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Britain's Australia

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Britain was never the 'onlie begetter' of Australia or its literature; but colonised Australia has always been, in some sense and degree, British. It is the nature of the relationship, not the fact of it, that appears complex, difficult to define, and dynamic. P. R Stephensen, in one of the less controversial contentions in *The Foundations of Culture in Australia* (1936), insisted that Australian culture is both derivative and local; that distinctive non-Aboriginal Australianness is, whatever else, a variant and product of Britishness. Especially in relation to the period before popular and governmental endorsement of a multicultural Australian nation, that suggestion may not seem contentious; and yet the move from a colonial relationship with Britain towards nationhood has influenced many literary nationalists to deny or disown Britishness; or to define 'Australianness' by jettisoning certain unwanted aspects of 'Britishness' or 'Englishness', while valorising as 'Australian' other preferred traits.

In *The Australian Legend* (1958), for example, Russel Ward uses the words English and British primarily to indicate middle- or upper-class Englishness, and thereby erases cockney and north country Englishness from his discourse. Paradoxically, he demonstrates thoroughly the cultural 'transmission' of a particular English literary heritage, a proletarian one, within colonial Australian literature and culture; but he is unwilling to label this process too obviously as English or British, since he perceives a discrete and distinctive Australianness as excluding Britishness.

For A. A. Phillips (in *The Australian Tradition*, 1958) a key 'Australian' quality is the 'democratic', whereas Englishness is defined in relation to class hierarchy. The Marston currency lads in Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms* (1888) are, ideologically and linguistically, on the way to gaining the Australian-ness that Henry Lawson's typical characters later achieve, but squatter Falkland of the colonial gentry is more 'English'. This class paradigm has exercised inescapable cultural power, understandably when it is remembered that Australia claims to be one of the world's oldest current democracies. Despite the rejection by recent commentators of the methodologies and the particular brands of nationalism of Ward and of Phillips, a similar image of 'British' and 'Australian' necessarily persists. Indeed, it may be encouraged by the use of constructs such as Benedict Anderson's national 'imaginary' (in *Imagined Communities*, 1983), which sets up a preferred and consensual ideal nation, or by those post-colonial theories that

define an ideological or political opposition between Britain as imperial colonising agent and Australia and its settlers as a 'colonised' other. In the late 19th century many settlers began to define 'Australia', the 'coming nation', as an Andersonian 'imaginary': they opted for a construct of nationality not yet validated by political realities or an actual constitution, while maintaining, perhaps covertly, various forms of behaviour inconsistent with new national ideals. In this context, the comparison between 'new' and 'old' was inevitably unfavourable to Britishness. In other contexts – where for example an allegiance to Britain was inseparable from most Australian nationalisms, as the Great War – rejection of the 'Britishness' of Australia was insupportable.

This chapter seeks to discuss British (especially English) literature, ideas and literary conventions in a way that underlines their pre-emptive importance for colonial Australian writing, while acknowledging the possibility of their reconstitution or reformation in local and colonial conditions, and also within international, imperial, or global contexts that bear upon the British-colonial connection. The possibility too that the 19th-century colonial literature affects British culture will not be overlooked.

Imaginary Australia: Terra Australis

Before white settlement of Australia, Europeans imagined or conjectured a territory south of the equator of unknown size and shape. Its position was often believed to be either adjacent to Java, or near Cape Horn. Because the south land was 'Incognita' (a term used on some but not all maps and narratives), Terra Australis could be depicted diversely according to one's purpose. Some narratives sought a detailed verisimilitude, scientifically consistent with the known world; some provided obvious escapist fantasy, designedly incredible; some offered frighteningly or wondrously fabricated tales to induce the credulous into belief (or at least suspended disbelief) in gothic monsters, giant birds and mythical animals. Others aimed at utopian or allegorical constructions, whether political or national, moral or metaphysical in focus; and a few were satirically critical of the known world, directing the reader's attention away from any postulated actual southern site towards Europe itself. The most brilliant satire was Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726, 1735). It was apparently positioned deliberately to create a nowhere-land effect in four uncharted regions of the actual world, two of which, Lilliput and the land of the Houyhnhnms, later turned out to be in or near Australia.

The depiction of Terra Australis as 'mediaeval' or 'modern', 'fabulous' or empirically 'scientific', is well illustrated by Geraldine Barnes in her discussion of contradictions in the narratives of the Dutch explorer William Dampier. In some contexts Dampier chose to display his 'scientific' credentials in careful descriptions of flora, fauna, topography and the Aboriginal people; or if motivated 'imaginatively', or commercially by the saleability of Mandevillean travellers' tales, he could provide monsters and marvels to order, 'indirectly confirming medieval constructions of race by translating them into empirical evidence'.

> Just as Columbus drew on tropes of paradise and romance to describe the wonders of Hispaniola, so Dampier drew upon medieval notions of the antipodes and the monstrous races to describe the hellish horrors of New Holland, with effects that would shape perceptions of Australia and Australians for the next three hundred years.[1]

Especially from the point of view of indigenous peoples, the grab for an African imaginary is comparable. As Chinua Achebe has famously suggested in his attack on Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), Africa has been similarly portrayed as a 'metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognisable humanity into which the wandering European enters at his peril'.[2]

Country without city: before gold

The discovery of Australia by British writers did not necessarily entail its literal, accurate, or scientific representation; it persists as a metaphysical trope or imaginary wonderland in verse fiction and drama to the present day. Both Enlightenment and medieval imaginary narratives serve as alternative prototypes. For example Lady Mary Fox, illegitimate daughter of William IV, wrote *An Account of an Expedition to the Interior of New Holland* (1837); it is difficult to discover whether she knew of the French antecedents 200 years earlier to her gothicised feminist utopian fictional treatise. Even Lewis Carroll's Alice plummets lightly down a hole to, or perhaps past, an Australian antipodes. Writers who adhered to certain discourses of 'Enlightenment' were disciplined by requirements of empirical accuracy: and the famous narratives of James Cook, Arthur Phillip, John Hunter, Watkin Tench, Charles Darwin and other navigators and explorers that obey this authority contribute to the revered 'annals of science'. Literary historians, however, while obliged to respect such writings, usually find something else (particularly in Cook, Tench and Darwin) that enlivens the prose, yet is not especially scientific; or (as in the case of Sir Joseph Banks) they find the writing dull. Cook is admired for his unconscious autobiographical revelation of the extraordinary skills of self-control, benevolence, and sheer competence and wisdom, later recognised in Kenneth Slessor's poem 'Five Visions of Captain Cook'. In Tench the added dimension includes a wryness and moral charity, an imaginative delight in the novelty of local realities, and compassionate recognition of human similarities as well as exotic differences between Aborigines and Europeans.

Colonial immigrants did not simply bring literature to Australia as 'cultural baggage'; a genie escaped from the baggage to create a 'literary culture', a broad and unconsciously employed heteroglossia that represented forces and ideas beyond the migrant's material individuality. European, American, Asian and Aboriginal influences, from works and dialogue, accompanied and reshaped British negotiations with local topography, climate,

1 From the abstract of a paper sponsored by ARC Network for Early European Research, 2–3 November, 2006. See also G. Barnes and A. Mitchell, in S. Trigg (ed.), *Medievalism and the Gothic in Australian Culture*, MUP, 2005.

2 Chinua Achebe, 'An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*', *Massachusetts Review*, 18 (1973).

flora, fauna and Indigenous and white culture. Literature was obliged to fumble with the demands that Australia made on English words, and to refashion its lens to cope with blur. Such a goal could never be realised quickly, unanimously, and absolutely; but the integrity of the attempts helped to create and individuate a colonial literary culture.

For example, any traditional European distinction within Australia between City and Country was impossible to apply in Australia before about 1840, since no city existed. Erasmus Darwin and others could project a city of the future (his 'proud arch, colossus-like'[3] bestrode the harbour in Sydney some 150 years later), but could not represent an unimagined example from the present or past. Even Sydney, Hobart and Melbourne were at first normally suffixed with the word 'Town', as if to reinforce their non-metropolitan status and colonial difference. If a colonial Ben Jonson were to apostrophise Penshurst or Kenilworth, he would find himself addressing an outlying small settlement or sheep station. Whether turretless or factitiously castellated, whether rough or elegantly hospitable, a homestead was never totally a country castle or manor; and its 'lord', the squatter, was a blurred or contradictory counterpart of the quasi-aristocratic type.

Literary representations of the squatter (and his castle) vary ambiguously; they respond as much to demands of 'transplanted' generic conventions and snobbish or romantic escapism, as to practical observation of actual colonial squattocracy. Henry Kingsley and Boldrewood prefer, in their masculine romances, to depict their squatters as typically leonine and judicious, paragons of English decency and quasi-aristocratic good taste; whereas Anthony Trollope's realism in *Harry Heathcote of Gangoil* (1874) uncovers paradoxical financial and social colonial anxieties, and the laborious and frustrating daily grind of squatting life. Joseph Furphy later recognised the squatters of the Victorian period in two forms: as gentlemanly, but never democratic, types (such as his Stewart); and as rapaciously cruel, ill-dressed scrooges, like the actual but legendary 'Hungry' Tyson and 'Big' Clarke. (There were apparently at least three 'Big' Clark(e)s in colonial Victoria, including one known also as 'Moneyed' Clarke.)

Arguably, the term 'bush', used as early as the 18th century to qualify English 'country', gained colonial currency because the English word was not by itself sufficiently useful or viable in a largely unsettled, cityless, non-English, non-aristocratic environment. Colonial 'writing' (vocally transmitted and published broadside material and newspapers, as well as fiction and poetry) spread and reinforced the use of such vernacular terms. Although these terms entrenched new local meanings, they also conveyed a tension with the English 'original'.

The conventions and ideology that shape and inform the most respected 'elitist' literature in Australia between white settlement in 1788 and the gold rushes of 1851 are those of British neoclassicism. In a new settlement literature has a patriotic role: to

3 Erasmus Darwin, 'Visit of Hope to Sydney Cove, Near Botany Bay', *The Economy of Vegetation*, 1792 (written 1789).

announce and celebrate the civilisation of Australian 'wilds', and the imperial importation of models of culture that demonstrate universal laws. Ostensibly, such literature claims colonised space as part of a greater imperium; it elicits pride or elation by erasing or subordinating local distractions or liabilities. Remoteness has no place within a scheme of universal order, unless perhaps it is to signify future achievement. The best account of literary neoclassicism in Australia is still Robert Dixon's *The Course of Empire* (1986), which examines its primacy in painting, architecture and accounts of exploration; it also finds it in the verse, for example, of Michael Massey Robinson, in the 'epic' poetry of Wentworth, and in fiction that culminates, sometimes ambiguously, in Kingsley's *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn* (1859).

Settlement, however, immediately brought challenges to neoclassical orthodoxies from 'home' as well as from within the new community. Robert Southey's *Botany Bay Eclogues*, published in 1793 when Port Jackson was five years old and the poet himself just 19, employed neoclassical forms to undermine their associated ideology. His attack was as radical, and Romantic, as that of his friends Coleridge and Wordsworth on 18th-century poetic diction. The penal colony becomes for Southey a potential Arcady not for gentlemen and ladies but for the abused quasi-Blakean victims of urbanisation, industrialism, imperialism, and (in the case of the 'female transport' Elinor) men. The subversive pastoral dream that Southey articulates anticipates various later Australian romantic literary and political 'rebellions': Charles Harpur's colonial republicanism, and romantic perceptions of 'nature'; the Arcadianism of later 'working men's paradise' immigration schemes and pastoral fictions; and the convict or Australian felon as hero or victim in ballads and fiction, are just three. Stuart Curran's comment, in relation to English literature, that 'Southey's pastorals constitute a watershed in the history of the genre'[4] equally illuminates Australian writing.

Another local anxiety was the perception – not unlikely at the best of times, but probable when reading dutiful public odes – that these trumpetings of the official view, these strivings for effect in an undeniably distant, convict colony, actually drew attention, through their absence in the verse, to unpleasant colonial realities themselves: to privation, separation, loss, and the mediocrity of local poetry. The Augustan conventions of Popean and Swiftian satire were appropriated by William Forster, William Wills, Harpur, Henry Kendall and others to create perhaps the finest of all colonial quasi-neoclassical verse. 'Appropriated', however, is a key term here, since the ideological axioms of the patriotic discourse are often missing. The beautiful and piercing heroic couplets, together with other conventions, are deployed not to endorse or confirm an old order, Roman or British, but perhaps to adumbrate a new cultivated ideal and to address vengefully the follies of particular local enemies.

Accompanying and paralleling Southey's example, but extending beyond it for decades, is the peculiar importance as poet and theorist of William Wordsworth. It

4 Stuart Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*, OUP, 1986, p. 199.

is tempting but misleading to claim without qualification that Wordsworth's poems and prefaces promoted the ballad form (as Southey transformed the pastoral), and the poeticised democratic 'language of men', and made them suitable vehicles for colonial adaptation and local transformation; and that his focus on natural landscape was especially pertinent to the local superabundance of it. Southey's use of the traditional 'aristocratic' ballad was certainly less suitable for colonial democrats than those, also employed by Wordsworth, dealing with outlawry and rebels; and there was no need for Australian balladists, particularly the Irish, to read Wordsworth in order to find models.

More importantly, Wordsworth became increasingly, for Australian readers and poets, a guarantor of taste and an authority to endorse or to challenge. As an anti-neoclassical role model, he was explicit as well as exemplary: he aimed to ascertain, he wrote in the 1800 *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, 'how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure', and warned that 'readers accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers [will] look round for poetry' of their kind without satisfaction. Harpur, it appears, modelled his own 'notes' and commentary as well as his verse style on this kind of fabricated rustic curtness and plainness, but claimed that Wordsworth himself (and certainly the 'townie' Tennyson) had to be relieved of the 'namby pamby' element and adapted further to colonial conditions. Harpur began writing in the 1830s, but gained more public recognition after the 1850s gold rushes.

A major difference between the poets is their primary perspective on the rural past. For Wordsworth, abbeys, castles and 'folk' characters (the leech gatherer, the solitary reaper) are guarantors of its sanctity and traditional value. For Harpur, deprived of this possibility in a land recently occupied by white settlers, the wilds are sparsely inhabited by distantly observed, vaguely defined white settlers, sometimes with names like 'Egremont', who appear necessarily small, like feral elves, against a backdrop of natural turbulence and expanse. The artificiality is not necessarily ineffective: but it does make Harpur's settings appear in some poems closer to those of an imaginary world. In other poems, such as 'A Midsummer Noon in the Australian Forest', the 'real' setting is literally untouched by immigrants: the English associations of 'a midsummer night's dream' undergo antipodean semantic inversions as the daytime trance reveals an older and primeval past and virtually untrodden natural landscape.

The gold rushes changed both the Australian colonial identity and the preoccupations and infrastructure of literary culture. The goldfields themselves resembled rough moving cities rather than lonely pastoral outposts. The published non-fictional accounts of hundreds of (mainly British) diggers and travellers established a highly literary genre of educative entertainment, now neglected; it complemented idealised narratives of the adventure romance, and emphasised pain, drudgery, failure, natural ugliness and social excess as well as camaraderie and natural beauty. When many years later Henry Handel Richardson claimed some originality for her attempt to write of one of the 'failures' in *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* (1930), she was obviously omitting from consideration

these non-fictional visitors' narratives, which she herself used as historical sources. The literariness and quality of these genre pieces, particularly their use of the conventions of set-piece description and travel writing, are still neglected by literary critics, and by historians who deploy them simply as tropeless 'documentary' evidence (see Chapter 5). In some respects, too, these works anticipate the later focus on urban literature, not only because cities and towns are now explored, but also because the goldfields experience, and the infrastructure of its entertainments, conflicts, crowds, daily routine and legal controls, are revealed as themselves quasi-urban.

By the 1880s British immigrants, and visiting novelists, poets and journalists, had adopted and introduced urban 'presence' and preoccupations into Australian literature. The new focus also redefined earlier perspectives on pastoral operations and wilderness in constructions of the 'bush' and the 'outback'. Catherine Spence, Marcus Clarke, Ada Cambridge, Anthony Trollope, Tasma and other contemporaries examine the multifarious dimensions of urban experience. The love–hate of the inured English Victorian urban writer is now colonialised, manifesting itself in displays of both awe and loathing for the city, and contrariwise for the country and outback. Victorian anti-urban sentiment, deriving from earlier English Romanticism, is sometimes projected into the incipient bush nationalism that was demagogically let loose by the *Bulletin*, and particularly A. B. Paterson in 1889 in 'Clancy of the Overflow'.

The gold rushes and urban growth nourished the development of a panoply of British and European literary and cultural institutions. There were libraries, galleries, mechanics' institutes, universities, the press, literary societies, and art schools, bookshops, working men's clubs, women's clubs, bohemian and elitist coteries, theatres – almost everything that London could offer (as literary visitors like Trollope, H. M. Hyndman, R. M. Twopeny, J. A. Froude, G. A. Sala, Mark Twain, R. L. Stevenson and Rudyard Kipling were likely to remark). Especially in Melbourne – by 1890 a cosmopolitan city of almost half a million people, one of the largest in the empire – both elitist and popular, both imperial and parochial manifestations of literary consumerism were colourfully prominent. But one commodity that could not in the colonial period be readily produced locally was the Author: not just a struggling Kendall, but an eminent and presiding Dickens or Tennyson. Authors of such stature never migrated (though Carlyle and Dickens thought about it), as to leave home was to depart from one's literary and financial support base. Australian readers were not necessarily disturbed by the need to look to Britain for their great writers – indeed, the eventual canonisation of local authors was a goal of the same general search; but the process entailed, even unconsciously, a dependency and congruency that younger native-born writers, however 'British', could not entertain.

The following discussion of the use by colonial writers and readers of British texts and literary authors is necessarily selective: space is not available to consider, for example, Shelley, Trollope, George Eliot, Irish balladists, and Robert Burns. Each of these exercised a discrete and different influence on colonial writers and audiences yet also,

though to a lesser extent than the writers examined, contributed to more widely shared colonial preoccupations and discourses. As we shall see, after the growth of larger cities, and the spread of rural population, 'Britain's Australia' was transformed by metropolitan and urban potentials.

Young and free: J. S. Mill

John Stuart Mill, the principal advocate of liberalism and a modified utilitarianism, had taken a close interest in the Australian colonies since the early 1830s when he and his mentor Jeremy Bentham supported Edward Gibbon Wakefield's proposals for immigration. He had sought then to create an agrarian labouring class, arguing (despite his usual utilitarian classical economics and support for Ricardo) that unless the price of land were initially fixed by governments at a level out of the reach of many immigrants, the cost of labour would be too high to sustain a productive economy. Nevertheless, his interest in de Tocqueville's account of American democracy, and his support of colonial immigration, self-help schemes and the creation of a 'prosperous' working class, allied him with liberal radicals who thought and wrote optimistically about Australian pastoral opportunities and 'democracy'. Chartism, the European revolutions of 1848 and their spillover into gold rush immigration, the American rushes of 1849, and colonial goldfield history after 1851 helped to shape the literary and intellectual outlook and writings of a high proportion of literary Australian immigrants and sojourners of the 1850s.

Mill had published *Principles of Political Economy* in 1848. During the gold rushes, while writing *Utilitarianism* and *On Liberty*, he was a controversial public intellectual who wrote regularly in the leading British newspapers and journals on economic, political, legal, social, foreign and current affairs, and on his own political and ethical principles. He was well known personally as well as in print by many of the professional intelligentsia who started to develop a colonial literary culture in the 1850s, particularly those who met in intellectual societies.

His defence of various 'freedoms' (of speech, conscience, 'information' and 'thought') was an essential part of the cultural baggage of the immigrant lawyers who defended the Eureka rebels, and of some of the rebels themselves (particularly the Italian litterateur librettist Raffaello Carboni). Charles Gavan Duffy, a personal friend, had used Mill's arguments in support of Irish political nationalism. R. H. Horne, the most celebrated poet to emigrate, knew him well, and had an array of 'liberal' credentials of his own (having fought Byronically against the Emperor Maximilian of Mexico); Frederick Sinnett, an early editor of Melbourne *Punch* and author of *The Fiction Fields of Australia* (1856), corresponded from Adelaide and Melbourne. On land owned by Arthur Hardy, brother of Mill's (eventual) wife Harriet Taylor, the Glen Osmond Mechanics' Institute was built: Mill and Harriet and her daughter donated about 100 books from their personal library.

Mill should not be regarded as the sole champion of liberalism, or his colonial followers as learned exponents of his every twist of argument. But his authority, example and personal acquaintance were especially pertinent and attractive in colonies where 'freedom', together with sheer space, was becoming a defining quality of the 'new' country. For colonial Australia's most controversial and colourful drama critic, J. E. Neild, Mill was the greatest of living philosophers; his work helped to define the essentials of 'colonial' culture as an independent entity by offering models and vindications of Neild's own specifically 'colonial' critical practices. Neild believed, in Mill's words, that the 'first duty' of a critic is 'to follow his intellect to whatever conclusions it may lead'.[5] The expression of an opinion may never be 'restrained' without detriment to 'mental freedom'. 'Give me leave to speak my mind', from Jaques in *As You Like It*, became the motto of Neild's weekly column: conflict he considered, like Mill, healthier than 'intellectual pacification'.[6] In dramatic performance 'tradition' is useless unless examined and relevant: the 'authority' of convention must be discarded, particularly if 'English' usages are inapplicable in colonial circumstances. 'Coloniophobia' was Neild's anticipatory neologism for 'the cultural'; he saw it as not merely old-world snobbery, but also as an uncritical surrender of liberty to the false authority of the inappropriate or outmoded.

Neild, like most of his literary contemporaries, could not put into practice the principles Mill enunciated in *The Subjection of Women* (1869), which the author himself could not totally master. When the brilliant Achurch–Carrington rendition of *A Doll's House*, the first and greatest of the British productions, was performed in Melbourne immediately after the controversial London success, Neild was among the most vociferous to miss the point, cantankerously satirising Nora's decision to leave her husband and children: 'it is certain that to any competent psychopathologist the circumstance of a woman quitting her home at midnight to study ethics, would supply a substantial reason for certifying to her unsoundness of mind'.[7] His colleague James Smith had advised J. C. Williamson to change the ending to 'My darlings, I cannot leave you!'[8] but Ibsen prevailed, along with an articulate band who acclaimed the play.

The literary journalist, novelist and political activist Catherine Helen Spence corresponded with Mill and in 1865 met him, and later George Eliot, in London. Spence was at first not especially moved by claims for women's suffrage because, like Mill himself, she wrongly found their implementation impracticable and utopian; but her writings reveal familiar Millian 'democratic' phraseology, later employed by the suffragists and Millian 'disciples' Rose Scott and Louisa Lawson. Spence's most passionately pursued cause was Thomas Hare's system of proportional representation, which she had discovered through Mill's advocacy, though Millian axioms underlie her interest in democracy itself. She wrote a defence of Hare in the Melbourne *Argus*, a series of letters on the

5 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays* (ed. John Gray), Oxford (World's Classics series), 1991, p. 139.
6 Ibid., p. 38. 7 *Australasian*, 21 September 1889. 8 James Smith Papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

subject for the *Adelaide Register*, and a pamphlet, *A Plea for Pure Democracy* (1859), all of which Mill read and discussed with her in correspondence before her visit, sending her as well gifts of early copies of *Political Economy* and *The Subjection of Women*.

Spence supplemented her Millian principles with her Unitarian religion, which increasingly expressed itself, perhaps uncomfortably, in the utopianism of her later fiction and journalism; her commitment to 'the soul' allied her with the transcendentalism of Carlyle and Emerson. The contest between Mill and Carlyle in Britain and Australia is a latter-day and local manifestation of what Mill himself saw as that between 'the lofty inspiration of Plato and the judicious utilitarianism of Aristotle';[9] frequently overshadowed in literary histories by local and nationalist impulses, it suffuses the entire colonial and literary scene, especially before the 1890s, but through Bernard O'Dowd and others in the later period as well.

For Ada Cambridge, Mill dominates over Carlyle and transcendentalism in a contest that pervades much of her verse and fiction. *On Liberty* is virtually axiomatic for her, yet the problems and ironies it creates seem to make any triumph merely pyrrhic. Richard Delavel, the hero of *A Marked Man* (1890) and in some ways a counterpart of Cambridge herself, is 'marked' in diverse ways (characterised, targeted, scarred, recognised), but ironically reverses the Victorian 'man of mark' by his efforts and failures to establish himself as the unorthodox Millian 'sovereign autonomous individual'. Trammelled by marriage and social convention, like J. S. Mill he rejects Oxford on the grounds that it forbids freedom of belief. Again like Mill, he is for years barred from the marriage he chooses until eventually 'freed' by a spouse's death to enter a 'companionate' marriage with his invalid helpmate Constance, counterpart of the 'constant' Harriet Taylor Mill. 'I was thinking of all she was to Mill through those best years of his life – what a different man he might have been without her – how much the world, as well as he, might have lost.'[10]

Richard Delavel's harbourside 'camp' is ostensibly a site of freedom, and may be read metonymically as the new Australia that transcends the old and fustian Britain; but its optimistic potential is shaded and ambivalent. In reality the camp is a place to which escape is possible only fleetingly, and by removing oneself from society. Richard's daughter Sue, a young 'woman of the future', is enthused, yet only in her naivety, for all her special liberal education. Cambridge is as aware as Mill that absolute freedom is impossible, though 'undue' interference may be undesirable; yet the hideaway itself seems, for the reader, idyllic, something like a child's cubby-house rather than an indication of real or transcendental Australian potential. As Robert Dingley[11] has observed, the 'real ending . . . takes the form of a question to which the narrative provides no answer: "Oh, what does it all mean?" wailed Sue, in an anguish of bewilderment, overwhelmed by the terrible mysteries with which she was confronted'.

9 Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 29.
10 The parallels and quotation cited here are from Margaret Bradstock and Louise Wakeling, *Rattling the Orthodoxies: A Life of Ada Cambridge*, Penguin, 1991, p. 130 (and circa).
11 In Ken Stewart (ed.), *The 1890s*, UQP, 1996, p. 194.