich and their crops showed the ‘greatest luxuriance.’ (Grose to Dundas, 29 April, 1794, p. 470) Here the settlers’ farms were often smaller than they were in Parramatta. By August there were seventy settlers and a good road had been made from Sydney to the settlement, which in June 1795 contained 546 persons (Grose to Dundas, 31 August 1794, pp. 483; 501-2). In 1798 the settlement was expanded further with the establishment of farms on the flats of George's river near Banks Town (Hunter to Portland, 10 January, 1798, p. 117).

Between 1810 and 1821, when the colony was under Macquarie's administration, at least 655 small farms were established (Fletcher, pp. 132-3). Most of these small farms were granted to emancipists, as free settlers did not arrive in the colony in great numbers until after 1820. Macquarie wrote to the Earl of Liverpool in 1812; ‘The best description of settlers for this country are emancipated convicts, or persons become free by servitude, who have been convicts.’ (Macquarie to Liverpool, 17 November 1812, p. 598). Similarly, in an 1814 letter...
to Earl Bathurst, Macquarie described small land owners, who raised grain and a handful of stock, as 'a lower class, whose early and laborious habits render them useful to the colony and constitute them, properly speaking, the yeomanry of the country, they being the real improvers and cultivators of the soil.' (Macquarie to Bathurst, 7 October 1814, p. 303).

**Difficulties Facing Small Grants**

Despite Macquarie's arguments in their favour, success as a small farmer in early nineteenth century New South Wales was very difficult. A range of factors contributed to ensure that agricultural development would, to cite Gascoigne's pithy description, 'benefit some and disadvantage others.' (Gascoigne 2002, p. 70) Conservative social attitudes, together with a range of economic factors (including high costs of production, a fluctuating market and the occasional difficulty of selling grain to the commissariat), conspired to make life very difficult (Perry, p. 22).

One of the difficulties facing small farmers was the limited supply of skilled convict labour in the colony. Experienced agricultural labour was in high demand. Men and women transported from the slums of London were unlikely to be of much use to a farmer in Parramatta. 'If fifty farmers were sent out with their families,' wrote Governor Phillip in despair to England in July 1788, 'they would do more in one year in rendering this colony independent of the mother country, as to provisions, than a thousand convicts.' (Governor Phillip to Undersecretary Nepean, 9 July 1788, p. 56). It was often the case that the convicts with the most farming experience were Irishmen who had been successful and respected land owners in their own right before being deported for political agitation (Campbell 1997, p. 35).

The distribution of convict labour was determined entirely by the small number of colonial officers who made up the Governor's inner circle. Malcolm Campbell cites an example from 1816, when the vice-regal secretary himself, John Thomas Campbell, boarded the newly arrived

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illas, with rooms of noble dimensions, expensively furnished with almost every luxury to be found in a genteel European and tropical, is cultivated. (Meredith 1849, p. 53) Speaking of Burwood Villa, the artist Joseph Lycett wrote: artificial Grasses were grown...
convict ship the *Surrey* and personally questioned each of the convicts to discover which of
them had experience in agriculture. He then proceeded to assign them accordingly.

The right connections to men like Campbell provided access to the best and most experienced
convict labour (Campbell 1997, p. 37). Given the almost total absence of non-assigned (free)
labour, this system of cronyism gave particular individuals (and groups of individuals) a very
significant advantage. It lent itself to the consolidation of power, wealth and prestige amongst
the officer class; those with the best connections and best access to the ear of the Governor.

There were other factors, too, which made it difficult for unaligned or unconnected individuals
without wealth, to progress. Military men, for example, had set up a monopoly for the supply
and distribution of many essential goods. With no competitors they were able to charge
whatever they desired. Farmers were at their mercy. By 1798 Governor Hunter (1795-1800)
was clearly aware that trading by the officers needed to be controlled if the settlers were not
to become bankrupt. In March he sent a detailed account of the settlers’ grievances about
inflated prices, showing differences of as much as 700 per cent between the landing costs of
goods and the price charged for their purchase by the public (Wood 1928, pp. 344-62; Fletcher
1961). 4 Large landowners among the officer class benefited from these monopolies, while the
emancipists on small farms were at their mercy.

Small farmers also seemed to bear the brunt of environmental hazards within the colony. The
Hawkesbury, where many former emancipists had settled, was subject to recurrent flooding.
A flood in May 1809 destroyed almost the whole of the grain from the preceding harvest, and
a second flood in August destroyed the growing crop. This placed the colony in the precarious
position of having to rely on wheat from Bengal and Rio de Janeiro to avert famine (Paterson
to Castlereagh, 9 July and 14 October 1809, pp. 167; 174). Although all agriculturalists

4 The practices indulged in by the New South Wales Corps were not without parallel in other parts of the British
dominions. John Macarthur’s profits as regimental paymaster, for example were far less than those often accumulated
by similar officers in India; however the difference between the commercial activities of Macarthur and his fellow
officers in New South Wales and equivalent operations elsewhere was that in New South Wales they achieved a position
almost of monopoly, whereas on other stations this was rarely possible.
were affected by these natural disasters, small farmers had fewer resources than the larger landowners to help them survive such setbacks.

The difficulties facing small farmers were also due to their own inadequacies. Many came from urban environments and had little or no experience in farming. Alcohol was also an enormous problem in the colony and widespread addiction to rum was detrimental to the colony’s productivity. The New South Wales Temperance Society was inaugurated in 1835, with the Governor, Sir George Gipps, present. Gipps found drunkenness to be the ‘fruitful parent of every species of crime.’ Lady Gipps was the first to sign a list for a woman’s temperance society. The Total Abstinence Society started in 1838 (Dunstan 1974, p. 49).

**Improvement**

The most profound difficulty facing small farmers, however, was their inability to compete with larger landowners in production and in the improvement of their properties. During the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries in England, developments in farming had been driven by the increasing rationalisation of farming practices and the increased application of scientific methods to increase yields. These shifts had increased the gap between larger, wealthier farmers, who were able to develop economies of scale in order to absorb the capital costs associated with the new techniques, and smaller farmers who were forced to continue to use more traditional farming methods.

In New South Wales, larger landowners, because of the size of their estates, were able to employ techniques that were more efficient and productive than those available to smaller farmers. In his 1819 submission to Commissioner Bigge, for example, William Cox noted that farmers with larger properties capable of supporting both crops and livestock were able to use animal manure to raise the fertility of the soil. One beneficiary of these kinds of practices of improvement was G. T. Palmer. He told Bigge that he was obtaining about twelve bushels of wheat per acre from his land (Perry, p. 22). Thus, although Bigge remained largely critical of the quality and rate of improvement in New South Wales, he also suggested that those fields which were in ‘the best state of cultivation and exhibit[ed] the greatest improvement’ could be found on the large estates of the wealthier landowners (Fletcher, p. 213).
Many smaller farms were unable to compete in this environment and eventually succumbed to economic and social pressure. For example, the area around present-day Castle Hill and Baulkham Hills, then known as ‘Ponds and Northern Boundaries,’ was originally the site of a number of small land grants of thirty acres. By 1819, however, as William Cox told Commissioner Bigge, ‘many of these had not [been] worked for many years and have since been purchased by larger capitalists who are now working them on a better system.’ Failed farmers were subsequently forced to work for wages (or start from scratch on a new farm).

The Rise of a Landed Gentry

The same social and economic forces that made it difficult for many small farmers to survive in early nineteenth century New South Wales facilitated the rise of a powerful and wealthy class of large landowners. Because of their larger holdings, these farmers were able to improve their land and increase productivity by a rational ordering of the landscape. These actions endowed them with a greater capacity for wealth creation.

One of the foremost concerns of such landowners was to distinguish themselves as a class in a way that would confirm their authority and justify their privileged status. Many writers discussing the progress of the colony during the first half of the nineteenth century suggested that this project bordered on the obsessive. To signify their status and wealth many landowners built grand houses which could ‘challenge comparison with some of the Country Residences of the Gentry in England.’ (Lycett 1971 [1824-5], text accompanying Plate 13) Louisa Anne Meredith, who lived in New South Wales from 1839 to 1844 wrote that:

Many of their houses are elegant villas, with rooms of noble dimensions, expensively furnished with almost every luxury to be found in a gentleman’s residence in England, and environed by beautiful gardens, where every description of fruit, both European and tropical, is cultivated. (Meredith 1849, p. 53)

William Cox’s evidence before Commissioner Bigge. See James Bonwick, Transcripts of records in the Public Record Office, London. From 1887 to 1902 James Bonwick transcribed early Australian source material located in London, for the New South Wales Government. Most of the transcripts have been published in Historical Records of New South Wales (1892-1901) and Historical Records of Australia (1914-1926).
Some of the grandest houses in the colony included John Piper’s ‘Henrietta Villa,’ which lay on the harbour, four miles to the east of Sydney Cove (now Point Piper) [Fig 3.1] Edward Riley’s ‘Woolloomooloo Estate’ [Fig 3.2], John Macarthur’s ‘Elizabeth Farm’ at Parramatta [Fig 3.3], and Alexander Riley’s ‘Burwood Villa.’ [Fig 3.4] On all of these estates a handsome house was situated amongst fields which had been cleared, enclosed, subdivided and improved. All of these estate owners took great pains to maintain an association between their affluence (symbolised by their grand houses), and the improvement of the landscape, (symbolised by the fields). Speaking of Burwood Villa, the artist Joseph Lycett wrote:

artificial Grasses were growing, in aid of the natural Pasture; and a Garden of four acres was in full cultivation containing upwards of three hundred Trees, bearing the following choice fruits, - viz. the Orange, Citron, Lemon… with abundance of Raspberries, Strawberries, and the finest of Melons. (Lycett 1971, no pagination)

In the early 1820s the owners of all of these estates commissioned artists, primarily Joseph Lycett, to paint views of their estates. The most important aspect of Lycett’s role was to represent the analogous relationship between the houses of these wealthy men and their carefully ordered landscapes. Drawing on the traditions laid down by the English landscape gardener, Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown (1715-83), Lycett represented the landscape as an undulating expanse of parkland, made more legible by carefully placed trees planted either singly or in clumps (Phibbs 2003; Turner 1985). Here, the bush has been transformed; tamed, ordered and made productive by the hand of man. Lycett published these images in 1824 in Views in Australia or New South Wales, and Van Diemen’s Land.

One of the most recurrent gestures Lycett made in these views was the inclusion of women strolling, in leisurely and assured proprietorship of the holding displayed. Lycett’s image of the Residence of John McArthur, near Parramatta, is typical (Roxburgh 1974). There is a

6 This country villa was at Burwood on Parramatta Road.
7 Views consisted of twenty-four images in the form of two tours: one began in Sydney and surveyed New South Wales and one began in Hobart and proceeded through the interior of Van Diemen’s Land. Lycett included a map at the start of each tour so that viewers could plot their imaginary journey.
The fruits of order: visions of a compliant nature

Part 1  Chapter 3

Figure 3.1
Joseph Lycett (1774?-ca 1828)
View of Captain Piper’s Naval Villa, at Elizabeth Point near Sidney, New South Wales
1822, Hand coloured aquatint
17.59 x 27.5 cm
Title below image
Inscribed “J. Lycett, Delt, et Execut London
Published May 1, 1825 by J. Souter, 73. St Pauls Church Yard” below image
Published in Joseph Lycett, Views in Australia, London, 1824, pl. 6.

...sand- lie scattered about in disorderly array, garnished with shrubs in livers of the freshest green, and flowers of the liveliest hue, cannot fail to impress any of their houses are elegant villas, with rooms of noble dimensions, expensively furnished with almost
very luxury to be found in a gentleman’s residence in England, and environed by beautiful gardens, where Joseph Lycett wrote: artificial Grasses were growing, in aid of the natural Pasture; and a Garden of four acres was in full cultivation con

Figure 3.4
Joseph Lycett (1774?-ca 1828)

1822, Hand coloured aquatint
17.5 x 27.5 cm
Title below image
Inscribed “London, Publish’d May 1, 1825, by J. Souter, 73 St Paul’s Church Yard” below image
Published in Joseph Lycett, Views in Australia, London, 1824, pl. 5.
gendered dimension to his images. English society understood the wife to be a possession of her husband (Chirelstein 1990, p. 43). It was a man’s responsibility, to protect her (Scobey 1992, pp. 214-5). These figures were, therefore, a powerful gesture on the part of Lycett. They signified a landscape which had been tamed and ordered; rendered fitting for women and a site of leisurely recreation. Furthermore, they placed this landscape at the heart of both patriarchal propriety and property ownership.

In the view of John Piper’s ‘Elizabeth Henrietta Villa,’ painted by Richard Read Jnr in 1820, we see the house set amidst a cleared and well maintained lawn [Fig 3.5]. The lawn is the site of a gathering of well-dressed men and women, who have arrived by water from Sydney. The scene is respectable and elegant. The women are carrying parasols and the men wearing hats. Dogs and children frolic nearby. Beyond the lawns are fields, carefully laid out and well maintained. In the distance lies an immense forest. Despite the distant presence of the forest, the scene is marked by an absolute confidence in the sovereignty of order within this landscape. Captain Piper is in full possession of his grounds.

In a view of Edward Riley’s Woolloomooloo Residence, by Joseph Lycett in 1824-5, the house is set amid a carefully laid-out lawn, with plantings of trees scattered about [Fig 3.2]. A fenced paddock is to the side of the house. The proximity of the wild is suggested by a group of indigenous Australians sitting under a tree at the very edge of the scene. Nevertheless, the civility of the landscape is confirmed by the presence of a well-dressed man and woman in the foreground of the painting. They have apparently walked out from the house, along the side of the Bay, so that they may look back on the view.

The view of John Macarthur’s Elizabeth Farm at Parramatta however, is even more picturesque than those properties around the harbour [Fig 3.3]. The Georgian house is set in a scene that stretches to the horizon. The landscape is almost impossibly green and elegant. Clumps of trees have been carefully planted over the rolling hills. The forest has been all but banished; visible

9 See also Joseph Lycett’s ‘View of captain Piper’s Naval Villa, at Elizabeth Point, near Sidney, New South Wales’ published in Views in Australia, London, 1824, pl. 6.
Figure 3.5
Richard Read Jr. (1796-1862)
Elizabeth Henrietta Villa
1820, Water colour on wove paper
39 x 67 cm
Signed and dated “Painted by R. Read junr. March 1820 Sydney N.S. Wales” in ink lower left.
Title in pencil below view in artist’s hand
Inscribed “situate about four miles Down the Harbour from Sydney Cpve the seat pf John Piper Esq: Naval Officer etc. etc. of Port Jackson New South Wales.”

Raspberries, Strawberries, and the finest of Melons. (Lycett 1971, no pagination, see text accompanying Plate 5) Cunningham was one among others perched upon the bold headland forming the southern entrance of the harbour, and overlooking the whole sea.
Among many commentators to eulogise the views of nature that the new road to South Head afforded. He wrote: The road terminates at the tall and airy lighthouse, southern ocean, spread out in boundless expanse before you... To the admirer of untamed nature, in all her primeval variety, this

Figure 3.2
Joseph Lycett (1774?-ca 1828)
The Residence of Edward Riley Esq, Woolloomooloo, Near Sydney, New South Wales
1822, Hand coloured aquatint
18 x 28 cm
Title below image
Inscribed "London Pub 1, June 1825 by J. Souter, 73 St Paul's Church Yard"
Published in Joseph Lycett, Views in Australia, London, 1824, pl. 4.
only in the far distance. In the foreground is a luxurious stretch of the Parramatta River. Along its banks, stroll a couple, presumably Macarthur and his wife Elizabeth, after whom the farm was named. Their presence, particularly her presence, at once so far from the house and yet dressed as if for a garden party, illustrates the immense power of this man. It appears that he has offered her his arm that he may show her the fruits of his labour. She is pointing with her arm raised, eager and appreciative. All is abundance and prosperity. Lycett projects an image of country life in which the estate is fruitful, nature gives up its treasures willingly, and the proprietor has the leisure to enjoy this bounty and share it with others.

This idea of the happy man ‘Beatus ille’ living on the land, both materially self-sufficient and philosophically content, can be traced back to Roman antiquity; in particular to Horace and Virgil whose work was celebrated by the English poets (Rosenthal 1982, p. 14). The element of morality in this idea of country life, living on one’s own estate, tilling the soil, immunising oneself against the artificiality of urban life (with its excesses and lack of balance) continued to influence the fledgling colony.

These images of wealth and leisure, set amidst and supported by the fruitful bounty of a harmoniously ordered nature, represented the utopian end of agricultural striving within the colony. Although the extravagance of the landed classes was sometimes criticised (Meredith 1849, p. 53) their capacity to realise and display the potential bounty of nature in an antipodean setting, was important within the imaginary of the colony. Although the obstacles to the realisation of such utopian pleasures by small farmers were great, the Edenic images fuelled their striving and focussed their hopes. At the same time these images helped the wealthy landowners to inscribe a conservative class-based social order onto colonial society. The dual nature of the colony, as both hierarchical and yet offering hope to those who aspired to climb the social ladder, was thus served by these representations of agricultural success. This dual purpose was similarly served by another performance of nineteenth century social life, the promenade.
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Figure 3.3
Joseph Lycett (1774?-ca 1828)
The Residence of John McArthur Esq. near Parramatta, New South Wales
1822, Hand coloured aquatint
18 x 28 cm
Title below image
Inscribed "J. Lycett, Delt et Execut. London. Published April 1, 1825, by J. Souter, 73, St Paul’s Church Yard."
Published in Joseph Lycett, Views in Australia, London, 1824, pl. 13.

liveliest hue, cannot fail to impress its beauty on the heart too deeply to be readily forgotten. (Cunningham cited in Faro, p. 117) Louisa Anne Meredith, who lived furnished with almost every luxury to be found in a gentleman’s residence in England, and environed
The spread of promenading

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century promenading developed into one of the most respectable forms of leisure and recreation in the colony. As David Scobey has described it, the promenade was ‘a performative utterance of gentility, a way of saying “I do” to the cultural authority of bourgeois values.’ (1992, p. 204) True to the dual pulls of conservative social order and progressive ideology of opportunity, the promenade was both inclusive and marked by signs of social distinction. John Dunmore Lang described the different ‘equipages’ to be seen promenading in Sydney in 1824. The ‘member of Council’ moved along ‘leisurely and proudly’ in a ‘ponderous coach.’ Mr. Whalebone, the ship-owner, strutted along in a ‘lively barouche,’ while the landlord of the Tinker’s Arms, provided a point of comparison and represented the more common end of the social scale with his ‘one-horse shay’ and ‘blowzy dame’ for company. ‘Ever and anon some young bachelor merchant or military officer, eager to display his superior skill in horsemanship, dashed briskly forward along the cavalcade at full gallop.’ (Cited in Faro, 1998, p. 121) Sunday in particular was ‘a great gala day,’ Peter Cunningham observed, when ‘all the various equipages are most profusely shown off.’ (1966 [1827], pp. 42-43)

One of the earliest opportunities for promenading in the new colony was associated with the construction of South Head Road, under the auspices of Governor Macquarie, in 1811. South Head Road started at the south-east corner of Hyde Park (the Old Racecourse) and ran east from the city, traversing the hitherto inaccessible ridge that divided the harbour from the coast. Its destination was South Head, and the lookout and lighthouse that had been built there in 1790.

Even before South Head Road was finished it was promoted as a site of recreation. ‘When finished,’ the Sydney Gazette trumpeted in 1811, ‘the new road to South Head promises to become a fashionable resort from the accommodation it will afford to carriages, which heretofore could not possibly pass without extreme difficulty and danger.’ (Sydney Gazette, 25 May 1811) Once built, the broad, flat, carriageway gave the middle- and upper-classes of Sydney a comfortable thoroughfare. The Sydney Gazette described South Head Road in 1812, as ‘a beautiful avenue of recreation, either as a pleasant ride or promenade,’ (Sydney Gazette, August 8, 1812) and then again in 1820, as ‘one of the most agreeable rides that imagination could contemplate.’ (Sydney Gazette, January 15, 1820) Surgeon Peter Cunningham, the finest chronicler of life in Sydney beautiful gardens, where every description of fruit, both European and tropical, is cultivated. (Meredith 1849, p. 53) Four acres was in full cultivation containing upwards of three hundred Trees, bearing the following choice fruits, - viz. the Orange.
Sydney in the 1820s, attests to the popularity of this recreation. He describes the new road as 'a grand equestrian resort, along which gigs with well-dressed people, and spruce dandies "a cheval" [on horse], may be daily seen careering.' (Cunningham 1966 [1827], pp. 42-43)

If the promenade serves to illustrate the obsession of the colonist with both social ordering and social aspiration, it also introduces a more confident positioning of man in relation to antipodean nature.

Cunningham was one among many commentators to eulogise the views of nature that the new road to South Head afforded. He wrote:

The road terminates at the tall and airy lighthouse, perched upon the bold headland forming the southern entrance of the harbour, and overlooking the whole southern ocean, spread out in boundless expanse before you... To the admirer of untamed nature, in all her primeval variety, this spot, where low undulating hills- of rock and sand- lie scattered about in disorderly array, garnished with shrubs in liversies of the freshest green, and flowers of the liveliest hue, cannot fail to impress its beauty on the heart too deeply to be readily forgotten. (Cunningham cited in Faro, p. 117)

Here nature is presented as spectacle. 'Untamed nature' and 'the boundless expanse' of ocean impress the soul with their beauty. The work of ordering, disciplining and rendering nature compliant was the first duty of the colonists, but as work gives way to leisure, nature is cast in a different role. Nature came to be understood as 'scenery, views and perceptual sensation.' (Green 1990, p. 6) The promenade along South Head Road had introduced a touristic gaze; an appreciation of the picturesque (McLean 2001, p 13). Green suggests that partly because of the writings of the Romantics, nature becomes largely associated with 'leisure and pleasure – tourism, spectacular entertainment, visual refreshment.' (1990, p. 6)

The road, and the promenade more generally, created points of view from which the natural could be enjoyed. The ability to take pleasure in the landscape displayed the growing confidence of the colonists. It was a symbol of a newfound power (Lefebvre 1992).

Speaking of Burwood Villa, the artist Joseph Lycett wrote: artificial Grasses were growing, in aid of the natural Pasture; and a Garden, Citron, Lemon... with abundance of Raspberries, Strawberries, and the finest of Melons. (Lycett 1971, no pagination, see
In the second half of the nineteenth century a number of other important promenading sites emerged. Some of these sites could be found in the grand public parks of Sydney, including Hyde Park and Centennial Park (Ashton and Blackmore 1988). In the Botanic Gardens the walk along the sea wall was used as a 'great promenade.' 'Despite the tread of innumerable feet,' George Barton wrote in a description of the Botanic Gardens published in 1886, 'the continuous soft carpet of buffalo grass maintains its freshness and elasticity.' (1886, p. 87)

Insofar as promenading represents a positioning of the socially inscribed body in relation to an apparently wild, but essentially compliant nature, it is closely related to another activity that gained popularity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the picnic.

**Picnicking**

The picnic is a leisurely meal consumed outdoors in a 'natural' setting. The ideal location for a picnic in nineteenth century Sydney was seen as a ‘wooded dell,’ ‘charming bower’ or ‘pleasant and shady nook,’ at once secluded and protected from any visitors gaze or chilly breeze which might come off the ocean, but, at the same time, giving access to a magnificent panoramic view over the harbour or ocean. The sea, especially its wild, untamed and immense quality had moved to the fore of nineteenth century aesthetic consciousness. It seemed to be nature in a quite unmediated fashion (Corbin 1992). Nature was thus valued right at the margins of civilised land, where nature and civilisation came into direct contestation (Green 1990). While the bush closed around and behind picnickers, ‘dark and wild to the eye… in front the view opened up so that nothing extraneous could encroach upon the display and curb the spectator’s field of vision.’ (Quasimodo, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 November 1889) The *Australian* of 3 July 1841, referred readers to ‘the number of picnics that constantly take place at North Bondi… [which] commands a view of the sea and the heads, [and] takes in at a bird’s eye glance a circuit of many miles.’

Vehicular transportation and roads that can convey picnickers to picturesque locations are an essential precondition as is the existence of leisure for the pursuit of such an activity.
The principal technologies of the picnic are the hamper, for transportation of food and eating utensils, and the rug, which marks out an ordered, comfortable and clean space on which the food can be displayed and consumed. The rug mediates relations between humans and nature. In the words of Mike Michael it offers an opportunity for ‘a communion with nature, particularly in its wilderness guise.’ (2000, p. 47) The space of the picnic rug, while establishing the ordering presence of civility within the wilderness, is both ephemeral and vulnerable.

It is the very tenuousness of the rug, however, which is the key to its power. It’s not in spite, but because, of the apparent vulnerability of the rug that the picnicker is enabled to ‘embrace the natural sublime, to consume nature’s spectacle, to measure nature’s objects, to extract nature’s bounty.’ (Michael 2000, p. 59)

**Conclusion**

An important consideration in establishing the colony in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was articulating a social objective, a sense of the good life to be realised as the reward of hard work, the goal of striving and progress. This vision would endow the colony with a vision of the future, give work meaning and enable progress. It was an especially important component in the rehabilitation of convicts and attracting migrants. This chapter argued that the telos of the colony can be observed in the rituals of leisure and pleasure that were central to social life. Importantly, the visions of this realised telos presented nature as an essential but compliant partner in realising human prosperity and pleasure.
ten-foot by twelve-foot hut, with slab walls, bark roof and a stone and wood fireplace was a common form of habitation. A rough bedstead of sheepskins or opossum (Roberts, p. 283). As Edward Curr (1968 [1883]) put it: ... some rather coarse brown sugar was put in the pannikins, which w...
Domesticating the sublime: heroic endurance and the pursuit of independence

sum rugs’ with a ‘bark table or, on occasion, a sea chest, to serve every other purpose.’ were then filled with tea from an iron kettle which was simmering by the fire, and finally a leg of mutton was
transferred on the end of a large iron skewer, amidst clouds of vapour, from the iron pit in which it was boiling. A ten-foot by twelve-foot hut, with slab walls, bark roof and a stone and wood fireplace was a close... (pp. 33-4).
The Mountains and the Sublime

During the first two decades of the colony the development and expansion of agriculture focused on the Cumberland Plain (bounded by the Georges River to the South, the Nepean River to the West and the Hawkesbury River to the North). This early period of development took place in three stages. Dharuk lands along the Parramatta River were settled first, then land along the Hawkesbury River, followed by the settlement of the dryer sclerophyll forest lands in the west of the Cumberland Plain (Gascoigne 2002, p. 76).

By the end of these first two decades of settlement, however, the lands of the Cumberland Plain had been fully deployed and pressure was building to expand agriculture beyond its boundaries. Mountains to the west of Sydney formed part of the Great Dividing Range, which ran parallel to the east coast of the continent. They presented a seemingly insurmountable barrier to the westward expansion of settlement. John Oxley, the Surveyor-General, feared that by limiting the extent of expansion, the mountains compromised the colony’s ability to meet all of its food needs (Speirs 1981, p. 35). The mountains, he argued, rendered the settlement vulnerable.

This vulnerability had been demonstrated by repeated devastation of food crops through a series of natural disasters. Prior to Macquarie’s arrival in 1810, for example, floods on the Hawkesbury had resulted in scarcity of wheat in the colony. A plague of caterpillars struck in the spring of that year and in 1811 the situation worsened after a drought caused many farmers to withdraw from the area altogether (Perry 1963, p. 29). The location of all agricultural activity within a limited geographic area meant that local events affected the entire crop. Expansion into new areas was needed. There was an overwhelming sense in the colony that, ‘For the first time land was needed for men, instead of men for land.’ (Béchervaise 1971, p. 24)

Anxiety about the need to cross the mountains was exacerbated by the number of explorers who had tried to do this and failed. Two of the most extensive explorations to be conducted had been led by Ensign Francis Louis Barallier of the 102nd regiment in 1802 and botanist Mr George Caley in 1804 (Thomas 2004, p. 63). Both of these men had believed that the rivers

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1 Caley’s report is entitled ‘An account of a Journey to Mount Banks: Nov 1804’ and was compiled for his employer Sir...
offered the best hope of navigating a path through the Mountains. However the rivers offered only an illusion of navigability. Writing in his journals Caley had reported:

In speaking of the Grose as a river, we cannot with propriety consider it as such, but rather a receptacle of a great number of brooks and rills... [It does not exceed six miles before it begins to divide; and by the [appear]ance of the country, must soon afterwards soon subdivide till the subdivisions will become too tedious to enumerate. (Caley 1984, p. 83)

Caley wrote that ‘The country just around, seemed to consist of small ranges of hills and vallies [sic], that run in a circuitous manner in every direction’ as though ‘nature had formed a Labyrinth.’ (Caley 1984, p. 75) Captain Watkin Tench employed a similar image. He described the ‘great chain of mountains’ as a ‘wild abyss… [a] trackless, immeasurable desert, in awful silence.’ (Tench 1961 [1793], pp. 153-4)

This image of the mountains as labyrinthine evoked a sense of their impenetrability; of horror and darkness. However a labyrinth also offers a challenge, the possibility of reward for its solution. The metaphor of ‘the labyrinth’ had currency, for the colonists, in its association with the Enlightenment project of bringing hidden truths to light through reason.² Descartes had employed the metaphor in his Rules for the Direction of the Mind (Regulae ad Directionem Ingenii).³ In seeking knowledge ‘the reader’ he wrote must ‘order and arrange’ his objects as carefully as he would follow the thread of Theseus if he were to enter the Labyrinth.’ (Descartes 1985, p. 20, para 380) Martin Thomas writes, the image of the labyrinth also endowed the ‘pursuit of knowledge with greater urgency;’ associating the ‘rationalist enterprise with a sense of fear – a cosmic terror – that humanity, without the beneficial qualities of reason, would be irretrievably lost.’ (2004, p. 85)

Joseph Banks. It follows his journey through the Devil’s Wilderness to Mount Banks.

² This view is evident in Michel Foucault’s work. He describes the Enlightenment as an attitude rather than an epoch or historically contained area. See ‘What is Enlightenment?’ in Paul Rabinow (ed) The Foucault Reader, London, Penguin, 1984.

³ Rules for the Regulation of the Mind was written in Latin in 1628 or earlier. However it was not published in the author’s lifetime. The first Latin edition was published in Amsterdam by P. and J. Blaeu in 1701. An earlier Dutch translation appeared in Holland in 1684.

As Edward Curr (1968 [1883]) put it: ‘... some occasion, a sea chest, to serve every other purpose.’ (Roberts, p. 283).
The portrayal of the Blue Mountains as labyrinthine; as frightening and seemingly impenetrable, but ultimately subject to reason drew on contemporary writings on the sublime. The notion of the sublime had originated in antiquity, but had received more recent impetus through the writings of Edmund Burke and in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant.

In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, published in 1756, Burke spoke of the sublime in terms of the experience of a power greatly superior to our own; a power that exceeds the quantifiable and the useable. Burke found the sublime in anything earthly that could produce the impression of infinity, vastness and magnitude; in natural phenomena such as in overwhelming mountains or dark caves, and also in human constructions of grandeur particularly soaring buildings or ancient ruins, or even in poetry (such as that of Homer) that celebrates the superhuman or the divine (Day 1996, p. 184).

Encounters with such a power, Burke observed, are characterised by a sense of ‘delightful horror,’ an ‘ecstasy of terror.’ (Burke 1990, p. 59-61) The coupling of positive sensations, of delight and ecstasy, with the negatives of horror or terror, he argued, produced a ‘temporary dislocation of the sensibilities’ which, in turn, ‘forced the observer into mental action.’ (Nye 1996, p. 6) To seek out the sublime was to seek the awakening of sensibilities to ‘an inner power’ that inspired awe, reverence and deep emotion (Nye 1996, p. 6).

Prior to Burke’s writing nature had been generally perceived as inhospitable. Dense forests, impassable mountains and ravines, and impenetrable swamps and marshes were stigmatised (Tuan 1993, pp. 60-1). Even those areas of nature which were among the first to be recognised as sublime had been represented as possessing turbulent power only decades earlier, as in Daniel Defoe’s description of the English Lake District which he portrayed as the ‘wildest, most barren and frightful’ of any area he visited (Nicolson 1978, p. 25). By the end of the century however, the Lakes district had become the first site of nature to be presented for aesthetic consumption (Urry 1995, Ch 13).

Important in this transformation of human relations with nature were the development of visual discourses around notions of the sublime and the picturesque, which enabled the more terrifying aspects of nature to be reinterpreted as part of a meaningful aesthetic experience.

rather coarse brown sugar was put in the pannikins, which were then filled with tea from an iron kettle, amidst clouds of vapour, from the iron pit in which it was boiling, to the tin dish on table... The atmosphere
Implicit in the idea of the sublime was a belief that, no matter how immense, the forces of nature could be confronted by man by virtue of his courage, his 'inner power,' his reason and rationality. There was a clearly a gendered component to this equation. As Day argues, the 'sublime moment' is 'peculiarly male.' While 'nature and the feminine can help facilitate this moment of sublime apprehension… priority and ultimacy reside with the masculine.' (Day 1996, p. 190) Exhilaration is experienced when this masculine spirit is confronted by a challenge to dominate; an opportunity to realise its power.

Immanuel Kant, like Burke, was concerned to articulate how feelings both positive and negative could be physiologically experienced at the same time. In *Critique of Judgement* (1790) he argued that while the sublime was awesome and terrifying, it was not insurmountable (Pluhar 1987, p. ixx). Discussing what he called the 'mathematical sublime,' which referred to man's encounter with extreme magnitude or vastness (such as the view from a great mountain), Kant's subject was able to 'recuperate a sense of superior self-worth, because the mind is able to conceive something larger and more powerful than the sense can grasp.' In this experience the subject passes through humiliation and awe to a heightened awareness of reason (Nye, p. 7).

Kant also referred to the contemplation of scenes that arouse terror by a subject who is safe from immediate danger. Such scenes might include a volcanic eruption, threatening rocks, lightning, high waterfalls or a mighty river. He suggested that, from a safe vantage point, it was possible to be 'all the more attracted by their aspect the more fearful it is.' Nye explains: 'Contemplating such dangers makes the subject realise that nature can threaten only his physical being, leading him to feel superior to nature by virtue of his superior reason.' (p. 8) 'We like to call these objects sublime,' Kant argued because they 'raise the soul's fortitude above its usual middle range and allow us to discover in ourselves an ability to resist which is of a quite different kind, and which gives us the courage [to believe] that we could be a match for nature's seeming omnipotence.' (Kant 1987, p. 120 [para 261])

In Kant's discourse on the sublime, man's confrontation with nature can be understood in terms of a mind/body dichotomy. As John Goldthwait argues, for Kant 'the sublime makes man conscious of his destination, that is, his moral worth. For the feeling of the sublime is really
the feeling of our own inner power, which can outreach in thought the external objects that overwhelm our sense.’ (Kant cited in Goldthwait 1960, p. 37)

The emphasis on reason in writings on the sublime was accompanied by an emphasis on effort and strenuous action. Burke paid particular attention to how the threatened self would be able to overcome danger through effort, through strenuous action which produced an act that would elevate the individual above subjugation to terrifying threat (Macnaghten and Urry 1998, p. 114). Together, these qualities (of effort and strenuous action) enabled man to act independently of nature, to be the master of his own will.

Embedded in this discourse of the sublime, therefore, was a process of transformation. The sublime suggested that challenges of nature, like those of the labyrinth, could be overcome and rendered submissive through reason and logic. However not only nature, but mankind too would be transformed by the encounter. Man would be awakened to his inner power, to realisation of true self. Thus it was argued that the encounter with nature would produce both knowledge and power (Macnaghten and Urry 1998; Michael 2000; Rose 1996).

In this context, confrontation with the sublime became highly valued in early nineteenth century European culture. In Australia, the discourse of the sublime informed and enabled the colonists in their determination to conquer new territories, and to subjugate these lands to the settlers’ purposes.

**Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson**

The crossing of the Blue Mountains was finally achieved in 1813 by an expedition led by Gregory Blaxland together with Lieutenant William Lawson and William Charles Wentworth.

The explorers’ famous journey over the mountains took just under three weeks (Waterhouse 1999, p. 23). They navigated their way through the previously impenetrable maze by following the main ridge of the mountains and keeping clear of the gullies (Thomas, p. 55). Their path was impeded by thick brush wood and haunted by fear of Aboriginal attack. By the time they
reached their destination, on the western side of the mountains, their provisions were almost exhausted and their clothes and shoes worn.

In the record he kept of the crossing, Blaxland adopted the style of the memorialist (a form uncommon in journals of exploration), writing entirely in the third person (Thomas, p. 55). In this way he was able to depict the trip as an historical epic, endowing it with a sense of grandeur and framing it as a sublime confrontation with the unlimited power of nature. Striking descriptions of the ‘death-like stillness of the interior’ and ‘the broken rocky country on the western side of the cow pasture’ which had the ‘appearance of having acquired its present form from an earthquake, or some other dreadful convulsion of nature’ invoke mixed feelings of horror and empowerment as man is presented as the potential master of this landscape (Blaxland 1979, pp. 76; 72). Henry Kendall, in his poem ‘Blue Mountains Pioneers’, would remember the explorers as ‘the dauntless three!’ who for ‘twenty days and nights… battled with the haughty heights’

By gaping gorgers, and by cliffs austere,
These fathers struggled in the great old year;
Their feet they set on strange hills scarred by fire,
Their strong arms forced a path through brake and briar;
They fought with Nature till they reached the throne
Where morning glittered on the great UNKNOWN! (1886, p. 257)

Within months of Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson’s successful crossing Macquarie sent the Assistant Surveyor-General, George Evans, to conduct further exploration. Evans set out from the Nepean River following the path of Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth to Mt. York. From there he could see the series of ranges to the west that the three explorers had described in the report of their journey. It took Evans only four days to negotiate this next phase of his journey and, nineteen days after departing, he reached the region that was to be known as the Bathurst Plains and the future site of Bathurst. Macquarie was so enthusiastic about Evan’s description of this ‘beautiful and Champain Country of very Considerable Extent and great Fertility’ that he granted Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth 1,000 acres of land each for their service to the future of the colony (Governor Macquarie to Lord Bathurst, January 19, 1814, p. 122).
Evans’ confirmation that the crossing of the mountains would lead to ‘very fertile Plains’ encouraged Macquarie to open up the new lands to the west (Governor Macquarie to Lord Bathurst, 28 April 1814, p. 149). He ordered that a twelve-foot wide road be constructed from one side of the mountains to the other ‘so as to permit two carts or other wheel carriages to pass each other with ease.’ (Letter from Governor Macquarie to Cox 1901, pp. 50-51) He chose William Cox of Clarendon, the leading magistrate at Windsor and a former Captain in the New South Wales Corps, to manage the project and ordered him to select thirty convict volunteers with good records.

The road building progressed at a rate of about half a mile per day until they reached the present day Linden. Here they were confronted with solid rock which needed gun powder to remove it. By the end of September (they had started on July 18, 1814) they had reached present day Wentworth Falls. Despite their lack of sophisticated tools they reached the Macquarie River on January 21, 1815. They had made 101 miles of road in six months (Speirs 1981, p. 42). Speirs notes that despite the nature of the work Cox lived up to his reputation as a humane supervisor. The convicts under his care ‘worked without chains, which was unusual, and received their pardons at the end of the project.’ (Speirs 1981, p. 42)

Transformation

Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth’s conquest of the Blue Mountains and the building of Cox’s road, had produced a radical transformation. The mountains, once an impenetrable barrier, now presented a gateway to a new fortune. The significance of this transformation was most clearly demonstrated when Macquarie, accompanied by his wife, set out on a tour of inspection of the new road. Also of the party were Sir John Jamison of Regentville, John Joseph William Molesworth Oxley surveyor-general and explorer, James Meehan (1774-1826)4 surveyor, explorer and settler, and George William Evans (1780-1852) surveyor and explorer. John William Lewin, regarded by Macquarie as the finest local painter and naturalist, kept the official pictorial record. Dominant in Macquarie’s report of this tour was a sense of pleasure and beauty. The labyrinth had been transformed into the picturesque.

4 Unlike Oxley and Evans, Meehan was sentenced to transportation for his part in the Irish rebellion of 1798.
The report began its narrative at 'Kealy's [Caleys'] Repulse.' Art historian Robert Dixson suggests that Macquarie may have included the pile of stones in his report 'as an oblique reminder to Lord Bathurst of difficulties overcome.' (1986, p. 89) The party made their first camp in the Mountains on a 'very pretty wooded Plain near a Spring of very good fresh Water and pitched our tent near the side of the road.' ‘The place being very pretty’, Macquarie wrote, ‘I have named it “Spring-Wood.”’ (Macquarie 1979, p. 91) Lewin’s watercolour captures this moment. The party have set up camp in the woods. They are bathed in a warm light that stretches from one edge of the scene to the other. In contrast the foreground is dark and foreboding with gnarled trees. A thick line of eucalypts that appears so dense they seem barely penetrable, encircle the party.

Lewin’s depiction of Macquarie’s party huddled around a campfire, surrounded by a dense forest and blasted trees, is scenographic in a manner reminiscent of the English picturesque paintings of the 1760s and 1770s [Fig 4.1]. The campsite appears as an emblem of civilised achievement in a hostile natural environment.

The next day the party ascended what is now called Bodington Hill and came to the flat plateau of the Upper Blue Mountains, which Macquarie named the 'King's Table Land.' He wrote ‘This tableland is extremely beautiful and has very fine picturesque grand scenery consisting deep finely wooded glens, stupendous rocks and cliffs, with high distant hills and mountains.’ (Macquarie 1979, p. 91) To the south west Macquarie observed a grand scene of ‘mountains rising beyond mountains,’ and a huge series of valleys fanning outwards from a cliff formation. He named this valley the 'Prince's Regent's Glen' after the Prince of Wales who had been appointed Regent in 1811 (later George IV) (p. 92). The cliffs he named 'Pitt's Amphitheatre', after William Pitt. Macquarie also named 'Jamison's Valley', after the Surgeon and 'Campbell's Cataract, a 1000 foot waterfall (later to be known as the 'The Fall at Weatherboard' and later still Wentworth Falls).

The climax of Macquarie’s report is his account of Cox’s Pass, also captured by Lewin in his watercolour Cox’s Pass (1815) [Fig 4.2]. Macquarie described the Pass as the ‘gateway’ to a region ‘designed by nature for the occupancy and comfort of man.’ He praised Cox for his
The or, on occasion, a sea chest, to serve every other purpose.’ (Roberts, p. 283). As Edward Curr (1968 [1883]) put it, the little which was simmering by the fire, and finally a leg of mutton was transferred on the end of a large iron
achievement in constructing this passage through the mountains which ‘end[ed] in a very abrupt descent almost perpendicular.’ (1979, p. 92) He wrote,

Here we halted for a little while to view this frightful tremendous pass, as well as to feast our eyes with the grand and pleasing prospect of the fine low country below us… (1979, p. 92).

The labour undertaken in the construction of the road and the difficulties surmounted, he notes, could only be appreciated by those who viewed the scene (p. 92). He wrote of ‘mountains rising beyond mountains, with stupendous masses of rock in the foreground, here strike the eye with admiration and astonishment.’ Much of the ascent was so ‘extremely steep’ as to render it hazardous to drive down it in the carriage (p. 93).

Again Lewin mobilises the strategies of the English picturesque. In the foreground of ‘The Vale of Clwyd’ painting, a precipitous descent looms on either side [Fig 4.3]. The viewer’s eye, however, is immediately transported beyond this vignette to the terrace, where the sunlight bathes the park-like plains of the Jamieson Valley. Nature appears as both sublime and picturesque, illustrating the mixed emotions of the colonists as they negotiated a landscape that seemed both terrifying and yet open to ultimate subjugation.

The shift in apprehension of the mountains as barrier to gateway is echoed in the shift from sublime to picturesque. While the sublime remains, the employment of the picturesque signals the confidence of Macquarie’s party. As Wentworth would write in his poem Australasia, their crossing opened up ‘thy inmost plains, A new Arcadia, teem[ing] with simple swains.’ (Wentworth 1982 [1823], p. 14)
Figure 4.2
John Lewin (1770-1819)
Cox’s Pass
1815, unsigned, undated, water colour drawing,
Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney

...
other purpose.’ (Roberts, p. 283). As Edward Curr (1968 [1883]) put it: … some rather coarse brown sugar was put in the leg of mutton was transferred on the end of a large iron skewer, amidst clouds of vapour, from the iron pit in
Early Settlements

The pictorial strategies of the picturesque, which tempered the threat of a sublime landscape, can be seen as forerunners to Macquarie’s legislative strategies, by which he sought to ensure an orderly pattern of settlement. In each case an attempt was made to establish the ascendancy of reason and civility, whether through the domestication of nature or the ordering of humanity. In order to manage the spread of settlement to the west of the mountains Macquarie ordered: ‘No person, whether Civil or Military, shall attempt to travel over the Blue Mountains, without having previously applied for and obtained permission in the prescribed form.’ (Macquarie 1815, p. 73) In a letter to Bathurst, Macquarie had voiced his concern that the vast spread of newly discovered territory would encourage illegal trespassing, claims made without purchase, without government permission, without lease and with a minimum of capital investment (Macquarie to Bathurst, 24 June 1815, pp. 558-9). Such unrestricted and disorderly settlement would undermine the orderly social hierarchy, founded on freehold estates that had been established in and around Sydney.

Macquarie suggested that the initial number of men allowed to settle over the mountains be limited to fifty and that these be ‘Sober, industrious Men, with Small Families, from the Middling Class of Free People.’ Macquarie suggested these men be granted ‘fifty to One Hundred Acres of Land’ each. They would be victualled at the expense of the government for a period of eighteen months. Macquarie suggested that these fifty be followed two years hence by a further one hundred of the ‘Same Class of People’ but only to be ‘victualled at the Expense of the Crown for Six Months.’ He did not wish to encourage the wealthy to extend their activities into the new terrain as he observed that this class of men ‘… generally Confined to Grazing of Cattle without any Regard to Cultivation for Increasing the Resources of the New Country.’ (Macquarie to Bathurst, 24 June 1815, p. 559)

Stockmen travel over the mountains

Despite Macquarie’s attempts to forestall uncontrolled spread of the settlement, the hunger for land was so great in New South Wales that it was almost inevitable that the construction of Cox’s road would be followed by a steady flow of fortune seekers. Travelling westward across
the Blue Mountains these men would then head south and west towards Goulburn, eventually reaching Australia Felix (later Victoria). Others headed northwest through the Hunter Valley and on through the Liverpool Plains to the Darling Downs (later Queensland) and the land along the Darling River. Rather than the small farmers that Macquarie had envisaged settling the land, these men were stockmen.

Macquarie’s fears that the opening up of lands beyond the mountains, while meeting the needs of the colony for more land, would also lead to a loss of government control over settlement, and thus to a dissipation of the civilised space of the colony, were realised.

This kind of dispersion was also seen as a form of moral dissipation. As the West Minister Review put it in 1830, dispersion ‘would convert the nation… into a horde of Tartars, living upon milk and flesh, and getting drunk on fermented mare’s milk,’ and would mean a lower type of civilisation (cited in Roberts, p. 70). Closer, more tight-knit settlement was identified with control and government. In his Letter from Sydney (1829), Edward Wakefield aggressively asserted that ‘Concentration would produce what never did, and never can, exist without it – CIVILISATION!’ Civilised space was bounded and regulated. In contrast, men crossing the mountains and dispersing without permission represented a disintegration of order and loss of control of government.

The men that travelled across the mountains and grazed stock without government permission became known as squatters. Squatters initially favoured cattle over sheep. This was because cattle required less attention and labour than sheep (they foraged far and wide in search of food, rather than needing to be led to pastures by shepherds). They were also less susceptible to attacks from dingoes, and were harder to steal. Nevertheless, the strong market for wool made the extra investment required by sheep worthwhile. Thus sheep numbers increased exponentially following the crossing of the mountains from about 50,000 in 1813 to 290,188 in 1821 when Macquarie returned to England. Coghlan notes that this shows an average yearly increase of 23.4 per cent. Wool had been exported to England since 1810 in fairly large quantities increasing substantially from 60,000 pounds in 1814 to 90,000 pounds in 1820 (Coghlan 1918, p. 110).

Queensland was separated from New South Wales in 1859.
Squatting

Dazzled by the promise of rich rewards and freedom from the constrictions of town life, men of all classes and conditions took eagerly to squatting. However squatting was never an easy option. The challenges of sublime and intractable nature that cast the bushman as heroic, also threatened the men (and women) with ‘assimilation, isolation and death.’ (Schaffer 1988, p. 4) While man’s identity might be ‘secured heroically by his possession and control of the land as a primary object of desire,’ Schaffer writes, equally this identity might be ‘called into doubt by the threat of the bush.’ (1988, p. 40)

Many of those who ventured out as squatters struggled and eventually succumbed to adversity, fading back into the anonymous multitudes of the towns. Those who endured and survived the worst that nature could throw at them were ‘iron-hard.’ (Cannon 1973, p. 19) Former social distinctions seemed trivial in the face of such an elemental test of a man’s worth.

The qualities that made a successful Australian squatter were in many respects the opposite to those of a good English farmer. In England, to follow established tradition was everything. In the Australian environment self-reliance, initiative, resourcefulness and good luck were what counted. To ‘make shift,’ to be contented though practically alone in the wilderness, to be able to keep a few employees in the same state of contentment: these were qualities of the type of squatter most likely to succeed in those early years (Cannon, p. 19).

The ambitious individual who ventured upon the challenge of squatting would fill ‘his saddlebags with tea, sugar, and tobacco, pack his flour, look after his quart-pot and tinder-box, and set out, blankets strapped to saddle and kangaroo dogs behind’ (Roberts 1964, p. 279). Leaving Sydney, ‘the whole length and breadth of the continent [would be] in front of him.’ (Roberts 1964, p. 277) Two days ride would take him beyond Bathurst, riding from station to station until he passed the last run.

If the prospective squatter was not ‘repelled by loneliness and a spice of risk, he could go as far as he liked and choose land according to his taste.’ (Roberts, p. 278) His goal was to find land unclaimed by any other squatter, on which to run stock. The claims of the Aboriginal people...
who already occupied these lands were ignored. The hopeful squatter penetrated what he saw as virgin territory.

Scouting for land involved travelling alone, often with very limited information. It was like ‘playing a game of hide-and-seek in an unknown country of millions of square miles, without clues, but with the enticement always there in the possibility of rich prizes.’ (Roberts, p. 281) “It’s no fool’s job,” one of the old pioneers wrote feelingly, “to traverse some hundreds of miles, of rough, broken, and unknown country, and ride up to within a few hundred yards of a problematical gum tree supposed to have certain Roman numerals cut into it many years previously” (cited in Roberts 1964, pp. 277-8).

An old and experienced colonist, of ‘much influence and importance’ advised the young Edward John Eyre (a seventeen-and-a-half year old clergyman’s son from Yorkshire) upon his arrival, that:

… it was useless to wait for anything from Government – that it would be folly to lease a farm and madness to buy one – in short he said there was nothing for it but to go 300 miles into the bush and commence grazing. (Eyre [1833] 1984, p. 35)

Once land had been found a squatter had to secure his run from other prospective interlocutors. Some chose land with well-defined natural boundaries such as rivers or mountains whilst others sought the security of an understanding with neighbours. After the run had been secured the squatter would race back to Sydney to make preparations for establishing himself upon it. This included raising finance, and buying stock. In the days before fencing, Cannon suggests, it was generally reckoned that a squatter needed at least 2000 sheep to pay his way. To look after these he would employ about half a dozen shepherds, hut-keepers, splitters

6 Originally found in the Nisbet Manuscripts, 1996, p. 32.
7 A frequent arrangement of the time was the system of Thirds, by which a Sydney capitalist would buy the sheep and finance the enterprise, receiving in return a third of the profits (Roberts, p. 281).
8 Good stock (improved by the new Saxon Merinos) was integral to the venture and great care was often taken in purchasing from reliable vendors. It’s was a buyer’s job to see ‘that his rams were good and that his flocks were well-balanced among two, four, and six-toothed ewes, with wethers and weaners of both sexes.’ (Roberts, p. 282)
and other workers (Cannon, p. 14). Many of these early squatters tried to make do with fewer men in order to minimise their expenditure and maximise returns.

Squatters of these early years were spurred by a belief that, by keeping expenses to a minimum, any enterprising person could take up and develop thousands of acres, watch his stock multiply, and trust to a continuation of the wool and cattle boom to make his fortune. The initial investment might only amount to one or two hundred pounds and was within reach of any free man or emancipist (Cannon, p. 12).

Investment in buildings or infrastructure was kept to an absolute minimum. This applied especially to any thing offering personal comfort (Governor George Gipps to Col. Secretary Lord Stanley. 3 April 1844, p. 510). For many squatters there was no incentive to build an enduring and solid house. For them a ‘tent, a bark hut, a sod hut, a hut of pisé or wattle-and-daub would do.’ (Dutton 1985, p. 35) A ten-foot by twelve-foot hut, with slab walls, bark roof and a stone and wood fireplace was a common form of habitation. Rolf Boldrewood describes his first dwelling near Portland in Victoria as being a ‘hut of split slabs, with wall-plate top and bottom and all the refinements of bush carpentry’ including a ‘wooden chimney with an inner coating of stone work.’ (Boldrewood cited in Dutton 1985, p. 37)

Harden S. Melville’s painting *The squatter’s hut: news from home* (1850-51) exemplifies this rude bark and slab construction [Fig 4.4]. Melville first arrived in Australia in August 1842. In 1844 he spent six weeks travelling through New South Wales and it is generally believed that this scene was based on these experiences.

Furniture was usually limited to a ‘rough bedstead of sheepskins or opossum rugs’ with a ‘bark table or, on occasion, a sea chest, to serve every other purpose’ (Roberts, p. 283). It was a more sumptuous hut, Dutton suggests, that boasted chairs (a few three-legged stools). An ‘old pint pannikin (a small pan or cup), partially filled with clay and topped with mutton fat from the frying pan, with a bit of old shirt wrapped round a stick stuck in the centre for a wick’ gave light at night, and beyond that the hut was basically empty (Curr 1968 [1883], p. 33). Meals usually consisted of a leg of mutton and a quart-pot of tea. As Edward Curr put it:

iron skewer, amidst clouds of vapour, from the iron pit in which it was boiling, to the tin dish on table... The pleasant nor inviting... (pp. 33-4). A ten-foot by twelve-foot hut, with slab walls, bark roof and a stone and wood fireplace was a common form of habitation. A rough
Figure 4.4
Harden S. Melville (Australia 1842-1846 England from 1847)
Died England
*The squatter’s hut: news from home* (News from Home) 1850-51
Painting, oil on canvas
Primary Insc: signed and inscribed u.c., oil “H.S. Melville/ Australia”, not dated
87.8 h x 102.1 w cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, ACT
… some rather coarse brown sugar was put in the pannikins, which were then filled with tea from an iron kettle which was simmering by the fire, and finally a leg of mutton was transferred on the end of a large iron skewer, amidst clouds of vapour, from the iron pit in which it was boiling, to the tin dish on table… The atmosphere of the room, the fire, the vapour, the odour of the ‘fat lamp,’ the scalding hot tea and reeking mutton, were neither pleasant nor inviting… (Curr 1968, pp. 33-4).

Living roughly, which meant surviving on ‘mutton and damper and something to lie on,’ was, for many, a source of great pride, a symbol of their ability to subordinate their need for personal comforts to the possibility of long term gain. The social infrastructure servicing these out-lying areas was at least as poor as the squatters’ accommodation. In a dispatch to Lord Stanley in London, Governor Gipps described how the population had spread over an immense territory making it almost impossible to ensure the influence of civilisation and law. He feared that the total absence of any religion or education would further impoverish the morals and minds of the almost exclusively male population that resided there (Governor George Gipps to Col. Secretary Lord Stanley. 3 April 1844, p. 510).

Squatters were men on the make, who saw the plains to the west of the mountains as an opportunity to prosper. The qualities that were valued by these men were shaped by the discourse of the sublime. As opposed to development closer to Sydney, with its emphasis on cultivation and improvement, squatting was a more adventurous enterprise requiring a different set of values and equipment. Foremost amongst these were an emphasis on courage, effort and strenuous action, prudence and independence.

These attributes cohered around an emphasis on entrepreneurship and individualism (Waterhouse 2005, p. 96). Concerned with ‘assertiveness, success, and acquisition of material [wealth],’ an individualistic society is characterised by the rejection of group influence and a belief that the same value standards should apply to all (Zandpour et al., 1996, pp. 176-180). In contrast to life in the settled districts around Sydney, life beyond the mountains was characterised by the absence of a social hierarchy. Squatters were a heterogeneous collection of men from a variety of backgrounds. In the open lands beyond the colony limits, emancipists and free settlers mixed freely and equitably with a more educated class of settlers. Some
squatters were the younger sons of landed families in England who had access to sufficient capital to pay their fares to the colonies, and purchase modest flocks and herds (Fletcher 1976, p. 211; Dutton 1985, p. 5; Roberts 1968, p. 65; Waterson 1968, p. 11). Others were emancipists whose energy and enterprise were firmly aimed at financial success. One such was emancipist Simeon Lord, who as early as 1818 had accumulated enough wealth to be one of the ten richest men in the colony (Hainsworth 1971, p. 39). No longer dependent on social connections for advancement, emancipists such as Lord were enterprising and independent, capable of making swift decisions, and carrying them out without recourse to the guidance or support of others.

Outcasts

Despite its rapid spread, squatting was essentially illegal. Claims were made without purchase, without government permission, without lease and with a minimum of capital investment.

Squatting was seen by the ruling classes as a dissipation of civilisation, loss of governmental control and the spread of unregulated opportunism. Attempts were made by the Governors who followed Macquarie, to contain and control the spread of the colony. Ralph Darling, who was appointed Governor in 1824, proclaimed the “Limits of Location” or the limits of settlement on September 5, 1826. This area extended from the Manning River in the north to the Moruya River in the south, and extended inland to embrace the ‘King’s Table Land,’ which Macquarie had named on his first excursion into the mountains. However the western plains lay beyond the limits (King 1957, p. 40). Only within the limits would settlers be permitted to legally take up land. Beyond the “Limits” land could be ‘neither sold nor let’ (King, p. 40).

The limits were not intended to be immutable. They were designed to restrict settlement until the Surveyor-General’s Department caught up with its back log and survey the land already granted within the prescribed area. On October 14, 1829, the ‘Limits’ were extended north as far as Kempsey and south as far as Bateman’s Bay. Most of this land was relatively flat and

received more than twenty inches of rainfall per year, making it valuable for agriculture. To the west the limits were extended out past the Bathurst plains to Wellington (King, p. 40).

This boundary divided eastern Australia into two regions, the settled and the unsettled, and gave legal sanction to an imaginary line that was to affect the entire course of settlement for decades. Within the boundary limits, 'land could be alienated, settlement was officially encouraged, police protection was provided, roads were made and provision existed for local justice.' Outside the limits, however, 'no land could be granted or sold, occupation was positively prohibited, and any man who dared to trespass had to rely entirely on himself.' (King, p. 40) The Governor not only 'refused to aid such transgression,' he defined these settlers as exiles. The man who 'went beyond', King wrote, 'had to view any official as an enemy.' (King, p. 40) Thus it was clear that the men who ventured beyond the limits would be entirely on their own. They would have to be totally self-sufficient and independent.

Many aspects of the culture of squatting contravened the social order of the colony (Weaver 1996, p. 987). Specifically, the alliance between property and status was undermined and investment in freehold title began to seem a questionable good.

The challenge squatting represented to the established social order of the colony and the dislike the landed officer class who ruled that social order felt for it, initially manifested itself in the wide representation of squatting as a disease and squatters as a threat to the social, moral and economic order of the colony.

By 1835 squatters were being represented as a plague, sweeping across the country and breaking down the established order of things. Anyone who lived on the fringes of society, and/or occupied land in the vicinity of alienated estates became labelled as a squatter. It was associated with cattle rustling, sheep stealing and men 'whose characters are of the most vicious stamp.' (Lieutenant Governor George Arthur, Order, 3 June 1828, cited in Roberts 1964, p. 35) In this context, squatting became synonymous with cattle rustling.
The *Sydney Gazette*, summed up the matter clearly and forcibly, saying:

The system of *squatting* has lately increased to an alarming extent; and cattle-stealing and every other crime that not only tends to demoralise the moral population, but to increase the general insecurity of property, continues to keep pace, in a remarkable manner, with an evil against which the Governor has hitherto strangely neglected to apply any radical or alleviating remedy. (*Sydney Gazette* 28 April 1835)

Later that year, when the Legislative Council appointed a Committee to report on the ‘police and gaol establishments, with special reference to the increase of crime in the outer-districts,’ it gathered a strikingly unanimous body of evidence condemning squatters (Roberts 1964, p. 56).

**Acceptance**

While the view of squatters as thieves predominated during the 1820s and the first half of the 1830s an alternative view also developed during this period. Many argued that with the land closer to the coast filling up it was inevitable that men of vision and curiosity would be impelled to search beyond the known mountains and rivers. For some, the activities of the squatters came to be aligned with the needs of mass pastoral expansion, their departures and arrivals occasions for public rejoicing, their discoveries a matter for close study, and their adventures the stuff of which legends were made (Cannon, p. 10). ‘The persons who form these stations are the real discoverers of the Country,’ wrote Governor George Gipps in a rare moment of sympathy with the squatters in 1840, ‘and they may be said to be in Australia (what the Backwoodsmen are in America) the Pioneers of Civilisation.’ (Governor George Gipps to Col. Sec., 11 April 1846).

The most important figures in this re-evaluation of the squatter were the great liberal governor, Sir Richard Bourke and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Frederick John Goderich. These men were in favour of opening up the so-called ‘waste lands’ for useful purposes, and

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10 *Council Committee on Police and Goal Establishments* (A. M’Leay, chairman), several reports, June-October 1835- the copious evidence is the primary source for Roberts, pp. 55-64.
spending the resulting revenue on promoting further immigration, particularly of women who would make suitable wives for the colonists. Economic factors were paramount in their vision. They imagined a shining future for the colony as an important supplier of raw materials for Britain’s explosive industrial development (Cannon, p. 9). Bourke wrote to his friend, Thomas Spring Rice, that ‘Sheep must wander or they will not thrive, and the Colonists must have sheep or they will not continue to be wealthy.’ (cited in King 1966, pp. 128-33)

In 1836 Bourke introduced one of the most radical land Acts in the history of the colony. Arguing that his objective was not to prevent occupation but to aid it, his Act enabled any man to legally ‘squat’ on any unoccupied land upon payment of an annual license fee of £10. There was no limit to the area he might occupy, so long as he grazed sufficient stock to justify his claim and paid ½d annual fee for each animal pastured (Hayden 1971, p. 21). Henceforth there were to be ‘no outcasts, no roamers on Crown Lands in defiance of their Government, but duly authorized occupants.’ (Roberts 1975, p. 79)

The effects of Bourke’s legislation were immediate and far-reaching. In less than seven years, almost the entire fertile arc outside the established counties, from ‘Wilson’s Promontory in the south to Harvey’s Bay in the north had been opened up (Governor George Gipps to Col. Secretary Lord Stanley. 3 April 1844, p. 510). The cultural change was equally dramatic. Stephen H. Roberts writes:

A squatter may have been a sheep-stealing outcast before 1835, it may have been a joking term of self-deprecation in 1835 and 1836; but after that year he was a legally recognised occupant of land in the interior-land which he did not own, but over which the government had yielded him permissive rights of occupancy. (1964, p. 68)
Establishment

In 1844 Governor Gipps introduced new land laws designed to manage the settlement of the interior. 'There is, in my opinion,' he wrote, 'nothing connected with the Administration of the affairs of this Colony, which more urgently requires the attentive consideration of Her Majesty's Government.' Gipps was particularly interested in the 'intimate connection' between the 'sale of Land and the supply of funds for the support of Immigration.' (Governor Gipps to Col. Secretary Lord Stanley. 3 April 1844, p. 510)

Gipps' new regulations limited runs to a maximum of twenty square miles. His intention was to promote the kind of closer settlement that Wakefield had argued was so necessary to the fostering of civilisation. In future, he ruled, the lessee would have to pay a separate £10 annual licence fee for each run. At the same time Gipps foreshadowed new laws under which squatters would be obliged after five years occupation to purchase sections of their runs at £1 an acre. Should the squatter not avail himself of this opportunity, any person could apply for the land, whereupon the government would put it up for auction at the 'upset price' (i.e. reserve price) of £1 per acre (Governor George Gipps to Col. Secretary Lord Stanley. 3 April 1844, pp. 509-14). These regulations were intended to establish a process that would gradually transfer land from lease to freehold, and from vast loosely organised holdings to more intensive settlement.

The reaction from squatters was vehement. Early in 1844 a crowded public meeting of New South Wales squatters and merchants at the Royal Hotel, Sydney, called Gipps action 'premeditated spoliation' by an 'arbitrary despot.' W. C. Wentworth described the meeting as having been 'assembled on a unanimous feeling of indignation and alarm - in revolt against the injustice and impolicy of a measure of the Executive Government.' He forecast that the squatters would 'soon be fast declining into a nation of wandering shepherds like those of South America, living on the produce of their own labour, on beef junk and cold water.' The cost to Wentworth of pasturing his own flocks in the Bathurst and Liverpool Plains districts would increase from £20 to £150 a year (Colonial Observer, 11 April 1844). Similar protests were held in Victoria.

The squatters were able to exert effective pressure in London. In 1846 the British Government passed the *Imperial Waste Lands Act*. This Act empowered the Queen in Council to proclaim
policies in relation to the occupation of Crown Lands (‘Waste Lands’) (Hayden 1971, p. 22). This was followed, in 1847, by the New South Wales Legislative Assembly’s Orders in Council, which granted squatters fourteen-year leases on their holdings. After this time they would still retain preferential rights on any land on which they had made improvements. The implications of the Act were clear. It largely locked the land against newcomers for another generation. The image of squatters as an unruly, unregulated collective of independent individuals was now replaced by an image of the interior as ‘one great sheep walk’ and an image of squatters as land barons, who conspired to keep out the smaller operator (James Byrnes in an election speech, S.M.H., 5 Dec. 1860 cited in Baker 1974, p. 114).

Far from affecting the end of squatting, Gipp’s attempt at regulation had ended by forcing recognition of the valued economic role that squatting played in the colony. From outcasts they were now established as respectable landholders with a guarantee that their rights would not be challenged for a further decade and a half, allowing them to consolidate their holdings and their fortunes.

**Conclusion**

The courage, hardiness and independence that had been so essential to the first generation of squatters were established as characteristic of the outback Australian. However the successful squatter now became a comfortable conservative. The need for qualities of endurance and frugality would be inherited by the next wave of settlers. Small farmers who would find themselves locked out from all but the poorest land by their established predecessors.
Queensland selector interviewed by Alexander Boyd told of similar experience: Well, I had a job, too, with that 'ere crop, let alone the clearing. There was scrub all round, an' it was alive wi' wallabies and paddymelons, an' ba... all in ... I set to and husked it, and then, my gum! I remembered it would have to be shelled. I hadn't got no corn-sheller... so I goes to work an' I shells out twenty bushels wi' ma hands. You may think I was jolly sick of it afor
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A moral order: families and responsibilities

...and the cockatoos was in millions. I planted most o' that crop twice over, and the bandicoots ripped the seed out o' the ground, and what came up the wallabies wires into... But the wust ain't come yet. When I'd done... I hadn't got no wife them times, an' I don't believe I could ha' kept one if I had. (Boyd, 1891, pp. 33-4)

Ye sons of industry, to you I belong. And to you I
would dedicate a verse or a song. Rejoicing o’er the victory John Robertson has won
Now the Land Bill has passed
Ent in the bush, near the mountains so grand. For the scenes of my childhood a joy are to me, And the dear nativ
Introduction

The principal feature that distinguished the small, independent farmer from his forebears and competitors, the squatters and pastoralists, was that he took his family with him into the bush. If the squatter had been seen as an adventurer and entrepreneur, the selector (or family farmer) was likened to ‘a patriarch’ from the Old Testament, in search of fresh pastures with his descendents (Armidale Express, Saturday, 14 April 1866, no pagination).

The advent of the selector within the Australian bush was brought about through a combination of government policy and social pressure. The way was opened through Robertson’s Land Acts, of 1861. These acts were a significant milestone in an on-going government campaign to promote closer settlement within the Australian bush. This push towards closer settlement would dominate rural policy from Robertson’s time until well into the twentieth century.

The term ‘closer settlement’ refers, quite simply, to the subdivision of land into (much) smaller holdings than those granted to the squatters. As a result of closer settlement neighbours would be closer to one another and more numerous. The government vision was of rural communities being formed, and the pattern of settlement in the ‘strange’ Australian wilderness gradually assuming a more civilised aspect, reminiscent of the English countryside (Dovers 1994, pp. 1-18).

The aims of the government were not only to boost agricultural productivity and diversity, and accommodate growing populations; but also to reduce the political power of the squatters. As Samuel Sidney wrote in a letter to the Right Honourable Sidney Herbert M. P., there was an urgent need to avert the threat of moral dissipation in the Australian bush. Small land owners, with their roots firmly planted in the ideal of land and family, seemed a perfect antidote to the dispersed realities of the squatting life. Sidney called for measures to establish ‘a class of yeomanry or freeholders in Australia, intermediate between the great squatter and the bush labourer, amongst whom the emigrants... would not only settle, but marry.’ (January 11, 1850, p. 20) Belief in the moral efficacy of a yeoman society, that had underpinned reformist hopes from the time of first settlement, gathered momentum as the government moved to transform the colony into a place not only of opportunity, but also of civility and virtuous family life.
Like squatting, taking up a selection meant considerable hardship. Living conditions were rough and uncomfortable with few luxuries. Those who survived often lived in unbearable conditions, persevering in the face of significant adversity. The many who chose this life, therefore, were propelled by belief in the benefits to be gained, sufficiently powerful to outweigh the discomfort of the selector’s life and the difficulties they faced.

This chapter outlines the social and political contexts within which the life of the selector in the Australian bush was promoted and idealised. The selector is a direct forebear of the family farmers in the Maranoa. The moral disposition of the Maranoa farmer, and the shape of their farming practice, is a legacy of the selectors.

### Family Life and the idealisation of bush life as healthy and moral

The social forces that combined to encourage large numbers of settlers to take up a selection in the decades from 1860 to 1930, were driven not only by a conviction of the rewards that would follow from land ownership, self-sufficiency and hard work, but also by belief in the healthiness of family life set in a direct relationship to nature. These beliefs had their origin in eighteenth century moral discourse, but were given increased impetus in the nineteenth century by the growth of the middle classes, and their awareness of the ills of urban life.

As argued in Chapter 2, a conviction of the moral efficacy of farm-life had been one of the founding beliefs of the penal colony. Discussion of Rousseau’s controversial treatise, *Emile*, on the education of a ‘natural’ man (published in 1762) would have been lively in the years leading up to establishment of the colony in 1778. The translation of Rousseau’s ideas into a program of educational reform through exposure to nature, had been initiated in Europe by Johann Pestalozzi in 1780, with the establishment of an original school for under privileged children on a farm near Zurich. Pestalozzi’s disciples in Australia enthusiastically took up these views (Gascoigne 2002, p. 106). However the establishment of appropriate educational settings for the accomplishment of Rousseauean moral reform in Australia, had been difficult in the early decades of the colony.

In the context of a penal colony, at least in its early years, the education of children was far less a focus than the reform of adult behaviour. The small land grants originally intended to
accompany this reform, had not prospered, and the ensuing poverty of the colony’s first small-
farmers had done little to persuade others of the merits of such a life. Gambling on the rewards
of squatting, or of the goldfields, seemed a surer path to prosperity.

However in the course of the nineteenth century, among the growing middle classes of the
colony, the theme of moral reform once again gathered momentum. In this, the Australian
middle classes very much echoed the debates of Victorian society in industrialised England. As
a contrast to the corrupting evils of urban life, idyllic representations of rural life provided an
emblem of moral health and well-being.

For the Victorian middle classes in England, the farm was imagined as a site of moral and social
reform. It provided a place free from the various sorts of worldly pleasures (especially indulgence
in alcohol and promiscuous sexual activity) that had corrupted urban life. It was an ideal site for
performance of the Protestant Christian narrative, which included an emphasis on hard work,
economy, independence and family. The Protestant church taught that salvation and liberation
involve a process of mind-body transformation through practising restraint with respect to
actions of body, speech and mind. It valued the self-discipline of an extremely austere lifestyle
refraining from sensual pleasure and the accumulation of material wealth (Weber 2009 [1904]).

For many politicians and reformers, steeped in a tradition of pastoral idyll, the answer to urban
decay lay in the provision of access to the benefits of the rural. Faith in the salutary effect of
‘nature’ thus impacted not only rural policy, but also approaches to urban development. In his
study of English attitudes to the countryside Burchardt described the conviction of middle
class reformers that the quality of life in London and other centres would be improved by the
recreation of aspects of the countryside in its midst (2002, pp. 25, 47). Projected improvements
to Australian cities also aimed implicitly to bring ‘nature’ to the artificial environment of the city.

Increasingly the middle class sought to make their environs more rural, and nature more visibly
present. Views of ‘natural’ landscape were experienced as peaceful and attractive. By extension,
it was reasoned, such scenes must be equally beneficial to the working class: it would make
them morally better, more respectable and less ignoble in their aspirations.
It was believed that the colony's cramped urban life was hardly conducive to rearing children or to good family life (Rowley 1989). Calls to improve the urban environment and reduce crowding in the city were also articulated in terms of a healthy national consciousness regarding Australia's 'wide open spaces,' as Hoskins has suggested (1994, p. 5):

*Australia's cities are like huge cancers eating into the national life - population must be transferred from the country to the city, leading to the establishment of more and more 'independent homesteads.' (A. G. Stephens, 'Criminal agitation of the people in the cities,' cited in Docker 1991, p. 73)*

Small farms located family-life in a more natural environment, away from the traumas of the city. The rewards of such a life were celebrated in John Glover's 1835 painting *My Harvest Home* [Fig 5.1] portraying abundance during harvest time. The painting is a representation of 'Patterdale,' Glover's family farm near Hobart. In a letter to his sister Mary Bowles (née Glover) on the 22nd September 1833, Glover's son describes how crops had been planted and homestead buildings constructed (Letter from John Glover, the younger, to Mary Bowles [née Glover], September 22, 1833). By 1839 he was able to report that the cycle of planting and harvesting had become routine. 'We sow, plant, fence, and break up new ground in progressive order,' and 'our own crops, thank Goodness, turn out equal to most, our wheat in particular often surpasses most of our neighbours.' (Letter from John Glover, the younger, to Mary Bowles July 12, 1839)

The painting, which speaks of the abundance with which nature rewards human labour, is an emblem of the good life to which selector families aspired.

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1 Alfred George Stephens (1865-1933) was an eminent literary critic, editor and publisher best known for his 'Red Page' in the *Bulletin* (1896 to 1906) and his own critical literary journal *Bookfellow* (which appeared intermittently from 1899 on).

2 Glover immigrated to Tasmania in 1830 with his wife and eldest son to join the rest of the family who had already established productive farms in the colony. Once there, Glover successfully applied for a grant of land, and in 1832 travelled from Hobart to the plan depicted in the painting to start a farm.

3 John Glover to his sister Mary (Mrs. Charles Bowles). John Glover the younger was the son of the famous landscape painter of the same name. The letters describe the experiences of the Glover Family during the voyage from England to Tasmania and during the first ten years of their life in Tasmania.
Figure 5.1
John Glover (1767-1849)
English
*My Harvest Home* 1835
Painting, oil on canvas
76 x 114 cm
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart
Women and the family

The rise of an emphasis on family life precipitated an attempt to redress the shortage of white women in the colony. Women (of the right kind) were held to play a central role in fostering healthy habits. However the proportion of women to men in the first century of colonisation of Australia was low, and few women would choose to move to the bush, where the difficulties of life in the colony were exacerbated by isolation and rough conditions.

The importance of bringing women into the bush was a focus of both government and private commentary throughout the nineteenth century. Characteristic is John Sidney's declaration that 'the future of Australia lies in hearths and homes, and these must be founded in the wilderness.' (John Sidney 1848, p. 29, cited in Campbell 1997, p. 119) This sentiment was echoed by J. C. Byrne in 1848 when he said, 'The morality of the bush might and would be much improved, if woman was more frequently there.' (1848, pp. 213-4)

Initial attempts to bring white women into the bush can be traced back to 1832, when the Colonial Office established the principle of government assisted emigration, financed out of the sale of colonial lands (Baker 1974). Historian Paula Hamilton writes: 'Colonial authorities and prospective employers clearly believed it was possible to obtain numbers of virtuous young single women for a variety of duties who at some later stage would marry respectfully and produce a family.' (1982, pp. 19-20) It was expected that women would promote civilisation and culture by encouraging the establishment of small towns which would in turn bring clergymen and teachers to the population and 'induce even the more depraved to attend their services and instructions.' (Byrne 1848, pp. 193-4)

From 1832 to 1836 the bulk of the colonial emigration fund was expended on the emigration from Great Britain of single women; those most needed 'to correct the existing disproportion of the sexes, which had produced such unhappy results.' (Parliamentary Undersecretary, Lord Howick, cited in Hammerton 1975, p. 539) The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission argued that 'female immigration must be carried on by Government, not as a mere convenience or means of profit, but as a moral necessity.' (Hamilton 1982, p. 22) Writing in 1844, Governor Gipps suggested that 'the influence [of Wives and families] can hardly fail to be advantageously
felt.’ (Gipps to Col. Sec. 3 April 1844, p. 510) It was believed that the presence of women would not only ‘check, control and humanize’ convict emancipists but also prevent vicious indulgence of the sin for ‘which God destroyed “the doomed” cities.’ (Byrne, 1848, p. 193) Samuel Sidney suggested that, for the man in the bush, ‘a wife would be wanted, and if possible obtained; a garden would be reclaimed from the wilderness, and a wandering vagabond would settle down a hopeful freeholder.’ (Sidney 1850, p. 18)

Expectations of the role that women were to play were made explicit to those who emigrated. ‘K.E.F.’ wrote a series of tracts, which were distributed aboard the ships bearing women to the colony. The tracts introduced these young women to their future domestic role.

The absence of a female society in Australia has made the settlers wild, reckless men; it should be the province of the young women who now emigrate to win them back to home ties and duties, and to revive in their hearts many pure and hallowed feelings which have long lain dormant.’ (‘K.E.F.’ 1850, p. 12 cited in Hamilton 1982, p. 20)

Emigration schemes led to a significant increase in the number of women in the bush. In 1841 there were only 1500 women throughout the entire squatting districts of New South Wales (which included the yet to be named colony of Queensland). Ten years later there were 8500, a jump from 17 percent to 30 percent of the rural population (Cannon 1973, p. 32). The most inequitable populations were ‘farthest-out.’ Byrne commented, ‘Seldom, indeed, in the backwoods, and distant sheep and cattle stations of the colony, is the face of a white woman seen.’ (1848, p. 193) In the district of Maranoa, for example, in 1851, ‘there were sixty-five single males over thirteen years of age and no single women. There were also three married men and four married women.’ (Ward 1978, p. 126) The absence of white women did not mean that there were no women at all, although this precipitated its own moral dilemma. As Reverend D. Mackenzie wrote: ‘black women [were] cohabiting… in all parts of the interior, with white hut-keepers.’ (Ward 1978, pp. 126-7)

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6 Pugh’s Moreton Bay Almanac for 1859 shows 85 people in residence in the Maranoa during the 1851 Census.
The following cable message ‘Send us as many girls as possible - our farmers want wives,’ sent from Western Australia to London in 1912, shows how ‘female emigration’ continued to be an issue even in the early twentieth century.

Send Us Girls

... Girls for sweethearts, and girls for wives,
And girls to milk our cows;
Girls to brighten our lonely lives,
Or weep for our broken vows;
Girls to attend to the hand-fed calves;
To honour and to obey
The blokes they take for their other halves,
And, who haven’t too much to say.

... Girls to iron, and girls to cook,
Who haven’t got time to cry,
Who’ll give us a sympathetic look
If we can’t digest the pie.
So don’t be sending us useless things,
As change for our gold and pearls,
But send us a ton of wedding rings,
And a hundred ton of girls.

(Gibson 1912, pp. 12-15)

The Order-in-Council, that effectively prevented new entrants to land ownership in the bush from 1847 to 1861, proved a major setback to this project, as it was difficult for itinerant...
workers to marry. Seeking for ways to continue the movement of women to the bush, Byrne, writing in 1848, suggested a policy favourable to the employment of married agricultural labourers and shepherds. He argued:

It would be advantageous, if a class of pauper agricultural labourers and shepherds, with stout young wives, were introduced into the colony; the wives could act as hut-keepers in many instances, where there was help to move hurdles. (Byrne 1848, pp. 213-4)

Similarly Samuel Sidney in a letter to the Right Honourable Sidney Herbert, M.P on female emigration argued: 'Marry the land to the frugal labourer, and he will be able, and glad to pay for the passage of his wife, and his son's wife.' (Sidney 1850, p. 19) However Byrne acknowledged the difficulty of persuading land-holders to employ these married men.

Settlers and squatters will never engage, if they can help it, men with families of children; the support of the useless mouths they do not like. (Byrne 1848, pp. 213-4)

Unless possessed of land of his own, a married man would find it difficult to live and work in the bush. The release of land for purchase by small-holders seemed pre-requisite to the further establishment of families in the bush.

**The attempt to introduce families into the Bush: The 1860s Land Acts**

Historian Michael Cannon says 'the urge to own a manageable bit of soil, rather than endless acres of pasture, was the great “Australian dream” of the nineteenth century.' (1974, p. 147) Land ownership was seen as a means to achieve independence. The importance attached to the possibility of bettering one's lot was evident in a public meeting in Bathurst where W. Farrand argued in favour of free selection before survey. The report said:

What had the majority of the young natives of this colony got to look forward to but to become shepherds or gold diggers? And this state of things could not be altered unless they could get land, and a homestead of their own (‘Free Selection before survey’, Bathurst Free Press, 17 Nov. 1860, no pagination).
The 1847 Orders-in-Council had granted squatters fourteen year leases and locked up much of the interior of the colony to newcomers until 1861. Debates about the redistribution of land reignited in the late 1850s, as the 1861 deadline approached. Arguments in favour of 'free selection' were made by an alliance of working-class and middle-class interests that reified the family.

Both of these groups argued that, compared with a leaseholder, the freeholder 'has more of the characteristics of citizenship than can possibly belong to any leaseholder.' (“Free Selection:” As it might be, Sydney Morning Herald, 5 December, 1860, p. 5) Citizenship, for many, was associated with ownership of land; above all, citizenship meant entering into a productive partnership with the land, and doing so as a family.

Even those who were critical of free selection felt that it was:

… not all a sham… The love of freehold is thoroughly British. The public uses of freehold are greatly superior to those of leasehold, or other temporary tenure, because freehold is more definite and enduring- because it roots itself more deeply in the soil- because it is more closely identified with individual right… The power of bequest greatly enhances the value and the solidity of freehold possession. (X in “Free Selection; As It Might Be; Sydney Morning Herald, 5 December, 1860, p. 5)

The most eminent political figure in the call for land reform was the middle-class politician John Robertson. Robertson advocated the right of Australians to choices about the ways they would pursue prosperity in the colony. Embracing the Enlightenment belief in the individual's ability to make rational decisions concerning their own interests, Robertson argued:

The people who land in a new country are the best judges of what is best for them to do; they employ themselves in accumulating wealth, and they will best know whether it is most to their interest to gather gold, to obtain sheep or cattle, and to breed them, or to grow wheat. (‘Crown Lands Alienation Bill,’ Sydney Morning Herald, 5 October 1860, p. 3)

If colonists were capable of making the right choices, then it was up to the government to ensure that choices were open to them. Those who wanted to become small landholders, he argued, should have the opportunity to do so.
In the lead up to 1861 the demand that government create opportunities for these prospective farmers became increasingly vociferous.

The *People’s Advocate* complained:

The [law-makers] seem to have no notion that men, after leaving their native land and travelling over sixteen thousand miles of ocean, should emerge from that state of labour which had been their doom in the old country. (‘Land, Labour, &c.’ Saturday, 14 April 1849, p. 1)

Working class men like Alexander Harris were concerned to point out that restrictions on land ownership led to the double evil of condemning colonists of small means to wage labour, while ensuring an oversupply of labouring men in the colony. Denying ‘persons of small property’ the opportunity to become landholders, Harris wrote, works to ‘coercively construct an immensely larger labouring class than otherwise would exist in the colony.’ The men in this class would thus be forced to work at ‘a vastly lower rate of wages.’ (Harris 1954 [1848], p. 224) Like Robertson, Harris believed that those who came to the colony should be given a choice. Artificial constraints, like those imposed by the 1847 Orders-in-Council, he argued, worked to everyone’s disadvantage.

The 1860s election became known as the ‘free-selection election.’ In its aftermath Robertson framed and supported two new Bills, the Crown Lands Alienation Act and the Crown Lands Occupation Act. The intention of these Acts was to ‘open up the land to persons of small means and to establish a class of small independent freeholders, who would live with their families on small, intensively cultivated farms which they would carefully tend.’ (Bonyhady 1985, p. 117)

Robertson told the Legislative Assembly:

What the industrious man requires is… an area… of good land, which he himself can select in a suitable locality, of such an extent that he may be able to raise from it the nobler produce of the soil, and by hard work and economy… have the reasonable prospect of competence and independence. (Robertson cited in Shaw 1970 [1967], p. 10)

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The primary intention of Robertson’s land acts was to produce large numbers of small-scale agriculturists. The reformers argued that ‘squatters had gone out into the country and freely taken what they wanted, and that farmers should have precisely the same rights now.’ (Baker, 1974, p. 122) Further, selectors should have no unnecessary restrictions placed upon them. ‘Neither squatters nor gold miners were hampered by prior survey. So also with farmers; they, too, should be free of this impediment.’ (Baker, p.122)

The passage of the Acts was celebrated in a ballad entitled ‘The Free Selector. A Song of 1861’ by A. B. Paterson. The song spoke of an end to many of the trials and tribulations facing those who had been unable to obtain land in the aftermath of the 1847 Orders-in-Council. It envisaged a pastoral Eden for the free selector and ‘the dear native girl’ with whom this idyllic existence would be shared. The joys depicted were those of a simple life set within sublime nature; ‘a hut… or a tent in the bush, near the mountains so grand’ and ‘a place of our own by the clear waterside.’ Both ownership and hard work were crucial. The promise of the vision was of self-sufficiency and independence, and the path to these rewards was through working the land. The final stanza of Paterson’s ballad was the most emphatic:

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8 Additional acts were passed in Victoria, (1862, 1865, 1869); Queensland (1863, 1866, 1868, 1884); and South Australia (1869, 1870) (Davidson, 1997, p. 31).
9 See also ‘The Free-Selector’s Daughter’ by Henry Lawson in his book of poems In the Days When the World Was Wide.
10 ‘Native’, in this context, meant Australian born, rather than Aboriginal.
We will plant our garden and sow our own field,
And eat from the fruits which industry will yield,
And be independent, as long we have strived,
Though those that have ruled us the right long denied.
Though those that have ruled us the right long denied.

(Paterson 1924 [1905], pp. 98-9)\textsuperscript{11}

11 Ye sons of industry, to you I belong,
And to you I would dedicate a verse or a song.
Rejoicing o'er the victory John Robertson has won
Now the Land Bill has passed and the good time has come.
Now the Land Bill, etc.

Chorus
Then give me a hut in my own native land,
Or a tent in the bush, near the mountains so grand.
For the scenes of my childhood a joy are to me,
And the dear native girl who will share it with me.

No more with our swags through the bush need we roam
For to ask of another there to give us a home,
Now the land is unfettered, and we may reside
In a home of our own by the clear waterside.
In a home of our own, etc.

On some fertile spot which we may call our own,
Where the rich verdure grows, we will build up a home.
There industry will flourish and content will smile,
While our children rejoicing will share in our toil.
While our children, etc.

We will plant our garden and sow our own field,
And eat from the fruits which industry will yield,
And be independent, as long we have strived,
Steele Rudd also described how the selectors would be ‘filled with the proud spirit of ownership’ in *Green Grey Homestead* (1934, p. 11). Again, the power of choice and the capacity to make one’s own fortune are to the fore. Rudd wrote:

> There’ll be a couple of hills to take your fancy as sites for houses and yards, but you won’t know which to decide on. It’ll be a wonderful look-out, and that homestead’ll seem just a big Christmas-tree to you, hanging with prizes. (1934, pp. 11-12)

The dream of the selector was of steady improvement. Farmers and their families hoped that once they had bred a few animals and paid one or two instalments on the land, the products of the soil would not only support them but also provide sufficient surplus for future payments, interest, improvements, and even expansion.

This belief in progress was strong and is depicted in a picture entitled ‘The selector’s dream: from the untamed bush to civilised comfort,’ published in the *Sydney Mail*, 21 December 1889. The image shows a before and after setting. The ‘before’ is an image of a selector with his family having Christmas lunch under a bark humpy next to a tent. The ‘after’ image, set nine years later (in 1889) shows the selector once again having Christmas lunch with his family. The difference is that now they are all seated on the verandah of a comfortable house. The caption underneath the image reads: ‘Two Christmases in an Australian Free Selector’s Life. 1880: Mutton and Damper, 1889: Turkey and Ham.’ [Fig 5.2]

While hardships were inevitable, said Samuel Sidney, it was ‘… equally certain that agriculture does pay the labouring man, or at any rate the man who can labour, with sons to help him.’ (1850, p. 17)

Though those that have ruled us the right long denied.
Though those that have ruled us, etc.

12 Steele Rudd’s real name was Arthur Hoey Davis. He lived on a selection with his family and wrote many books including *On Our Selection* (1987 [1973]), *In Australia, or, The old selection* (1987), *Sandy’s selection* and, *Back at our selection* (1973), and *Stocking our selection* (1970).
The selector’s dream: from the untamed bush to civilised comfort.

The caption underneath the image reads: “Two Christmases in an Australian Free Selector’s Life. 1880: Mutton and Damper, 1889: Turkey and Ham.”

Sydney Mail, 21 December 1889
Many selectors also believed that they would be compensated for their hard work by the pleasures of ‘outdoor life.’ In particular, these benefits were seen as a gift to children. Steele Rudd wrote that he cherished memories of his childhood selection life for its ‘freedom’… ‘its joys, its careless hopes and sorrows, its utter irresponsibility.’ (1969 [1909], p. 18)

The possibilities and pleasures of rural life were also depicted in newspapers such as the *Illustrated Australian News*. For example on the 12th of March 1881 selectors families were shown digging up a potato crop in rich soil around Warrnambool in Victoria. The district was renowned for ‘pigs, Paddys and parties.’ This image portrays the comradeship and sense of community which were celebrated as being among the great rewards of rural life.

In the aftermath of the 1860 ‘free selection election’ the urge to select land was widespread. Drawn mainly from classes of immigrant gold-seekers and itinerant rural workers, the selector became obsessed with the idea of possessing land. G. H. Gibson, in *Ironbark Splitters from the Australian Bush* (1912) likened it to an epidemic caused by ‘the little microbe of the land-selectin’ craze.’ (p. 6)

> You can hear the microbe whisper in the watches  
> Of the night,  
> And it makes you discontented, though your  
> prospects may be bright,  
> Till you long to take some implements – some  
> Shovels and some hoes –  
> And go out and “make the wilderness to blossom  
> as the rose.”

*From ‘Going on the Land,’* (Gibson, 1912, p. 1)

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13 ‘Paddies’ is a colloquial term that refers to people who have emigrated from Ireland.

14 See also ‘Jones’s Selection’ (*The Kiandra Man’s Yarn*) where Bill Jones ‘scarificed the surface with, His double –furrow ploughs.’ (1912, p. 21)
Between 1860 and 1900 Robertson’s land acts led to a significant intensification of freehold. Over 39 million acres of land were alienated in the aftermath of these acts, and the area under crop increased tenfold. By 1883, 21,000 people had taken up agricultural pursuits (Coghlan 1918, p. 110).

**The Temperance Movement and Domestic Masculinity**

In the later decades of the nineteenth century the middle-class emphasis on the family and the associated culture of domestic man gained impetus amid ongoing polemic against the corrupting influences of urban life, such as dancehalls and drinking dens. The contrast between virtue and vice was repeatedly mapped onto a contrast between rural and urban life. In his 1880 Annual Report, Edmund Fosberry, the Inspector of Police, referred to the ‘prevalence of idle, intemperate and dissolute habits amongst the youth of Sydney and other large cities.’ (New South Wales Police Department, Annual Report, 1884) ‘Degradation attaches to the bulk of the sport in which the working boys and girls and men and women of the city indulge,’ the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported:

> There is degradation in every pothouse, in every lower-class dancing saloon, in every street-corner gathering place, in all the life of the streets- in short, between all the hours of sunset and midnight. (Ignotus, ‘Outdoor Amusements,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 December 1884)

Central to this polemic was the Temperance movement.

The Temperance movement sought to reform behaviour that was damaging to family life, especially drinking, smoking, gambling and sexual indulgence. While the Temperance movement was directed at both women and men, it was perhaps inevitable that men would become the principal targets since families were often the victims of drunken men (through both physical violence and the loss of income).  

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15 The New South Wales Temperance Society was inaugurated in 1835, with the Governor, Sir George Gipps, present (Dunstan 1974, p. 49). Gipps found drunkenness to be the ‘fruitful parent of every species of crime.’ For a time a vigorous anti-drink movement became an important aspect of the concern for moral enlightenment, receiving the backing of a whole network of organisations including many Protestant churches. The Total Abstinence Society started in 1838 and
In these decades, middle-class masculinity was increasingly defined in terms of a man’s ability to provide and care for his family (Lake 1986, p. 117). This view of masculinity was also widely embraced by the aspirational working classes. Typical was William Lane, ‘perhaps the most charismatic Labour leader of the 1880s.’ (Lake 1986, p. 130) For Lane, the ‘manly’ man was straight, temperate and monogamous. Lane envisaged a new society whose economic arrangements would encourage men to be sober and responsible breadwinners. Women, the ‘weary sex,’ were to be relieved of the necessity to earn an income and so enabled to care for home and family (Lane 1948, p 45). This view of masculinity was institutionalized by Justice Higgins who decreed in the Harvester Judgment of 1907 that a basic, minimum wage be paid, ideally to a male breadwinner, sufficient to keep a wife and children in frugal comfort (Hearn 2007, p. 2).16 Both middle- and working-class ideals were increasingly defined through family life; and a healthy family life, it was understood, meant eschewing the dirt, noise and raucous temptations of the city in favour of a harmonious rural dwelling.

The selector helped to shape the meaning of the bush as a space within which farm life, as an emblem of health (both moral and physical), could be pursued. As early as 1881 The Bulletin suggested that people brought up in the bush were ‘almost uniformly well-behaved.’ (‘Australian Larrikins and “Federal Australian” Larrikins,’ The Bulletin, 28 May 1881, p. 2) Farm families were considered to be especially adept at fostering good habits, and that, consequently, bush life led people to ‘become respectable and useful members of society.’ (Sydney Morning Herald 23 October 1882, p. 7) No longer dominated by the cattle thieves of the early 1830s, the masculinist squatter of the 1840s, the land barons of the 1850s and 1860s, or even the itinerant worker that populated the stories of Henry Lawson and A. B. (Banjo) Patterson, the bush began to occupy a new place in the public imaginary, now inhabited by virtuous members of the aspirational

16 In 1906 the Protectionist Party and Australian Labour Party attempted to introduce fair and reasonable wages and working conditions to workers. The decision was made in the Excise Tariff (Agricultural Machinery) Act, which said that an excise on locally made machinery would be waived if workers were paid ‘fair and reasonable’ wages. The Harvester Judgment was the result of a Melbourne-based agricultural machinery manufacturer ‘The Harvester Company’ applying for a reduction of the excise. The application was over-ruled by the Arbitration Court’s president, Henry Bournes Higgins on November 8, 1907. He determined that fair and reasonable remuneration must be enough to support a wage earner in reasonable comfort, and set a figure of 2 pounds and 2 shillings per week as a minimum wage.
working classes. The family farm was conceived as a site of self-betterment, health and happiness. It was a place that enabled a realisation of the Protestant ethic. The men were seen as temperate and hardworking. Similarly, as Sue Rowley has shown, the early federation period harboured a vision of rural womanhood as more ‘womanly’ than its urban counterpart (Rowley 1989, p. 77).17

Problems facing Selectors

From the beginning, however, the 1860 land acts presented hopeful selectors with a number of barriers. Firstly, the acts gave no consideration to the question of the capital required to establish a farm in the more isolated regions of Australia; forcing many selectors to borrow money to stay on the land. However until the end of the nineteenth century access to finance was limited, forcing many selectors to seek help from private lenders who charged extortionate interest rates. In the song ‘The Settler,’ or ‘Billy Barlow in Australia’ by Benjamin Griffith, Billy a recent immigrant is forced to borrow money from Tom Burdekin, a notorious Sydney money-lender. He sings:

And the matter to mend, now my bill was near due,  
So I wrote to my friend, and just asked to renew;  
He replied, he was sorry he couldn’t, because,  
The bill had pass’d into Tom Burdekin’s claws.  
Oh dear, lackaday, oh!  
But perhaps he renew it, said Billy Barlow.

I applied; to renew he was quite content,  
If secured, and allowed just 300 per cent  
But as I couldn’t do it, Barr, Rodgers & Co.  
Soon sent up a summons for Billy Barlow.  
Oh dear, lackaday, oh!  
They soon settled the business of Billy Barlow.

17 Also see Kate Murphy’s article on ‘The “Unnatural” Woman: Urban Reformers, Modernity, and the Ideal of Rurality after Federation.’
Robertson once said that he expected men could settle, and begin cultivation of their land with an investment of ‘100 or 200’ pounds. According to Baker, ‘this seems to be the only publicly reported reference by the reformers to the need for settlers to have capital.’ In reality, Baker argues, Robertson’s estimate was ‘perhaps ten or twenty times smaller than that required.’ (1974, p. 123)

The new Land Laws maintained a relatively high price for land. The first Act provided that any person could select any block of Crown land between 40 and 320 acres at a fixed price of £1 per acre. One-quarter of the purchase price was to be paid at once and applicants were given a licence on the condition that the land was stocked at a quarter of the carrying capacity of the run. The second Act maintained the annual leases for squatters in the old settled (First Class) districts, but reduced the leases from fourteen to five years in the intermediate (Second Class) settled districts and in the unsettled districts. In both the latter, these five-year leases were open to competition by private tender, although improvements entitled squatters to pre-emptive right on the lands on which these improvements had been made.

As Baker suggests, a really radical land law, one which really did aim at establishing a multitude of yeomanry settlers, would have enabled land to be sold at a very low price to selectors, and it would have had stringent provisions to prevent squatters and capitalists from buying at the reduced rates (Baker 1974, p. 124).

Instead, the 1861 Acts allowed many prospective buyers to be stymied by existing squatters, who engaged in extensive peacocking and dummying. Peacocking involved buying up all the water frontages, the water holes and the best land, often with support of government officials. This process was very popular in drier districts where land away from the river was rendered useless without access to water. Another tactic used by squatters to subvert the Act involved arranging for ‘dummy’ selectors to purchase lands. When these ‘dummies’ failed to pay for their selection, the land would revert to the squatter. Family members, wives and children, were

18 Selection in Queensland and Tasmania was also restricted to 320 acres. In Western Australia the limit was 500 acres and in Victoria and South Australia the limit was 640 acres.

19 Practices like this were not uncommon even before the land acts.
the most popular and reliable ‘dummies.’ A squatter could also ask his employees and others to select land on his run (Roberts 1969, p. 309-311).  

These practices were carried out without much acknowledgment. In New South Wales evidence given to a committee, and subsequent reports to parliament, included only a few, ‘understated references’ to peacocking and dummying. Both were referred to as ‘uncommon,’ in spite of evidence that suggested the contrary (Waterhouse 2005, p. 29). Perhaps the lack of comment was a function of the ubiquity of these practices, as opposed to their absence. Cannon suggests that ‘dummying was accepted as a way of life in New South Wales rather than a scandal.’ (p. 140) A subsequent (1884) bill designed to eliminate flaws in existing legislation claimed that ‘dummying had flourished and that land was sold at too low a price, allowing the squatters to pick the eyes of the country.’ (Crown Land Commission of Inquiry 1884, p. 6; Legislative Assembly, Vol. 43, 1884, p. 321)

However, one of the biggest hurdles facing selectors was the scarcity of good land. A high proportion of the land suitable for cultivation had already been taken up by squatters, effectively locking it up in the hands of the large pastoralists. Many of the blocks of land that were left were relatively poor, and therefore needed to be of a much larger size to be economically viable. In 1865, only four years after the passage of the Robertson Land Acts, witnesses before the Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly testified that the maximum of 320 acres that could be acquired by each selector was insufficient to establish economically viable farms in many areas (Waterhouse 2005, p. 29). The Land Alienation Act (1868) and the Homestead Act (1872), which were designed to provide encouragement for closer settlement by allowing farmers to select either 80-acre agricultural or 160-acre pastoral homesteads, did little to recognise or alleviate this situation.

The Select Committee also questioned whether many of those taking up a selection possessed sufficient knowledge or capital to survive and prosper. They further acknowledged that even

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20 For more descriptions of how squatters acquired land by a combination of the above methods, see Waterson (1968) and Kiddle (1967).

experienced selectors, backed by capital, were not certain to succeed unless they had ready access to markets. In other words, it was essential that farms be located near roads or rivers, or close to major towns.

An English traveller wrote on a visit to Queensland in 1871:

… the free selector can grow nothing on the Darling Downs for which there is a market. He finds it hard to get ready money. Wheat he cannot produce as it will fail twice for him every time it will thrive… transport costs are high. (Merritt and O’Brien 1985, p. 81)

The difficulties associated with a lack of access to good arable land, a lack of capital, primitive agricultural techniques, little experience and high transport costs, were often compounded by drought.

In addition to this, all the disadvantages attendant on farming a small block, that had impacted on small landholders among the early colonists, remained a century later, and continued to characterise the difficulties of the selector.

**The effects of the land acts:**

**Descriptions of the lifestyle of New Selectors**

Having won the right to occupy land, the selector, as he came to be known, went in search of a block. Equipped with only frugal possessions, a horse and dray, tools such as a single furrow plough and harrow, seeds, and axes, pots and pans and a few bush rations, he searched for a plot of land; often with his family.

**Work**

While some selectors were able to thrive, whether by luck or knowledge or both, life was difficult for many selectors (Waterhouse 2005, pp. 97-8). The endless work was often commented on. Writing in the *Bulletin* in 1887, Henry Lawson recalled how he:
Saw selectors slaving away in dusty patches amongst the barren ridges: saw one or two carried home, in the end, on a sheet of bark; the old men worked till they died. Saw how the gaunt selector’s wives lived and toiled. Saw elder sons stoop-shouldered old men at thirty. Noted, in dusty patches in the scrubs, the pile of chimney stones, a blue-gum slab or two, and the remains of the fence— the ultimate result of 10 years’, 15 years’, 20 years hard, hopeless graft by strong men who died like broken-down bullocks further out. (*The Bulletin* Saturday, 18 June 1887 p. 6)

Henry wrote of his own childhood on his parents’ selection:

But the life! The stifling tent in the summer till part of the building was up, then the rough bunk; and work from sunrise till dark… And the terrible dreariness and weariness and loneliness of it all… I remember looking ahead half hopefully for a change in the scenery as I approached the sight of each new job; but- and it seemed fate- there was never a change. Each hole in the scrub we worked in seemed more wretched than the last. (Prout 1963, p. 51)

A Queensland selector interviewed by Alexander Boyd told of similar experience:

Well, I had a job, too, with that ’ere crop, let alone the clearing.’ There was scrub all round, an’ it was alive wi’ wallabies and paddymelons, an’ bandicoots, and the cockatoos was in millions. I planted most o’ that crop twice over, and the bandicoots ripped the seed out o’ the ground, and what came up the wallabies wires into… But the wust ain’t come yet. When I’d gotten it all in … I set to and husked it, and then, my gum! I remembered it would have to be shelled. I hadn’t got no corn-sheller… so I goes to work an’ I shells out twenty bushels wi’ ma hands. You may think I was jolly sick of it afore I’d done… I hadn’t got no wife them times, an’ I don’t believe I could ha’ kept one if I had. (Boyd 1891, pp. 33-4)

Similarly Mary McConnel, the wife of Australian pioneer Mr David C. McConnel, described the lives of those she met while travelling through Queensland.

They had rough quarters, but not so rough as where we stopped for lunch, at the house of Major and Mrs. North, fine old gentle folk from Ireland… Their cottage was bark, with an earthen floor very uneven. The dear old lady gave me a hearty welcome. We were expected,
and she had a pair of boiled fowls for lunch. I have never forgotten the scene - the little old gentleman moving about the poor hut. (1909, p. 18)

Houses

In their homes, the selectors living conditions were rough, makeshift and uncomfortable. Many of them had begun life on a selection living in a bark humpies, where:

…the rooms were partitioned off by bark and bag, with beaten earth as their flooring, bushel bags stretched between poles for beds, packing cases for dressing-tables, rough slab tables driven into the ground, seats made the same way as their furniture, and cuttings from old number of Illustrated London News and family albums as the sole decoration on their walls. (Clark 1987, p. 144)

Bob the swagman’s song, describing his old bark hut, captures the barrenness of life on a selection block. He sings:

And of furniture, there’s no such thing, ’twas never in the place,
Except the stool I sit upon-and that’s an old gin-case.
It does for a safe as well, but you must keep it shut,
Or the flies would make it canter round the old bark hut…
(Anon, ’The Old Bark Hut,’ in Stewart and Keesing, 1970, p. 226)

Lawson portrayed a similar situation in ’The Selector’s Daughter’:

The place was called “Deadman’s Hollow,” and looked like it. The “house” – a low, two-roomed affair, with skillions - was built of half-round slabs and stringy-bark, and was nearly all roof; the bark, being darkened from recent rain, gave it a drearier appearance than usual… A plank-table, supported on stakes driven into the ground, stood in the middle of the room, and two slab benches were fixtures on each side. The floor was clay. All was clean and poverty-stricken; all that could be whitewashed was white, and everything that could be washed was scrubbed. (1940, p. 325)

blossom as the rose.” From ’Going on the Land,’ (Gibson, 1912, p. 1)
A selector’s diet was very simple and often consisted of damper, corn meal, eggs, wild animals and rabbits (Cannon, p. 150). Essential foodstuffs such as milk, fruit and vegetables were scarce and the vast majority of women had to endure hard physical labour if they were to provide it for their families. Growing food was universally regarded as women’s work. As Holt says even in 1946 ‘more than half the wives of Wimmera farms still milked the cows, and nearly three-quarters had sole responsibility for the fowls.’ (p. 154)

In On Our Selection Steele Rudd described how his parents made a form of tea by roasting bread to black cinders then pouring hot water over it (1987, p. 25). Similarly, an Anonymous lyricist in ‘The Stringybark Cockatoo’ described dinners of goanna hash, forced down with bread and lard and breakfasts of ‘pollard’ (the waste material from winnowed grain, usually fed to animals), which ‘tasted like cobbler’s paste.’ (Stewart and Keesing, 1970, p. 159) Henry Lawson recalled ‘a period of brown ration sugar, bread and treacle, and bread and dripping,’ whilst their ‘neighbours were even worse off, subsisting as best they could on a diet of bread and tea and pumpkin pie.’ (Prout 1963, p. 36)

Contaminated water and sanitation also made disease rampant. Richard Jefferies describes how a combination of grease-laden water, the refuse of discarded chamber pots, and vegetable peelings all coalesced around the hut with the nearby latrine to create a ‘peculiarly offensive’ odour (1937 [1880], p. 8).

The difficulties facing selector’s wives

The difficulties of life as a selector were often borne more by women than men. The worst problems were isolation and loneliness. R. D. Barton, in his Reminiscences of an Australian Pioneer, wrote that his mother ‘did not set foot outside their home station near Wellington

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23 Richard Jefferies was thirty years old when he wrote Hodge and his masters. His idea was to write a book which would interest English men everywhere. He wrote it in section and the instalments appeared in The Standard, a London newspaper.
in New South Wales for twenty years, during which time she gave birth to nine children, fed and educated them, made their clothes, sewed their boots out of hide, and managed the whole property when her husband suffered a compound fracture of the leg which she refused to allow the doctors to amputate.’ (1914, cited in Cannon, p. 32) Similarly Barbara Baynton in her short story ‘Squeakers’ Mate’ describes the “hard luck” of one ‘woman who alone had hard-grafted with the best of them for every acre and hoof on that selection.’ (1995 [1902], p. 58)

Apart from working on the selection, providing food and doing the domestic work many women had to exercise extreme frugality in order for their families to survive. Some developed ‘side-line’ projects to bring in extra income. If not too isolated to do so, women could drive to town once a week to sell surplus eggs, butter and cream for ‘pin money.’ (Holt, 1946, p. 97)

It was the woman’s responsibility to bear as many children as possible, as labour was too costly to hire. Large families were seen as a benefit, as sons would provide labour without adding too much to the expense of the farm. The children that survived were put to work at the earliest possible age, collecting firewood, driving stock to water, sowing seeds, digging gardens, milking cows and taking care of other children (Cannon, pp. 154-5).

‘Milky White’ Emerson, in A Shanty Entertainment, described how a cocky’s boy (Bill Jackson) had to be ‘kicked out of bed at four in the morning to milk cows, and to be kicked right through the day till nine and ten o’clock at night doing this, that and everything for Mr and Mrs Cocky.’ (1904, p. 20)

Formal education was limited to a few years. As the sons, in particular, grew older many continued to work for no wages on the understanding that one day they would inherit the farm.
Debt and leaving the land

For the selectors the necessity of obtaining both capital and labour led them into a network of oppressive relations, which made a mockery of their much-vaunted independence.

Selectors became heavily indebted not only to storekeepers, but merchants and later, to banks. When the state took over the function of providing money their debt was to the Closer Settlement Board.

John Angus Buchanan, a valuer and rate collector for Wimmera Shire in Victoria told a Royal Commission in 1878 that selectors in the shire were borrowing 22½ percent on their licences for rations and food from storekeepers. (1973, p. 26) Steele Rudd described how a storekeeper sold his father's first harvest of corn for twelve pounds and then deducted the grocery account which had swollen to nine pounds: 'Dad was speechless and looked sick… went home and sat on the block and stared into the fire…' ('Our First Harvest,' The Bulletin, Saturday, 3 August 1895, p. 28)

The difficulties of the selectors became more acute as a result of the rabbit invasion of the 1880s and the droughts of the 1880s, 1890s and early 1900s. Some farmers sought off-farm work to help pay their bills. However for many, this was not a viable option as their own farm took up all their time.

The biggest winners in this situation were the banks, as small farms failed and were repossessed by creditors. By the 1880s banks owned more land than ever before. Moreover, they now began to operate these stations themselves. With the exception of the Australian Agricultural Company and the Van Diemen’s Land Company that had been established in the 1830s, this was the first time that corporations had attempted to operate a large number of land holdings in Australia. These finance houses discovered that by operating a number of properties simultaneously in different parts of the continent they could alleviate the effects of drought, by moving stock from drought-effected areas to non-drought affected areas, and thereby maintain profits (Bailey 1966, pp. 184-7). The practice of moving stock from one property to another was adopted by wealthy individual pastoralists with capital, who realised station leases could be purchased cheaply. This situation gave rise to the saying:
The Banks own ‘alf the blooming runs,
The rabbits own the rest.

From ‘Times is Changed’ (Gibson 1912, p. 45)

Responses to the Plight of Selectors

Response to the plight of selectors took two directions. Both of these were present in the work of Henry Lawson. On the one hand, selectors were compared unfavourably with the ‘fiercely independent’ figure of the itinerant worker (Ward, p. 17). The term ‘cocky’ often used as a synonym for the selector (because he was said to ‘live off seeds pecked from the ground, like a cockatoo,’) became a byword for meanness and stupidity. Selectors were mocked for their very virtues: ‘providence and a considerable capacity for back breaking toil.’ (Ward, p. 244) In ‘The Vagabond’ Henry Lawson represented the family as a tyranny, and the family man as a fool.

Sacrifice all for the family’s sake
Bow to their selfish rule!
Slave till your big, soft heart, they break-
The heart of the “family fool.”

From Winnowed Verses (1944 [1924], p. 20)

However, selectors were also celebrated as pioneers, determinedly fighting the forces of nature, the squatters and the banks all at the same time. Lawson captures this aspect of the selector’s persona in ‘Freedom on the Wallaby.’ He writes:

Our parents toiled to make a home,
Hard grubbin’ twas an’ clearin’,
They wasn’t much troubled with lords
When they was pioneerin.’
But now that we have made the land
A garden full of promise,

and Berlin-wool dipped in virus, and rouse them up, and feed them, at the risk of my life, with slices of young pumpkin...’ (Prout, 1963, p. 26)
Old Greed must crook his dirty hand
And come ter take it from us

**The Reinvention of the Selector**

Lawson's description of the selector as a pioneer became the dominant understanding of the selector in the 1900s when, as Richard Waterhouse argues, he underwent a fully-fledged 'transformation,' from 'cocky' to 'pioneer.' The pioneer legend, Hirst has argued:

transform[ed] the low status selector of the nineteenth century into a nation builder… The pioneer's struggle with the elements and the nation's struggle to survive in a more hostile environment became fused.' (1992, pp. 218-9)

In 'How the Land Was Won' (1899) Lawson invoked the theme of sacrifice and nation-building. He wrote:

They toiled and they fought through the shame of it-
Through wilderness, flood and drought;
They worked, in the struggles of early days,
Their sons' salvation out.
The white girl – wife in the hut alone,
The man on the boundless run,
The miseries suffered, unvoiced, unknown –
And that's how the land was won

This transformation from cocky to pioneer was a celebrated theme in Australian painting also (MacDonald 2008; Bonyhady 1987; Hoorne 2007). In 1904, for example, Frederick McCubbin painted 'The Pioneers,' [Fig 5.3] a massive work in three panels which is considered the embodiment, in art, of the selector as pioneering legend. The first panel shows a selector and his wife on first arriving at their selection in the forest; the second shows the selection established, and the third, the 'triumphal stanza' as the Age described it:

![Figure 5.3](Frederick McCubbin (1855 – 1917)
Australian
*The pioneer* 1904
Painting, oil on canvas
225.0 x 295.7 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne)
A country youth with reverent fingers, clears away the undergrowth from the rough wooden cross marking the last resting place of the gallant couple. In the distance the spires and bridges of a glorious young city and the stocks of rich harvest field tell of the joys that another generation is reaping from the toil of the once lusty pioneers now gone to dust (The Age, 16 August, 1905).

Similarly Arthur Streeton’s (1867-1943) The Selector’s Hut (Whelan on the Log), 1890, oil on canvas (76.7 x 51.2cm), [Fig 5.4] at the National Gallery of Australia, in Canberra celebrates the courage, enterprise, hard work and perseverance of a pioneer. An image of heroic masculine labour, Whelan sits on a log smoking a cigarette after felling a tree.

Charles Conder’s (1868-1909) Under a Southern Sun (Timber Splitter’s Camp), 1890, oil on canvas, (71.5 x 35.5cm), [Fig 5.5] National Gallery of Australia, in Canberra also portrays a selector with an axe. A child is in the foreground, a tent in the background, and washing is hanging on the line. This more domestic scene references the multiple roles that many selectors played – father, child minder, laundry man, and axe man. Hard work, directed to the transformation of the landscape, is at the heart of these compositions.

Nowhere is the transformation of the figure of the selector into a pioneer more colourful than in Steel Rudd’s stories about a family of Queensland selectors, which he published in a series of novels and melodramas including On Our Selection, The Bushman, My Mate, and a Bush Love Story. In these representations selectors were portrayed as foolish and ignorant but, equally, they were celebrated as the backbone of the nation, credited with turning the waste country into farmland, and achieving modest prosperity by hard physical labour despite constant harassment from squatters.

24 On Our Selection first appeared in the 1890s in the Bulletin and was published as a book in 1899. Steele Rudd wrote numerous follow-up selection volumes and by 1940 On Our Selection had sold an estimated quarter of a million copies (Strum 1985, p. 33).
Figure 5.4
Arthur Streeton (1867-1943)
Australian
The selector’s hut (Whelan on the log) 1890
Eaglemont, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
Painting, oil on canvas
Primary Insc: signed and dated l.r., oil “Streeton. 1890.”
76.7 h x 51.2 w
Framed 93.0 h x 69.3 w x 8.0 d cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

you I would dedicate a verse or a song. Rejoicing o’er the victory John Robertson has won Now the Land Bill has
Figure 5.5
Charles Conder 1868 – 1909
English
Australia between 1884-90
Under a southern sun (Timber splitter’s camp) 1890
Heidelberg, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
Painting, oil on canvas
Primary Insc: not signed. not dated
71.5 h x 35.5 w
Framed 97.0 h x 62.0 w x 10.5 d cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Success does not come easily to the Rudd family. Much of their lives are spent working on the selection for little or no reward. However, it is the representation of 'Dad' as a 'battler,' a man whose moral fibre is moulded through a persistent struggle with vicissitude that comes to be revered.

Steele Rudd's stories contain repeated references to the virtues of rural life, the way in which the city deprives people of their usefulness and a sense of inequality. For example, Norah leaves the selection to become a Brisbane schoolteacher, and when she returns she seeks to impress her family with her sophistication, by showing disdain for physical labour. They respond by reminding her of her origins, and by leaving her to fend for herself when a dog attacks and drags her through the mud.

Another example of the ills associated with city life can be seen in *On Our Selection* when Kate leaves to go to Brisbane and is reminded by her admirer Sandy not to become a fine lady and lose the 'tang of the blue gums.' Inevitably she finds the city lonely and dangerous and flees back to the bush to escape the unwelcome attentions of a city slicker who had sought to seduce her by promising her 'fine clothes, suppers and amusements.' (Rudd 1984, p. 87)

**Conclusion**

Through representations of the selector, land ownership in rural Australia came to be associated with family life. Those willing to take up farming believed that their hard work would be rewarded, that their families would be the beneficiaries of their labour and that the land, if properly cared for, would provide for them.
Part 2

The Maranoa: family farmers and the legacy of the yeoman ideal
Brisbane 4th September 1905 ... A continuance of dry weather ... the long dry spell ...
Chapter 6

Settling the Maranoa

1905 ... A continuance of dry weather ... the long dry spell. Brisbane 4th September 1905 ... A continuance
...there will be a corresponding decrease of rain... to present cycle...
The Maranoa district is located between the agricultural lands of the Darling Downs to the east and the sparse and arid region of the Warrego to the west. To the south are the Liverpool Plains; while the area to the north is bounded by the Carnarvon and Chesterton Ranges. These ranges house the source of the Maranoa River and form a natural boundary.

The traditional inhabitants of this area were the Kooma and Mandandanji Nations (Tindale 1940). Settlement by Europeans began in the south-east of the Maranoa during the 1840s as squatters entered from the Liverpool Plains or more particularly the area around the Barwon and Gwydir rivers in search of fresh grazing land.

However, it was not until 1845-46 that a thorough exploration of the area was carried out. This exploration was carried out by Sir Thomas Mitchell who travelled along the Balonne and Maranoa Rivers in search of a route from Sydney to the Gulf of Carpentaria. Although Mitchell failed in his attempt to be the first European to reach the Indian Ocean by land, his report praising the condition of the land he passed through played an important role in opening up southwest Queensland to further European settlement.

In hindsight, Mitchell’s expedition must have traversed the Maranoa in the wake of a bountiful wet season. He described the Balonne River as having ‘splendid reaches’ and declared it to be ‘as fine a looking river as I have seen in the colony, excepting only the Murray.’ (1848, pp. 80, 111) As with other explorers, Mitchell did not seem to take the seasonal nature of the climate into account when assessing the potential of the area (Dr F. H. Bauer cited in Perry 1966, p. 138). An extract from Mitchell’s journal, in November 1846, refers to the country north of St George’s Bridge:

We had passed over a country covered with excellent grass, consisting chiefly of plains and open forest, with scrubs of Acacia pendula and a soil of clay… and in the open forest Acacia nerifolia was observed in fruit. (1848, p. 386)

There are numerous spellings of the Kooma Nation. In Tindale’s 1940 account he uses the spelling Koamu. I have used Hazel McKellar’s more recent spelling of Kooma which is cited in her book Matya-Mundu: a history of the Aboriginal people of South West (1984, pp. 47-53).
Travelling north west, he continued to praise the ‘excellent country for grazing purposes.’ (Mitchell, p. 133) The Maranoa-Balonne (Darling) river systems were unusually full, partly as a function of the floods which were occurring at a frequency of three to five years at the time. Lack of water did not seem a problem (Brown 1963, p. 3).

Mitchell observed that the Kooma and Mandandanji peoples had an intimate knowledge of what the land could yield. He wrote:

Their means of subsistence and their habits, are both extremely simple; but they are adjusted with admirable fitness to the few resources afforded by such a country, in its wild state. (p. 413)

These peoples hunted for ‘kangaroos,’ ‘ducks’ and ‘emus,’ which ‘probably constituted their chief food.’ (Mitchell, p. 80) They also ate opossum, fish and various kinds of fruit and vegetable food including a small indigenous melon, the size of a plum that was growing in abundance at the time of Mitchell’s passage through the country (p. 379).

They used fire to manage the vast grass lands to ensure a steady supply of kangaroos for hunting. Mitchell commented:

Fire, grass, kangaroos, and human inhabitants, seem all dependent on each other for existence in Australia; for any one of these being wanting, the others could no longer continue… But for this simple process, the Australian lands had probably contained as thick a jungle as those of New Zealand or America, instead of the open forests in which the white men now find grass for their cattle. (p. 413)

Archaeologist Sylvia Hallam has also concluded that ‘The land the English settled was not as God made it… [but] as the Aboriginal people made it.’ (1975, p. vii)

Mitchell’s tour was followed by squatters pushing west from the rich country of the Darling Downs. These settlers took up land along the Balonne, Maranoa and Moonie Rivers and employed similar farming techniques to the Kooma and Mandandanji peoples. They based themselves along watercourses and utilised the Aboriginal-cultivated grasslands to graze sheep.
and cattle instead of kangaroos. While the Aboriginal people had controlled the land with fire, the Europeans brought their own land management technologies – ringbarking, burning (unwanted herbage), clearing and fencing.

The runs opening up in Maranoa were much poorer and less fertile than those on the neighbouring Darling Downs and Liverpool Plains districts. Many of the early Maranoa runs served the role of secondary stations or outstations for squatters with holdings on richer lands to the east and the south. They used the Maranoa runs to fatten stock in the good times, when watercourses filled with water and fish. In drier years, these stations were left fallow. The runs were often managed by superintendents or stockmen, rather than providing a home for the squatter and his family. (Brown 1963, pp. 10, 46)

The slow take up of runs in the Maranoa during the first decade after Mitchell’s tour can be attributed to a number of factors such as low rainfall, scarcity of labour, and the insecurity of holding a run outside the official district (Brown, p. 12).

The Kooma and Mandandanji people fiercely resisted the appropriation of their lands and practices (Collins 2002). The presence of Europeans disrupted indigenous harvesting of the land and threatened their survival. The Maranoa, the Balonne and Maranoa Rivers became a focus for conflict. The murder of shepherds and the stealing of sheep were attributed to indigenous people. For instance an attack on Allan MacPherson's Mount Abundance station by indigenous people in 1848 resulted in the deaths of two men and the theft of 800 sheep (Brown, p. 28). Fear of attack on shepherds was a contributing factor in the change from sheep to cattle in 1849 on Mount Abundance, but in the process of re-stocking, two of the five men were killed. MacPherson eventually left the station in the charge of stockmen who finally abandoned it. But he was not the only settler affected. James Blyth left his station after being wounded with spears and following the death of a shepherd (Brown, p. 14). To the east, MacIntyre River runs were abandoned by squatters who feared for their lives (Skinner 1975, p. 23) A missionary, by the name of William Ridley described the Kooma and Mandandanji nations as the ‘most determined and troublesome foes the colonists have met in this country.’ (French and Waterson 1982, p. 18) By 1851, the European population of the Maranoa was only 85 (Pugh Moreton Bay Almanac 1859, p. 117).
Allan MacPherson sold the licence for his Mount Abundance station to Stephen Spencer of Iron Bark station near Barraba in New South Wales in 1857. Spencer’s daughter Mary (later McManus) supplies us with a vivid account of squatting life in the Maranoa in the journals she kept over the twelve years she spent at Mount Abundance.²

In March 1858, more than a decade after Mitchell’s tour, fourteen-year-old Mary Spencer echoed the early explorer’s view of the Maranoa as rich and plentiful in her record of the journey by which she arrived at Mount Abundance station. Travelling with her mother, father and eleven year old brother, 13 men, 1000 head of cattle, 60 horses, and four bullock drays loaded with household effects, Mary journeyed 644 kilometres over four months to settle at the station (1969 [1913], p. 1). She described the journey as follows:

We travelled slowly up the Balonne River to allow our cattle to recover their condition on the luxuriant grass that grew so plentifully all along its banks... All along the Balonne the country was most lovely. The tall grass waving in the wind nearly over our heads like a field of wheat ready for reaping (Introduction, no pagination).

They arrived on June 11, 1858 and immediately commenced building a hut. ‘It was a rough life’ she wrote, ‘My mother was the first squatter’s wife who ever came into the Maranoa district, and my brother and I were the first children.’ (1969, p. 4) She described their sense of isolation at being the most westerly residents in the district (p. 4).

The first significant wave of closer settlement to affect Maranoa took place in the 1860s. The move to establish tighter settlement patterns, on smaller more close knit farms, took place under the auspices of what historian David Cameron has called a liberal-agrarian philosophy, which encouraged smaller holders including townspeople, tradesmen, bush workers and immigrants to take up small freehold or leasehold agricultural farms. Queensland with its vast landscape appeared to offer significant potential to fulfil the rural yeomanry ideal in the manner expressed by populist nineteenth-century agrarian utopians such as Edward Wakefield, Henry George, John Dunmore Lang, and the Queensland socialist radical William Lane (Cameron 2005, p.

² Mary met her future husband explorer and pioneer J. C. McManus whilst living on Mount Abundance station.
The closer settlement movement was accompanied by calls to increase the immigration of farmers to Australia and to improve rural infrastructure (Cameron 2005, p. 6.4).

The passing of the Unoccupied Crown Lands Occupation Act in 1860 initiated a push to establish tenure over runs throughout Queensland. This Act provided, for a small fee, a licence for one year. After the first nine-months, a licence holder was to be permitted to apply for a fourteen-year lease (Brown 1963, p. 47). In accordance with the aims of the liberal-agrarian instigators of the act, the runs were small, ranging from 25 to 100 square miles (65 to 259 square kilometres).

The passing of this Act led to a rash of land speculation in the Maranoa, which was dominated by squatters from the more fertile and affluent Darling Downs and New South Wales. Mary McManus (née Spencer) refers to this rush to acquire licences in her *Reminiscences*, noting that, 'everyone was infatuated with the desire to possess a run in Queensland. The excitement was extreme and nearly equal to the gold rush seven or eight years before.' (1969, unpaginated, see Chapter IV) Among those listed as applying for runs were a number of speculators who had no intention of occupying. As there was no provision in the Act against the taking up of several contiguous runs, and stock not evident on one run could be claimed to have been moved to the neighbouring run, the task of the District Commissioner to see that each run was appropriately stocked and legitimately settled, was impossible (Armstrong 1968, pp. 22-3).

The Pastoral Leases Act of 1863 tightened the 1860 Act by requiring runs to be stocked to the legal minimum at initial occupation instead of after the runs had been taken up. This prevented speculators from taking out a licence for a run simply in order to sell at a profit several months later. Mary McManus describes the urgency during 1863 to stock runs. She says:

> During the year 1863 the greatest rush for new country took place... the driving of stock surpassed anything ever seen before or since. Squatters were striving to arrive first on their respective runs with their stock, for whoever failed to have his stock on his run by the day

3 See William Lane's *The Workingman's Paradise: An Australian Labour Novel.*

The weather has been abnormally dry ... No rain fell ... a few isolated showers in Maranoa ... unusually hot and dry weather
appointed by the Act, forfeited, and it became the property of him who could first get his stock on. (unpaginated, Chapter X)

In 1861, in the wake of the first land Acts, the population of the Maranoa had risen to 1,241. By 1864 the population had risen again to 1,848, an increase of 600 within three years. The ratio of men to women ranged between 4:1 and 5:1 throughout the district (Brown, p. 44).

In 1866 drought hit. Very few of the settlers who had journeyed to Maranoa had anticipated the extent and frequency of drought in the area. An early warning was sounded in Mary’s Reminiscences when she recounts a story about Mannandilla Spring.

A very old blackfellow [sic] once told my brother that when he was young there was a very long drought, and when all the other creeks and rivers dried up the natives all made for the Mannandilla spring, where they remained till all the game was killed and eaten, when the poor creatures died in great numbers from starvation… The same old blackfellow also assured my brother that such a drought will occur again and destroy every living creature. (unpaginated, Chapter IX)

A short time later, Mary wrote:

No one who now sees the drought stricken aspect of the country of recent years can form an idea of how it looked then [1858-1864], and how it has deteriorated by over-stocking and dry seasons from its original and virgin state. (unpaginated, Chapter X)

By the early 1880s prickly pear was becoming a problem especially around the Bullamon/Moonie River area (Kowald 1996, pp. 36-7). Warnings that rabbits were becoming a problem had also been sounded, spurring the government to pass the 1880 Rabbit Act, forbidding the keeping, introduction or breeding of rabbits. A further Rabbit Act of 1885 imposed tighter regulations, and a rabbit-proof fence along the New South Wales/Queensland border was begun in 1886 (Kowald, p. 37).
Despite these difficulties, by 1888, the area had been transformed. Sheep and cattle had been grazing on Maranoa for up to forty years and the landscape now clearly exhibited signs of European occupation, fences, bores, homesteads, woolsheds and wool scour. Ringbarking and clearing by fire had altered the topography; trees were either dead or in the process of dying, and grasses were becoming prolific, along with noxious weeds inadvertently brought in by humans and their animals. The land was slowly recovering from the adverse effects of sporadic drought over the twenty years from 1866 to 1886. During the 1880s there had been a prolific growth of British investment in the wool industry. Sheep numbers had increased and pastoral activity had expanded into arid and semi-arid regions (Butlin 1964, pp. 31-38).

In view of the isolation and vast distances, the Maranoa settlers of 1888 required a twelve months reserve of food and station supplies. After months en route, stores they had ordered would arrive from the Maitland firm of Wolf and Gorrick in New South Wales via Moree and the border crossing at Mungindi. The Cobb and Co coach service, which had operated in the area since the 1870s, built stores at Yuleba, Surat, St George, Thallon and Dirranbandi to help service their routes (Kowald 1996, p. 56).

In the 1898-1902 drought the Balonne River completely ceased to run for the first time since 1885.\(^4\) Heavy dust storms accompanied the drought. In November 1898 the Gregory News at Winton reported that dark clouds gathering all round were thought to be rain but proved to be dust, commonly referred to as a ‘Barcoo Shower’ (25 November 1893, p. 4). William Young, the Australian Pastoral Company’s general manager, described the country in June 1901:

> Simply an arid desert… the sight begs description. From the time I left the railway terminus till I returned I did not see a living sheep on any Run but Warbreccan, and those I saw there were so emaciated that they could barely walk. At every station and road-side accommodation house they were getting their meat supply from Rockhampton… the mutton killed on Warbreccan was quite unfit for human consumption. (cited in Kowald 1996, p. 123)

\(^4\) This is considered one of the most devastating droughts to date in Australia (Kowald 1996, p. 119). Sheep numbers in the Maranoa decreased by seventy-three per cent from a peak of 2,689,000 in 1894 to 712,000 in 1902 (Butlin 1962, p. 304).
In 1903 an artesian bore was sunk in Henry Street to give the town of St George a water supply (Armstrong 1968, pp. 169-70).

Many of the early closer settlement initiatives of the 1860s and 70s had failed due to drought. As small landholders abandoned their runs, the spread of settlement came to be dominated by larger holdings. Characteristic of these larger landowners were Charles Brown Fisher and his brother, whose properties were concentrated in the south extending from St George to the border, east to the Moonie River and west to the Culgoa River (Kowald, p. 47). Their runs included Noondoo, Yerrabah, Gnoolooma, Dareel, Bullamon, Cubbie, and Doondi, totalling 3,373,703 acres or 13,705.7 square kilometres (Armstrong 1968, pp. 74, 77-8). Between 1888 and 1892 Fisher sold his properties\(^5\) to the Australian Pastoral Company Limited for 1,050,050 pounds (Kowald, p. 46).\(^6\) A Queensland Government list of owners of leasehold land showed that in 1900, the APC, trading as the Trust and Agency Company of Australasia Limited, was the largest holder of leasehold land in the state. Significantly, banks fill the next four positions; a direct result of the 1891-3 depression and drought in the late 1890s when many runs were forfeited (Kowald, p. 52).

Despite the failure of these early attempts to establish smaller farms in the Maranoa, the Queensland government continued to promote closer settlement. Laverty argues that unlike the southern colonies 'Rural development was a good deal more important [in Queensland]... probably because the economy was at an earlier stage of development, because geography and decentralisation militated against urban concentration, and because the government promoted rural development to the neglect of urban activities.' (1970, p. 31)

In light of the drastic failure of previous attempts to establish closer settlement in Maranoa, legislators were cautious about extending closer settlement programmes enacted in less marginal areas of Queensland into the area. They were seduced, however, by a series of good seasons from 1902 to 1914 that allowed the Maranoa to show its Edenic face, when the rivers

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\(^5\) Noondoo, Cubbie, Gnoolooma, Doondi, Bullamon, Wagoo, Weeyan, Burgorah, Hollymount and Yerrabah (NSW) were purchased by the APC in 1888, Guinbarb in 1889 and Collyben and Burrandown in 1892.

\(^6\) The Australian Pastoral Company Limited was made up of many British investors who supported the Australian Pastoral industry. Their head office was situated in London although an office was also established in Melbourne.
filled with water and Mitchell grasses grew as high as a man. Their optimism was bolstered by high commodity prices. It was also during this period that technological developments, including the widespread adoption of tractors and mechanised transport, was allowing farmers to work much more efficiently as well making production in these semi-arid regions possible.

The year 1903 marked the end of the fifteen-year period from the commencement of the leases of Noondoo, Bullamon, Goolooina, Cubbie, Collyben, Doondi, Gulnarber, Wagoo, and Weeyan. The government was therefore entitled under the 1884 Land Act to resume half of the leased area (one quarter of the original) from each property (Kowald 1996, p. 95).

Under the auspices of the Queensland Closer Settlement Act of 1906 and the Queensland Land Act of 1910, a total of 320,000 hectares were repurchased from pastoral properties (Johnston 1982, p. 139). Most of this land, approximately two thirds, was in the Darling Downs. However, there were five major resumptions of land in the Maranoa in 1908, 1932 and 1952. Thus land was then re-parcelled into smaller lots and sold to family farmers under the closer settlement scheme. The incentive provided by these Closer Settlement Acts saw the number of agricultural holdings in Queensland increase steadily from 18,000 farms in 1904 to 26,700 holdings by the end of World War One (Queensland at a Glance 1905, pp. 2-3). However much of this growth was restricted to the state’s south eastern districts which lay to the east of Maranoa where rainfall was much more regular.

Following the Bullamon resumptions in 1908 (east and west of the Moonie River) and 1910 (the Weengallon settlement east of the Moonie), the Australian Pastoral Company gave up another 150 square miles (390 sq kms) in 1914 (Bullamon Lease east of the Moonie River). Much of the land was infested with prickly pear (Kowald, p. 97). Not surprisingly the majority of these farms were abandoned after a relatively short time. In June 1916, another 50 square miles (130 sq kms) west of the Moonie was resumed from the Australian Pastoral Company and another 79 square miles (205.4 sq kms) in 1921 (Kowald, p. 97).

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7 Drought returned to the area in 1915 for a period of a year. The next thirteen years were prosperous with good rainfall. Drought returned to the district between 1928-30 (Kowald, p. 115).
In 1917, a resumption of 133 square miles (345.8 sq kms), on Noondoo resulted in some fourteen selections. Each block was approximately 8,000 acres (32.4 sq kms), an area which proved to be too small to be viable (Queensland Government Gazette [QGG] 24 March 1917, p. 1025).

The governments of this period invested heavily in the extension of railways to service the new agricultural districts. Great advances were also made in agricultural production methods and technology (i.e. tractors and motorised transport). Nevertheless, the farms to become prosperous in the wake of the introduction of these technologies were almost exclusively in the southeast of the state, where good agricultural land was in close proximity to domestic markets and the export port of the capital, Brisbane (Lewis 1973, pp. 132, 188).

The trend for closer settlement in Queensland continued into the early 1920s, driven by the Labor premier Edward 'Ted' Theodore. Labor intended to solve the acknowledged difficulties of closer settlement in Queensland by fundamentally reorganising the agricultural sector (Theodore and Gillies 1922).

To achieve greater economic viability for closer settlement agriculture he proposed an agrarian-socialist agenda, based on cooperative producer organisations designed to ‘control the marketing and distribution of agricultural commodities in order to stabilise prices and enhance returns for farmers.’ (Cameron 2005, p. 06.8) One of the most important components of Theodore’s strategy was a comprehensive agricultural education programme to assist farmers in adopting the latest scientific methods to improve production methods, increase disease resistance in crops, and so to increase crop yields and productivity of livestock. This accelerated use of science and technology to increase production underpinned the economic viability of grain and fruit growing, sugar cultivation and dairying from the 1920s onwards (Cameron 1999, pp. 309-314; Johnston 1982, p. 179; Murphy 1990, pp. 329-331). Theodore’s ambitious rural development strategy was introduced in 1922. It was called the Queensland System.

Another strategy to increase the number of small farms in Queensland was through the soldier settlement projects of the 1920s. These settlements included pineapple farms in the Beerburrum area, fruit growing in the Stanthorpe district, grain growing around Cecil Plains, cattle grazing...
in Roma and the surrounding districts of Maranoa and sugar growing in the Tully district (Cameron 1999, pp. 303-308; Johnston 1982, p. 179; Murphy 1990, pp. 329-331).

In a seasonal environment like Maranoa, however the small, place-based farms proposed by closer and soldier settlement schemes were always going to have difficulty. They might be able to survive during good years, when the rain fell, but the drier years, of which there were always many, were a different story.

In addition to the radical unpredictability of the environment in the Maranoa, small family farmers needed to contend with unstable domestic and foreign markets, strong domestic competition, long distances to markets, lack of suitable agricultural land, difficulties in adapting various crops to Queensland conditions and the lack of appropriate skills of many selectors.

The period of success of the soldier settlement programmes was even shorter than for the previous closer settlement programmes. The Queensland and the Commonwealth governments had envisaged 20,000 soldier settlers and their families taking up farms in Queensland by early 1919. However most returned servicemen weren't interested in taking up holdings in the bush. Overall fewer than 2,600 holdings were taken up by 1921. The bubble finally burst in the wake of a widespread drought between 1925 and 1927. Kowald cites the distress of R. M. Tweedle in 1927, who owned a block of 9,446 acres (38.2 sq kms) resumed off Noonoo in 1917. He applied to the Lands Department to purchase a further portion of Noonoo if ever the property were further subdivided. He argued that he was unable to make a living on his existing allotment and requested a further 4,800 acres (19.4 sq kms) (Kowald, p. 97). The inadequate size of runs was not the only problem. Fluctuating agricultural commodity prices, inadequate agricultural training and skills, and falling demand also played a role in sealing the programme's fate (Fitzgerald 1984, p. 57; Fitzgerald and Thornton 1989, p. 101). By the time the Great Depression descended upon the Queensland economy in 1929, thousands of family farms, including many returned soldier settlements, had been abandoned and the future of closer settlement looked bleak once again (Cameron 1999, pp. 303-308).

A brief term in government, from 1929-31, by the Country Progressive National Party, saw an attempt to re-enthuse small farmers by offering them the incentive of freehold ownership. This will be a corresponding decrease of rain... to present cycle ...there will be a
conservative government clung to the belief that the small, independent farm was not only a desirable, but also a viable model for farming in Queensland. A return to Labor Government in 1931 saw the end of this incentive scheme, as Labor restricted freeholding in favour of long-term and perpetual leasehold tenures, and for the next twenty-five years the number of small farms continued to dwindle.

In 1957 the Country Party, led by Frank Nicklin, a pineapple farmer and former soldier settler who had endured five prior electoral defeats, won government once again (Evans 2007, p. 209). Nicklin quickly ushered in the long promised changes to rural lands policy to allow freeholding of new rural land and existing long term and perpetual leases, along with other farmer friendly measures (Cameron 2005, p. 06.15). The freehold policy won great support among farmers and rural workers who aspired to own a property. The freehold policy also brought Queensland into line with Victoria and New South Wales where policies had favoured freehold since the late nineteenth century (Cameron 2005, p. 06.15).

Hundreds of men responded with enthusiasm to the promise of independence and security offered by freehold tenure, taking up selections in the hope of building a better future for themselves and their families. There is little doubt that the Nicklin government’s policy changes together with the previous Labor government’s 1952 Land Act promoting closer settlement tapped into a rich vein of popular desire among those who dreamed of a new life of working their own land (Lack 1960, pp. 386-387).

As a result, the 1950s marked the greatest expansion in intensive grazing and broad-acre cultivation (e.g. grain growing) since World War Two in districts such as the Maranoa. Grain growing (i.e. wheat, sorghum and maize) was particularly popular among new farmers who individually worked several hundred or even thousands of hectares of land (Lack 1960, p. 352). This process coincided with great advances in agro-pastoral science, especially in horticulture and livestock breeding, the introduction of exotic and improved pastures, bulk fertilizers and chemical pest control and new production technologies (Tribe and Peel 1988). The structure and demands of domestic and foreign markets and the greater mechanisation of farming fundamentally altered the economics of primary production. Increased production was achieved through more efficient cultivation and farming methods, equipment processes, and

Conclusion

The fluctuating history of government driven closer settlement has left a legacy of small family farms in south western Maranoa that range in size from 1000 to 8000 hectares. The properties taking part in the field work reflect this; ranging in size from 2720 to 5340 ha (6721 to 13195 acres). These farms are the legacy of over a century and a half of deliberate policy based on ideological commitment to fostering a particular type of farming community. Belief that small-scale farms would be the site of virtuous family life; nurturing generations of hard-working, independent, sober and productive citizens, drove policy decisions by governments that failed to take account of the particular limits to the productive capacity of this region. Technology masked these limits for a time, and a supportive policy and economic environment allowed the farms to briefly flourish, however closer settlement failed to produce the agrarian paradise that many had hoped for. Even during a good season few properties were capable of handling more than one beast per 20 to 25 acres and one sheep to 3 to 10 acres (Graham, et al., 1991). The continuous proliferation of hooved animals has damaged shallow soils, whilst tree clearing and the introduction of foreign plant species have ensured that the destruction would continue (Taylor 1997). Only 23 percent of the land on these properties is considered good for grazing and grain production, while 52 percent is considered fair and 25 percent poor (Graham et al., 1991, p. 49). Many of the properties taking part in the field work were severely degraded and some of the land used for grazing was so eroded that the damage was considered irreversible (Queensland Department of Primary Industry 1994, 1998, 2001).

From the 1940s to the mid-1970s many of these small farms experienced a degree of prosperity. Through price support, production incentives, and other state interventions aimed at stimulating output, farmers continued to improve their productivity and ensure an ever-increasing volume of commodities. Such state involvement was consistent with ideologies of decentralisation, protection, subsidisation and state-assisted economic growth. Commitment to such ideals has been progressively replaced since the 1970s with a narrower focus on free
markets. This shift rendered small farmers more vulnerable to market forces and the climate. As government support for an ideologically driven cultivation of yeoman farmers in Australia was withdrawn in the last quarter of the twentieth century, the difficulty of pursuing this type of agricultural practice on marginal lands in Australia has become ever more evident. The decline in fortune of small farmers on marginal agricultural land in Australia since the 1970s will be traced in Chapter 8. Chapter 7 introduces the fieldwork.

The weather has been abnormally dry … No rain fell … a few isolated showers in Maranoa … unusually hot and dry weather
The weather has been abnormally dry ... No rain fell ... a few isolated showers in Maranoa ... unusually hot and dry weather.
There corn, there grapes spring more luxuriously; elsewhere young trees shoot up and grasses unbidden.' (Virgil, Book 1, para 43-55) This has always been sheep country and I
family to develop breeding techniques which result in better quality wool... It’s what I am good at (C Leigh 19...
love [the] challenge of breeding the perfect Poll Merino sheep… It has taken several generations of our 998, pers. comm., 21 October).  Bill commented, “I have sustained considerable financial losses but I don’t think I have lost out in any personal or emotional way.” We
don’t have the “luxury of leisure” said another farmer (S Thomas 1998, pers. comm.)
Introduction

The striving of the farmers in Maranoa, like that of the early colonists, is directed towards the attainment of a bountiful and compliant natural order as the setting and sustainment of a ‘good life.’ Like the colonists, the Maranoa farmers strive to order the landscape and to release its productive potential. They determine the species that will be cultivated, and the manner of their cultivation. Through breeding and selection, the genetic material of nature is ordered and aligned with human productive purposes. Like the colonists, the farmers of the Maranoa are sustained in their striving by visions of the good life and its pleasures that are to be realised through their participation in the bounty of nature.

In their pursuit of a good life they have been heirs to particular beliefs that have been passed down from one generation to the next. The most dominant of these beliefs have centred around their role as decision makers, planners and determiners of order, their dependence on technologies and in progress, their understanding of the land as property (bounded and allocated to the caring attention of a specific family), and the ethics of their engagement with the land as a physical challenge that delivers moral benefit.

The Good Life: the ‘internal rewards’ of farming

The particular pleasures and rewards that farmers experience, recollect or anticipate, through their engagement in the practice of farming, are a touch point of their conversation and of the shared experience of their community.

Wheat farmers like ‘Sarah’ and ‘Bill’ often talk about the visceral pleasure that they derive from the process of ploughing, sowing and harvesting crops. Their pleasure in seeing their crops grow is expressed in physical, as well as emotional, terms. ‘Craig’ Williams, a sheep, beef and wheat farmer, conveys his enjoyment of the “smell of frequently turned soil” by deeply inhaling. His greatest pleasure, however, is in the harvest. “You are not really living until you walk across
a field, hearing the combine harvesting the wheat, seeing the paddock change colour, and
feeling the air.” (C Williams 1999, pers. comm., 13 June)

Many who farm in Maranoa speak of the excitement they feel when they set out to prepare
a paddock for planting. Bill, in particular, talks about the exhilaration he feels when the first
stalks appear. This moment of first promise, and the smell of the field just before harvest, are
both experienced with intense pleasure.

An important requirement for growing wheat is that it rain prior to planting (in March). The
coming of rain at this time, therefore, is felt as intense pleasure and joy. As ‘Caroline’ Leigh
pointed out: “There is nothing like the sound of heavy rain” and the promise it holds of “grass
shooting away.” (C Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 16 October)

Such pleasures, although experienced by the individual, belong not to the individual but to the
practice (Reckwitz 2002, p. 250). David Carr (1986) writes that, ‘a large part of the experience
I have as an individual, and of actions in which I engage, is not merely mine alone.’ (p. 154)
Rather, it forms part of a larger narrative. The narrative is dynamic and continues to grow, with
individuals and groups acting as storytellers, characters and audiences for themselves and one
another (Carr, pp. 60–63). To understand a practice such as farming, we must first understand
the stories that farmers have inherited, that give a context to their self-understanding, their
striving and their experiences. In their day-to-day participation in their practice, farmers give
new sense to these stories through their re-enactment of roles and embodied experiences that
are understood as belonging to the practice. As MacIntyre argues ‘What I am... is in key part
what I inherit, a specific past that is present to some degree in my present.’ (2007, p. 221)

Many of the emotional experiences of Maranoa farmers, described above, had genesis in a pastoral
tradition in which eulogy to boundless harvest was married to images of a biblical Eden. This
tradition conveyed with sensuous potency the bounty of lands in which: ‘Here corn, there grapes
spring more luxuriously; elsewhere young trees shoot up and grasses unbidden.’ (Virgil, Book 1,

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1 All personal communication contained in this chapter refers to a series of face-to-face conversations which took place

...have got because nothing grows on its own... and the cattle don’t feed themselves...
Without necessarily having ever encountered the poetic works of this tradition, the farmers of Maranoa echo Virgilian language in expressing the joy they feel in farming.

The role of visual media in giving expression to these joys is apparent not only in the history of pastoral painting, but also in the way farmers have themselves mobilised visual technologies in the making of their personal farming narratives. Caroline described how she liked “watching everything grow” and taking pictures of the changing landscape. “I like keeping track of the way everything changes after rain.” (C. Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 16 October) For Caroline her pictures are a reference point. I can compare what the country used to be like in the dry with the country after the rain. “You wouldn’t know it… by looking at it now but sometimes this [place] can be like Eden.” (ibid) Her pleasure in her photography arises from its capacity to capture the changing moments in the narrative of growth.

What is inherited through engagement in a practice is a specific emotionality that arises within the body; a disposition for particular pleasures, and a responsiveness of the body to particular triggers that engender those pleasures. MacIntyre illustrates the process by which such embodied dispositions are acquired by citing the example of a child’s induction into the game of chess. Although initially the child may need to be bribed to engage with the practice (perhaps with candy), once s/he has developed a degree of proficiency s/he may:

…find in those goods specific to chess, in the achievement of a certain highly peculiar kind of analytical skill, strategic imagination and competitive intensity, a new set of reasons… for trying to excel in whatever ways the game of chess demands. (2007, p. 188)

MacIntyre calls the incommensurable satisfactions that accompany the enacting of expertise within a practice ‘internal goods.’ (pp. 188-9)

The pleasures of bringing the soil to the right degree of receptiveness for planting, and of realising its fruitful bounty in the harvest, are joys only available to, and generally only recognisable by, proficient participants in the practice of farming. They are goods internal to the practice. The central role played by internal goods in the lives of Maranoa farmers is evident throughout the fieldwork data. Craig, for example, has a deep emotional investment in breeding...
sheep. A fourth generation farmer in Maranoa, Craig has been raising sheep since he was eighteen years of age. He ‘loves’ it. Caroline, another sheep grazer, voiced the same sentiment:

This has always been sheep country and I love [the] challenge of breeding the perfect Poll Merino sheep… It has taken several generations of our family to develop breeding techniques which result in better quality wool… It’s what I am good at (C Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 21 October).

Her husband ‘John’ also talked about his satisfaction in “breeding stock” and “observing genetic improvement.” He said that he experienced a “great deal of satisfaction working with animals.” (J Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 21 October) The pride and satisfaction felt in the performance of expertise are internal rewards experienced by participants in a practice.

**Know-how (as a source of pleasure)**

The internal pleasures that are felt in expert performance of a practice point to the centrality of ‘know-how.’

‘Know-how’ is specific to each particular practice (Reckwitz 2002 p. 253). This form of knowledge is more complex than ‘knowing-that.’ ‘Knowing-that’ is knowledge that can be put into words. For example, you know that the sun will set tomorrow; you know that chickens lay eggs and that fleas are smaller than dogs. By contrast, ‘knowing-how’ is tacit, and cannot be fully communicated through language (Polanyi 1958; 1983). To successfully participate in a practice you need to know-how to do those things that are essential to the practice; how to bring about a particular outcome, how to navigate the world in some particular way. ‘Know-how’ is a skill arrived at through exposure to, and induction into, the practice. It is an essential part of expertise.

Maranoa farmers speak of farming as an inherited ability. “Farming gets in your blood” is a common refrain, as is the belief that good farmers come from good farming families. The conviction voiced by these farmers, that the capacity to farm is passed down from one generation to the next, is coherent with both MacIntyre’s and Reckwitz’s accounts of the transmission of a practice. Those that have been inducted into a practice act as ‘carriers’...
fix a car.” (A Evans 1999, pers. comm. 21 January)  “We work hard... we increase production, we save money, we don’t buy new farm as a business asset. It’s about my family. I never think about its dollar value. If
somebody came and offered me double what this land is worth, I wouldn’t sell it. I’m keeping

‘Here corn, there grapes spring more luxuriously; elsewhere young trees shoot up and grasses unbidden.’ (Virgil, Book 1, para 43-55) This has always been shee
it for my kids... I’m going to make something of it so that my kids can benefit.” (J Leigh 1998, pers.

country and I love [the] challenge of breeding the perfect Poll Merino sheep... It has taken several
(Träger) of patterns of bodily behaviour and of certain routinised ways of knowing-how that are historically and culturally specific (Reckwitz 2000 pp. 250-1; MacIntyre 2007, pp. 190, 194). Thus know-how does not belong just to the individual but to the practice itself (Reckwitz, pp. 251-2). The farmers, as bearers of their practice, embody and enact their know-how in the daily routines of farming. Their knowing is passed on to new practitioners through prolonged interaction within the performance of the practice.

Craig who spent some time at university studying husbandry told me he learned more about sheep from his father 'Jack,' who has been breeding sheep for almost 45 years, than he had from his formal education. Like the boys on the properties where I stayed, Craig would have accompanied his father about the property from an early age, spending long hours absorbing not only Jack's feel for the health and welfare of his sheep and the land they grazed, but also his gait, his language, and his modes of interaction with his dogs and farm equipment.
Bill commented, “I have sustained considerable financial losses but I don’t think I have lost out in any personal or
professional respects.” Excusing himself from the conversation, he said he needed to get back to the
farm (C Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 21 October). “We have to work hard;” he has to “work to improve
our situation” (pers. comm., 31 August).
This acquired disposition, gained through long-term participation in a practice attunes the body to particular kinds of engagement, particular disciplines and particular rewards. One farmer expressed, with intensity, the “good feeling” that farming gave him. His pleasure was in the fruitful responsiveness of his land, elicited through the performance of his know-how. For him farming was a part of his self (B Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 13 August). Another farmer said: “Some people see [farm] work as a job, but to me, it’s a way of life.” (J Williams 1999, pers. comm., 29 June)

Know-how, which instils a feeling for what is needed within the day-to-day running of the farm, is particularly mobilised in the farmer’s surveillance over the ordering of his property. This was the activity that, more than any other, occupied the time and energy of the farmers I stayed with. As we went about the property they were keen to communicate their feel for the state of their land and stock.

Bill spoke at length of the dangers of retaining high levels of stock on drought-stressed land. This can have negative effects on the property, accelerating the spread of weeds, creating bare tracks and eroding and compacting the soil. Cultivation land sets very hard if it is used for winter forage grazing during wet weather, explains Bill. Weeds are a significant problem and require constant surveillance. Bill says that control methods are limited, however notes that, “the best control method is good grazing management.” (B Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 7 August)

The state of the land and the stock is assessed by direct engagement with it. The height of the grass or the alertness of the animal signals the balance that has been achieved, or the need for restorative action. John explains that an average grass height that is less than 10 inches indicates the need to reduce stock numbers (J Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 22 October). The decision to sell stock is also influenced by soil moisture, the likelihood of rain, and market prices for animals.

Bill explained that optimum-planting depths could vary with moisture, soil type, seasonal conditions, climatic conditions, and the rate at which the seedbed dries. The general rule is to plant as shallow as possible provided the seed is placed in the moisture zone but deep enough so that the drying front will not reach the seedling roots before leaf emergence, says Bill (B Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 1 September).
Constant surveillance is necessary if you want to reduce the risk of disease taking hold. Detecting early signs of “crown rot” can prevent the loss of crops, says Bill who regularly surveys the wheat he has sown. “The disease is caused by fungus and is particularly prevalent in winter,” he says, and “it can survive from one season to the next on infected crop stubble.” (ibid) He explains that the disease is often the result of good conditions at the start of the season followed by unusually dry conditions during flowering and grain filling.

Such distillations of understanding acquired through a long and intimate engagement with their land were central to these farmers’ self-esteem and were shared with me generously. The sense that this knowledge closely defined their sense of self was potent. One woman said, “You can’t separate [my husband] from farming any more than you can separate him from his skin.” (V Williams 1999, pers. comm., 29 June) Another said: “A person on the outside can’t comprehend our feeling for the land. It’s not like a piece of equipment.” (A Evans 1999, pers. comm., 19 January)

The bodily disposition that gives rise to particular pleasures within the performance of a practice, also disposes practitioners to other felt states. The inherited disposition that the farmer is inducted into through childhood years on the farm, also includes a disposition for hard work, for endurance, self-reliance, and a valuing of independence and autonomy. My earlier chapters detailed the role played by these qualities in the early history of farming in the colony, and the fieldwork provided ample evidence of the extent to which farmers in the Maranoa continue to embody and value these qualities.
Hard work

For these farmers, hard work is felt to be virtuous and the right path to the realisation of rewards. Hard work is understood as the driver of an ordering of both world and soul.

Among the farmers I lived with, many offered positive responses when they talked about the virtues of hard work. Many believe hard work gives them an opportunity to battle on and build character. They therefore look positively on experience which otherwise could be debilitating. Bill commented, “I have sustained considerable financial losses but I don't think I have lost out in any personal or emotional way.” On the contrary, “I think hard work has made me stronger.” (B Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 12 August) Craig, too, stressed that hard work had made him a “better person… I think it has made me stronger … and I think the kids have benefited from that.” (C Williams 1999, pers. comm., 17 July) As for the settlers of the colony, hard work has a moral dimension. According to one participant, successful farming is about “working hard and doing what is right.” (M Mack 1999, pers. comm., 15 April) In the words of another, hard work “improves on what God has already given us.” (A Evans 1999, pers. comm., 27 January)

“You have to work hard if you want to achieve something,” said John (J Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 1 November). Caroline continued “There is no point in waiting for everything to come together just right. You have to make something from what've you got in front of you. You have to make it work for you.” (C Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 1 November) One farmer commented that, had he and his wife not continued to work hard, “we could have lost the farm.” (C Williams 1999, pers. comm., 17 June)

We don't have the “luxury of leisure” said another farmer (S Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 31 August). “We have to work hard;” we have to “work to improve on what we have got because nothing grows on its own… and the cattle don't feed themselves.” (V Williams 1999, pers. comm., 3 July) ‘Graham’ commented that “the fact that we have managed to stay afloat by working hard gives us a good feeling… we know that we are getting through it.” (G Lawson 1999, pers. comm., 16 August)
Self-reliance and independence are valued. "We need to be doing more for ourselves," said one farmer "if we want to survive." (G Mack 1999, pers. comm., 2 May) “The difficulties we face just make us work harder,” says Bill. “[Difficulty] forces us to be more independent and self-reliant.” (B Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 8 September)
somebody came and offered me double what this land is worth, I wouldn’t sell it. I’m keeping

...mm., 13 December) ‘Here corn, there grapes spring more luxuriously; elsewhere young trees shoot up and grasses unbidden.’ (Virgil, Book 1, para 43-55) This has always been shee
Autonomy

Bill’s comment points to the connection these farmers make between hard work and independence. For them, one of the most important benefits of farming is the autonomy they experience in their decision-making and in the daily planning of their activities. “When you are working for yourself, you can stop when you want to, you can work when you want to,” one farmer commented (J Williams 1999, pers. comm., 30 June). Another said: “If you work for somebody, you have to do what [he or she] says.” If you have a desk job, “you can’t just do whatever you feel like.” (G Mack 1999, pers. comm., 4 May) A farmer is “able to take an afternoon off to be with a child or go to a school meeting or church function” (V Williams 1999, pers. comm., 13 July). “You are free” to do what you want, when you want “with nobody to crack a whip over you” pointed out another farmer (A Evans 1999, pers. comm., 1 March). Other farmers talked about the importance of being independent from supervision, “the knowledge that I have my own freedom,” that “I am my own boss.” (G Lawson 1999, 9 September)

John felt that farming gave him “some degree of control” over his life (J Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 3 November). Craig concurred. He, too, valued the sense of freedom he obtained from “making everyday decisions” and having the ability to “buy [his own] stock and sow [his own] crops.” (C Williams 1999, pers. comm., 1 July) Another farmer said that he “loved the freedom in farming” despite the frustration and the “lack of understanding shown by his creditors and banking institutions.” (G Mack 1999, pers. comm., 1 May) For him, the idea of working “at a desk” was unfathomable because “you’re shut up.” (ibid) Farming, on the other hand “is different.” “No-one is ordering you around.” “You decide when you want to do something or when something needs to be done,” said another farmer who emphasized his sense of autonomy (B Thomas 1999, pers. comm., 4 September).

For these farmers, the independence they exercise in their daily decision-making and their capacity to determine their own priorities in dividing time between family, farm and community, is balanced against the unrelenting hard work, and the physical and emotional endurance demanded of them by their life on the farm. Self-determination and self-reliance go hand in hand, and hard work, in their minds, both enables and entitles them to freedom from the hierarchies that they associate with other walks of life.
Prudence

The importance of maintaining the farm’s autonomy is evident in the great emphasis that women place on prudent spending and “making do.” Many women explained that they expect farm work to involve an element of risk. However risks are negotiated strategically and often require self-deprivation and self-control. This is not necessarily a question of poverty, as was explained to me many times, but a question of good judgment. The money that is saved by being prudent, “improvising” and “living sparingly,” can be “spent on more livestock or farming equipment to develop and sustain the farm.” (S Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 2 September)

Household expenditure on a farm requires long-term planning very different from the budgeting of a steady flow of money from a regular salary. Most farm activities generate an income only once a year. A big cheque must be spent slowly so that the money covers months in which there is no income. In addition, farmers face the possibility of droughts and slumps, and must save to build a cushion for such years. To achieve this there is a great emphasis on self-discipline when it comes to personal and household expenditure. Said one farmer, the key to success is to “use what you need and put the rest back.” (M Mack 1999, pers. comm., 13 May)

Another said: “we live a simple life. I am not ashamed to say that I count every cent. And while I find it frustrating sometimes, I know that it is a matter of survival.” (S Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 11 August)

Some women explained that they do not mind being frugal because it is a quality that generates respect. For them, material wealth does not demand the same respect. Neither clothing nor furnishings are highly valued. The object of farm work is not social prestige, but rather self-sufficiency and economic independence. You can enjoy what the farm gives you, such as a beautiful sunset, rain falling, seeing crops grow, listening to the rustling of the rows of wheat as they sway in the breeze. These are the pleasures that count, not those of material comfort or prestige.

Ann and Don echoed these sentiments. For Ann, as for most farm women, fear of overspending is omnipresent. Don said: “We don’t have much of it [money] but we know how to make do with what we have got.” (D Evans 1999, pers. comm., 21 January) Ann is proud of the fact that she comes from a long line of “resourceful” women. “My grandmother taught me how
to be resourceful,” she said. “She had her own chickens and kept a small vegetable garden. She even taught me how to sew my own clothes and fix a car.” (A Evans 1999, pers. comm., 21 January) Another farmer said: “My wife is great, she really knows how to make something out of nothing, without her we wouldn’t have made it through the last drought.” (C Williams 1999, pers. comm., 16 July)

One woman explained, that if the family put their desire for a car ahead of the needs of the farm, they might end up bankrupt. “Farming has to come first or else you will suffer.” (L Lawson 1999, pers. comm., 24 August) Another woman said: “You don’t want to find yourself in a situation where you have spent your monthly income on something frivolous” (V Williams 1999, pers. comm., 22 July) For Caroline, being frugal is a necessity. “We work hard… we increase production, we save money, we don’t buy new clothes or waste money on food we can produce ourselves… we don’t waste anything.” (C Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 4 November)

**Family**

The independence valued by most farmers in Maranoa is only made possible by the interdependence of members of the family unit. The family unit is an active collaborator in realising the goals of farming. These goals are coherent with nineteenth century temperance ideals located in the family of the selector that sought to reform behaviour damaging to family life; notably drinking, smoking, gambling and sexual indulgence.

The determination of successive colonial governments to create a class of yeoman family farmers in Australia was fuelled by their conviction that farming communities would provide the ideal setting for the cultivation of virtuous families. It was also believed that small farms worked by a nuclear family would cultivate virtues of self-regulation, hard work, a sober, frugal and fruitful life.

The farmers in the Maranoa are the product of this determination and the heirs to these ideals. For them it is only possible to achieve the internal goods that belong to farming through the cooperation and participation of every member of the family. They are tied to the land and to
their family, but rejoice in their freedom from entanglement in the institutional hierarchies that they associate with urban life.

Many farming women express appreciation that farming has allowed them to work together as a family in a way which they would never be able to do if they lived in the city and their husbands had a city job. “I like the way he’s around all day [and] not off somewhere else,” said one woman. “I look around and think I am so lucky.” (V Williams 1999, pers. comm., 8 July) “John and I have raised our kids, together” said Caroline (C Leigh 1999, pers. comm., 16 December). Many women agreed that their husbands helped, and exhibited gentleness, with their children. “Don loves taking the boys out to work with him. They can be gone for hours and I know that he is taking good care of them… they love working with him” said Ann (A Evans 1999, pers. comm., 4 March). Some women enjoy the practice of driving around the farm with their husbands in the evening, looking at the crops and checking livestock. “It’s very relaxing and makes you feel the family is together”, said one woman (S Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 18 July).

If men accept unrelenting work as the price they pay for autonomy, then women accept a gendered division of labour and power on the same basis.

The distinction between men and women on the farm is both ideological and practical. Although the work of the farm is divided strictly on gender lines, with power and authority remaining with the male, women regard themselves as equal and valued participants in the household and in the wider farm. The relationship between the farm and the family is so intimate that farm and family seem joined.

Despite the gendered nature of roles in farm life, women do not identify themselves as oppressed, and exhibit a general hostility towards feminism, which they perceive as urban ‘self-indulgence.’ Farm women discard their individual interests in favour of the family unit or the larger project which they regard as vital to social well-being (Zandpour et al. 1996).

The commitment that women make to the wellbeing of their family is shared equally by their husbands. In Maranoa the primary defining relationship is between the family and the land. What matters to most farmers is primarily “how I am doing it for my family.” This relationship on what we have got because nothing grows on its own… and the cattle don’t feed
themselves." (V Williams 1999, pers. comm., 3 July)  “We don't have much of it [money] but we know how to make do with what we have got.” (D Evans 1999, pers. comm., 21 January)  “She had
her own chickens and kept a small vegetable garden. She even taught me how to sew my own clothes or waste money on food we can produce ourselves... we don’t waste anything.” (C. Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 4 November)
"We work hard... we increase production, we save money, we don't see the farm as a business asset. It's about my family. I never think about its dollar value. It's more about the privilege of owning a farm."

– A. Evans, pers. comm., 21 January 1999

Family farmers and the embodiment of the yeoman ideal in the Maranoa
is made stronger through temporal generational succession. John, a 52-year old wool and beef producer, for example, told me:

I don’t ever see the farm as a business asset. It’s about my family. I never think about its dollar value. If somebody came and offered me double what this land is worth, I wouldn’t sell it. I’m keeping it for my kids… I’m going to make something of it so that my kids can benefit.” (J Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 13 December)

Another farmer, also in his fifties, said “everything I do is on account of my kids.” (B Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 5 July) “I want to preserve what I have for future generations” said another farmer (G Lawson 1999, pers. comm., 14 September). “I am working so my kids can inherit the farm and their kids after that” said another (G Mack 1999, pers. comm., 10 May).

Craig was also keen to explain:

My father bought this land… my father and mother slaved on it… we [my family] grew up here… I owe all this land to my father… My wife and I work on the farm… we have sacrificed everything… [so that] my children can inherit this [property]… [It’s] where we belong… (C Williams 1999, pers. comm., 11 July)

Bill, a third generation farmer producing wheat and wool, who sees himself as a custodian of the land, said “I don’t do it for the money, I do it for my family.” (B Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 28 August) He told me that his life’s dream was to be a successful farmer. A successful farmer provides for his family. Bill takes a long-term view of the difficulties he is forced to endure and points to his family’s accumulation of equity and future income. “I want my children to have something to look forward to” he said (ibid).

For most farmers the main aim is to pass on the farm genealogically, usually from father to son. This strategy privileges the nuclear family, as the nature of the family that is associated with the farm. In this sense the farm is understood to pass from nuclear family to nuclear family.
Yet what makes the farm a family farm is more than just a legal relation between family and
farm. Instead it is the family’s connection to the land, the sense of place imbibed through their
everyday farming activities. Love of their land, in all its particularity, binds each family to the
land as a unit not just as an individual but also as a family (generations with a past and future).

If a disposition for hard work is a part of the heritage of the farmer and a focus on prudence,
a frugal lifestyle, and a gendered division of roles is equally accepted by both women and men
on the farm, the discipline imposed on them is willingly accepted in return for the rewards that
flow to them. Their valuing of family, their sense of independence, and their love of their land
are equally a part of the heritage of the farmer.

Projects

The kind of pleasure that is experienced through know-how and the emotional dispositions
particular to a practice are not the only kind of pleasures attendant upon farming. Other pleasures arise from participation in wider cultural dispositions, delivered by the
Enlightenment project in which contemporary farming is embedded.

From the beginning, the activities of farming in the colony were characterised by a particular
mode of being in the world. The planning, projecting and ordering of the colonists belongs
to the Enlightenment disposition of which the colonists were ’bearers’ (MacIntyre 2007, p.
222). Bauman has characterised this disposition, or mode of being in the world, as that of
’the gardener.’ Developing his metaphor, Bauman writes that ’the gardener assumes that there
would be no order in the world at all (or at least in the small part of that world entrusted to his
wardenship) were it not for his constant attention and effort… He first works out the desirable
arrangement in his head, and then sees to it that this image is engraved upon the plot.’ (Bauman
2007, p. 99). He encourages the growth of the right types of plants and uproots and destroys
other plants, now renamed ’weeds,’ whose uninvited and unwanted presence, unwanted because
uninvited, can’t be squared with the overall harmony of the design (Bauman 2007, p. 99).
The planning and projecting of strategies of intervention and engagement in the landscape is
dominant in the farmer’s self-understanding of his or her relationship with the land.
On each of the farms in Maranoa a balance is sought between different kinds of production and between different strategies of farming. Important decisions are made about how much of the farmland will be given over to sustainment of the farm, and how much to production for commerce. Typical of the Maranoa farmer’s strategic projection of an order onto the landscape is their planning for and balance between stock, food for stock and commercial crops.

Historically many of the farmers in the area have thought that the best way to improve feed supplies was to clear scrub and trees from the land. Extensive clearing became common after World War Two. The advent of heavy machinery made it possible to clear large tracts at low cost. Today, many farmers continue to believe that wholesale clearing is the best way to increase the stock carrying capacity of the land, and so to raise production levels.

Don, a fourth generation farmer who now manages a property in the Paroo Shire with his wife Ann and their three children, had cleared more than 17,296 acres (or 7,000 ha) of belah, box, mulga and cypress pine country over the 18 months prior to the study. He said that controlling woody weed and sucker regrowth would take another fifteen years. He believes that his clearing of the land will increase his stock carrying capacity from 1 beast per 40 acres (or 16.19 ha) to 1 beast per 8 acres (2.4ha). His objective is to increase stock on the property from 1000 to 5000 head of cattle in the next five years.

‘George’ and his wife ‘Martha’ own a sheep, beef and wheat property. Approximately 25 per cent of their property is dedicated to cropping (with a rotation between wheat and forage crops) while 60 per cent is dedicated to sheep and 15 per cent to cattle. Over the past ten years they have continued to clear their property to increase their stocking capacity. George emphasised the pride he felt in “develop[ing] the property from a scrub block.” “My family started this place… my family were here from the very beginning… [and] my family are responsible for everything that you see here today.” (G Mack 1999, pers. comm., 10 April) Significantly clearing the land gave George and Martha immense pleasure. This pleasure was associated with their sense of progress. A cleared block gave them the impression that they had generated a tabula rasa, a place free of unplanted influences and open to their projects. The capacity of technology (in partnership with the farmer) to bend nature to human purposes, invokes the exhilaration associated with the technological sublime.
good at (C Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 21 October). Bill commented, “I have sustained considerable financial losses but I don’t think I have lost out in any personal or
George's engagement with his land depends heavily on the input of chemicals, and the application of large-scale machinery to bring the land under complete domination. At the time of my stay the project that occupied him was one of large-scale clearing. His satisfaction in removing all traces of natural landscape, and giving over the land to more technological forms of production, was intense.

George and Martha's property is one of the westernmost farms I stayed on, and one of the most marginal enterprises in the study. Their family were locked into a battle for survival, pressing the land to yield every last ounce of productive capacity. The empowerment that technologies lent them, in their pursuit of this project of commanding productive compliance from their land, was experienced as a kind of joy. The pleasure felt in the power to command is a very different kind of pleasure to that which is attendant upon the performance of expertise. It belongs not to the particularity of farming as a practice, but to the Enlightenment project of ordering.

On the less marginal farms I stayed at, a different but equally inherited pleasure informed the plans and projects that were given priority. These farms were characterised by a mixture of cropping and grazing. The policy of wholesale clearing was avoided, as it was believed to increase erosion and destroy all kinds of drought resistant native sources of feed, making properties far less drought-resistant.

On one such farm, Craig and his father Jack maintain their dry perennial grasses by ensuring that they do not become overgrazed. They argue that these dry perennials will be immensely useful during a drought. They are very proud of their ability to maintain their land in good condition. Sarah and Bill Thomas have taken a similar approach, adopting techniques, which they hope, will make their wool, beef and wheat property more drought resistant. Their goal is to manage the grazing land for optimal and sustainable production, without degrading its natural resources.

To achieve this, Bill started growing what is commonly called 'old-man' saltbush. Saltbush is a drought-avoiding (quickly responsive) and drought-resisting (deep-rooted) plant that can

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The decision to grow saltbush actually came from their neighbours who had been successfully growing saltbush for over ten years.
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support sheep or cattle in drought. "It’s a very tough plant," says Bill (B Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 18 July). Another attraction of saltbush is that the kangaroos don’t eat it. It was native to the Maranoa region until rabbits grazed it out in the 1902 drought. The Thomas’s have sown saltbush in twenty-hectare blocks. Saltbush paddocks are intensively grazed for six to ten days and then rested for six to nine months to rejuvenate. Although, saltbush “doesn’t provide sheep with all the carbohydrates they need” says Bill, it does provide them with some nutrition (enough to get them through a drought) as well as provide shade (ibid). Bill even suggests that some sheep, especially those from around the Cunnamulla region in far western Queensland, like eating saltbush. “When they smell it”, he says, “they come running.” (ibid) Bill suggests that once saltbush is established, this kind of management strategy should enable him to earn a return similar to cropping. He emphasizes the joy associated with growing feed for their stock. There is a sense of accomplishment associated with initiating a new practice, and having the risk taken pay off.

Sarah and Bill’s pleasure in successfully establishing saltbush as a source of food for their sheep gains intensity from their conviction that in giving over a part of the productive activity of their property to a native crop, they are working in harmony with the natural environment. Their feel for the land echoes the appreciation felt by the early explorers for the Edenic potential of the Maranoa.

Caroline and John also grow saltbush and have been doing so for more than a decade. They run the farm in collaboration with Peter, Caroline’s 23 year-old son from her first marriage. In order to better manage their vulnerability to drought they have planted thousands of salt bushes. For them, growing feed for stock is very much a science. They are acutely aware of the difficulties and costs of feeding their animals during drought. “In the past we have had to rely on strategies such as supplementary feeding, agistment or destocking to feed stock in a drought.” (C Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 9 October) Supplementary feeding and agistment can be costly so they have tried to reduce costs by growing their own feed.

Saltbush is planted in much the same way as any other crop. Caroline, John and Peter prepare the ground by leaving it fallow for about twelve months beforehand. As for a crop, there must be enough moisture in the ground “or it will always struggle” says John (J Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 3 July) “We don’t have much of it [money] but we know how to make do with what we have got.” (D Evans 1999, pers. comm., 3 July) “She had themselves.” (V Williams 1999, pers. comm., 3 July)
comm., 9 October). They sow the saltbush using a tree-planter towed behind a tractor. The saltbush is rotationally grazed and seems to be surviving “even when the land gets very dry,” says Caroline (C Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 9 October). Their plan is to use the saltbush not only to maintain stock throughout periods of drought, but also to break up some of the hard clay country for better water filtration. Caroline adds that saltbush is a “hardy plant” that can be used “to fatten lambs or as a supplement for ewes in the dry.” (ibid)

Caroline and John both derive a great deal of satisfaction and pride from their ability to keep their stock nourished through difficult times. They have also tried to increase their property’s resistance to drought by planting mulga trees (a substitute feed used during drought) and by sinking bores.

In contrast to George and Martha, whose ordering of the land is dominated by an ideal of productive efficiency commanded through the exercise of technological power, John and Caroline and Sarah and Bill are performing a different kind of ordering. They see the risk they take in giving over a part of their land to a more natural, less immediately productive, order, as balanced by the promise of a long term and resilient partnership between themselves and their land. They have moderated the command of the technological in their associations with their land. This may be partly because they are less vulnerable than George and Martha. Their land is not as marginal and so the imperative for immediate return is not so desperately pressing.

The Enlightenment disposition to project order, to make plans and take risks is variously embodied by the different farmers, but all of them register the pleasure they have experienced in the carrying out of their projects. Whether the pleasure is given in harnessing the power of technology or by negotiating a balance, it arises equally out of the performance of an inherited disposition for the production of order.
“We work hard... we increase production, we save money, we don't see the farm as a business asset. It's about my family. I never think about its dollar value. If...” (A Evans 1999, pers. comm., 21 January)
somebody came and offered me double what this land is worth, I wouldn’t sell it. I’m keeping

'Here corn, there grapes spring more luxuriously; elsewhere young trees shoot up and grasses unbidden.' (Virgil, Book 1, para 43-55)  
This has always been she
Order

Order establishes control, regulates and makes predictable. A political ordering of relations within society and an ethical ordering of individual desires, accompany the physical ordering of the landscape. For the first colonists in New South Wales the ordering of nature began with the establishment of boundaries. The boundary continues to be a crucial technology that enables and defines work on the farm in Maranoa. Boundaries differentiate one thing from another, and bring relations to view. Order is achieved when the proper relationships are in place; when difference has been recognised and articulated, and each participant in the order has been given its due.

Ordering technologies

For the farmers in the Maranoa the establishment and maintenance of boundaries is a primary concern. Boundaries operate not only in the landscape of the farm, but also in defining political relations within the farming family. Boundaries on the farm distinguish both functional parts, (e.g. pasture from crop, active from fallow, house and garden from productive landscape), and zones of responsibility – the man's territory from the women's territory. Each of these zones is considered a necessary part of the whole.

The boundaries imposed on the land by Maranoa farmers are orthogonal. They are determined by the technologies of production. For the men, the establishment and maintenance of physical boundaries is central to their performance of an ordering of the landscape.

The starting point for their ordering is not the tabula rasa envisaged by George and Martha. Fences are usually inherited. Their location has been determined mainly by the availability of water. Bores are expensive and therefore dam sites are important; ideally stock should not have to walk further than a couple of kilometres to water. Fence lines are also determined by the suitability of the land for different types of production. Areas of grassland are fenced, as well as those given over to crops, so that animals can move onto grass during wet periods.
generations of our family to develop breeding techniques which result in better quality wool... It’s what I am motional way.” We don’t have the “luxury of leisure” said another farmer (S Thomas 1998,
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Bill commented, "I have sustained considerable financial losses, but I don't think I have lost out in any personal or op. comm., 31 August. 'We have to work hard; we have to work to improve"
on what we have got because nothing grows on its own... and the cattle don’t feed
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“...themselves.” (V Williams 1999, pers. comm., 3 July)

“We don’t have much of it (money) but we know how to make do with what we have got.” (D Evans 1999, pers. comm., 21 January)

“She had...”

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her own chickens and kept a small vegetable garden. She even taught me how to sew my own clothes or waste money on food we can produce ourselves... we don't waste anything. " (C Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 4 November) I don't ever s
“We work hard... we increase production, we save money, we don’t see the farm as a business asset. It’s about my family. I never think about its dollar value. If...”

(A Evans 1999, pers. comm., 21 January)
Somebody came and offered me double what this land is worth, I wouldn’t sell it. I’m keeping it.

This has always been she...
it for my kids... I’m going to make something of it so that my kids can benefit.” (J Leigh 1998, pers. comm.)

Dry country and I love [the] challenge of breeding the perfect Poll Merino sheep... It has taken several...
generations of our family to develop breeding techniques which result in better quality wool... It's what I am motivational way. “We don’t have the “luxury of leisure” said another farmer (S Thomas 1998,
good at (C Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 21 October). Bill commented, “I have sustained considerable financial losses but I don’t think I have lost out in any personal or...”

“We have to work hard;” we have to “work to improve...”
Although such considerations already etch out certain dispositions of the land, the farmer may project new possibilities, or respond to new concerns. Thus revisions, or new performances of the ordering, are ongoing.

John and Caroline are in the process of fencing 20 kilometres of creek frontage. John says this will lead to major improvements in water quality. He explained that the fenced areas along the creek will be grazed occasionally in a very controlled way. This will enable trees to regenerate, and will reduce erosion. Craig has also fenced off his grassed waterways. The fenced area can be grazed for two to four weeks per year and this feed source has proved a useful supplement when good quality feed for stock is needed.

For many of the farmers decisions about how to manage their cattle have influenced their ongoing decision-making concerning the ordering of the property.

For Don and Ann such decisions had become pressing. Not only were the cattle wearing tracks in the land by long walks to water, they were grazing the large paddocks very unevenly. “In one part of the country, the cattle just flatten everything, and in another the grass is up to your knees,” said Don (D Evans 1999, pers. comm., 16 January). To overcome this problem they are putting up fences to help even out the grazing. Fences also mean they can “lock some paddocks up and let the ground cover grow back.” (ibid)

Similarly Graham and ‘Lisa’ have had to make decisions about where their cattle will be grazing, restricting them to land that is not suitable for cropping. Graham explains how “over stocking” can be completely disastrous for the soil. “I try not to keep stock numbers tight” and “only keep what I can feed.” (G Lawson 1999, pers. comm., 18 September) But “stock numbers could grow if I increased the number of fences on our property.” (ibid)

According to Bill, many pastures in the Maranoa are in poor condition due to “over stocking,” which has led to bare areas and soil erosion (B Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 9 July). To maintain the productiveness of the soil, Bill and Sarah have introduced rotational grazing and encouraged the development of deep root systems, which use soil moisture more effectively. The
biggest challenge has been to move to zero-till cropping, which improves moisture use. The rule of thumb is “eat a third, trample a third, leave a third” says Bill (ibid).

Don and Ann have also been “put[ting] in more watering points”, so the cattle “don’t have to walk so far for a drink.” Ann explained how when the cattle aren’t walking so far “they stay in better condition,” and by managing the grazing better we “cut down on erosion. . . It works environmentally and economically.” (A Evans 1999, pers. comm., 2 February)

“Water shortage is a part of life here,” explained Don (D Evans 1999, pers. comm., 2 February). Bores enable farmers to access much needed water. “Drilling for water involves substantial financial outlay,” says Don (ibid). Ann described how they had had to hire a private hydrogeological consultant who provided them with a ground water assessment, estimates for maximum depth, expected water quality and quantity rates. If the drilling is successful the bore will provide much needed water for stock.
her own chickens and kept a small vegetable garden. She even taught me how to sew my own clothes—"we don't waste anything!" (C. Leigh, 1998, pers. comm., 4 November).
“We work hard... we increase production, we save money, we don’t see the farm as a business asset. It’s about my family. I never think about its dollar value. If..." (A Evans 1999, pers. comm., 21 January)
Provision of stock water is an important management consideration for farmers in Maranoa. Since most properties depend on surface water stored in dams, which may fill only once in every four years, dams are required in each paddock if little use is made of piping and troughs. However good quality water from a bore is a real asset to any property and can provide much needed additional water during a drought.

Water distribution systems such as dams and bores put in place a human ordering that works all the time. This technology performs an ordering that has been decided upon.

Similarly windbreaks are often mobilised by farmers with a significant investment in crops. Windbreaks can have many functions, explained John. They can protect crops, increase crop yields and reduce crop water use. They can also filter wind-blown soil particles from the air and in summer, they can reduce water evaporation.

Loss of fine topsoil from wind erosion and incorporation of shallow layers of surface soil with heavier clay sub-soil visibly decreases soil fertility. These degraded soils rapidly form a surface seal during rain and this increases surface run-off. Ensuring that each part of the order retains its own balance, the water and nutrients it needs, is an essential part of maintenance. Bill has introduced contours and tramlines across his paddocks so that when it rains the water can run more evenly. He says "erosion is a big issue here" (B Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 18 September). “You can't replace the soil,” so minimising soil erosion is a “number one priority… I don't want to lose it [soil].” (ibid)

A reconsideration of the ordering of the property becomes necessary if the existing order begins to fail. To manage soil erosion in the future Graham plans to introduce “grazing on smaller paddocks, on a rotational basis.” (G Lawson 1999, pers. comm., 27 September) Bill and Sarah are also responding to the challenging times they face. Rainfall has been at serious drought levels for almost half a decade. While the property has been profitable in good years (with operating costs at around half the annual income) poor years mean an increase in debt for the family (operating costs being greater than the farm income). The property is currently 55 per cent grazing and 40 per cent farming land.

“Somebody came and offered me double what this land is worth, I wouldn’t sell it. I’m keeping it,” (ibid, 13 December)  ‘Here corn, there grapes spring more luxuriously; elsewhere young trees shoot up and grasses unbidden.’ (Virgil, Book 1, para 43-55) This has always been she...
Bill’s aim is to revise the balance between stock and cropping to give a more reliable income each year. They would like to run more stock and grow fewer crops as they believe this would improve returns in the long term. They are influenced by an increasingly felt imperative to protect the farm’s natural resources, to ensure ongoing resilience to drought. Bill and Sarah see this as the best path to maintaining optimum levels of sustainable production.

Social order

The maintenance and surveillance of gender relations is also vital to the farm’s operations. Social order offers a way of organising the labour associated with running the farm into masculine and feminine domains. For instance, the tasks essential to maintaining and running the farm have been traditionally assigned to men. Women are usually allocated different zones of responsibility, defined by technologies of cleanliness and the maintenance of support systems that extend beyond the farm. Men and women tend to different thresholds. The most obvious and important demarcation of responsibilities is the distinction between the house and the working land of the farm. The labour inside the garden fence belongs to the house and, is the responsibility of the women. The labour outside the fence, belongs to the workings of the farm itself, and is the responsibility of the men.

Women on the farm actively work to maintain this distinction. The ordering of the house, the banishment of ‘dirt,’ or ‘nature displaced,’ from its confines, and the establishment of a space of civility, in distinction to the space of production, is central to their sense of self. Much of the day can be spent tidying and cleaning up. Kitchens, especially, are areas that are kept very clean. Food in the kitchen is always carefully covered and wrapped and plastic mats and containers are a common feature in every household. Furniture and tables, too, are often covered with plastic to protect them from dirt and keep them meticulously clean. Linoleum floors that can be mopped clean are a favoured covering for the floor.

The predominance of 1970s décor particularly the wood panelled walls, the laminate tables and the vinyl surfaces first introduced in the 1950s and 60s indicate cultural moves which value the ability to wipe surfaces clean (Douglas 1978; Shove 2003).
generations of our family to develop breeding techniques which result in better quality wool... It's what I am motivational way. “We don’t have the luxury of leisure” said another farmer (S. Thomas, 1998).
good at (C Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 21 October). Bill commented, “I have sustained considerable financial losses but I don’t think I have lost out in any personal or
Working clothes and shoes are perceived as dirty and a source of contamination, so rituals associated with taking shoes off, changing work clothes and washing hands are all carefully observed by both men and women.

Another essential technology for maintaining the distinction between the house and the farm is the liminal space of the verandah. It is here that people coming from the farm can take off their shoes, dirty clothes and hats. Some verandahs also have a tap or a shower where the dirt of the farm can be washed off. Verandahs are also places where items can be stored which are necessary for the everyday running of the household, but which pose a contamination threat. Freezers for storing meat are almost always located on the verandah as meat is associated with contamination. Even though storage techniques have improved considerably since the old cold-houses or meat sheds have been replaced with freezers, the association between meat and flies and smell still remains. Locating the pantry on the verandah ensures that any animals or rodents that might be foraging for food are away from the kitchen.

Similarly animals are considered dirty – and are seen as belonging to the farm and not the house. Dogs are usually kept only for working, and live in a shed some distance from the house. Cats are seen as carriers of bacteria and are usually relegated to the back of the house or on the porch. On several occasions cats were allowed to venture into the kitchen but never in to the main areas of the house. Certain rooms were usually kept shut and only used for special visitors.

Gardens and lawns around the house are also important symbolic spaces. They are a sign of a respectable distinction between the house and the farm. They represent a healthy and well-managed farm. Some women are avid gardeners and the yard can boast an assortment of flowers after the rain.

Women actively police the boundaries between masculine and feminine spheres. Most importantly, women often assume responsibility for administering the farms finances. By disburdening men of this arduous responsibility, women liberate men to pursue their productive role on the farm.

on what we have got because nothing grows on its own... and the cattle don’t feed
In most cases farm women take responsibility for much of the bookwork which includes the paying of bills and keeping of farm records. Many women are also responsible for the financial management of the farm, including negotiating loans, negotiating the purchase of machinery and equipment, and planning capital projects. This was certainly the case with Bill and Sarah. Sarah had arranged bank loans to refinance farm debts and had supplemented the family’s income with off-farm work. This responsibility for financial management of the property is seen as an important, but not central, aspect of farm life. Like other roles assumed by women on the farm, this work can be seen as boundary riding, or a policing of relations with forces outside the farm itself. The priority given to the man, and his productive activity on the farm, remains unquestioned. Sarah maintains that Bill is “the breadwinner” and emphasises that he “does the primary work that supports the household.” (S Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 18 July)

Conclusion

The farmers of the Maranoa who took part in my study, are the heirs to a tradition established within Australia by the colonists and shaped by the early history of farming in the first century of settlement. As was made evident in Chapter 6, farming in the Maranoa has always been a marginal activity, with many farmers on ill-considered land settlement schemes succumbing to drought. The episodic reappearance of the Edenic face of the Maranoa has kept hope alive, and farming in place, in these marginal lands. The profound intensification of technoligised farming in the course of the twentieth century, although allowing increased production, has rendered this fragile landscape ever more vulnerable.

As my next chapter will show, shifting economic policy in the second half of the twentieth century has progressively removed the social support that valued the activity of the farmers and guaranteed a safety net. Despite this, the farmers I spoke to voiced their deep love of farming.

“Farming is my greatest love – it’s the best way of life”, said one farmer (G Mack 1999, pers. comm., 10 May). “When I die, I will know I spent my life doing exactly what I want to do – exactly what I love.” (B Thomas 2000, pers. comm., 2 June) For John “nothing beats a sunset at the end of the day and the overriding knowledge that this is where we wanted to be long term… [This] is always at the front of my mind.” (J Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 16 November)
her own chickens and kept a small vegetable garden. She even taught me how to sew my own clothes. I don’t buy new clothes or waste money on food we can produce ourselves... we don’t waste anything.” (C. Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 4 November)
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Chapter 7

"We work hard... we increase production, we save money, we don't see the farm as a business asset. It's about my family. I never think about its dollar value. If
Globalisation and the fate of the marginal family farm
Stories of farmers receiving less for their calves than the cost of taking them to market, of others whose sole payments for bulldozing their orchards than from sale of the fruit, of economic problems in the canning industry...
He began at a time when it was daily announced that old fashioned farming was a thing of the past. Business maxims and business practice were to be the rule of the future. Farming was not to be farming; it was to be emphatically ‘business,’ the same as iron, coal, or cotton. Thus managed, with steam as the motive power, a fortune might be made out of the land, in the same way as out of colliery or a mine (Jefferies 1937 [1880], p. 133).

Introduction

The last chapter looked at the shared disposition, possessed by family farmers in Maranoa, for enduring hardship and for taking pride in hard work, self-reliance, autonomy and prudence. Possession of these qualities is essential to their self-definition as farmers, as is their determined independence and the strength of their ties to family and place. These farmers are heirs to a narrative of virtuous engagement with the land, shaped by the early history of agriculture in Australia in the first century of European settlement. Their history is embedded in a tradition of struggle. Their disposition to endure a frugal and physically demanding life, and to take pride in such endurance, is not only essential to their sense of self, but also necessary to their survival. Their self-understanding as farmers also draws upon wider cultural resources, including a disposition for planning, projecting and ordering, delivered by the Enlightenment project.

Despite the difficulties inherent in farming marginal lands, hope has been kept alive in the Maranoa by the episodic reappearance of the Edenic face of this landscape. This hope has been supported by a growing dependence on technology. Technologically enabled ‘progress’ has cultivated faith ‘in the future as a better world.’ (Sturken and Thomas 2004, p. 6)

If the qualities of family farmers, identified through the fieldwork and presented in the previous chapter, are qualities that were nurtured through the first century of colonial engagement with the land in Australia, the second century of farming in Australia not only preserved these qualities but variously overlaid and undermined them through the growing dominance of technology. This chapter focuses on the escalation of technological systems of production and consumption throughout the twentieth century, and the impact of this escalation on family farmers. The following, and final, chapter returns to the fieldwork to illustrate the legacy to the farmers of the Maranoa, of a century of participation in technologized agricultural production and consumption systems.
Narratives of Technology and Prosperity

The expectation that technology can deliver a more prosperous and better life has been central to modern farming. As demonstrated in the first half of this thesis, technologies have long structured farming narratives. In America as Second Creation: Technology and Narratives of New Beginnings, historian David Nye argues that nearly all Euro-American ‘foundational narratives’ of nineteenth century frontier settlement ‘used powerful technologies’ for the assimilation of nature, order, and good society (2003, p. 2). He found that these foundation stories transformed ‘an uninhabited, unknown, abstract space into a technologically defined place’ that valorised particular technologies and made transformation possible (2003, p. 4). The stories narrate the transformation of waste-land into fertile farmland by harnessing new technologies to the human project of reshaping and ordering the physical world (2003, pp. 4–6). Foundation narratives explained and validated expansion, emphasizing how particular tools and machines enabled settlers to inhabit new places.

At the centre of this valorisation of technology is a conviction that technologies will benefit all of society. In the twentieth century, for example, it was usually taken for granted that the only reliable source of improvement is ‘from new machines, techniques and chemicals.’ (Winner 1986, p. 5) The emergence of environmental and social problems clearly attributable to technological innovation, has rarely diminished this faith in technology-based progress.

Representations of technology in the rural press

In the twentieth century, representations of the technological sublime fuelled farming settlement, reworking the landscape and rendering it orderly. Whereas the natural sublime is experienced when human reason is confronted by the limitless power and majesty of nature, which defies the grasp of imagination, in the technological sublime the overwhelming power that is displayed is human rather than natural. The awe induced by seeing an immense technological object becomes a celebration of the power of human instrumentality (Nye 1983, pp. 104–6). In farming, technologies permitted new production techniques on a hitherto inconceivable scale. Visions of an idyllic future informed the striving of farmers, and seemed tantalisingly attainable, given just a little more work.
Representations of technology were prominent in the rural press during the first half of the twentieth century. They ranged from advertisements for labour-saving machines to editorials on new technologies for improvement of farm techniques. *The Pastoralists’ Review* had a dedicated ‘utilities’ page that reviewed new implements for sale and provided instructions for their use.

By 1914 interest in the power of technology to transform agricultural practices was widespread. The enthusiasm with which new technologies were received can be seen in the rapid up-take of farm equipment. Technological progress was not only projected by industry and government as desirable, but was assumed to be inevitable and irreversible (Sterling 2005).

Langdon Winner has coined the term ‘autonomous technology’ to refer to the experience of technology as an apparently miraculous, spontaneous force, beyond social and political influence, that is unstoppable in projecting us into the future. He writes:

> In some views the perception of technology-out-of-control is associated with a process of change in which the human world is progressively transformed and incorporated by an expanding scientific technology. In others the perception focuses on the behaviour of large-scale technical systems that appear to operate and grow through a process of self-generation beyond human intervention. In others still, the matter is primarily that of individuals dwarfed by the complex apparatus surrounding them, which they must employ if they are to survive (Winner 1977, p. 17).

Farmers, especially those on marginal lands, have been, and continue to be, wedded to the technologies of maximised production. They can conceive of no future without them.

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1. The *Australian Town and Country journal*, first published on January 8, 1870 in Sydney, New South Wales by Frank and Christopher Bennett, and *The Australasian Pastoralist Review: A monthly journal and record of all matters affecting the pastoral and landed interest throughout Australasia*, first published on March 16, 1891 in Melbourne by Twopenny, Pearce and Co, are two popular examples of rural print media embracing the technological sublime.

2. Jacques Ellul is also representative of this approach - what he called the autonomy of technology. This school of thought is frequently referred to as substantivism. Substantivism views technology as an independent power that unfolds according to its own logic. Tensions between different kinds of approaches to technology such as instrumentalism (neutrality) and pluralism are well documented by philosophers such as Borgmann and Verbeek.
Intensification of agricultural production

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries new technologies enabled a reconfiguration of agricultural land, allowing its perceived deficiencies to be technologically overcome. Machines such as ploughs and harvesters radically extended the capacity of farmers to turn nature to human purposes, accelerating the rate at which the place of natural things was consumed and usurped by the man-made (Marx 1965). The advent of heavy machinery in farming, such as steam powered engines, made it possible to clear large tracts of land at low cost. New techniques, such as feed-lots, were developed to streamline production of a controlled, maximised and predictable farm product (Tribe and Peel 1988, pp. 12-13). Roads and railroads rendered previously remote lands accessible, connecting them into wider systems of ordering and distribution. A farmers’ ability to settle and cultivate unimproved land, to increase output and access wider markets, further strengthened the interdependence of agriculture and technology.

In the course of the twentieth century the 'extensive' model of farming that had been dominant in Australia in the closing decades of the nineteenth century was gradually replaced by a more 'intensive' model which enabled significant increases in production (Gruen 1990, p. 21; Lawrence 1996; see also Kenney et al. 1991; McMichael 1992; 1994).

Intensification was achieved in two ways; firstly by increasing the area of production and, secondly, by mechanisation, automation, industrialisation and, above all, the increase of inputs, such as fertilisers. Financial institutions such as banks, funded these intensification strategies, binding farmers into the apparatus of collaborative economic expansion. The push for intensification was further supported by the slow and steady growth of research in agricultural institutions between 1900 and 1940 (McLean 1982; Tribe and Peel 1988). Thus intensification required farmers to develop dependent relations with financial institutions and, increasingly, to interpret their land and its potential through the lens provided by scientific research.

Basic to the development of an intensive system of farming was the initial assessment of the agricultural potential of the land and its associated resources of soil, water, vegetation, and climate. Mapping technologies, such as Goyder's use of natural vegetation to delimit areas of South Australia for arable farming, played an important role in rendering the landscape...
Richard Jefferies, The new steam digger, 1874, From Hodge and his master, Gelatin on silver photograph

early 1000 acres of exceedingly rough, tussocky, and ti-tree country.

All who have seen the
available to production in new, more intensive ways (Heathcote 1981, pp. 295-321). The recognition of seasonal weather patterns, and their impact upon particular crops fuelled further calculative management of farm production (Tribe and Peel 1988, p. 36). Similarly, soil classification provided an ordering of the landscape that informed the introduction of irrigation technologies, and played a significant role in enabling previously poor areas to be cultivated.

Along with this more intensified management of the productivity of the land, the shift from extensive to intensive land use practices often meant changes in the type of farm product produced. In the Maranoa, earlier farming of wool and beef was increasingly complimented with wheat, while irrigation around St George enabled the growing of fruit and cotton in regions previously reserved for the production of wool.

Technologies were not merely aids to farming activity, but powerful forces shaping farmers’ lives (Callon 1991; Latour 1991). Consider the changes brought about by the stripper harvester, for example. Designed by James Morrow, of Nicholson & Morrow, a Melbourne farm machinery firm in 1884, and also by Hugh Victor McKay in the same year, this machine redefined the process of grain production by combining in a single unit the functions of the stripper and the winnower (Tribe and Peel 1988, p. 16). In one operation it could gather and thresh the ripe heads, separate the grain from the chaff and deliver the grain for bagging. Thus the development of the stripper harvester not only increased efficiency by reducing the amount of time and labour required to harvest cereal crops, but it also transformed the industry fostering a massive expansion of the wheat frontier on previously marginal lands in eastern Australia, and in the 1900s and 1910s assisted the opening up of the Western Australian wheat belt (Fahey, Lack and Dale-Hallet 2003, par 6-7).

Bruno Latour critiques the distinction habitually made between the human and non-human, which ascribes agency only to the human (1991, p. 122). Latour argues that it is more illuminating to understand both humans and non-humans as actors and collaborators in maintaining, or bringing into being, particular dispositions of the world. The stripper and winnower can be seen as a collaborator in the farmer’s project of harnessing the productive capacity of the land for the purpose of producing cereal. Equally, both the farmer and his machinery can be seen as disciplined actors serving predetermined roles within a much larger

work have expressed themselves as very pleased and satisfied that it was a profitable investment; no less than nine large graziers have followed suit after seeing the world way for less than £3 15s. to £5, and with the new system of leaving the stumps and the tussocks in the ground...
economic cycle of production and consumption. The mechanised action of the harvesting machinery is determined by the larger network within which it performs; but so, too, are the actions of the farmer. Latour's argument is important for understanding the paradox of the farmer's relationship to technology within a landscape of increasingly intensive, technologised farming, over the course of the twentieth century.

The development of industrialised technologies of immense power contributes to what Albert Borgmann describes as the 'device paradigm' within post-Enlightenment culture (1984). For Borgmann the difference between other kinds of technological engagement and engagement within the device paradigm, arises from the action of the device in distancing the doer from what is done. According to Borgmann, the technological objects of our time differ from pre-technological ones in that they diminish people's engagement with the world around them.

Borgmann maps out his understanding of technologised society in Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life. He argues that it is in the character of technological devices to make products and commodities available on demand. Something is available, according to Borgmann, if it has been rendered instantaneous, ubiquitous, safe and easy. 'Goods that are available to us enrich our lives, and if they are technologically available, they do so without imposing a burden on us.' (1984, p. 41)

Borgmann illustrates the nature of a device through the example of a 'central heating system.' (Borgmann 1984, p. 41) The major aim of the central heating system is to deliver warmth quickly, easily and safely. Its radiator and thermostat are machinery that produce controlled warmth as a commodity, on demand. As a device, its machinery withdraws to the background. Our experience of the commodity 'warmth' is isolated from any experience of its manner of production. In Borgmann's view this withdrawal of the means of production from the experience of what is produced diminishes our engagement with material culture. Our experience is reduced to mere consumption.

Agriculture, in particular, is affected by the 'device paradigm.' As Borgmann understands it, agricultural technologies are devices that remove the farmer from the land, marginalising or eliminating the sensuous experience of participation in a cycle of growth and replenishment.
Within the device paradigm, the farmer plays an impoverished role, simply activating, operating and managing the devices that will make available a desired commodity. The pledge of the device is the one of ‘disburdenment.’ (Borgmann 1995, p. 89) This promise of disburdenment is particularly attractive to farmers, whose history has been defined by their burden of hard labour.

The combine harvester (or ‘combine’), on which the stripper harvester was modelled, is typical of the devices that promise to disburden the farmer. Patented in America in 1834, it was the first machine to combine harvesting, threshing and cleaning into one action.

The contemporary combine is a large, comfortable machine with air conditioning, music and an ergonomic, cushioned seat. The cabin is sealed tight and pressurized to prevent dust from entering. Equipped with a GPS and an on board computer, the machine not only strips and winnows, but also calculates the amount of grain that has been harvested. The farmer, who once would have had to harvest, strip, winnow, package and calculate, is disburdened of this labour. He now merely initiates and monitors the various stages, guiding the machine through the process.

Thus a combine harvester contrasts markedly with early agricultural machinery, such as the reaper and binder, as a thing. A reaper has an intelligible and accessible character and calls forth skilled and active human engagement. A combine, by contrast, distances the farmer from the land and limits his or her skilful and sensuous engagement in the harvesting process.

**Shifting practices**

Technology, with its promise of liberation and disburdenment, appealed to a fledgling nation like Australia, concerned with establishing economic independence. Technology extended the reach and impact of hard work and self-reliance, as well as increasing (at least on the surface) a sense of independence and autonomy. It lent ‘man’ power in the project of re-ordering the landscape, placing its fruitful potential at his disposal.
The new intensive and industrialised agricultural regime was manifest in the Fordist production model. This model achieved increases in agricultural productivity similar to the productivity increases achieved by Fordism in the factories of the city.

Fordism played a crucial role in twentieth century agriculture, globally. It not only transformed processes of production, it also impacted on processes of consumption affecting farmers. While factories and other sites of production were being revolutionised by technologies of mass production, mass consumption of agricultural products was stimulated and accelerated by developments like the supermarket and the rise of prepared and fast food (Lipovetsky 1994, p. 90). These developments had a significant impact on farmers, as their productive activity became increasingly integrated into a vertical supply-chain that incorporated both producers and consumers. This process of vertical integration can be looked at through the lens of actor-network theory, which re-presents humans as minor players in such amalgams (Callon 1986, 1991; Latour 1986, 1987, 1991, 1992, 2005; Law 1986, 1991).

While the increases in agricultural production were aligned with increases in consumption, overall growth in the system meant greater profits could offset the increased costs. However growth in consumption of food was ultimately more finite than growth in consumption of other, non-essential, commodities. Agricultural production, driven by Fordist efficiency and technological progress, continued to grow, while the market for agricultural products began to reach saturation. The discrepancy between rates of production and demand for consumption of agricultural commodities, made farmers even more vulnerable to international market fluctuations and the pricing policies of agribusiness firms. If increases in the costs of inputs, such as fertilizers and machinery, were unmatched by increased income from outputs, the farmers could lose heavily. International market fluctuations that affected the costs of inputs and profits on outputs differently, rendered this vulnerability ever-present.

As markets approached saturation, farmers attempted to alleviate the effects of the decline in value of their commodities by striving for further efficiencies in their production process. By this means they sought to decrease the cost of production in line with the decrease in value of that which was produced. Unfortunately, the most immediate way to increase efficiency was to both increase the intensity of farming through the use of more sophisticated and expensive...
agricultural technologies, and to expand the scale of operations; investing in further land, stock and equipment. Increased intensity of farming quickly transformed demands on farmers into demands on natural resources. Intensive production methods involved the heavy use of pesticides and fertilisers, causing unforeseen environmental damage. Sophisticated farming technologies also encouraged farmers to spread into ever-drier soils and less-productive environments.

In Queensland the era of new farming technologies was characterised by the expansion of intensive grazing practices. These advances included the introduction of bulk fertilizers, exotic improved pastures, chemical pest controls and new production technologies (Cameron 2005, p. 06.13). By the late 1940s, intensive farming technologies had rendered viable mixed grazing and cultivation. Marginal areas such as the Maranoa began to flourish, with farmers sowing crops in areas previously considered suitable only for grazing.

However, the long-term impact of technologically driven production regimes on marginal lands, had not been well understood.

Some problems associated with intensive farming practices

The strategy of lowering cost per unit produced by increasing the scale and intensity of production, in order to survive the price decline of agricultural products, was ultimately unsustainable; given that the pressure to reduce costs was largely driven by a mismatch between an oversupply of product and limited growth in demand.

By the 1970s this unsustainable cycle was starting to show signs of strain. While individually beneficial in the short term, as a means of addressing immediate cost-price pressure, the farmers’ investment in efficient production led cumulatively to a flooding of markets and to further price decline. In 1971, the Bretton Woods Agreement collapsed leading to a deregulation of world currencies. In Australia this led to a rise in the value of the dollar on the international market, which was bad news for exporters, who became less competitive as a result. Further, the entry of Britain into the European Common Market in 1972, meant that Australia lost much of the access to UK markets that it had hitherto enjoyed (Teeple 1995; Lawrence 2000; McMichael 2000). This meant that greater government support was needed to

was to shoot and burn their animals, of pear and apricot producers who received more in government payment of poverty among dairy farmers (Lawrence 1987, p. 10). Alfred T. Evans article ‘Breaking up Rough Land for Artificial Fodders and Grasses’ From the P
maintain farmer’s incomes in Australia. For a time the government succeeded in underwriting farming by providing, amongst other benefits, cheap credit, input bounties, loans to marketing authorities, quarantine services, water resource development, research, extension services, subsidies, concessions and taxation relief (Lawrence 1987, p. 10). Nevertheless, ongoing endemic overproduction as a result of the mechanisation of farming meant that commodity prices continued to fall, compared to the cost of inputs (Higgins 1999, p.132-3). The effects of the market collapse were amplified by a rise in oil prices in 1973 and 1979, which increased the costs of agricultural production. This rise in cost was made worse by inflation, which further undermined the competitiveness of Australian farmers in the international market (Lawrence 1987, 1996, 1998; Marsden et al. 1990).

The turn to deregulation

The first government to deregulate the Australian agricultural economy in a significant way was Gough Whitlam’s Labor Government, elected in December 1972. Partly as a result of economic strain, Whitlam sought to reduce the government’s commitment to farmers. This involved a shift away from the Keynesian welfare system via a process of deregulation which further exposed the farm sector to international competition. This shift was also driven by an ideological turn towards the ‘dry’ economic rationalist agenda of neoliberalism.

Rural sociologist Geoffrey Lawrence notes that within 18 months of Whitlam’s policy initiatives there was a dramatic increase in stories of rural desperation;

[Stories] of farmers receiving less for their calves than the cost of taking them to market, of others whose solution was to shoot and burn their animals, of pear and apricot producers who received more in government payments for bulldozing their orchards than from sale of the fruit, of economic problems in the canning industries and of poverty among dairy farmers (1987, p. 10).

3 The National Farmer’s Federation of Australia supported this initiative.
Although the farmers were vocal in their opposition to the rural policies of the Labor Government, Whitlam infamously replied ‘… that they had “never had it so good” and that they had no basis for complaint.’ (Lawrence 1987, p. 10)

**The Rural Adjustment Schemes**

By 1975 the Whitlam government had been dismissed from office and the conservative Coalition, led by Malcolm Fraser, a wealthy grazier, was elected in a landslide. Predictably the Coalition re-introduced a number of concessions to rural voters. However, it remained a consensus amongst many administrators that Australian farming required major structural changes if it was to survive (Gray et al. 1993, pp. 2-4). This bilateral understanding formed the basis of many of the initiatives made under the Fraser Government. Rather than supporting ‘unviable’ farmers in expanding their output, the Commonwealth government began to provide funds for land amalgamation and debt restructuring in order to promote economies of scale (Higgins and Lockie 2001, p 182). This approach became known as ‘structural adjustment.’ Lawrence argues that although the Coalition reintroduced a number of concessions, which had been withdrawn by the previous administration ‘there was throughout the remaining years of the decade, an uneasy feeling amongst the farming fraternity that agriculture had not been restored to its “rightful,” pre-eminent place in the economy.’ (1987, p. 10)

The first stage of these structural adjustment policies was implemented under a federal and state agreement called the Rural Adjustment Scheme (RAS), which was established on 1 January 1977 (Commonwealth of Australia 1976). The principle feature of the RAS was a reduction in the subsidies and tariffs that had hitherto protected Australian farmers from the global market. In addition, agricultural production was encouraged to transform itself from a system based largely on independent producers growing food for local and regional markets to one in which farmers were mostly engaged in the contract production of raw materials for global agrifood companies.

The implementation of these policies was ameliorated by the ongoing influence of the National Party in the conservative Liberal – National Coalition. Influential politicians such as Doug

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Antony, Ian Sinclair and Peter Nixon helped to preserve the idea that the social value of farming was integral to the process of adjustment (Costar and Woodward 1985). Fraser himself also maintained a belief in a welfare safety net and stopped short of abandoning the farmers to the market altogether by providing grants to help farmers achieve the kinds of changes required by the RAS (Higgins 1999, p. 136). Farmers were provided with money (by means of interest rate subsidies) for changing techniques of production, reorganising their farms and upgrading their skills (Stayner 1997).

The intention of these policies was to increase competitiveness of Australian farmers on global markets. The ability of farmers to take advantage of these markets was predicated on a significant increase in the productivity of the Australian agricultural sector via streamlining and economies of scale. These policies were supported by the National Farmers’ Federation (NFF), which since its inception in 1979 had adopted the economic rationalist argument, highlighting individual inefficiency amongst farmers and wage inflexibility in the wider community as impediments to the drive to make Australian agriculture more internationally competitive (Lawrence 1987).

The ‘rural crisis’ of the late 1970s and early 80s highlighted the uncertain position that small family farms occupied within the world of transnational corporate capital and free market economics (Lawrence 1987, p. 3). Farmers had become dependent on the costly products and services of corporations yet they received low returns on their own produce as a result of intense local and international competition. Their reliance upon new technologies to improve productivity meant they had little choice but to continue to purchase and apply the latest products of agribusiness.

The farms best able to survive this situation were large-scale farms. These farms were able to maintain profits in an increasingly difficult market by further increasing levels of production via economies of scale. This created a ‘get big or get out’ mentality, leading to the displacement of both agricultural labour and smaller farmers (Higgins and Lockie 2001, p. 180). Mid-scale farming enterprises virtually disappeared from Australia’s farming landscape, while many small farmers survived principally on income earned through off-farm work (Lawrence 1987; Williams 1990). The impact on rural communities was significant and ongoing. Many rural town dwellers moved to cities while others, with restricted mobility, remained trapped in semi-
poverty. This impoverishment and decline in population diminished the social and economic viability of many small towns, eroding rural facilities and employment opportunities (Lawrence and Gray 2001; Stehlik 1999).

While technologies have made agricultural production more reliable and predictable, a growing reliance on the latest technologies to increase production created a shift in power between farmers and agribusiness supply firms. As farmers were forced to borrow money in order to purchase the latest equipment, chemicals and other inputs, they became increasingly vulnerable to the dictates of the corporate sector. The need to make regular payments on loans pressured farmers into ever-tighter relationships with agribusinesses.

These relationships were further exacerbated by national schemes encouraging linkages between farmers and the food industry in the Asia Pacific region (Lawrence, 1987; 1996). Not only did this promote an enhanced role for agribusiness, especially in the marketing of farm products, but it also forced many farmers to negotiate individual producer contracts with agri-food processors and retail chains. Since the 1980s many farmers have been contracted to supply specific commodities for particular local and international markets (see Pritchard 1998).

Contract relations have allowed agribusiness to exert an excessive amount of influence on production. In effect, the contract is a ‘device’ that secures delivery to agribusiness of a particular good at a particular price. The device facilitates delivery of the desired commodity to the consumer, while hiding the impact that this demand makes upon the site of production. Thus contracts between farmers and agribusinesses elide the particularity of different farming landscapes, and screen from view the predicament of marginal farmers who are assumed to be equal competitors within a technologized production system. In this way the device paradigm escalates the risk of environmental damage on marginal farming land. Contract relations have also made farmers more vulnerable to transnational corporations that run supermarket chains such as Coles and Woolworths (Greens MP Christine Milne from Tasmania and Independent Conservative MP Bob Katter in northern Queensland both campaigned strongly against this phenomenon in the most recent Federal election in 2010).
Despite the feelings of empowerment delivered by engagement with the technological sublime, the progressive increase in technological intensity of agriculture has meant that much of the control that farmers previously exercised over their own production processes has been progressively relinquished. Farmers and farms increasingly play out roles that have been scripted for them, and that have embedded them ever more firmly within the networked interdependencies of global agricultural production and consumption.

**Governments reduce their support for farming**

The effect of the Rural Adjustment Schemes on small family farms was catastrophic. For those who managed to survive the first series of adjustments in 1977, the drought of 1982 dealt a crippling blow. Average yields of many crops dropped to 50 percent of normal levels, while stock numbers dropped by 3-4 per cent. Rural indebtedness rose by an estimated 27 per cent (Lawrence 1987, p. 11) Despite the emergency assistance offered by the government, many producers did not recover.

Although the election of the Hawke Labor Government in 1983 coincided with rain, it wasn’t long before the next major rural crisis loomed, this time fuelled by international competition, oversupplied world markets, and the pricing policies of transnational agribusinesses (Lawrence 1987; 1996; 1998). With terms of trade for raw and semi-processed commodities in decline, the Government felt they could no longer afford to underwrite farming, and so sought to reduce their support.

Further cuts to public spending in agriculture were enacted through the 1988 Rural Adjustment Act (Commonwealth of Australia, 1988; Johnson 1996). The new Act extended the project started in 1977. It employed a view of farming that was devoid of almost any sense of social heritage or cultural value. It encouraged the development of a ‘corporate-based, “high-tech,” deregulated, rationalised, vertically integrated farming model.’ (Lawrence 1990, p. 106) The then Minister for Primary Industry and Energy, John Kerin (1980, p. 1465) stated that:

> There is to be a much stronger emphasis on the notion that farming is first and foremost a business which must be run along strong business lines if it is to survive and prosper…
This view of farming as a commercial enterprise employed an ideology of self-reliance and individual risk management, enabling the Government to distance itself from the problems facing small farmers (Lawrence 1987, p. 201). The Government also used an emphasis on the education and training of farmers to divest itself of responsibility for risk management. The theory was that these policy changes placed responsibility for success and/or failure firmly in the hands of farmers themselves.

Without state support, the farmers were directly exposed to the power of the transnational corporations (TNCs). Zygmunt Bauman argues that because the power exercised by these corporations is primarily financial, it is disembodied and abstract in character. Unlike the power exercised by state bodies, this ‘bodyless’ form of power enables transnational organisations to become truly ex-territorial (Bauman, 1998, p. 19).

Owned by international investors, and owing allegiance to no particular state, TNCs are characterised by their fluidity, mobility and the flow of capital across national boundaries. Bauman argues that the key characteristic of this new era, which he calls ‘liquid modernity’ is the ability to bypass the limits on the movement and flow of capital that had characterised earlier modernity. This new era, that made its presence felt in the acceleration of globalisation in the 1980s and beyond, requires an ability to ‘travel light’ and to uproot instantly. Bauman writes:

… mobility has become the most powerful and most coveted stratifying factor; the stuff of which the new, increasingly world-wide, social, political, economic and cultural hierarchies are daily built and rebuilt. (1998, p. 9)

Within liquid modernity those who are free to move without notice are in a position to rule. Bauman is careful, however, to differentiate deterritorialised freedom of movement from the romantic view of the traveller as ‘light’ and ‘weightless.’ In his view, what sets ‘liquids’ apart from ‘solids,’ is the looseness and frailty of their bonds (2000, p. 2).

Bauman metaphorically characterises those who roam freely across boundaries, motivated purely by personal or corporate gain, as ‘hunters.’ He emphasizes their difference from the place-based ‘gardeners’ who were nurtured within earlier political and technological regimes.

ought stump-jump disc ploughs, disc harrows, and disc drills. This cultivation could not possibly have been done in the old way and ploughing the ferns down instead of cutting and burning them, the work has been done for 28s. per acre,
If the family farmer is a ‘gardener,’ the transnational corporation is the archetypal hunter, detached from any specific nation or place and intent upon maximization of profit.

The chief attribute of the hunter is a physical, emotional and psychological detachment from the land. Bauman argues that this detachment leads to a greater tendency towards abuse and exploitation. He writes of the hunter:

Most certainly, they would not consider it to be their duty to make sure that the supply of game roaming in the forest would be replenished after (and despite) their hunt… It may occur to them that sometime, in a distant and still undefined future, the planet might run out of undepleted forests; but if it does, they wouldn’t see it as an immediate worry – and certainly not as their worry. Such a distant prospect will not after all jeopardise the results of the current hunt, or the next one, and so surely there is nothing in it to oblige me, just one single hunter among many, or us, just one single hunting association among many, to ponder, let alone do something about it (2007, p. 100).

The hunter’s detachment produced a number of very concrete advantages for TNC’s who were sufficiently disengaged and mobile to exploit opportunities.

Bauman’s account can be seen as drawing upon Martin Heidegger, who described a similar attitude towards nature as ‘resource,’ in his 1953 essay ‘The Question Concerning Technology.’ Heidegger wrote of a landscape where:

… everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. (1977, p. 14)

In Heidegger’s view, an attitude that grasps things as Bestand or resources, makes possible an endless series of ‘disaggregations, redistributions, and reaggregations’ where flexibility and efficiency reign (Dreyfus and Spinosa 2003, p. 317; See Heidegger 1977, pp 16-20).

Transnational corporations rewrite the world in terms of resources. They are able to connect, on the one hand, places of cheap production and labour with advanced economies that have high for less than £3 15s. to £5, and with the new system of leaving the stumps and the tussocks in the ground including Yankee grubbing and burning off all timber, ploughing, harrowing, rolling, drilling in seed with
rates of consumption and a capacity to pay high prices (Fagan and Webber 1994; McMichael 1996; McMichael and Lawrence 2001). An understanding of ‘resources’ as endlessly available to re-ordering, enables investors to reconfigure their portfolios and redistribute their investments, according to the most profitable opportunities available at any time. The risk entailed by regional and local problems, such as drought, must be weathered by the place-based ‘gardener’, but is easily sidestepped by those who have the power to mobilise and redistribute their involvements.

Dispersed investment has become the hallmark of power. Farmers have become mere ‘placeholders’ within a system of mobile and distributed interests. This positioning of farmers and farms within the networks of more mobile players, has radically reduced their ability to operate independently.

Bauman is critical of the hunter. He is particularly concerned that the looseness and frailty of their social bonds leading to an elision or avoidance of the responsibilities and costs associated with order-building and maintenance (2000, p. 11; 2004).

The power of the hunter within ‘liquid’ modernity has many implications for the physical, cultural and psychological sustainability of Australian farming. It is especially destructive for family farmers, who are bound to the particularity of their land and yet are forced to operate within a global financial environment dominated by, and privileging, a free-roaming hunter.

Throughout the 1980s Australia’s farmers were forced to find new ways of managing the risks attached to fluctuating market conditions as well as the unpredictable impact of local conditions such as drought or flood. Often the only path open to them was through contractual arrangements with financial institutions and transnational corporations.

5 It is also worth noting that TNCs arrange production to suit their needs with, typically high technology processes remaining in the Developed world as labour intensive activity goes where labour is cheaper.

6 Liquid modernity seems to be the late realisation of a tendency that has characterised modernity from the start. What remains at issue is whether the ‘solid’ institutions of prior modernity were merely the residue of tradition, or pointed towards a more enduring potential of modernity itself.
Subsequent reviews of the Rural Adjustment Scheme (in 1991 and 1992) only increased the emphasis on productivity and individual risk management. The most notable feature of the 1992 adjustment to the scheme was a shift in responsibility for determining viability of a farm from the government to the commercial sector. Farmers that were able to convince a commercial financial institution to continue supporting them, were judged viable. This meant that farm management decisions were increasingly forced into conformity with production strategies that financial institutions understood and could measure. Many farmers were thus locked into practices determined by global business imperatives, rather than by a knowledge of what their land could bear. The autonomy of the farmer as a decision-maker caring for the long term good of his/her property was significantly eroded.

Thus by the end of the 1990s self-reliance was firmly embedded in Government policy, as a solution to the farm adjustment problem.

**The effects of deregulation**

The liberalisation and deregulation of the Australian agricultural economy which took place throughout the 1970s, ‘80s and ‘90s led to more flexible employment relations, opportunities to trade without imposition of national regulations, the free-play of market forces and the unregulated flow of capital. Overall this opening of economic activity to the flow of global economic forces made the national government significantly less capable of directing economic development within national borders (Lawrence 1990; and Le Heron 1993). As a result of these changes, many areas of economic management, but especially agriculture, were left to the vagaries of the ‘supranational arena.’ (Lawrence 1996, p. 62)

The deregulationist thrust of these changes was made on the basis of a theory / vision of immense (and deregulated) flows of money, goods, services, people, information, technologies, policies, ideas and images. These flows transcended individual nation-states and created a hitherto unimaginable level of global interdependence. The flipside of these policies was that they also opened up Australian agriculture, both to increased imports from competing countries and to increased foreign investment (Lawrence and Vanclay 1995).
Conclusion

In the period from the end of the Second World War until the early 1970s small farmers in Australia understood themselves to be, and were widely accepted as, the bearers of valued expertise. They functioned as (relatively) independent commodity producers who sold products under state authorised marketing arrangements (Wool Board, Wheat Board etc). They were invested with the power and authority to decide what they produced (at least to some extent). However from the 1970s onwards, shifts in Government policy, deregulation of the market and the advent of transnational corporations as major players in the global organisation of production and consumption, meant that farmers began to occupy a very different position.

The farmer’s commitment to a specific property, hitherto an asset and indication of wealth and power, has become a liability, limiting their ability to operate in a deregulated global marketplace (Bauman, 2000, p. 121). Farmers, tied by their property and responsibilities, cannot compete with the mobility and fluidity of the TNC’s who roam freely like ‘hunters’ in pursuit of another ‘kill.’ (Bauman, 2007, p. 100)

This polarising effect is symptomatic of the way in which, as Bauman argues, globalisation divides humanity between the haves and have-nots. He writes: ‘[R]ather than homogenising the human condition, the technological annulment of temporal-spatial distances tends to polarise it.’ (1998, p. 18) The bulk of the population is forced to pay a heavy cultural, psychological and political price for the ‘cybernetic isolation’ of the elites (1998, p. 18).

Technologies have radically altered the look of farming in a relatively short time. The promising character of technology (technology always ‘promises’) served both to enhance and conceal its enormous transformative power. The promise, as it was formulated, for instance, by Bacon and Descartes, consists in both liberation and enrichment. The introduction of technology was not due to a simple desire to ‘dominate nature,’ as has often been claimed, but was done ‘with the aim of liberating humanity from disease, hunger, and toil, and enriching life, with learning, art, and athletics.’ (Borgmann, 1984, 36) This promise has been partly fulfilled in agriculture, where technologies have radically altered the working landscape. However far from delivering the Edenic paradise farmers have been striving for, it has committed the small family farmer to

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He says: Having had many inquiries about breaking up ro

for bulldozing their orchards than from sale of the fruit, of economic problems in the canning industries and pastoralists' Review, Vol XV, No. 6, August 15, 1905, pp. 378-9).
a life of vassalage, and his lands to the tyranny of exhaustive production. With the integration of the farm into the global agricultural network, power has not only been removed from the small farmer, but has significantly abstracted the production process into a globalised system, prohibiting the farmer to respond to local needs and problems.
We operate very close to the limit around here... We don't have any resources to buffer ourselves against a bad year anymore, like say a big landowner who has properties all over the place... [Then there are] the extern... [Once] the cost of production rises...
all things that happen to us, like wool and wheat prices going down... It all comes back to the scale of your operation... how much you can take... the state of your equipment, and how much you are required to pay... profits start to drop and then that causes debt... once you start getting into debt, you run more stock, and...
put more land into crop and it’s not long before the whole bloody thing goes up in dust.” (B. Thomas 2000, pg 238)

“...we increase production, we look for alternative sources of income etc...”
Over the two years I spent with families in the Maranoa, exhaustion was everywhere evident. The long drought, depleted stocks, and changes to equity in property dominated many dinner conversations. Apart from lack of rain, and diminishing or disappearing water supplies, farmers talked about poverty, stress and uncertainty. Morale was deteriorating as farmers found themselves working harder for little gain, and with few prospects for future betterment of their living conditions.

“Farming life is not what it was,” George commented. “Land used to be cheaper, rural commodity prices higher, and farmers in general made more money… Now I work everyday, and for what? For nothing.” (G Mack 1999, pers. comm., 12 April 1999)

Belief in the future of family farming in this area is fading. Although market fluctuations are accepted as a part of the reality of farming, the good periods are insufficient to offset the bad. In the 1980s and 1990s the combination of financial pressures, trade difficulties and climatic hardships meant few good years for rural families in the Maranoa.

Sarah commented:

We operate very close to the limit around here… We don't have any resources to buffer ourselves against a bad year anymore, like say a big landowner who has properties all over the place… [Then there are] the external things that happen to us, like wool and wheat prices going down… It all comes back to the scale of your operation… how much you can take... the state of your equipment, and how much you are required to pay someone to work for you… These are the sorts of things that can undo even a prosperous farmer. (S Thomas 2000, pers. comm., 1 June)

The goals that direct the striving of family farmers – their vision of a good life lived in a rural setting with a few simple possessions; of a life in which pride and self-respect are fostered through the farmer's independent exercise of reason in directing the farm's production, the family reaping

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1 All personal communication contained in this chapter refers to a series of face-to-face conversations which took place in the Maranoa.
we stop buying equipment... and still we can’t make ends meet.” (C. Leigh 2000, pers. comm., 16 June)
The bank advised us to get bigger. They increased our loans to enable us to buy...
the bounty of nature as a reward for their hard work – these goals have receded from view, rather than approached realisation. The narrative of progress, of assured reward where hard work is directed by reason, has been eroded by the bitter experience of the past decades.

In this chapter the struggles and growing despair of family farmers on marginal farms in the Maranoa, are given voice.

Debt

In one very real sense, the small family farmers of the Maranoa are going backwards. Bill described his own plight with anger and frustration: “[Once] the cost of production rises… profits start to drop and then that causes debt… once you start getting into debt, you run more stock, and put more land into crop and it’s not long before the whole bloody thing goes up in dust.” (B Thomas 2000, pers. comm., 1 June)

The process of financial decline has been excruciating and embarrassing for many farmers. Some families described sleepless nights caused by worries about bills and repayment of farm loans. Despite great personal sacrifice many have been unable to make ends meet. Farmers comment that it is “like being on a treadmill,” with “no choice but to work harder for less reward.” “We work, we save, we increase production… and for what? We’ve got nothing to show for it.” (L Lawson 1999, pers. comm., 10 September) Caroline echoed this sentiment when she said:

We work hard… we increase production, we look for alternative sources of income either on or off the farm, we save money, we scrimp on clothes, food, whatever… you name it… we stop buying equipment… and still we can’t make ends meet (C Leigh 2000, pers. comm., 16 June).

These farmers feel trapped. Even though production levels have been going up it is common to hear farmers say that they are going backwards.

One couple told me that, in the early 1970s, the cattle and wool property that they had been running had been almost debt free with an equity level approaching 90 per cent. At that time they were producing high quality stock and were well respected in grazing circles. After running more land. All we ended up with was more work, greater costs and less income.” (G
Mack 1999, pers. comm., 7 June)  

“We can see that we were making valuable changes... but that’s all stopped now. We don’t have much
choice but to continue to do things the way we used to... which basically means exploiting what little resources we’ve got to try and keep going if we are to stay on the farm.” (S Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 1
a number of difficult years of drought, poor prices and increasing production costs, their financial situation had changed significantly. Reduced land values and higher interest rates meant that their relatively small mortgage was now aligned to a less valuable asset. At the same time they had been forced to increase their debt to buy stock food and cover general living expenses. As a result their equity in the property had fallen to below 50 per cent. Despite their ability to run the property, they have become unsure whether they can survive in the long term.

Another couple on a nearby property have experienced similar difficulties. They are several bank payments in arrears and their equity in the property has been reduced to 40 per cent. They are unable to afford machinery or property repairs, fertilizer or seed to plant a crop, transport costs, property rates or insurance payments. The frustration they have experienced has been increased by successive crop failures. One farmer said, “When I am out in the paddocks I feel so ashamed of the state of the farm.” (C Williams 1999, pers. comm., 21 June) His wife, explained: “My husband just can't see that the drought, the poor prices and the changes over the past couple of decades are more to blame than he is.” (V. Williams 1999, pers. comm., 27 June)

Another woman described how they had had to sell all their marketable cattle, keeping only the best breeding stock and a few trading stock. “We had no choice but to [try to] survive the drought, maintaining the best of the herd with minimum feed purchases.” The property had a small mortgage but the stress was evident, as no income could be anticipated for at least six months. “[I have] little hope that the future will be any better,” she said. (M Mack 1999, pers. comm., 18 May)

**Paid work/Off farm work**

Craig and Virginia are also experiencing financial difficulties. Rising production costs, lower commodity prices and extended periods of drought have reduced their income significantly. To offset the drop in farm income Virginia has been working off-farm. Her off-farm income pays for groceries and other bills, enabling the family to reinvest all the farm income in the running of the farm; paying for fertilizers, herbicides, and the cost of re-establishing crops generally. Without Virginia's off-farm income, they would have no choice but to sink further into debt.
Negotiations with utility companies and other creditors are tough. “It is a pain that I can’t describe,” said one woman (A Evans 1999, pers. comm., 29 January). “We have always managed with what I make on the farm,” said one farmer, but now “no matter how hard I work we still need help.” (C Williams 1999, pers. comm., 21 June) Another farmer said, “My husband has been working longer hours, as have I, but if it wasn’t for my paid work we wouldn’t have anything to live on.” (V. Williams 1999, pers. comm., 22 June)

Recent falls in the price of beef had forced one farmer, Graham, to look for work off farm. “A lot of farmers have to find [off-farm] work.” “I am lucky I can make enough driving trucks so that Lisa can stay at home with the kids.” (G Lawson 1999, pers. comm., 25 August) Lisa says that Graham spends long periods of time away from home.

Like many farmers struggling to make enough income from the farm, Graham feels that he has failed as a husband and father. Graham explained that he cannot afford to build a new house, so they have to go on living in an old house on his family’s property.

Lisa and Graham are also concerned about their debt to the bank. They borrowed money to buy land adjacent to Graham’s family farm. However the equity in their property has been significantly reduced. They have very little money to maintain the property and have subsequently borrowed money to buy seed and fertilizer to plant crops. Graham told me that they are unable to repair their machinery and feel trapped as the future of the farm becomes increasingly uncertain.

One of the hardest aspects of the exhaustion experienced by farmers is the sense it gives them of personal failure. Michael, a young farmer working a thousand acre property does not own enough livestock to make the property viable in the long term. He regularly looks for off-farm work but there is little available in the area. He struggles to afford even the most basic household expenses such as school books, shoes and transport costs. However he is reluctant to seek help, subscribing to the pervading view among farmers that welfare is for those who are too lazy, or too ill to work. However, as the situation has got worse and his ability to provide for his family has declined he is finding himself forced to rethink this position.
**Risk and Improvement**

A considerable amount of anger is directed towards the banks and financial institutions. George explained how he had gone into debt to expand his enterprise. “They [the bank] advised us to get bigger. They increased our loans to enable us to buy more land. All we ended up with was more work, greater costs and less income.” (G Mack 1999, pers. comm., 7 June)

Banks have been the usual financial partner for farmers wishing to improve their property, expand their operation or change their farming practices for the ultimate benefit of their farm. However the risk represented by such loans has too often led to disaster rather than reward for farmers on marginal properties. Typical of the current wariness of Maranoa farmers is one, who said: “I was one of the first to try to grow pulses but I just don’t do that sort of thing anymore… you cannot afford to take that sort of risk.” (B Thomas 2000, pers. comm., 2 June)

Many farmers in the Maranoa complained about interest rates. In particular they referred back to the 1980s when interest rates peaked at around 18 percent, whilst penalty rates for arrears in payments often reached 24 percent. Although interest rates declined in the 1990s, the majority of farmers described the peak rates of the 1980s as having done permanent damage to their financial situation. Not only had their equity been reduced, but they had been left with no funds to restock or restart their enterprise. John’s experience was typical of farmers in the area. He commented that: “Whatever happens now we can never recover from the interest costs we faced in the 1980s.” (J Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 19 December)

Many farmers have good reason to feel wary of any further risk-taking. George spoke of one middle-aged farmer who had sold his property in order to purchase a larger property that could support his adult son and his son’s family, as well as himself and his wife. However high interest rates, poor returns from crops and the continuing drought forced him to sell this larger property. He still owns the farm machinery and has been employed by the new owners of the property as a care-taker. His son has had to find work elsewhere.

The incapacity of the farmers to support risk has frustrated the desire of some to shift to more sustainable farming practices. The majority of farmers are aware of the long-term effects of their
current production practices on the sustainability of their farms. They can see potential for, and where possible have made, valuable innovations in land management.

For example, to help make his farm more resilient Craig Williams designed and planned a drought management strategy. One measure was to promote light grazing of local grasses such as Mitchell grass. Jack, Craig’s father, argues that one of the best management options to encourage rapid seedling recovery after a drought is light grazing and fire. He explained that heavy grazing “inhibits root growth.” (J Williams 1999, pers. comm., 27 June) They also believe that areas that have been burned will respond better to rain than areas that have not been burnt.

However despite implementing these strategies the Williams have not been able to decrease the cost of production or reduce the environmental strain on the farm. Now they say they can no longer afford to take risks in order to develop the farm innovatively. Virginia explained:

We can see that we were making valuable changes… but that’s all stopped now. We don’t have much choice but to continue to do things the way we used to… which basically means exploiting what little resources we’ve got to try and increase production. (V. Williams 1999, pers. comm., 27 June)

Together, the linked phenomena of reduced equity and a reluctance to take risks in order to shift practices for the long term improvement of their farms, has eroded the farmer’s confidence in their capacity to effect progress towards their goals of family prosperity and well-being. Rather, they seem locked into a progressive impoverishment of both land and family.

**Family**

In recent years belief that hard work will see their family through bad times has started to fade. Even when farmers spoke positively about an experience there was a sense of fatigue, a sign that they had reached their limit as far as pain was concerned.

Many families described the exhaustion they felt. The most common family scenario involved a man who was working for very long hours, clinging to the belief that more work would produce...
more income. When this income did not eventuate his wife would commonly seek off-farm work, taking this on in addition to her on-farm work, the running of the household and the care of their young children if they were below school age.

The outcome of such a scenario is a family where there is little time for conversation, shared activities or relaxation, and less productivity due to tiredness, fatigue and stress.

Many people said they felt they were in an impossible situation, caught in an endless cycle. One farmer expressed it in the following way:

My husband has been working longer hours but he has nothing to show for it. He has no choice but to keep going if we are to stay on the farm. (S Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 1 August)

Many marriages are placed under enormous stress explained another farmer. “I rarely get to see my husband.” (L Lawson 1999, pers. comm., 6 September)

He is up at first light and comes in again after dark. I know he tries hard but it doesn't seem to be getting us anywhere. (ibid)

Sarah, another farmer was equally frustrated. She said: “He just grabs some food and a bit of sleep and I am doing much the same… We don't have much choice though, we work harder for less reward.” (S Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 12 August)

One woman said that her husband's willingness to work so hard for such a low return was beyond [her] comprehension. She expressed astonishment at the way in which he continued to work.

Many farmers talked about the stress on their familial relationships as well as the stress assumed by their children. Caroline talked about how little time John had to spend with his family. “We rarely have time alone together. He is always busy wondering how we are going to keep the farm running.” (C Leigh 2000, pers. comm., 16 June)
A number of women complained about their husbands retreating into their work. The men were becoming distant from their children, and often developing depression. Arguments between family members increased. “The hard times have made it difficult for all of us,” explained Sarah. “We are very close one minute but at each other’s throat the next. Farming can either pull you together or tear you apart.” (S Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 29 July)

Martha described her feelings,

Depression sets in. It invades the family and the household. You try to push it away but then you have to face it. The hard part is, this downturn will last. It’s not going to get much better; not if things continue to move in the direction that they have been moving. (M Mack 1999, pers. comm., 2 May 1999)

Many women talked about the struggle to keep their spirits up. “[My husband] would come home so discouraged and I wouldn’t know how to lift him out of it,” said one woman (L Lawson 1999, pers. comm., 27 August). “He is just so exhausted,” said another woman. “I feel defeated,” said another.

Some women were critical of the way in which men handled the crisis. Caroline, for example said, “I know for a fact that some local men feel threatened by their wives making decisions about the farm.” (C Leigh 2000, pers. comm., 20 June)

The men were also visibly exhausted although they tended to be less emphatic in their descriptions. “I’m hurting,” said one farmer. “The pain is more than I want to think about,” said another farmer. Several men commented on how tired they felt, while another farmer said that he just didn’t have time to dwell on it. In general, men were more reluctant to reflect on the emotional costs. Another man said, “It has taught [him] how to be much more philosophical about everything.” (C Williams 1999, pers. comm., 21 July)

Bill expressed regret at not having seen his kids grow up. “In the last six years I haven’t really seen them, not even for Sunday lunch… I work a seven day week,” he explained (B Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 18 July).
Because of the work pressures, on and off farm, parents tended to have very limited contact with children. When they do spend time together they often avoid talking about how serious the farm situation has become. The children, however, often had learned through the media or other families, just how difficult things were for farmers on properties like theirs.

My dad says I should stay at school for as long as possible before coming back to the property. But I don’t know if there will be anything to come back to. (S Williams 1999, pers. comm., 13 July)

Concern among children was common. Sarah’s teenage daughter felt the strain. “Dad is so busy. I don’t know how he does it. Mum has no time either… I don’t know if they get a chance to talk to each other any more.” (I. Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 2 September)

“My father won’t listen to any other explanations,” said another. “He just worries about his responsibility to the rest of the family. He thinks he has let us all down.” (James Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 5 November)

Families shared many concerns for their children. These concerns ranged from the lack of educational opportunities and future employment prospects, to fears about increasing levels of depression. While women resented having to scrimp and save, they were more candid about the numerous factors contributing to the family farm demise. Men, alternatively were more likely to blame themselves for the collapse of the family farm.

Families expressed their sense of failure at having let down parents and grandparents who had kept the farm viable throughout the great depression, world wars and previous difficult trading times. Many farmers stressed that “giving up” was not an option. The farm is a part of the family and the family is the farm. “We have no choice but to struggle on.” (G Mack 1999, pers. comm., 18 May)

Sometimes the number of difficulties being experienced was so high that even the most fiercely determined farmer had to acknowledge the very real threat of losing the farm. “My parents struggled for years to make it possible for me to have this place and I’m afraid that I’m going to lose it”, said John (J Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 15 December).
Ann was born on a cattle property in far north Queensland. The property where she spent her childhood had been purchased by her great grandfather over ninety years ago, and her family still farms it today. She said, “The droughts and fluctuating prices (that we still experience today) are problems that my grandparents experienced, but determination and a sense of custodianship for the land strengthened their resolve to survive.” (A Evans 1999, pers. comm., 11 March)

Until recently Don, Ann’s husband, had worked with his father Trevor on the family farm. The father and son partnership just managed to pay its way while supporting the family until high interest rates, continuing drought and a slump in wool prices forced Trevor to sell the family property. The failure of the family farm was devastating for Trevor whose family had owned the property for three generations. Unable to recover from the shock of having to shoot his stock Trevor left the Maranoa moving to the coast with his wife. Don and Ann became managers on a neighbouring property owned by a transnational corporation. Don never mentions his father. “He can’t bear to think about it,” says Ann who describes what it was like to witness that kind of slaughter. “I don’t think Trevor (or Don for that matter) will ever recover from the trauma of watching everything they worked for disappear.” (A Evans 1999, pers. comm., 11 March) Don still blames himself. He says “my parents struggled for years to make it possible for me to have this place but we just couldn’t hold onto it.” (D Evans 1999, pers. comm., 11 March) Ann says Trevor won’t listen to any explanations. He blames himself for what happened.

A sense of obligation, and guilt at inability to meet that obligation, permeates relations between the different generations on a farm. Not only are these farmers finding themselves unable to equal the heroism of their forebears but, equally, they are unable to avoid compromising their children.

John, for example, is a third generation farmer. His father and grandfather taught him that farm work involves risks and that he needs to think strategically in order to negotiate these risks, to bring about the expected benefits that farming can realise. However problems with financial stress, aggravated by drought, have made it very difficult for him to make ends meet. As the main family member working on the property he cannot return enough profits to the farm, despite working himself to the point of exhaustion. As his children grow, they begin to question whether there is a future in farming. Neither John nor Caroline could answer this question.
Caroline later admitted: “I have got to the stage where I wonder whether it's worth doing anything any more.” (C Leigh 2000, pers. comm., 16 June)

Problems of retirement and succession are complicated by the non-viability of these farms. Where the farm is barely able to support those who work it, there is nothing left over to fund the retirement of those who can no longer participate in productive labour. Henry explained that retirement, however he might desire it, was impossible. All his assets [were] tied up in the farm. “[I just] can’t earn enough” to retire, he said (H. Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 10 July).

Parents who are unable to retire are unable to give over the farm to their grown children.

Some of the issues surrounding parent/children interactions can continue for many years. As children grow up and, in adulthood remain interested in or heavily involved in, the farm, tensions can arise in regard to the transition of ownership from the older to the younger generation. These tensions are particularly evident when parents are aging and decisions need to be made concerning the farm. Where family trusts and or partnerships are operating the issues are often emotional and disputes are common. In some cases tiredness and exhaustion make it almost impossible to achieve open communication and decision-making.

Graham's father is 64 years of age. His cattle and sheep property is adjacent to Graham's. They work together. Graham describes his relationship with his father as difficult. My father is reluctant to give me any responsibility even though we have been running the farm together for a number of years.

I can’t do anything to make him happy. He will have to die before we can sort it out. (G Lawson 1999, pers. comm., 30 August)

For Graham's father, farming is more than work. It represents social status. Though the farm may have been a continual loss, he hangs on because it gives him a sense of worth, of value in the community. “I don't know what I would do if I didn't have this farm,” he admits (C Lawson 2000, pers. comm., 21 June). For him, getting off the tractor means failure.
Lisa doesn’t feel that she can contribute to the family farm. “I try and talk to my husband about what’s going on with our future. I want to know what his parents intend to do with their property. Will there be anything left for us?” (L. Lawson 1999, pers. comm., 19 September)

Familial conflict

An older couple, who own a property badly affected by drought and on which they carry a large mortgage, have found themselves unable to give their son, Mark, independence. Mark and his wife, Rose with three young children, live in a run down house on the property. ‘Mark,’ who has a small stake in the property, is lucky if he receives even living expenses. He finds it difficult to leave his parents and seek off-farm work, as his father requires him to assist with work on the property. Ultimately, however, Mark will have little choice. The farm is too small to produce sufficient income for two families. As Mark wants to remain in farming and his father is not ready to retire, one family will eventually have to either buy or rent a separate farm to support itself.

When the adult child of a farming family has been living on, and helping their parents with, their family farm, and especially if the child hopes eventually to inherit the family property, his (or occasionally her) marriage can mean the beginning of a difficult negotiation of identity for the new family unit. For farmers identity is so closely tied to the farm, that each nuclear family unit feels the need to control their own property.

Under such circumstances, family relations are subjected to enormous stresses. One woman told me that her mother-in-law treated her as though she was the main source of all their problems. “George and I are the third generation. We work for almost nothing and his parents couldn’t run the place without us. We don’t get much say in the farm business . . . This doesn’t stop them from blaming all the problems on me though,” says Martha (M Mack 1999, pers. comm., 15 June). The situation became so bad that George’s parents began to resist the idea of passing over any part of the property to them. There were behind-the-hand remarks, long silences and exclusion from family events. Everybody else would be up at the house having

2 Mark and his family live on a property adjacent to Don and Ann. Although I did not live with them, I spent a lot of time in their home. Mark frequently worked for Don as a way of earning extra income.
lunch, but George and Martha just didn't feel welcome. Slowly they were shut out of the farm. By the end, relations deteriorated to the point where there were screaming matches and threats. Eventually Martha and her family took the dogs and the clothes on their back and bought another farm.

**Material and Social Interdependence between the family and the farm**

Inter-dependence between a family and a farm is common. Families are materially supported by the income from their farm; and farms are viable as productive enterprises producing income, profit and capital when resources are owned, managed and worked by a single family. Such economic reliance is only one factor of the mutual dependence between farm and families. Being dependent on the family often led to a reluctance to trust anyone outside the family. Hope, pride, and a fear of losing social status also played a role in isolating the family from other sources of help.

**Community**

Just as relations within families are strained by the hardship of farming marginal properties, so too do communities suffer. As these properties are located several hours drive from their nearest neighbour or town, simple things like meeting friends and arranging social activities can become extremely difficult when days are fully occupied by farm and domestic chores.

Involvement in social, political, recreational and church activities are part of the social capital of the farmer, and inability to participate contributes to a sense of guilt and failure. For some farmers it has been particularly distressing to find that they are no longer able to make an ongoing contribution to their community because of the demands of their farm and home situations.

One farmer said: “My wife is working too hard. She gets so tired from working on the property... I can see how much she is missing her activities and her responsibilities to the church.” (J Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 15 October) Another said, “I am completely run off my feet just keeping things going. I feel like we have let the community down, but the farm and the kids take every moment of our lives.” (V. Williams 1999, pers. comm., 22 July) Another farmer has nothing to show for it. He has no choice but to keep going if we are to stay on the farm.” (S Thomas 1998) It all comes back to the scale of your operation... how much you can take... the state of your...
admitted that he had contemplated quitting farming, “I feel like I have let everybody down. I used to be the president of the football club and on other committees… but now I don’t even have the energy to go to church anymore.” (J Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 15 October)

John has always seen himself as a leader. He has worked very hard to bring other graziers and town residents together. He is an active supporter of local clubs, and is well regarded by producer organisations. He has also been a member of several state bodies and is known in political circles for his ability to identify rural concerns amongst constituents.

However in recent years John has been unable to meet the rising costs of production. This has increased his debt and led to a decline in the value of his property. For John this has had significant consequences. It has affected his ability to part take in local activities and it has forced him to withdraw from the public role in which he had taken such pride. “It used to be, that a farmer who worked hard had community respect,” but all that has changed now. Nobody cares if you work hard. It’s all about efficiency and viability and how much you earn; “it has nothing to do with who you are and what you believe in.” (J Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 19 December)

For many farmers loss of income has led to a sense of isolation from the outside world. They mourn the closure of local shops, district clubs, rodeos and agricultural shows as these are important avenues for social interaction. One woman said that she felt they were “losing everything… people in Brisbane and Sydney just don’t know what it is like to live in a place where all the shops are boarded up.” (A Evans 1999, pers. comm., 11 March) The diminishing population, lack of money, lack of leisure time and exhaustion of potential participants are given as the main reasons for the loss of these facilities and events.

**Government withdrawal**

Many farmers blame the government for a growing gap between the country and city. They feel that the government tends “to be more worried about people in the city than people in the country.” (V. Williams 1999, pers. comm., 29 June) “We have different needs to people in the city,” one farmer emphasised (D Evans 1999, pers. comm., 2 February). There was a strong feeling that the government did not give sufficient weight to these different needs. Another
cost of production rises... profits start to drop and then that causes debt... once you start getting into debt, 
trust.” (B Thomas 2000, pers. comm, 1 June)  “We work, we save, we increase production... and for what? We've got nothing to show for it.” (I
(Rawson 1999, pers. comm., 10 September)  “We work hard... we increase production, we look for alternative solutions... whatever... you name it... we stop buying equipment... and still we can’t make ends meet.” (C Lei...
farmer complained that the government rarely took the time to understand the diversity of communities involved in farming.

Bill and Sarah went further by saying that they thought, “nobody in Canberra respected them.” Sarah explained:

I don’t think the government cares if we stay here or not. I think most country people feel neglected by the politicians. (S Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 17 September)

Martha agreed saying that the government was making survival increasingly difficult for small farmers. “I think they [the government] are out to help the big person and not the little one.” (M Mack 1999, pers. comm., 21 April)

Many expressed their feeling of having been abandoned. They complained bitterly that their grievances went unnoticed by the larger population. One farmer commented, “Farming is the lifeblood of the country” but “city people rarely take any notice.” (D Evans 1999, pers. comm., 14 February)

The government’s fierce commitment to deregulation has made the stress under which people work worse. Many farmers described how they were unable to make any real difference to their financial situation, despite working long hours. Others worried that they were unable to meet their family’s needs. “I have had enough of working for nothing,” said one farmer. (G Mack 1999, pers. comm., 7 June)

Criticism of the government’s economic commitment to deregulation was widespread and often coupled with disbelief. Lisa explained how:

We can’t understand why they are deregulating everything. It just does not make sense… There are probably some changes they could make… but why have they got to radically change everything? (L Lawson 1999, pers. comm., 14 August)
to enable us to buy more land. All we ended up with was more work, greater costs.
and less income.” (G Mack 1999, pers. comm., 7 June) “We can see that we were making valuable changes... but that’s all...
Another farmer felt that farmers had gained very little from Government during the wool crisis. As a wool grower he particularly objected to the way the Government had allowed the floor price of wool to rise to unprecedented levels of 870 cents in the eighties. He explained that when overseas buyers stopped buying wool the stockpile grew to over 4 million bales. Industry debt also rose to over 2 million dollars (Richardson 2000). Federal Cabinet was subsequently forced to scrap the scheme. Farmers condemned them for having ignored the warnings made by industry leaders in Queensland and Western Australia. Bill said,

I still resent the fact that the demise of the floor price scheme for wool was engineered by bureaucrats and politicians… (B Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 13 August)

Some farmers expressed an equal contempt for banks. Bill once had over 80 per cent equity in his property and a perfect record with the bank until, because of low wheat prices; he found he could manage only the interest payments on his mortgage. On the advice of his accountant he applied for a government interest subsidy. His credit records were excellent but the application was declined on the grounds that he would be unable to service his loan and run the farm. Subsequently he was offered the Government's Part C Household Support package that implied his farm was un-viable and required him to sell it. Bill was really angry. He felt that his years of hard work and sacrifice in order to meet the payments on his mortgage now count for nothing.

Similarly John was also critical of the banks. He accused them of "loading the farmer up with anywhere between 2 and 4 per cent extra interest over the prime rate." (J Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 22 October)

3 The reserve price scheme for wool was scrapped in the early 1990s. The reserve price scheme for wool was first introduced in the early 1970s. It responded to concerns over overseas buyers colluding to keep prices low. Sir William Gunn convinced the government of the day to introduce the reserve price scheme, a government guarantee supporting a floor price for wool. The scheme worked successfully until the mid 1980s. See Richardson, B. 2000, 'The politics and economics of wool marketing, 1950-2000', Australian Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics, vol 45.

4 See also the McLaughlin Report of 1999. A review of the wool industry it argued that private competitive market forces were the best indicators for risk management and quality assurance in a global wool industry.

"...which basically means exploiting what he has and working hard to make ends meet. He is putting all his hours but he has nothing to show for it. He has no choice but to keep going if we are to stay on the farm." (S T
little resources we’ve got to try and increase production.” (V. Williams 1999, pers. comm., 27 June) “My husband has been working longer hours” (Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 1 August) “We operate very close to the limit around here...We don't have any resources to buffer ourselves against a bad year anymore, like say a big flood...
A landowner who has properties all over the place... [Then there are] the external things that happen to us, like wool and wheat prices going down... It all comes back to the scale of your operation... how much you can take.

[Once] the cost of production rises... profits start to drop and then that causes debt... once you start getting...
As finances deteriorate and the farm ceases to be a viable enterprise, significant loss of income, family security and future prospects are experienced. Receipt of government assistance is experienced as an additional shame, although their right to such relief is emphasised.

Farmers do not recognise any inconsistency between the image of the independent, self-reliant farmer and the historical extent of government intervention in, and support of, agricultural industries. Their conviction of the value of their industry to Australian well-being and prosperity, makes both privileges seem theirs by right. This attitude explains their failure to see any inconsistency between their expectation that farmers should receive government support for such things as drought relief, and their tendency to denigrate city-based recipients of welfare support, referring to the urban unemployed as ‘dole bludgers.’

**Being marginal**

The gradual withdrawal of government support followed by the National Party’s decreasing influence on the Coalition left many farmers feeling marginalised and without a political voice. Alienated from the political mainstream some farmers started to look for scapegoats. Those they targeted were often far removed from the practice of farming itself.

The most common scapegoats were indigenous Australians and migrants. Farmers resented what they saw as an unfair advantage being given to these groups.

Indigenous Australians were a popular target. Sarah, a Pauline Hanson supporter, explained why some farmers felt bitter towards Indigenous Australians. She said, “Why are they singled out for government handouts when we have been told to tighten our purse strings? I am not saying that they don’t deserve some of it… but just handing out money to anyone is not necessarily the way to do it.” (S Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 17 September)

They live differently to us, complained John. “They are just taking the money… and now they want more rights than anybody else.” (J Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 4 December)

Caroline tried to justify her views by saying,
I am of the opinion that there is racism on both sides, white people being racist against Aboriginal people… and Aboriginal people being racist against the whites… I think that a lot of the reporting is about the racism of the whites against Aborigines and I don’t think there is much reporting the other way. (C Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 4 December)

Ann was more empathetic. She said,

You will see them sitting in a park… drinking. Lots of people only get to see that side of Aboriginal culture… so they sort of label them alcoholics. I think that the Aborigines that sit in parks are really destructive. If there is some way of controlling that… getting people off the streets then I think that more people would be sympathetic. (A Evans 1999, pers. comm., 9 February)

Many farmers also expressed sympathy with and for Indigenous Australians. They expressed empathy for the effects of dispossession, and talked about their links with the land. As one farmer put it, “Aborigines share our sense of belonging to a particular place.” (V. Williams 1999, pers. comm., 13 July)

Another farmer said, “They have a natural affinity with the land.” (G Mack 1999, pers. comm., 15 June) He recalls how he grew up with the son of an Indigenous couple working on a property. “We became good friends over the years”. While some farmers reflect warmly on their friendships with Indigenous people they appear much more reluctant talking about Indigenous ownership. Fear of being dispossessed themselves (being ‘Maboed’) was always close.¹ (C Williams 1999, pers. comm., 11 July)

Less empathy was voiced for migrant groups. “Our cities are full of migrants,” said one farmer (S Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 17 September). “They can’t even speak English properly,” said another (L Lawson 1999, pers. comm., 24 August). Many farmers resented any alternative sources of income either on or off the farm, we save money, we scrimp on clothes, we work, we save, we increase production… and for what? We’ve got nothing to go up in dust.” (B Thomas 2000, pers. comm, 1 June).

¹ On June 3, 1992 the High Court of Australia delivered its landmark Mabo decision which rewrote the Australian common law recognising the existence of native title (rights that existed before colonisation and which still exist). Mabo overturned the doctrine of terra nullius the legal fiction that when Australia was discovered by Captain James Cook in 1788 it was empty and uncivilised.
public acceptance or recognition of cultural difference. They believed that policies such as multiculturalism were diminishing the stability and unity of the nation. For them, stability, unity and strength were understood in terms of racial and cultural homogeneity. As a result, many farmers argued for tighter restrictions on immigration.

A common criticism aimed at migrants was their failure to assimilate. As one farmer put it, “we have different values” and “they don’t care about the same things that we care about.” (B Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 10 July) Caroline’s concern was focussed on the different ways that migrants do things, emphasising that “they just don’t fit in.” (C Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 19 November) Other farmers recalled their fear of travelling to cities such as Brisbane and Sydney. “There are so many non-whites in Brisbane,” said Ann. They are “mixed up with crime… and they are violent, particularly towards women…” (A Evans 1999, pers. comm., 9 February) Caroline expressed her belief that men from the Balkans are inherently violent. Racist references were often justified by insisting that migrants had been insincere or impolite in their dealings with local populations. “Not that I have anything against them,” one woman protested, “but a lot of them are very pushy… they don’t even say thank you.” (L Lawson 1999, pers. comm., 24 August) Virginia and Craig expressed similar views, saying, “I don’t know about you, but I am tired of always having to accommodate people who don’t understand what it means to be Australian… to have good manners… to be fair…to be honest.” (V. Williams 1999, pers. comm., 13 July)

Many farmers I talked to believed that Australian jobs were being undermined by the presence of migrants. Caroline, for example, talked about migrants “snatching away our jobs.” (C Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 19 November)

John and Caroline both believed that Australia would be wise to cancel the refugee programme, and in future draw immigrants from “traditional Christian countries.” John frequently advocated that although he does not support a return to the ‘White Australia’ policy, he believes “we are in danger of being swamped by Asians.” (J Leigh 1998, pers. comm., 13 November)
Political groups claiming to represent farmers, such as Pauline Hanson's One Nation, have echoed many of these sentiments.6

In her Maiden Speech to the House of Representatives, following her election to the Senate as Independent Member for Oxley in 1996, Hanson argued:

I, and most Australians, want our immigration policy radically reviewed and that of multiculturalism abolished. I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians. Between 1984 and 1995, 40% of all migrants into this country were of Asian origin. Abolishing the policy of multiculturalism will save billions of dollars and allow those from ethnic backgrounds to join mainstream Australia, paving the way to a strong, untied country. Immigration must be halted in the short term so that our dole queues are not added to by, in many cases, unskilled migrants not fluent in the English language (Australian House of Representatives Hansard, 10 September 1996, pp. 3860-3863).

The popularity of Hanson and the One Nation Party flourished in areas such as the Maranoa.7 Political theorists such as Judith Brett and Jennifer Rutherford claim that this popularity was largely based on Hanson's appeal to a conception of Australian masculinity rooted in traditions of independence, self-reliance and self-discipline (Brett 1998; Rutherford 2001).

6 Support for One Nation in the 1996 federal election and later in the 1997 Queensland State election largely came from rural and regional Australia. This election was a watershed in Australian politics. Across the state the One Nation Party received 22.7 per cent of the first preference vote. This was highest in the outer-metropolitan seats (e.g. Caboolture, Bundamba, Logan and Woodbridge). In three seats ONP received over 40 per cent of the vote (Barambah 43.5 per cent, Maryborough 42.6 per cent and Tablelands 42.1 per cent) (Parliamentary Library). Overall in regional and rural Queensland, One Nation received 29.8 per cent of the vote and won nine seats (Parliamentary Library).

7 The State with the greatest level of support for Hanson was Queensland. This was partly because most Queenslanders live outside Brisbane, in regional and rural areas (Goot 1998, pp. 63-64). In the first six months following its formation in April 1997 One Nation Party branches formed across the nation. At its peak it had as many as 270 branches (Ward 2000, p. 91). While in the period between April 1997 and June 1998 the national level of support for One Nation ranged from 5% to 10%, in Queensland this figure remained steady at 15-17% (Goot, p. 63). In the polling booth of Burra Burra, in the Queensland electorate of Western Downs (a part of the federal electorate of Maranoa), the ONP candidate scored 66.3 per cent of the primary vote (Davis and Stimson 2001, p. 74).
One of the overriding elements in Hanson’s iteration of white Australian masculine identity was an emphasis on the land. Hanson’s rhetoric defined bounded property as the principal site for the performance of white Australian masculinity (Probyn-Rapsey 1999).

Sympathy for far-right groups is not unprecedented in the region. For example literature from the Australian League of Rights has always been readily available. Openness to these more extreme political elements demonstrates the extent to which farmers feel isolated from mainstream politics.

**Exhaustion and the failure to realise what they are striving for**

In the Maranoa hard work has not led to an enriched life. Gradually and often painfully it has led to exhaustion and a depletion of all moral resources.

Rather than being rewarded by a sense of progress towards the goals for which they strive, the farmers feel besieged, and complain of physical and mental exhaustion. In their bitterness they have become less tolerant, less generous and in some cases dishonest.

One farmer explained how farmers used to take “pride” in honesty and integrity. For instance “A farmer would never try to cheat anyone out of money but that’s not the case any more.” (G Mack 1999, pers. comm., 18 April)

Another financially over-extended farmer admitted that in the past he would never have considered falsifying a document or fudging on a federal government subsidy, but now he is not so sure. He and his partner have struggled with the enormous pressures of debt for many years, and exhaustion is a part of their changing sense of what is right. “Watching others get away with it makes it easier,” said one woman whose concerns ranged from lack of educational opportunities or employment prospects to fears about depression and suicide. Most farmers had come to the conclusion that “if you are going to farm you are going to have to do dishonest things sometimes.” (C Lawson 1999, pers. comm., 27 September) Farming provides many opportunities for beating the system, said one farmer who admitted to borrowing more money than he could afford to repay. He justified this by saying that, “when you are sliding down the
you have to grab every bump that comes along.” (C Williams 1999, pers. comm., 21 July)

Another, who had taken up off-farm work, said “Thanks to my job, I’ve never had to stoop to that [deception], but I won’t say that I wouldn’t do it.” (G Lawson 1999, pers. comm., 25 August)

**Loss of pride and self-respect**

Fierce pride, which so often manifested itself among the family farmers that I stayed with, was sometimes an obstacle to the farmers’ accepting that their farm was becoming less financially viable. As heirs to generations of struggle, and stubborn refusal to give in to adversity, many found it extremely difficult to admit that the future of their farm was under serious threat. This pride also led farmers to hide their failure from others, wherever they could. For them their ability to hold things together was essential to their personal dignity.

Many women talked about the humiliations associated with looking for work outside the farm. “No one recognises your skills,” said one farmer. “I feel inferior and degraded.” (L Lawson 1999, pers. comm., 24 August)

... you’re in a position where you have to go on the dole and you’re being put through an interview and they don’t care (M Mack 1999, pers. comm., 23 June).

I want to work... it’s not that I don’t want to work... I’ve been down to the C.E.S and said I’ll do anything... but they still don’t contact you and then you get this stupid thing of wasting three days sitting there finding out how to get a job. It is insulting (A Evans 1999, pers. comm., 11 March).

Some farmers argued that programmes to provide drought relief and other agricultural assistance packages, were set up arbitrarily. “There’s no fairness in it,” said one farmer whose eligibility for assistance was dependent on putting his property on the market and making himself available for full time employment at Centrelink (B Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 12 August). “Bending the truth to qualify for these programmes is common,” admitted another (C Williams 1999, pers. comm., 11 July).
... but that’s all stopped now. We don’t have much choice but to continue to do things the way we used to... which basically means...
exploiting what little resources we've got to try and increase production.” (V. Williams 1999, pers. comm., 27 June) “My husband has been working on the farm.” (S Thomas 1998, pers. comm., 1 August) “We operate very close to the limit around here... We don't have any resources to buffer ourselves against a bad year.”
working longer hours but he has nothing to show for it. He has no choice but to keep going if we are to stay on the farm anymore, like say a big landowner who has properties all over the place… [Then there are] the external things that happen to us, like wool and wheat prices going down… It all comes back to the scale of your
operation... how much you can take... the state of your equipment, and how much you are required to pay someone to work for you... These are the sorts of things that can undo even a prosperous farmer." (S Thomas 20
you start getting into debt, you run more stock, and put more land into crop and it's not long before the whole
On the flip side, some farmers discuss their dealings with local agricultural businesses as a constant battle to avoid being cheated. One farmer recounted his own experience of being short-changed by a grain dealer, cheated on fertilizer, and victimised by being sold old seed instead of new.

Although it is impossible to substantiate particular claims of dishonest or unfair practice, it is clear that farmers accuse each other of various deceitful strategies with minimal or no evidence. A lively gossip network spreads these rumours, fuelling a pervasive atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust.

The topic of dishonesty is less commonly discussed amongst those farmers who have been more cautious with their finances. However they, too, accuse other farmers of taking too many risks, and of putting the practice of farming in jeopardy through their mismanagement.

The subject of fraud was also raised but when it did come up in conversation it was often associated with the more “ambitious” larger-scale cotton farmers, who had properties near St George. Cotton farmers would often be accused of being overly greedy. They were seen as having betrayed the ethos of rural idyll; having sacrificed traditional ways (it was held) in pursuit of profit. Many cotton farmers and their families do not choose to live on the farm. For them the farm is a business, not a dwelling place. Cotton farmers display hunter-like qualities. Family farmers frequently charged them with using too much water, draining the rivers and buying and selling water licences without consideration for the rest of the community.

**Conclusion**

Life has become difficult for the family farmers in Maranoa. The vision of a good life, a life in which a farming family can work harmoniously together, independently exercising their judgment to develop their land, reaping the bounty of nature as a reward for their hard work, and gaining respect and social recognition; this vision has receded, almost disappeared, from view.

As demonstrated in Chapter 8, the profound intensification of technologised farming in the course of the twentieth century coupled with shifts in government policy, deregulation of the
market and the advent of transnational corporations as major players in the global organisation of production and consumption, has meant that farmers now occupy a very different position in the world from that envisaged by their forebears. No longer sustained by their past and not yet incorporated into a viable future they remain stranded and trapped in a world that does not require their skills nor recognise their know-how. Bauman uses the term ‘redundant’ to describe people, who like the farmers in Maranoa, have become ‘collateral casualties of progress.’ (2004, p. 15). He notes that within liquid modernity there is no cure for being made redundant. ‘The others do not need you, they can do as well, or better without you.’ (2004, p. 12)

Feeling vulnerable and exposed, many farmers have lost all hope. However family, duty and responsibility condemn them to a life of continuous struggle; a failure to retain the farm would be felt as a personal indictment of their ability as farmers, and an insult to their ancestors who had faced difficulties but who nevertheless had managed to hold onto their farm.

“We work hard... we increase production, we buy new clothes, food, whatever... you name it... we stop buying equipment... and still we can’t make
we look for alternative sources of income, either on or off the farm, we save money, we scrimp to make ends meet. (C. Leigh 2000, pers. comm., 16 June) They [the bank] advised us to get bigger. They
Conclusion
Conclusion

Reflection is the courage to make the truth of our own presuppositions and the realm of our own goals into things that most deserve to be called into question. (Heidegger 1977, pp. 115-154)

The long process of engaging with the photographs I had made in the Maranoa began when I returned from my fieldwork. Committed to using archival film I spent many weeks in the dark room developing and making proofs, thousands of proofs. What strikes me most about the photographs now is the dissonance between what the participants in the project wanted me to see and record, and what the photographs finally convey.

These farmers wanted an evocation of their robustness, their heroism. Indeed the fieldwork demonstrates that not only are they resilient but they are resourceful; and their capacity to work, and endure a frugal and physically demanding life, is evident in their ability to hang on to their farms and their families despite their difficulties. They are the proud heirs of a tradition that celebrates endurance and takes pride in independence, self-reliance and self-control, as well as in their ability to impose order on the landscape. They reminded me that possession of these virtues had enabled them to survive, as had their ties to family and place. Their capacity to order nature and command technology is something they are fiercely proud of, and evidence of this can be seen in the number of photographs dedicated to documenting their work life.

However, as an alien among them, a guest and helper and, above all, a photographer, what I saw, and what the photographs potently bring back to me, was their vulnerability, their fragility and their desperate, but ever-more tenuous, clinging to a life that once held for them the promise of great rewards. Despite the efforts of these farmers to order their surrounds, the images speak of disorder and fragmentation. Everywhere one looks there is evidence of disintegration, degeneration and decay. The erosion is both physical and symbolic.

The failure of technology to deliver on its promise of a good life is compounded by the tyranny it exercises over these farmers and their land; the tyranny of exhaustive production. With the integration of the family farm into a global agricultural network, the small farmer has not only
been rendered powerless, but has been consumed within an abstracted production process serving a globalised system, and prohibiting the farmer from responding to local needs and problems.

The importance of local knowledge cannot be underestimated in terms of sustainability. In a global culture that prefers to value the hunter, with an emphasis on maximum production, over the gardener who offers placed-based knowledge, the sustaining of local food security has been backgrounded.

Certainly, global food systems are incapable of responding with sufficient sensitivity to sustain the long-term viability of marginal farming land. The fieldwork undertaken for this thesis clearly shows that exhaustion deadens the capacity of practices to critically engage and institute necessary change.

However the feeling of powerlessness that the research leaves one with comes more from the recognition of the scale of the forces at work in the situation of the farmers, and the view of them as almost insignificant parts of the large mechanisms of Fordist production.

The only escape from such powerlessness comes from a recognition of what is at play within the situation one faces, and a re-evaluation of what is worthwhile in the role one is playing. In other words, rather than being held in place by a romantic attachment to a past ideal, the farmers could foreground their real love of the land and of their partnership with it, but recognise that harnessing that land to exhaustive production is not a way forward for either the land or themselves. Change of some kind is necessary, and the strength to make that change is probably going to come more from the women than the men - given that the women have always given themselves over to whatever needed to be done in order to realise the goals of the family.

On the marginal farms of the Maranoa, however, hardship has hardened formerly flexible farmers into the most conservative of practices, while those who are most deeply wedded to agendas of maximized production within a highly technologized system, are ever more desperate in their adherence to this ideology. Change has been abandoned and the long term good of the land has been sacrificed to immediate survival. The study suggests both the urgency of addressing the need for changes in farming and food production practices on marginal
land, and the difficulties that currently stand in the way of such change. What can be done to mobilise the more sensitive and nurturing aspects of the practice that these farmers have inherited? These farmers have something important to offer.

On the other hand, the easy equation between hard work and virtue is challenged by the disintegrating moral landscape of these farmers. The hardening into intolerance and narrow ideological paths of a section of our population, should be of concern to us all. We need to address the circumstances that create such retreats from the challenges of a diverse global society.

There is a quality in the fate of these farmers reminiscent of Greek tragedy, their plight evocative of a condition all too human. The fieldwork and the photographs portray their strength, their determination and their fierce pride, as they hold to their inheritance; a mixed and often internally contradictory amalgam of beliefs, emotions, orientations and knowing engagement. Yet what the photographs also portray is the exhaustion and the bewilderment of betrayal felt by these farmers, as they realize that the control that they have sought to establish over their domain is inadequate to counter the untamable, and ultimately unintelligible forces of the larger systems they are caught in.

Although I started the project with the assumption that these farmers were profoundly different to me, I am now more struck by what we have in common. We all hold to the orientations and values delivered by the practices that we have given ourselves to. Like the farmers, we find ourselves in the midst of practices that shape our pleasures, fiercely felt, and our struggles, made worthwhile by the hopes and values that orient us and give us purpose; these things are the stuff of our lives. They define our communities, and provide us with dignity and self-respect. Many postmodern urban practices, like the practices of the farmers, are shaped by an inherited amalgam of Enlightenment aspirations and strategies, and post-enlightenment entanglements. For all our urban sophistication, the practices that we are bearers of establish our cares and set us on projects of ordering and control. Shaped by the same broad cultural development of the Enlightenment project, we often find ourselves, like the farmers, overwhelmed by the forces it has unleashed. The farmers of the Maranoa are part of an historical moment that heirs to the cultural inheritance of the West, in large part, share. The photographs capture the particularity of this moment in the Maranoa. The heroic and the tragic are intermingled. But this is a Western condition, as it always has been.
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