‘To See With Their Own Eyes':
Australian Travel Writing on the Pacific Islands c.1880-1941

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of
The Australian National University

Nicholas Halter
December 2014
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge, my own original work, except where acknowledged in the text.

Nicholas Halter
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ABSTRACT

From the 1880s onwards, the Pacific Islands became increasingly accessible to the average Australian with improvements in transportation and the growth of trade and business, Christian outreach, and colonial administration in the region. Economic prosperity and social mobility in Australia facilitated their movement abroad, and the development of publishing and literacy encouraged the circulation of texts which generated excitement about travel and exotic foreign destinations. The varied experiences and impressions of Australians travelling to, and through, the Pacific Islands filled diaries, letters, books, magazines, memoirs and travelogues, many of which found a receptive Australian audience. This thesis explores this corpus of Australian travel writing on the Pacific Islands from c.1880 to 1941. In doing so, it examines how representations of the Pacific Islands within travel accounts reflected, and contributed to, Australian knowledge of the region.

By contextualising these sources and their authors, this thesis explores the nuances and complexities of the individual Australian travel experience, whilst also situating them within the broader corpus of Australian travel literature. It discusses several themes which were prevalent in Australian travel writing of this period: the experience of seaboard travel and tourism, commerce and profit, romantic and utopian ideals, gender roles, ideas of nation and empire, theories of race and science, and notions of the 'savage' and 'civilised.' It explores how individual Australians negotiated these concepts whilst abroad in the Pacific Islands, and how their encounters and their texts highlight a diverse set of reactions, at times confirming, challenging or rejecting previous assumptions and expectations.

This historical study of a previously neglected body of literature deepens our understanding of the historical engagement and exchange between Australians and Pacific Islanders. This was a relationship that reached beyond the political and economic interests of a select few – it permeated popular literature and public debate. Though European stereotypes of the Pacific Islands persisted well into the twentieth century, travel writing was crucial in familiarising and informing Australians about their close neighbours. These accounts also show that this engagement was not one-
sided. The Pacific Islands played an important role in shaping the growth of the Australian nation too, and Australian travel writers recorded much about themselves as they did the exotic 'other' when placed in unfamiliar surroundings. Travel writing can provide a more nuanced view of Australian travellers and readers, and a more detailed understanding of how they imagined the 'South Seas.'
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In this thesis, I refer to authors by their published name, with their initials expanded if known. I also refer to islands as they were named at the time. In some cases in which two names were used (such as ‘Niue’ or ‘Savage Island’) or alternate spelling was used (such as Malayta or Malaita) I will defer to its current name unless quoting the author. Contested terms such as ‘savage’ or ‘civilised’ will be given quotation marks in their first appearance only.

The following names were used by an Australian shipping company in their 1903 route map published in *All about Burns, Philp & Company, Limited*:

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<td>Fiji Group</td>
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<td>Gambier Group, Marquesas Group, Paumotu or Tuamotu Group or Low Archipelago, Society Group, Tubuai or Austral Group</td>
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<td>Ocean Island</td>
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<td>Pleasant Island</td>
<td>Nauru</td>
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<td>Samoa or the Navigator Group</td>
<td>Western Samoa and American Samoa</td>
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<td>Sandwich Islands</td>
<td>Hawaii</td>
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<td>Solomon Islands and Santa Cruz Group</td>
<td>Solomon Islands</td>
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<td>Tokelau or Union Group</td>
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<td>Tonga or Friendly Group</td>
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How superb in reality, fragrant in retrospect, for those who love and understand.¹

Daniel Defoe, Robert Louis Stevenson, Herman Melville, Robert Michael Ballantyne, Louis Becke: until recently, I had never read these authors with their famous, fantastical tales of adventure and savagery in the Pacific Islands. On the contrary, my Pacific education was based on the American film Castaway (2000) and a Lonely Planet guidebook. Yet for Australians of the early twentieth century, these writers loomed large over the Pacific, overshadowing the accounts of explorers before them, informing and inspiring new generations of Australian-born who were more literate and more mobile than their forebears. As I read the novels and magazines that Australian children consumed, and the subsequent travel accounts of Australians who had realised their dreams of a Pacific odyssey, I was captivated by their recollections, in particular the moments when expectations met reality, and the subsequent choices made to reconcile fact with fiction.

My experience of travel to the Pacific Islands was profoundly liberating. Eager to leave behind the familiar for an adventure promised by the unknown, I went to Weno Island, in Chuuk Lagoon, in the Federated States of Micronesia, to volunteer at a Catholic high school for twelve months. I relished my isolation and freedom from the outside world. I felt a rush of excitement to be discovering and understanding this strange new world on my own. I was energised by my newfound authority and independence – only eighteen years old and I was teaching algebra to freshmen students. I was naïve and impressionable, and I remember the joys and frustrations of cross-cultural exchange. It was a formative period in my life and, like Australian zoologist Alan John Marshall in 1937, I strove to convey to my family and friends the powerful impact of my Pacific encounters and the depth and intensity of emotions that moved me.

Writing was an important process in my travel – the nightly ritual of reflection in my journal; the weekly emails to parents and the monthly letters to grandparents; the periodic updates on my online blog. Writing for me was simultaneously an activity of reflection, communication, and archive. Each text served a specific purpose, to reassure, to document, to argue, to entertain, to advertise, to question, to project, always written with a certain audience in mind. I struggled to articulate my personal experiences in a way that moved others to empathise and understand. As the years passed, reminiscences became romanticised and nostalgic. I travelled further afield, beyond the Pacific Islands, chasing those fragrant memories, and in doing so I returned with a desire to seek out that same sense of connection in Australia that I had found elsewhere.

It is this experience that underscores my passion for the Pacific Islands, and for writing, a knowledge and a craft which has been nurtured and developed here at the Department of Pacific and Asian History in ANU.
INTRODUCTION

The truth is that in the places where ‘every one’ goes, almost no man sees with his own eyes...The celebrated spot...is like a photograph which a countless number of others, all more or less similar, have been superimposed in the well known ‘composite’ style...In the whole blurred, worn-out picture, each man’s personal impression counts for just another touch of shade set upon a shadow that has long been there...It is impossible to admire by the battalion, and yet enjoy to the full that sense of an individuality enlarged by experiences absolutely new, that is the real heart of travel-pleasure.  

Beatrice Grimshaw came to be known as one of Australia’s most famous travel writers of the early twentieth century. She was one of many Australian travellers who described crossing unfamiliar landscapes and oceans, and facing the choice of following well-worn routes or forging their own path. Grimshaw articulated the tension between the collective memory or knowledge of ‘the celebrated spot’ and ‘that sense of an individuality enlarged by experiences absolutely new.’ This tension between the individual traveller, and travellers as a collective group, underscores my research of Australian travel writing on the Pacific Islands from c.1880 to 1941. On the one hand, this thesis explores the main themes that permeate Australian travel writing, and questions how these accounts reflected, and contributed to, popular public opinion about the Pacific Islands. It acknowledges that individual travel impressions formed layers upon layers of representations over time, in which particular tropes and stereotypes persisted. Yet it is also important to recognise the individuality of travel accounts. Thus I highlight the diverse backgrounds of these travellers, the varied nature of their impressions, and the nuances, complexities and multiplicity of Australian voices. These were voices which did not blindly accept, but also challenged, or discarded the stereotypes of the texts that inspired them to travel to the Islands in the first place. By providing historical contextualisation to these sources, I attempt to

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2 Beatrice Grimshaw, From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands (London 1907), 168-169.
analyse individual stories in their own right, whilst also situating them within the broader corpus of Australian travel literature.

In light of these travel accounts, I identify subtle shifts in Australian representations of the Pacific Islands over time. The few accounts written in the late nineteenth century continued to apply European myths and stereotypes of a romanticised and alluring Pacific, and appropriated the Islands as settings for fantastical tales of savagery and adventure. In many ways, these accounts reinforced tropes of the 'savage' and 'inferior' Islander, resonating with contemporary issues in Australia such as the Queensland labour trade. Stereotypes of the idyllic Pacific Island and the 'savage' Islander persisted well into the early twentieth century in Polynesia and Melanesia respectively.

From the 1890s until 1914, travel writing increased dramatically, encouraged by economic prosperity in Australia, the growth of publishing, steamship and tourism industries, and a national self-confidence and optimism following Federation. Australians travelling the Pacific Islands began to identify themselves as distinct from their European origins. Carrying their own ideological baggage about Australian masculinity, progress, purity and innocence, Australians began to write accounts that were distinct from conventional European observations. Australians were well aware of colonial rivalries in the region since the late nineteenth century, and their descriptions often contained judgements on the successes or failures of colonial rule, and in some cases, the potential benefits of Australian imperialism.

The interwar period which followed World War I was a time in which the most Australian travel writing was produced. Tourism industries responded to the new demand for travel in, and through, the Pacific Islands, and an increasing number of travellers produced accounts which attempted to distinguish themselves in a competitive commercial market. Some of the accounts began to question previously held assumptions about the Pacific and Australia's role within it. I argue that these accounts are evidence of a gradual shift away from conventional stereotypes emphasising Islander inferiority and savagery, and towards a more humanistic identification with them. This may partly be explained by the massive social and
economic upheaval after World War I, and Australia's newly acquired mandates in the Pacific. It may also have reflected a broader uncertainty about world order and civilisation prompted by the violent conflict in Europe. A study of travel literature can also provide another explanation. I argue it may also reflect a general weariness of exaggerated and overused tropes, in much the same way as readers of the 1880s and 90s favoured Australian writers like Becke whose writing style departed from the British literature which saturated the market. This weariness was encouraged by increasing numbers of travellers returning home whose experiences did not match their expectations. Whilst these returning travellers remained a minority by 1941, their critical attitude would reappear later in travel literature of the 1940s and 50s.

Though Australian representations of the Pacific Islands were diverse and changing over time, two main findings can be taken away from this study of Australian travel writing. First, this research argues Australians were more closely connected to the Pacific Islands than has previously been acknowledged. The level of engagement was much deeper and more widespread than a purely political or economic relationship. It infiltrated popular language and literature, as well as public debate. Travel writing reflected the close proximity of Australians living on the eastern seaboard to their Pacific neighbours, the constant exchange of goods, peoples and ideas across the Pacific Ocean, and a broader awareness within Australia of the significance of the Pacific Islands in its national history as well as European fantasy. These texts provide a reminder of the historical legacy of early European and Australian encounters in the Islands which meant that these places and people were as familiar, if not more so, than other exotic backdrops of Africa or the Orient which regularly featured in popular literature.

This thesis also highlights the ways in which ordinary Australians encountered the Pacific Islands, both physically and through travel literature. These individual travel experiences may have been glancing and momentary, but when considered as a collective they highlight the extraordinary mobility of Australians and their close engagement with the region. As a body of literature, it was an important medium through which Australians negotiated broader social issues which I raise in this thesis, such as romance, gender, economic prosperity, colonialism and empire, nationhood,
racial science, savagery and civilisation. It was also a valued source of information that contributed to a collective Australian knowledge about the Pacific. These texts were important in shaping Australian attitudes to, and expectations of, the region.

Second, Australian travel writing is distinguished by its diversity, both in content, and style. This thesis highlights a varied and complex series of encounters between Australians and Pacific Islanders, emphasising the specific temporal and spatial nature of their journeys. The experience of cross-cultural encounters and the inevitable confrontation of expectation and reality forced individuals to question Australian representations of, and relationships with, the Pacific Islands. This thesis will show that individual responses to travel were broad-ranging and did not always confirm popular assumptions and expectations about the Islands. It brings to light accounts which once were extremely influential and popular in Australia, but have since been overlooked by historians because of their touristic nature, and their momentary and often unremarkable observations.

**Oceanic Imaginary: A Land Girt By Sea**

Australian public interest in the Pacific has fluctuated over time, often overlooking the longstanding maritime connections between the Australian colonies and the Pacific Islands. This section examines the diverse Australian perceptions of the Pacific Ocean and its islands as a geographical space that influenced, and permeated, Australian travel writing.

The immense size and geographical diversity of Australia has at times obscured its Oceanic characteristics – it is an island bordering the Pacific Ocean, with more than 85% of its population currently living within fifty kilometres of the coastline.³ Australia itself is the greatest of the South Sea Islands, the centre around which the smaller constellations are scattered⁴, argued a 1912 shipping magazine.⁴ Historically, Australians have shared a strong connection to the Pacific Islands and the

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maritime world in general, displaying pride in the British traditions of seamanship and navigation. For example, the initial composition for *Advance Australia Fair* in 1879 included the lyrics ‘Britannia rules the wave’ and revered ‘gallant’ Captain James Cook as a popular hero emblematic of ‘British courage’ and naval skill. Sydney in particular was a port city built on sea trade and harbour life, ‘waterborne and waterbound’ according to Grace Karskens. Rather than a barrier, the ocean provided a connection to England and the rest of the world. Sydney Harbour and its visiting seamen inspired popular writers such as Joseph Conrad, Henry Lawson, and Kenneth Slessor. According to Ian Hoskins, the regular arrival of the *HMS Powerful* (the flagship of the British navy’s Australia station), the visit of the American Great White Fleet in 1908 and the reception of Australia’s first naval fleet in 1913 all attracted wide attention. Popular interest in sailing and navigation resurfaced in the 1920s and 30s, evident in several accounts of travel on private sailing vessels which were inspired by Jack London’s *The Cruise of the Snark* (1911).

Australia’s oceanic origins were held in tension by a turn to the interior, particularly from the 1820s onwards. On the Australian frontier, a national character was beginning to take shape. Yet the ocean remained a vital link, and an important part of the lifestyle and culture of many Australians. The Australian gaze was torn between the sea and the land, and both domains were viewed as pathways to return

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5 Peter Dodds McCormick, *Advance Australia Fair*, (Sydney, 1907).
6 Grace Karskens, *The Colony: A History of Early Sydney* (Crows Nest 2010), 161, 166. Sydney was founded and run by naval officers. Karskens shows that Sydney was marked by a sense of fluidity, and the ocean offered the possibility of escape for convicts.
‘home’, as escape destinations, as opportunities for social betterment, as spaces of danger and threat, as spaces to be explored, known, owned and colonised.\(^{11}\)

For the first colonial settlers in Australia, knowledge of the Pacific Islands was influenced by the popular imaginary in Europe. Few Australians travelled through the Pacific Islands prior to the 1880s. For them, the Pacific Islands were frequently identified as the ‘South Seas’, a term derived from the classical myth of the antipodes.\(^{12}\) Fictional tales of adventure incorporated the accounts of returning travellers and continued to locate protagonists on an unspecified ‘cannibal’, ‘savage’, ‘coral’, ‘tropical’ or ‘treasure’ island within the South Seas, cementing the Pacific Islands as a generic and exotic backdrop upon which European actors played. These ambiguous descriptors persisted in Australian travel accounts, and were more prevalent than terms such as ‘Pacific’ or ‘Oceania’.\(^{13}\) They continued to serve as ideal settings for boyhood adventure tales in the late nineteenth century, which were very popular and influential in Australia, and valued for their educational content as well as entertainment.\(^{14}\)

The character of the Australian colonies prior to Federation also shaped views of the Pacific neighbours. Roger Thompson’s history highlights the discord over foreign policy and trade in the Pacific between the eastern Australian colonies and the British Colonial Office, and the role of businesses, religious groups and individuals

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\(^{11}\) Frances Steel’s history of New Zealand owned Union Steamship Company argues for a more ‘multi-sited (sighted) gaze’ that looks to the sea as much as it does to the land. Frances Steel, *Oceania Under Steam: Sea Transport and the Cultures of Colonialism, c.1870-1914* (Manchester 2011), 9.

\(^{12}\) The term ‘South Sea’ or ‘Mar del Sur’ was coined by Spaniard Vasco Nunez de Balboa in 1513. Bronwen Douglas traces its genealogy to Greek philosophers of the sixth century who believed in an antipodean southern landmass which counterbalanced the north. Bronwen Douglas, *Science, Voyages, and Encounters in Oceania, 1511-1850* (New York 2014), 4. From the 1880s to 1941, Australians frequently referred to Pacific Islanders as ‘South Sea Islanders.’

\(^{13}\) Ferdinand Magellan described the ‘Mare Pacificum’ or ‘Pacific Sea’ in 1520. ‘Oceania’ was coined by French geographers, first as ‘Océanique’ in 1804 and then as ‘Océanie’ in 1815, encompassing Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands and island Southeast Asia. Ibid., 5. Adrian Vickers argues that fictional literature of the 1880s and 90s constituted what was the ‘most coherent and extensive depiction of this part of the world [that is, Asia and the Pacific] then available to Australian readers.’ Adrian Vickers in Robert Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, Gender, and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction, 1875-1914* (New York 1995), 198.

who lobbied government when public interest waned.15 This was particularly the case in issues pertaining to labour and trade, most notably the nineteenth century Queensland labour trade (see chapter six). The term ‘Australasia’ reflected these colonial relationships, which extended within Australia and across the Pacific to New Zealand and Fiji. First coined in 1756 by French scholar Charles de Brosses, it was appropriated to signify Australia and New Zealand, Australian imperial ambitions in the Pacific, or simply Australia.16 By the twentieth century, New Zealand articulated its own ‘Pacific destiny’ distinct from Australia.

The realities of colonial competition in the region from the 1880s onwards brought specific islands into focus for the Australian public. During the 1880s Australian public interest in the Pacific Islands reached its peak, and rather than an empty ‘South Sea’, the imagined Pacific was filled with islands, mapped in colour according to their colonial masters (see figure 1). By 1885 a well-attended town hall meeting in Australia could be held on a Pacific issue, according to Luke Trainor.17 Amongst the many perceived external threats, the French presence in New Caledonia and the New Hebrides prompted considerable debate during the late nineteenth century. Chapter four highlights these concerns, which were used by the Australian federation movement to highlight the need for a foreign policy independent of Britain, and in some cases, a form of Australian imperialism in the Pacific.18 With Federation in 1901, the newly formed national government could begin to implement a distinctively Australian foreign policy, but remained constrained by inter-state rivalries, economic pressures, and allegiance to Britain.19

18 Australians looked to the United States’ ‘Monroe doctrine’ as a model of a new Australian imperialism in the Pacific. The Monroe doctrine was an American policy prohibiting foreign annexations in the Americas. In 1869 The Age declared ‘the manifest destiny of Australia, to employ an Americanism, is to colonise and subdue the islands of Melanesia.’ The Age (14 August 1869) in Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific*, 25.
The borders defining spheres of influence in the Pacific Islands shifted over time, yet the most pervasive, persistent and unchanging conceptualisation of the Pacific Islands was a racialised one. The terms ‘Melanesia’ and ‘Polynesia’ were firmly rooted in Australian understandings of the Pacific region, denoting race rather than geographical location. Australians of the twentieth century frequently described the Pacific in terms of this racial binary, omitting the original categories of ‘Malaysia’

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20 Commonly attributed to Jules-Sébastien-César Dumont d’Urville’s categories of ‘Melanesia’, ‘Micronesia’, ‘Polynesia’ and ‘Malaysia’ in 1832, these divisions had racial origins as early as 1595 when Spanish explorers visited the Marquesas Islands. D’Urville’s quaternary division was based on earlier theories that the Pacific was inhabited by two races, one made up of Micronesians, Polynesians and Malaysians, and one of Melanesians, distinguished by their dark skin (amongst other traits). Serge Tcherkezoff, ‘A Long and Unfortunate Voyage Towards the “Invention” of the Melanesia/Polynesia Distinction 1595-1832’, Journal of Pacific History, 38:2 (2003), 176. The term was coined by Bory de Saint-Vincent in 1825, ‘Mélaniens’ meaning ‘Blacks’. The islands of Melanesia included Australia, New Guinea, New Britain, New Ireland, New Caledonia, the New Hebrides, Santa Cruz and Fiji. The islands of Polynesia included Samoa, the Cook Islands, Easter Island, French Polynesia, Hawaii, Niue, the Pitcairn Islands, Tonga, Wallis and Futuna, Rotuma and New Zealand.
(which was considered part of Asia) and ‘Micronesia’ (which was too distant). As journalist Paul McGuire explained in 1942, Melanesia’s proximity brought it within Australia’s colonial reach: ‘At Suva you pass from Polynesia into Melanesia and into the Australasian sphere of influence. The Fijis are ruled from London, but one begins to be aware of Sydney and Wellington west and south.’

This racialised conception of the Pacific Islands was reflected in Australian travel accounts, which increasingly advocated a scientific understanding of race as immutable, and situated Pacific Islanders as inferior and static. This resonated with early European conceptions of the Pacific Islands as a space for scientific discovery which inscribed the Pacific Islander as a ‘passive receptacle of observation.’ As chapters five and six demonstrate, science and race permeated Australian travel writing, particularly in Melanesia, and were convenient tools to justify colonial exploitation and governance. Travel writing informed, and was informed by, a series of domestic racial policies designed to protect the nation from foreign immigration, known collectively as the ‘White Australia Policy.’

Australian travellers continued to imagine the Pacific Islands according to the literary and scientific legacies left by their European predecessors, and popular ideas of the South Seas, Polynesia and Melanesia remained unquestioned by the majority. However, I argue that there were an increasing number of travellers during the interwar period that began to undermine popular tropes about the Pacific Islands. As more Australians travelled further afield, there were more possibilities for cross-cultural encounters that undermined conventional stereotypes of the Pacific. The acquisition of the New Guinea mandate in 1922 also redefined Australia’s geographical conception of the Pacific, and demanded a greater international consciousness within Australia. In travel writing of the 1920s and 30s, the use of the term ‘Pacific’ was more common than previous regional descriptors such as ‘South

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Seas’ or ‘Australasia’, evidence of a greater recognition of the Pacific Islands as a shared and contested colonial space.23

Parameters

In light of the expansive nature of Australian engagement with the Pacific Islands, I have established some parameters for this research. The time period, from c.1880 to 1941, coincides with the expansion of steamship routes between Australia and the Pacific Islands (see chapter one). These routes responded to, and facilitated, the growth of Australian engagement with the Pacific region, including trade and business, Christian outreach, and colonial administration in the region. As a result, more Australians than ever before came into contact with the region and its peoples, opening new possibilities for encounter and exchange. Although I consulted some texts from the 1860s and 70s when Australians were beginning to move through the Pacific, the exchanges that took place during these decades were intermittent and limited in scale compared to the 1880s when interest from the Australian colonies in the Pacific Islands reached its peak. The 1880s was also identified as a starting point because it was a period marked by the development of a stronger national consciousness (politically and culturally), and the Pacific Islands became intertwined in the advancement of Australian political interests, first in the federation debate, and then in discussions about Australian colonial rule.

The beginning of the Pacific War in 1941 was identified as the end point for my research because mobility became highly restricted and the consequences of war dramatically changed Australian perceptions of the region. Vessels were commandeered and enemy ships patrolled Pacific waters. The construction of island airstrips facilitated the growth of air transportation after the war, permanently changing subsequent Australian travel to the region. After 1945, popular literature

23 This is evident in recent studies of the participation of Australians in Pan-Pacific organisations in the 1920s and 30s, which originated out of American efforts to encourage the idea of a ‘new Pacific’ as a sphere of influence separate from Europe in which it could play a leading role. Tomoko Akami, Internationalizing the Pacific: the United States, Japan, and the Institute of Pacific Relations in War and Peace, 1919-45 (New York 2002); Fiona Paisley, Glamour in the Pacific: Cultural Internationalism and Race Politics in the Women’s Pan-Pacific (Honolulu 2009). In the late 1930s, fear of Japanese imperial ambitions also encouraged Australians to look further north in the Pacific.
about the Pacific increasingly focused on war themes, and sites of conflict became memorials and tourist attractions. In some cases I refer to texts which were published after 1941 about earlier travels, but I acknowledge that these accounts were written and published in a different historical context.

Geographical limits to the sources examined in this thesis were also necessary. The region of the North Pacific was largely excluded in response to the limited number of sources about the area. This reflects the minimal level of Australian engagement with, and interest in, the region, most likely due to its geographical distance from Australia, and its closer colonial associations with Japan and the United States of America. Some discussion of Hawaii is included in chapter one, and occasionally I refer to Australian trade with Micronesian outposts in the Marshall Islands and Kiribati.

Conversely, significant long-term contact between Australians and the territories of ‘Papua’ and ‘New Guinea’ offers a vast archival record of Australian travel writing which, for pragmatic reasons, I have not included in my research.24 Fortunately, many of these materials have featured in numerous studies of Australian and Papua New Guinea history, including those of Nigel Krauth, Clive Moore and Hank Nelson.25 Australian representations of Papua and New Guinea share close

24 The Territory of Papua comprised the south-eastern quarter of the island of New Guinea which became a British Protectorate in the year 1884, and four years later it was formally annexed as British New Guinea. In 1906 Australia became responsible for its administration. The north-eastern part of the island of New Guinea and a number of outlying islands, including the German-named Bismarck Archipelago, New Britain and New Ireland, was known as German New Guinea. It was a protectorate from 1884 until 1914 when it fell to Australian forces following the outbreak of the First World War. From then it was known as the Trust Territory of New Guinea, given to Australia as a League of Nations mandate (along with Nauru) in 1920. In 1949, the territories of Papua and New Guinea were combined. The Dutch claim to the western half of New Guinea was unchallenged by Germany, Britain or Australia. Hank Nelson, ‘Liberation: The End of Australian Rule in Papua New Guinea’, Journal of Pacific History. 35:3 (2000), 270.

similarities with depictions of Melanesia in general, which I discuss in detail throughout this thesis. Explored relatively late compared to other Pacific Islands, Papua New Guinea was the ‘last unknown’ (as named by Karl Shapiro and Gavin Souter) and the ‘last colonial imaginary.’ As a result, within the broader Pacific imaginary, Papua and New Guinea was a place of extremes, a ‘land of phantasmal imaginings and unexplainable nightmares.’

As Australian narratives of settlement gradually replaced those of exploration, Papua and New Guinea became a ‘testing-ground for the strength of the Australian character’ in the 1900s. It was also in these territories that Australian imperial ambitions were most fully enacted until 1975. This did not only mean that there was a proliferation of accounts by government officials and district officers, but also that these territories became a standard by which Australian rule was appraised. Thus, for those Australian travellers post-World War I who increasingly questioned the merits of their ‘civilisation’ and the allegedly ‘superior’ Australian coloniser, Papua and New Guinea presented the clearest opportunity for judging Australian efforts (see chapters five and six).

For similar pragmatic reasons, the prolific archive of visual sources including photography and film were not included in this research. I do acknowledge that these were significant sources that shaped Australian representations in the early twentieth century. Images were no longer a luxury by the 1900s, and they not only featured in monographs, but were also reproduced in photo albums, encyclopaedias, guidebooks, magazines, newspapers, stamps and postcards, and at exhibits, museums and lantern shows. Until the 1930s, when camera technology was more accessible, few travellers

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28 Krauth, New Guinea Images in Australian Literature, xiv.
took their own photographs. Rather, popular images were reproduced and widely circulated, especially the work of Australians John Watt Beattie, Norman Hardy, Frank Hurley, John William Lindt and Thomas McMahon.

As the cinema industry developed from the early 1900s, several Australians were influential in the production of cinematic works as writers, actors and actresses, and directors. Amateur films were even taken aboard cruise ships by travellers in the 1920s. Yet American films dominated the commercial market, preferring Hawaii as an ideal location. The visual imaging of the Pacific reinforced and contributed to persistent tropes about the Pacific Islands which I will discuss throughout this thesis. Whilst the proliferation of images, both static and moving, did not completely displace travel writing, it did alter the market for travel literature, and in some cases subordinated travel writing as a form of communication that was less 'real.' Subsequent travel writing had no choice but to incorporate, and respond to, this new collection of images which were perpetuating particular tropes about the Islands.

**Who was the ‘Australian’ Traveller?**

The task of determining what counted as ‘Australian’ travel writing was also challenging. A sense of distinctive Australian identity was not clearly articulated between 1880 and 1941. Travellers did not often explicitly describe themselves as ‘Australian’ in their texts. Australian slang and references to Australian people or places were not common in travel accounts either, perhaps because travellers preferred to focus on the exotic rather than the familiar. This trend may also be explained by...

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The earliest surviving records of films are those of Hawaii (commissioned by Thomas Edison) and the Torres Strait (by Alfred Haddon) in 1898. Notable Australian contributors to cinema include Charles Chauvel (director), Errol Flynn (actor and author), Beatrice Grimshaw (author), Frank Hurley (director), Annette Kellerman (actress and author) and Raymond Longford (director).

The National Film and Sound Archive of Australia holds two films by anonymous authors of their trans-Pacific travels: Title #64121, [Pacific Islands Leg of Boat Trip to U.S.; Sydney to Los Angeles by Boat] (c.1927) and Title #37863, [New Zealand, Pacific Island and Canadian? Holiday] (c1928).

the process of travel abroad, which accentuated the ambiguities and insecurities of individual and national identities. Instead, travellers preferred to present themselves as wanderers or explorers, using terms such as ‘globe-trotter’, ‘vagabond’, ‘way-farer’, ‘sundowner’, ‘beachcomber’, ‘shell-back’, ‘troubadour’ and ‘pilgrim.’ Many of these identifiers contained romantic or heroic connotations when they appeared in travel writing about the Pacific Islands. I referred to several online databases, bibliographies and dictionaries to compile my list of Australian travel writers, tending towards inclusivity when determining which texts were Australian travel writings. Occasionally biographical details were conflicting or unable to be found. In some cases, mistakes had been made in previous compilations, such Edmund Morris Miller’s 1935 bibliography of Australian literature which incorrectly reported Englishman Ralph Stock’s birthplace as New South Wales.

There were many travellers who were born in Europe and moved to Australia, and these European immigrants remained a high proportion of the Australian population in the nineteenth century. As a result, Richard White argues that during most of the nineteenth century there was more emphasis on being Anglo-Saxon rather than British or Australian. Beatrice Grimshaw was Irish-born, and travelled the Pacific Islands where she established her reputation as a professional travel writer, before permanently settling in Australia in 1907. George Robertson Nicoll emigrated from Scotland to Australia in 1848, where he became a wealthy shipowner and later recorded his world travels in a diary and published book. Nicoll provided a detailed


account of his European upbringing, yet explicitly described himself as ‘Australian’ in 1899.36

There were also self-identified ‘British’ travellers who spent time in Australia and have been included in lists such as the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (ADB) on the basis of their contribution to the Australian nation. The most common examples which feature in the ADB are English missionaries and naval officers who were regularly posted among the various British colonies or dominions. In most cases, I have only included British-born authors who did not live permanently in Australia if they spent a significant period of time living in Australia, and if their travel accounts do not express an overt allegiance to a particular nationality other than Australian.37 Alternatively, British travellers who wrote accounts of the Pacific before they lived in Australia have not been included (such as Anna Brassey38).

There are many examples of the fluid exchange between England and Australia in which national identity was blurred or omitted. Elinor Mordaunt was an English-born author who lived in Australia for six years, raising her son by herself whilst editing a women’s magazine. She went on to become a famous travel writer, and I have included her in my research on the basis of her time spent in Australia.39 Similarly, Albert Stewart Meek was a British-born naturalist who made several visits to Australia and the Pacific Islands where he stayed for between a few months and two years. For this reason he is included in McCormack et al.’s bibliography of Australian travel writing, as well as mine.40 Fred Rebell was a Latvian migrant who was not naturalised as an Australian citizen until 20 years after his Pacific travels, yet I have

37 For this reason I have tended to dismiss the accounts of British officials and naval officers who spent time posted in Australia. Missionaries were less overt in their national allegiance than British officials. I also distinguish between travellers who specifically identify themselves as ‘British’, and those who only include their birthplace or childhood details in their travel writing.
40 Albert Stewart Meek, *A Naturalist in Cannibal Land*. Edited by Frank Fox (London 1913); McCormack et al., *Annotated Bibliography of Australian Overseas Travel Writing*. 
included him because he had spent 19 years previously living and working in the country. British-born artists Aletta Lewis and Arnold Safroni-Middleton both spent their formative teenage years in Australia before returning to England, and both did not identify themselves as British in their travel accounts, so I have also included them.41

The mobility of Australians also made it difficult to determine their nationality, with many moving to Europe in search of employment, and staying there. Jack McLaren, a Melbourne-born author who wrote extensively about his Pacific travels in the late 1890s, moved to London in 1925 when he was 39 to pursue his writing career. It was here that McLaren found success, establishing his reputation as an author, publishing the majority of his fictional work about the Pacific, and broadcasting for the British Broadcasting Corporation. In fact, some Australian authors were regarded as British by their readers because their books were published in London.42 In some cases, such as Henry Tichborne (publishing under the pseudonym, ‘Sundowner’), the lack of biographical information about the author compounds the difficulty in determining their nationality.43

‘Colonial’ was another label used by Australian travellers, particularly during the nineteenth century, to express a shared colonial identity under the British Empire. This shared identity was encouraged by books and magazines about the Pacific Islands which were distributed amongst the colonies, and included Australian, New Zealand

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41 In fact, Lewis discussed her willingness to become accepted as Samoan, and did not feel proud of her European heritage. Aletta Lewis, They Call Them Savages (London 1938).
42 ‘Very few Australian titles made their way directly to the US from Australia before the 1930s. They travelled via London...As commodities, then, these books travelled as British books regardless of their stories or settings or the author’s residence or birthplace – it is largely a transatlantic not a transpacific story.’ David Carter, ‘Transpacific or Transatlantic Traffic? Australian Books and American Publishers’ in Robert Dixon and Nicholas Bims, eds., Reading Across the Pacific: Australia-United States Intellectual Histories (Sydney 2010), 345.
43 According to his texts, Tichborne was born in England, but spent some time in Australia. This is verified by a newspaper article which describes him as a ‘special correspondent from London.’ See ‘The Polynesian Question’, The Advertiser (9 October 1900), 6 [accessed 5 August 2013 at http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article36972981]. His Australian connection was suggested in Rambles in Polynesia, where he wished to be laid to rest ‘with my own folk under the old gum trees on the Kolarendabri’ [in Australia]. Henry Tichborne, Rambles in Polynesia by Sundowner (London 1897), 1.
and British authors. Similarly, the term ‘Australasian’ was a popular expression of colonial affinities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and was used to articulate an Australian sphere of influence in the region, encompassing New Zealand and/or the Pacific Islands.

Australian travellers frequently admired and proclaimed the benefits of the British Empire in their texts, and it was common practice when travelling abroad to visit the British consul, particularly when in contested or dangerous territories, such as the New Hebrides. ‘Britisher’ was another ambiguous term used in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In some cases it was used to refer to oneself as a British subject, a term both Clement Wragge and M. Lloyd employed in 1906 and 1901 respectively. Yet ‘Britisher’ was also used to identify British travellers, as Betty Freeman did when she described ‘young Australian socialites’ and ‘upper crust Britisherhomeward bound’ on a steamship in Suva in the 1930s.

In light of this colonial legacy, national identity continued to be ambiguous and contested in the early twentieth century. This was despite the population growth of more Australian-born and a growing sense of Australian identity and nationalism. In 1936, tourist T. Allan McKay called himself ‘a plain British-Australian business

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44 See for example the *Peeps at Many Lands* book series, or magazines such as *Chums* or *The Southern Cross Log*. In fact, a body of ‘Australian literature’ was not identified until 1927 when Sir John Quick published *A Classified Catalogue of Books and Writing by Australian Writers*.

45 For examples of the term’s varied use, see Andrew Garran, ed., *Australasia Illustrated* (Sydney 1886); William Wilkins, *Australasia: A Descriptive and Pictorial Account of the Australian and New Zealand Colonies, Tasmania and the Adjacent Lands* (London 1888); Thomas P. Lucas, *Shall Australasia be a Nation* (Brisbane 1907); and Frederick Rhodes, *Pageant of the Pacific: Being the Maritime History of Australasia* (Sydney 1934).

46 New South Wales politician Thomas Henley and fiction writer Jack McLaren both supported the British Empire in their accounts. Thomas Henley, *A Pacific Cruise: Musings and Opinions on Island Problems* (Sydney 1930); Jack McLaren, *Gentlemen of the Empire: The Colourful and Remarkable Experiences of District Commissioners, Patrol Officers and Other Officials in Some of the British Empire’s Tropical Outposts* (Melbourne 1940). Richard Cheeseman visited the British consul in the New Hebrides and was given cautionary travel advice. Richard Cheeseman, *The South Sea Islands: Notes of a Trip* (Brighton 1901).


48 Betty Freeman, *Fiji - Memory Hold the Door* (Balgowlah 1996), 72. Freeman distinguished Britishers from Australians, whereas Nossiter considered them the same: ‘It quite bucks one up after being away from one’s own kind, to meet Britishers in such out-of-the-way places as there.’ Nossiter, *Southward Ho!*, 117.
man.49 Around the same time Albert Fuller Ellis published two accounts of phosphate mining in Ocean Island and Nauru which proudly advertised British enterprise. Although he was born in Queensland, he resided in both Australia and New Zealand for extensive periods of time, and did not clearly identify with a particular nationality. Passports did not distinguish between the two nationalities until 1949, and upbringing and education prepared Australians for Britain as ‘home’, with travellers who visited Europe finding their identity as British being strengthened (as well as their own Australian identity).50

There were occasionally travel accounts which were patriotic. The Sydney school of writers for the Bulletin and the Victorian-based Australian Natives Association influenced writers and travellers, such as Louis Becke, Jack McLaren and George Meudell.51 The 1917 diary of Australian sailor Chris Syvertsen whilst anchored in Suva aboard H.M.A.S. Fantome is a rare example of a distinctively Australian ‘voice’, with references to what he termed, ‘Australian Slanguage’, and poems about what it means to be Australian.52 More commonly, patriotic statements were stimulated by the presence of foreign threats, such as reactions to the French in the New Hebrides or the Japanese in the north Pacific 53 (see chapter four). Disappointment with the reality of colonial presence in the Pacific also prompted criticism of the British Empire.54

Aside from the ambiguous and interchangeable application of terms such as ‘colonial’, ‘British’, ‘Britisher’, ‘Australasian’ and ‘Australian’, travellers can also be identified according to their gender, age, profession, and motivations. Although this information was not always available or clear, it can provide a general overview of the

49 Thomas Allan McKay, Seeing the World Twice 1926 1935 (Melbourne 1936), vii.
50 Andrew Hassam, Through Australian Eyes: Colonial Perceptions of Imperial Britain (Carlton 2000), 15.
52 Chris Syvertsen, Private Record, PR01438, Australian War Memorial (October 1917-April 1918).
53 For example, Ernest George Marks, Pacific Peril, or, Menace of Japan’s Mandated Islands (Sydney 1933); Julian Thomas, Cannibals and Convicts: Notes of Personal Experiences in the Western Pacific (Melbourne 1886).
54 For example, see Baume’s description of Fiji as a ‘typical smug British colony’. Eric Baume, I Lived These Years (Sydney 1941), 160.
types of travellers leaving Australia from 1880 to 1941. These characteristics will be discussed throughout this thesis. Of the 101 authors that I determined to be Australian for the purposes of this research, males were the overwhelming majority, with only 13 women leaving behind written documentation of their travel (see chapter three). It was a more difficult task to determine the age of travellers. Of the 81 whose ages I could ascertain, 16 were in their twenties, 21 were in their thirties, 17 in their forties, 14 in their fifties, and 12 over sixty years old. The occupations of people travelling were varied. Nine travellers to the Pacific Islands were on official business. These included company employees, philanthropists, politicians and public servants. Five had academic or scientific backgrounds. Journalists amounted to 12, a high number which can be explained by their access to publishers. Seven were artists and writers, often self-styled and in casual occupations. An additional 18 were ‘opportunists’, a term which I use to describe wanderers without any particular aim, or those travelling in search of employment or residence. Other professions included soldiers, seamen, traders and teachers (see chapter two).

Visiting the Pacific Islands was often part of a ‘Grand Tour’ to Europe, in which case the Islands are often summarised in a short paragraph, sidelined in favour of European settings. Twenty-seven of these authors were en route to Europe, and if they were not travelling for business or employment, the journey was often seen as a pilgrimage to the ancestral homeland, and an opportunity for self-improvement, education, and refinement. Twenty-one accounts described travel restricted to the Pacific Islands only. Several steamship companies offered round trips usually for a duration of one or two months. It is more common in these accounts, as opposed to those en route to Europe, that travellers were attracted to the Islands by their isolation, the difficulty of access and a sense of the unknown and adventure.

Pacific Island travel was not only a luxury reserved for the wealthy. Although the majority of Australian travellers were middle or upper class, travel could be achieved via cheaper berths aboard sailing and cargo ships, as well as working aboard vessels. In fact, travellers of the 1880s and 90s were as likely to be opportunistic Australians seeking a better life in the nearby islands, as they were wealthy travellers. By the 1920s and 30s, more luxurious liners catered for those privileged enough to
afford the fare (as well as the ability to travel for leisure). It is perhaps more accurate to associate class with travel writing, rather than travel, as middle and upper class Australians were likely to be well educated, and have access to publishers. This provides further evidence of the need for a more nuanced understanding of Australian travellers that does not bind them to a particular group or category.

**Writing the Pacific for an Australian Audience**

A commonality that these Australian travellers did share was their role as writers, and their conscious effort to address a particular audience. Writing first occurred aboard ship, in the form of notes, sketches, letters and diaries. Writing was an important tradition and activity during sea voyages through the Pacific. When faced with a long sea voyage, writing was a way of passing time and gaining a sense of physical progress. Diaries often took the form of ship logs, with chronological entries noting dates, times, weather patterns, and short observations. Later (and with the benefit of hindsight) these texts were copied, edited and rewritten with page numbers, chapters, and illustrations for publication. Diaries were not necessarily private accounts in which authors reflected on their feelings. Rather, diaries were frequently written with an audience in mind, often sent home to be read aloud amongst family and friends.

Writing was also undertaken as a form of validation. By visiting popular sites or making observations that conformed to previous accounts, travel writing could verify one’s experience of travel, in the same way that photographs or souvenirs were taken as proof. Authenticity could also be secured by imitating the practices of anthropologists and naturalists, with such practices as detailed note-taking and observations, the use of scientific terms, and the collection of specimens (see chapter five). Travel writing became increasingly valued as a form of education and a valid

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56 Ibid., 42. ‘All diaries aspired to the status of a printed book, and the notebooks of every shape and size in which diaries were kept show a common ambition among diarists to produce a lasting memento.’ Andrew Hassam, *No Privacy for Writing: Shipboard Diaries, 1852-1879* (Carlton 1995), xiv.
contribution to the public record, and the objective and ‘scientific’ traveller’s account was perceived to be more accurate and trustworthy.  

Publishing in books or magazines and newspapers was also a way for travellers to make a living. Newcomers to the publishing industry would circulate multiple copies of the same or similar stories to various magazines to establish a reputation. Authors such as Frank Hurley, Ion Llewellyn Idriess and Frank Clune were clever marketers and capitalised on sponsorship and publicity on radio and in print. Others, such as Grimshaw, earned commissions from governments and businesses for their travel writing (see chapter two). Australian novelists writing about the Pacific were confident of a market in Australia, England and the United States for sensational accounts of mysterious islands. Most writers were conscious of the characteristics of popular genres at the time, and the abundance of travel writing produced a need for travellers to distinguish themselves, even if this tended towards sensationalism.

Whether writing for family and friends, validation, or fame and fortune, travellers returning home who wished to publish their diaries or notes had to negotiate a competitive market in Australia. This thesis will show how the changing literary landscape between 1880 and 1941 correlates with shifting representations of the Pacific Islands in Australian travel writing. In the 1870s and 1880s, there was a growing mass market for books in Australia and an increasing number of Australian professional writers as national literacy improved and printing became cheaper. Since there were few book publishers in Australia, periodicals were often de facto publishers. A trans-Tasman print culture meant that writing was regularly shared between Australia and New Zealand, as was authorship. Australian author Will Lawson was known as the ‘restless poet of Australasia’ because he crossed so

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57 Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, eds., The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing (Cambridge 2002), 20, 53.
59 Lydia Wevers, Country of Writing: Travel Writing and New Zealand, 1809-1900 (Auckland 2002), 156.
60 The 1870 Education Act in Britain made printing cheaper and between 1891 and 1911, the number of authors, editors and journalists in New South Wales jumped from 530 to 955 (especially after 1901). White, Inventing Australia, 89.
frequently between the colonies. For both Australian and New Zealand writers of this period, literature was closely tied to British publishers and themes.\(^{61}\)

As shown in table 1, the number of Australian travel writing accounts significantly increased from the 1890s onwards. This may be explained by the expansion of steamship routes in the Pacific Islands, and economic growth and national optimism in Australia up until 1914. A new literary culture was developing in Sydney at this time led by the *Bulletin* and the establishment of new publishers.\(^{62}\) These included the Sydney bookstore Angus and Robertson (established in 1888) and the New South Wales Bookstall which began publishing around the same time. By 1922 Bookstall alone had published 120 authors and 200 titles, and sold 4.5 million copies at a time when Australia’s population numbered five million.\(^{63}\) In this environment, Australian literature represented the newly federated nation as young, pure and innocent, and, through the figure of the ‘coming man’, idealised a people superior to the British stock who were shaped by the Australian climate and proven in sport and war (see chapter two). This idealisation was also shaped by popular racial assumptions about the superiority of the Australian both at home and abroad (see chapters five and six). Australian travellers influenced, and incorporated, these popular ideas about race and nation circulating in Australian literature at the time.

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\(^{61}\) Australian literature ‘from the late 1880s...has customarily been critiqued as a phenomenon *sui generis*. [It was], however,...part of a wider process, in which the role of London-based publishers was crucial, involving their reaching out beyond the British Isles, to the outposts of Empire, to procure promising texts.’ Elizabeth Morrison in Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure*, 197.

\(^{62}\) Peter John Kirkpatrick, *The Sea Coast of Bohemia: Literary Life in Sydney’s Roaring Twenties* (St Lucia 1992), 52.

Following the upheaval of World War I, a new urban and cosmopolitan middle class in Australia simultaneously drove demand for travel and literature. With the exception of the Great Depression, approximately 24,000 Australians were travelling the world annually after World War I. This was the ‘age of the tabloid press’, according to Peter Kirkpatrick, when newspapers had to excite and entertain, not simply inform. Facing increasing competition and a new ‘segmented hierarchy of taste cultures’, Australian publishers had to market their materials to a more diverse public, according to David Carter. This shift is evident in the diverse content of magazines such as *Walkabout* and the use of titles distinctive from the traditional cannibal or coral stereotypes of previous decades, such as ‘South Sea Foam’, ‘Sinabada’, ‘The Black Musketeers’, ‘Stormalong’, ‘Backwash of Empire’, ‘No Longer Innocent’, and ‘Wine Dark Seas and Tropic Skies.’ These titles may also reflect a broader weariness of overused and exaggerated Pacific tropes during the interwar period. This resonates with Andrew Hassam’s claim that the depression of the 1930s stimulated a more critical attitude in Australia, and produced a literature marked by a greater cultural maturity.

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65 Kirkpatrick, *The Sea Coast of Bohemia*, 111.
Both author and audience were crucial in shaping Australian representations of the Pacific Islands. Travel writing offers numerous examples which show that travellers were aware of the popular genres of the day, the key texts that preceded them, and the shifting demands of the Australian audience. Yet the audience’s response is more difficult to assess, particularly when the readership and circulation of these travel accounts is not clear. Instead, my research traces the persistent themes which permeate Australian travel accounts, and proposes connections between these tropes and historical trends or issues amongst the Australian public.

Increasingly, travel writing is recognised as a substantial and valuable genre that can shed light on the multifarious voices within Australia. Between 1830 and 1970 the market had absorbed almost one thousand travel books written by Australians. In my research alone, there were over 130 texts and 100 travel writers writing about the Pacific Islands from c.1880 to 1941. In spite of the availability of this valuable material, research on these works of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has not been undertaken. There are more general bibliographies of Australian literature or non-indigenous literature about the Pacific Islands, but rarely have Australian travellers been considered by scholars as a collective group.

Other analyses of Australian travel to Europe and Asia offer some insights. Also of note is Ngaire Douglas’ They Came For Savages and Ann Stephens’ Pirating the Pacific, which specifically address tourism in the Pacific Islands during the colonial period. More

68 McCormack et al., Annotated Bibliography of Australian Overseas Travel Writing. They give an example of Nathan Frederick Spielvogel’s travel account of Europe, A Gumsucker on the Tramp (1905) selling 20,000 copies, comparable per capita to Mark Twain’s Innocents Abroad (1869).


71 Ngaire Douglas, They Came For Savages: 100 Years of Tourism in Melanesia (Lismore 1996); Ann Stephen, ed., Pirating the Pacific: Images of Travel, Trade & Tourism (Haymarket 1993).
commonly, Australian travel writing has been subsumed within histories of European contact and engagement with the Pacific Islands since the eighteenth century, or within studies of European literature. Whilst they are valuable contributions to our understanding of the Pacific Islands, studies of the European experience in the region overlook the specific historical involvement of Australian travellers.

Scholars have addressed this issue in studies of American representations of the Pacific Islands, often in reference to American imperialism in the North Pacific. In the Australian context, Roger Thompson’s comprehensive history of Australian colonialism in the Pacific Islands is a useful starting point, although its scope is limited to political and economic analysis. Building upon this work, this thesis signposts particular themes and trends in travel writing that were of historical interest to Australians generally. In doing so, I propose general trends in Australian representations of the Pacific Islands, and suggest how these depictions were perpetuated, tested, and revised over time. I have attempted to avoid inflating or conflating these issues, acknowledging, where possible, the diverse and nuanced responses by Australian travellers. Generalisations that argue Australian travel writing is distinguished by its obsession with cleanliness or a supposed ‘casual seriousness’ risk oversimplification. In writing this thesis, I have sought to maintain a balance between a nationalist history (which can tend towards a ‘conceptual and spatial

72 For example: William Davis, Pioneering the Pacific: Imagining Polynesia in United States Literature From 1820 to 1940 (Ph.D., The Claremont Graduate University, 2002); Jeffrey Geiger, Facing the Pacific: Polynesia and the U.S. imperial imagination (Honolulu 2007); Paul Lyons, ‘Pacific Scholarship, Literary Criticism, and Touristic Desire: The Specter of A. Grove Day’, Boundary, 24:2 (1997); Paul Lyons, American Pacificism: Oceania in the U.S. imagination (New York 2006); Christopher McBride, The Colonizer Abroad: Island Representations in American Prose From Herman Melville to Jack London (Ph.D., The Claremont Graduate University, 2001); Rob Wilson, Reimagining the American Pacific: From South Pacific to Bamboo Ridge and Beyond (Durham 2000).

73 Thompson, Australian Imperialism in the Pacific; Thompson, Australia and the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century. See also Clinton Hartley Grattan, The Southwest Pacific Since 1900, A Modern History: Australia, New Zealand, the Islands, Antarctica (Ann Arbor 1963); William Roger Louis and William S. Livingston, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands since the First World War (Canberra 1979).

narrowing’) and a history that recognises the contested, transnational space in which Australians were moving.\(^{75}\)

Whilst examining these broader themes and trends, my research also remains rooted in the study of individual Australians who were traversing the Pacific. Popular individual Australian travellers, such as Louis Becke, Frank Clune, Beatrice Grimshaw, Frank Hurley and Ion Llewellyn Idriess, have occupied the attention of scholars so far.\(^{76}\) I seek to counterbalance this focus by highlighting the travels of other Australians who were not as famous or well-known. In addition to showcasing the diversity of these Australian travellers, this study offers a more nuanced and comprehensive analysis of how ‘ordinary’ Australians (distinct from those with vested interests in the Pacific, such as government officials or European residents) perceived both Australia and the Pacific Islands.

For the study of Australian and Pacific history, travel writing can offer a new perspective. Once dismissed as a historical source because of the perceived unreliability of tourist accounts and their susceptibility to literary embellishment, travel writing has only recently been recognised as a valuable record. In fact, the process of anticipation, arrival, and recollection shared by travellers (discussed in chapter one) offers the historian opportunities to simultaneously examine their expectations or preconceptions, evaluate their responses when expectation meets

\(^{75}\) Frances Steel argues ‘New Zealand and Australia figure in Pacific History in uneven and fragmented ways, while the Pacific seldom permeates histories of Australia or New Zealand.’ Frances Steel, *Oceania Under Steam: Maritime Cultures, Colonial Histories 1870s-1910s* (Ph.D., Australian National University, 2007), 22.

reality, and assess the subsequent choices made to reconcile fact with fiction. The feelings of uncertainty and flux that travellers experienced when surrounded by the unfamiliar provoked diverse reactions, confirming or challenging their worldviews. Thus, travel and travel writing were opportunities for negotiating concepts of belonging, possession and identity. Their texts can illuminate our understanding of how individual Australians interpreted and applied grand social notions of race, gender, nation and empire.

The ambiguities in travel writing which once made it irrelevant to academic study are now a source of renewed interest. Post-structuralist and post-colonial studies encourage an exploration of cultural transmission, flexible identity, mobility and dissolving borders. This is particularly significant for Australians, whose experience of travel has often been shaped by an ambiguous sense of place. From the first inhabitants of the continent to its more recent European colonisers, Australians were defined by journeys of migration, and distinguished by their exceptional mobility. In literature, Australians idealised the explorer and wanderer, acknowledging a proud maritime heritage and celebrating the pioneers of the inland frontier.

Mary Louise Pratt, Nicholas Thomas and Robert Dixon have made significant progress in the study of mobility and travel writing, occasionally providing insights into Australian travellers, but often considering them alongside Europeans writing about the Pacific. Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes* (1992) was one of the first works to identify travel writing as an ‘ideological apparatus of empire’ giving readers ‘a sense of ownership, entitlement and familiarity.’ In *Colonialism’s Culture* (1994), Thomas argued against a simplistic political or economic interpretation of colonialism, instead identifying it as a cultural process which was often contested and conflicted. Trained in Pacific history, Thomas offers a more specialised focus on the region, and recognises that colonial discourse is contradictory – travel reinforces colonialism at the same time as it is ‘an enlarging and liberating process that unsettles the confidence

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78 White, ‘Travel, Writing and Australia’, 6, 10.
of authority.' Most recently, Dixon’s study of Australian and European literature has extended Pratt’s and Thomas’ work to advocate a ‘stronger postcolonial perspective in interdisciplinary Australian studies.’ Dixon argues that text cannot be reduced only to ideology or the state, and highlights the role of commercial entertainment markets in shaping texts. His text-based analyses demonstrate the hybridisation of Australian texts, acknowledge the discernment of Australian audiences, and argue for a more nuanced understanding of the relation between culture and governance as ‘contingent and mediated.’ In light of these readings, travel writing is increasingly identified as a vehicle for colonialism, and as a highly contested and contradictory space in which European travellers, authors and audiences negotiated colonial legacies.

Recognising the diverse and ambiguous nature of travel writing, I have used the broad definition provided by The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing (2002): ‘a discourse designed to describe and interpret for its readers a geographical area together with its natural attributes and its human society and culture.’ This discourse incorporates many genres and styles of writing, including memoirs, journals, guidebooks, travelogues, and magazines. This is immediately evident when searching library catalogues, which spread travel accounts widely amongst various subject headings, both according to genre and region. Within this corpus, I have focused on those accounts that are based on an individual’s actual experience of travel (as opposed to anonymous newspaper articles or generic fictional tales), and contain personal reflections (as opposed to those texts written by authors with a vested interest).

80 Nicholas Thomas, Colonialism’s Culture: Anthropology, Travel, and Government (Princeton 1994), 5.
82 Ibid. See also Dixon, Writing the Colonial Adventure; Dixon, ‘What was Travel Writing? Frank Hurley and the Media Contexts of Early Twentieth-Century Australian Travel Writing’.
84 I have overlooked newspaper content that tends to be sensationalised and impersonal, and fictional tales which often contain generic or imagined plots and island settings, unless they provide contextual background about the author or a particular historical issue. I consider missionaries, government officials, and scientists amongst those travellers that had vested interests (to evangelise, to propagandise, to make an official report, to substantiate a scholarly theory), and thus I only refer to their documents for historical context. For further discussion of Australian, European and American fiction, see Dixon, Writing the Colonial Adventure; Brian V. Street, The Savage in Literature: Representations of “Primitive” Society in English Fiction, 1858-1920 (London 1975); Rebecca
Trying to categorise the type of texts was problematic given that texts frequently blended multiple genres and incorporated fact and fiction, and the desires of the author were not always explicitly articulated. Of the 130 sources I examined, 23 were what I termed ‘personal recollections’, being those texts written by travellers who did not travel on a steamship tour, but sailed their own vessels or visited the Islands for a purpose other than tourism. Their accounts usually have more detailed descriptions of the Islands (and the authors themselves) compared to the 65 ‘tourist recollections’ which contained momentary observations. There were 18 memoirs and autobiographies, and 18 texts were written for a specific purpose: treatises; promotional material commissioned by governments or businesses; and reports to particular communities or organisations at home. I also consulted 10 magazines containing travel articles, and other reference materials, such as handbooks, guidebooks, educational textbooks for children and adults, and encyclopaedic documents. There were 20 unpublished materials, including the diaries of businessmen, Australian naval seamen, scientists, missionaries’ wives, as well as the logbooks of traders and sailors, and other travel ephemera (scrapbooks, postcards, and letters).

During my research I consulted the major repositories in which Australian travel writing is scattered. These included the National Library of Australia, Canberra; the Mitchell Library, Sydney; the Pacific Collection at the Barr Smith Library, Adelaide; the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne; the State Library of Queensland and the Queensland State Archives (particularly relating to the Queensland labour trade), Brisbane; the Menzies Library (holding records of the Colonial Sugar Refinery in Fiji, and Australian shipping company, Burns Philp & Company), Canberra; the National Library of New Zealand, Wellington; and in Suva, the University of the South Pacific’s library, the Suva City library, and the Fiji National Archives.

It is not my intention to provide a complete list of every piece of Australian travel writing, nor do I claim to offer a conclusive analysis of every Australian who

lived in, or travelled through, the Pacific Islands. Where possible, I have tried to corroborate accounts, but my main concern is not to determine ‘what really happened.’ Rather, I explore Australian representations of the Pacific Islands, offering glimpses of individual travellers and experiences in the region, and identifying signposts along the way that correlate with key themes and issues within their accounts. By exploring these themes and issues, I highlight the importance of Australian travel writing in shaping Australian ideas about the Pacific Islands.

The Journey

Like many of the texts that Australians wrote, the following chapters of this thesis are arranged thematically, signposting a set of themes which persisted in Australian travel writing from 1880 to 1941. In some cases these themes are located within a specific location or region. Within each chapter I have attempted to explore whether these themes shifted over time, and if so, how individual Australian travellers reinforced or undermined them.

Chapter One charts the rise of steamship travel and Pacific Islands tourism, and the effect it had on the individual experience of travel, and of the Islands. It examines the processes of travel – the excited anticipation, disappointed realisation, and remembered nostalgia as Australian travellers read, observed, and wrote about the Pacific Islands. It outlines the expansion of steamship routes in the Pacific Ocean, from coastal barges and trading cutters to luxurious trans-Pacific liners. As steamship companies grew in size, trading operations expanded from cargo to passengers, and tourism became an increasingly viable source of revenue by the early 1900s. Islands responded to the new influx of visitors and the impact of tourism became visible in stopover destinations, such as Suva, Papeete, Apia, Pago Pago, Honolulu and Nuku’alofa. Travel accounts describe life aboard these modern ships, as new communities were temporarily created, and the experience of cruising shaped their expectations and impressions of the Pacific Islands. The voyage culminated with the moment of first arrival, a point on which travel accounts often focused, describing the inevitable clash of expectation and reality. This chapter also explores the subsequent consumption of the islands by the ‘tourist gaze’, and draws attention to an increasing
trend in the 1920s and 30s amongst travellers to reject the label ‘tourist’ because it was contrary to the values of adventure and exploration traditionally associated with the Pacific.

Chapter Two focuses on the commercial motivations of travel writers, and discusses the difference between emotive travel impressions, and accounts written by those with vested interests in the Pacific (to evangelise, to propagandise, to make an official report, to substantiate a scholarly theory). In doing so, I explore the similarities and contrasts between writers travelling for leisure, and those travelling on business. This chapter also highlights the economic idealisation of the Pacific Islands in travel writing, and explores the romanticisation of the ‘enterprising Australian’ based on the nineteenth century tales of traders, overseers and miners in the Pacific. It examines how Australian travellers contributed to a narrative that imagined the Pacific Islands as a region for Australian investment and profit, and explores the disjuncture between the romanticised Pacific trader/planter and the realities of making a living in the islands.

Chapter Three traces the origins of the Polynesian ideal and its sustained application by Australian travellers throughout the early twentieth century. For those Australians seeking escape and freedom, Polynesia was the preferred choice, enshrined as alluring, available, feminine, pure and idyllic. This chapter focuses on Australian representations of Tahiti in particular, noting that they remained relatively unchanged from 1880 to 1941. This was in spite of the increasing number of travellers expressing disappointment with the sought-after paradise tarnished by European residents, tourists, and modernisation. Rather than breaking down the problematic trope, representations of Tahitian fragility and corruption only enhanced its desirability, and its geographical isolation from Australia facilitated the continuation of European myths and romanticisms. This chapter also examines the accounts of those Australian idealists and escapists who chased the utopian lifestyle in Tahiti. Their experiences reveal the limitations of the Polynesian ideal, namely the difficulties of interracial romance and abandoning ‘civilisation’, and the role that gender played in shaping experiences of travel in the Pacific.
Chapter Four discusses the legacy of French colonial expansionism in the Pacific Islands, and its impact on Australian attitudes to New Caledonia and the New Hebrides. Both island groups were the subject of intense debate in Australia prior to World War I, forming an integral part of the federation movement, and shaping early Australian perceptions of the Pacific Islands. These island groups were distinct from other French possessions in the eastern Pacific, their proximity to the Australian coast driving alarmist public sentiment. New Caledonia was chiefly known for its convicts and violent conflicts with Islanders, whilst descriptions of the New Hebrides were characterised by uncertainty and confusion. Although concern about French annexation of New Caledonia subsided following World War I, the shared custodianship of the New Hebrides by British and French governments continued to stimulate public debate throughout the 1920s and 30s.

Chapter Five traces the genealogy of 'scientific' racial theories, and the way these ideas were used by Australian travellers in their representations of the Pacific Islands, in particular their judgements on the perceived progress and stasis of particular places and peoples. Racial theory was a persistent undercurrent in Australian travel writing, informing popular themes such as disease, depopulation, and ethnic diversity. In this chapter I highlight the ways in which Australians expressed concern about disease and the tropical environment, the depopulation and degradation of Pacific Islanders (and the role of Australians in protecting and civilising), and the presence of other races in the Pacific (especially Indians, Chinese and Japanese). Travel provided opportunities for face-to-face encounters which challenged assumptions of the passive and primitive Islander, and drew attention to the diverse racial makeup of the Pacific. It also fuelled growing speculation on the superiority of Australian civilising agents and their role in the development of the Pacific Islands.

Chapter Six tests the savage/civilised dichotomy as it was applied by Australian travellers to Melanesia. I identify four perceived traits of the 'savage' – the bestial, infantile, primordial, and cannibal – and show how these were modified and adapted over time. I discuss representations by those involved in the Queensland labour trade who emphasised the brutality of the 'savage' until the early 1900s; by missionaries who stressed childlike characteristics instead to further their evangelising...
goals; and by tourists who tolerated the ‘savage’ in the search for an idealised natural primitivism. Representations of the Islander cannibal were consistent throughout the first half of the twentieth century, albeit increasingly formulaic and commodified over time. The changing emphasis on certain traits of the ‘savage’, moving away from the barbaric image portrayed in adventure fiction and pioneering accounts, suggest that Australian representations of the ‘savage’ softened over time as travellers expressed an awareness of the contested nature of the category.

This thesis draws together a diverse collection of travel accounts about a vast geographical area over a long period of time. The themes I will raise in the following chapters are also wide-ranging and general, and as such, I do not profess to offer a definitive answer to how Australians understood concepts such as science, race, gender, commerce, nation, empire and mobility as they were applied to the Pacific Islands. Ultimately, this thesis is rooted to the accounts of individual travellers. From these individual reflections, impressions and glimpses of the Pacific Islands, the historian can draw connections to broader historical themes and issues to better inform and expand our understanding of Australia’s relationship with the Pacific Islands.

This diversity can also be applied to Australian authors and the Islands they visited. My research shows that Australians were not a uniform set of travellers – they carried their own ideological baggage with them, influenced differently by their own backgrounds and upbringings, their education, gender, class, religious and political affiliations, professions, as well as different motives for travel. Just as this thesis displaces the formulaic stereotypes of Pacific Islanders, it also displaces a specific Australian type. Regional Australian diversity amongst the different colonies, states and towns shaped travellers’ impressions of the Pacific, as well as influencing the way in which readers responded to travel literature. Ultimately, I stress that individual Australians forged their own paths, even when travelling along well-worn ones. For this reason I hope to show in this thesis how Australians saw the Pacific Islands ‘with their own eyes’, as well as how their historical experience informed their representations.
CHAPTER ONE

Steamships and Tourists

Romance and adventure are inseparably bound up with our literature of these Islands, and we have almost got to think of them as mythical isles of beautiful imaginings, creations of the poetic brain of genius, only to be enjoyed in book or picture, like fairy tales of modern Arabian Nights. And yet, these beautiful scenes are very real, and very easy to reach for the fortunate residents of this great Southern Continent...Sydney is the starting point of the fleets of vessel which carry the flag of Commerce amongst the Southern Seas, and the advent of the modern mail steamer, with its charted route and regular timetable, has proved a real 'open sesame' for the everyday holiday makers, to scenes which before were only accessible to the fortunate ones of wealth and leisure.¹

As suggested by this 1914 promotional brochure for Australian shipping business Burns, Philp & Company, the rise of the steamship made travel to the Pacific Islands more accessible to Australians. Offering safe, comfortable and exciting journeys through the islands, steamships popularised particular routes through the Pacific. The transformation of cargo ships into cruise liners gave rise to a new type of traveller, the tourist. In contrast to the lone adventurous explorer or wealthy yachtsman of the past, the tourist was the modern voyager of the twentieth century, able to travel for leisure and pleasure. Transported in great numbers with regularity by steamships to the Pacific, these visitors were increasingly conformist in their routes and responses, and encouraged the development of a commercial tourist industry in Australia and the Islands.

¹ Burns, Philp & Company, Limited, Picturesque Travel (1912), 54.
This chapter explores how the development of steamship routes in the Pacific Islands facilitated the growth of travel writing and tourism, and how these vessels and routes shaped Australian representations of the region. It begins by charting the rise of several steamship companies which ferried Australians to, and through, the Pacific Islands, as well as marketing the Islands as a travel destination. It also examines the impact of steamships on stopover destinations, such as Suva, Papeete, Apia, Pago Pago, Honolulu and Nuku'alofa. Next, it explores the passenger’s experience of travel on board ship – the liminality of cruising, the role of writing and reading whilst travelling, and the ways in which the space on board the ship shaped the expectations and impressions of the Pacific Islands. Third, it discusses the experience of first arrival and the visual consumption of the Islands, a phenomenon which featured prominently in Australian travel accounts. And finally, it considers the reactions and responses of other travellers against the ‘tourist’ label. I argue that in spite of the preference of Australian travellers to portray themselves as adventurous explorers and their experience as authentic, many of them followed well-worn paths through the Pacific, and their accounts were shaped in similar ways by the shared experience of sea travel.

**Steamships, Stopovers and Destinations**

The first steamer in Australia travelled along the Parramatta River in 1831, although it was not until the 1840s that the invention of the screw propeller and metal hulls began to displace sailing ships. Sailing ships continued to be used in the nineteenth century because they were cheaper to build and run, and were important in inter-island trade because they did not require deep harbours or channels. Several significant events contributed to the rise of the steamship in Australia, including the gold rush of the 1850s (attracting steamers from America), the opening of the Suez and Panama Canals\(^2\) (in 1869 and 1914), the construction of railways (in Panama from 1850 to 1855, the transcontinental railway in the United States of America from 1861

\(^2\) Before the construction of the canals, ships had to use the ‘blue water route’ around Cape Horn, or pay expensive overland costs. According to Beatrice Grimshaw, ‘The opening of the Panama Canal route will bring the islands so much nearer to the great trading highways, that they [the New Hebrides] will become more important than they are at present, both from a strategic and a trading point of view.’ Grimshaw, *From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands*, 177.
to 1869, and within Australia from the mid-1850s), and the extension of communication cables (including the Pacific Cable in 1902).

For Australian travellers to, and through, the Pacific Islands, multiple services were provided by competing steamship companies, most notably Oceanic Steamship Company, Messageries Maritimes, Union Steamship Company, Burns, Philp & Company and Australasian Steam Navigation Company. Beginning as coastal services, these companies slowly expanded their fleets and routes into the Pacific, diversifying their operations to include passenger transportation, island trading stores and plantations to remain profitable. In this competitive environment, winning lucrative government mail contracts was important to maintaining long Pacific voyages, the major mail routes running from Brisbane to Singapore via the Torres Strait; Sydney to Vancouver or San Francisco (via Fiji and Honolulu, or Rarotonga and Tahiti); and Sydney to London via the Cape or the Suez.3

The Oceanic Steamship Company began operating services from the North American coast to Hawaii from 1881, later establishing a regular route from San Francisco to Honolulu, Pago Pago, Suva and Sydney in conjunction with Union Steamship Company.4 It was acquired by Matson Navigation Company in 1926, another American-owned company which had competed on the Hawaiian route since 1882, and continued Oceanic’s trans-Pacific services until 1970.5 In response to the

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4 This company is not to be confused with the Oceanic Steam Navigation Company (also known as the ‘White Star Line’) which made trans-Atlantic voyages, or the Ocean Steam Ship Company (also known as ‘Blue Funnel Line’) which owned routes between North America, China, and Singapore, and from Europe to Fremantle via Cape Horn. The Oceanic and Union Steamship Companies took over the Sydney to San Francisco mail route from American-owned Pacific Mail Steamship Company in 1885. S. Swiggum and M. Kohli, ‘The Fleets: Oceanic Steamship Company’, *The Ships List* (2007) [accessed 5 June 2013 at http://www.theshipslist.com/ships/lines/oceanic.shtml].

growing tourist traffic to Hawaii, Matson constructed some of the fastest and most luxurious ships traversing the Pacific at the time. In 1927 the Malolo was the fastest ship in the Pacific, cruising at 22 knots. It was followed by the Mariposa, Monterey and Lurline between 1930 and 1932. The Mariposa and Monterey regularly conveyed Australians through the Pacific, and were so popular that their names were reused in subsequent liners until 1970. Matson were also responsible for the construction of the Moana Hotel in 1901, the first of its kind in Honolulu, followed by the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in 1927.

The Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes (usually shortened to MM) was a French steamship service founded in 1835, which began services from Marseille to Melbourne, Sydney then Noumea from 1882, transporting mail, passengers and cargo. From 1901 a smaller vessel named Pacifique operated an inter-island route between Sydney, Noumea and the New Hebrides. From 1922, ships travelling via the Suez Canal terminated at Sydney, and a new Panama Canal route to Noumea added Papeete, Wellington, and Suva to the list of stopovers. After severe losses following World War II, its passenger fleet was rebuilt, but eventually abandoned by 1972.6

The Union Steamship Company (known as USSCo. or the Union Line) was a Dunedin-based coastal shipping company established in 1875. It ran a regular route from Auckland to Fiji from 1881, expanding to Melbourne the following year, and

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Sydney by the end of the decade. USSCo. established cruises targeted specifically at tourists from Auckland to Fiji, Samoa and Tonga in the 1880s. Their success, though limited until the late 1890s, was due to effective marketing and the construction of the passenger steamer Waikare. Services were then expanded, including an additional tour of the Cook Islands, Tahiti, Samoa and Tonga, and an extension of the Fiji-Tonga-Samoa circuit to the New Hebrides, New Caledonia, Norfolk Island and Sydney. In 1901 USSCo. acquired the Canadian-Australian Royal Mail Line (also known as the ‘all-red route’ because it used British-owned ships and visited only British territories, excepting Honolulu). This allowed USSCo. to deliver passengers from Sydney to Auckland, Suva, Honolulu, Victoria and Vancouver until 1953. In 1909 USSCo. redirected its Sydney to San Francisco service via Rarotonga and Tahiti in response to American restrictions on trading between US coastal ports. This service lasted until 1936.

Burns, Philp & Company (also known as BP) became the most prominent Australian shipping company in the Pacific in the early twentieth century. Originally a Queensland coastal shipping company, it expanded to the pearl shell industry in Northern Queensland in the 1880s. From their branch at Thursday Island they extended services across the Torres Strait to Port Moresby in 1883. They offered a four week excursion round trip from Auckland to Fiji, Samoa and Tonga in 1884 on the ship Wairarapa. This was repeated intermittently and with limited success due to economic hardship in the colonies, and the wreck of the steamer in 1894. Frances Steel, ‘An Ocean of Leisure: Early Cruise Tours of the Pacific in an Age of Empire’, Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History, 14:2 (2013). [accessed 11 January 2014 at http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history/vO14/14.2.steel.html].

The Canadian Australian Line, which had been running since 1893, was renamed the Canadian Australasian Line to reflect the inclusion of New Zealand in its route. The original route included Brisbane, and temporarily Wellington. From 1902 Suva was added as a permanent destination. Steel, Oceania Under Steam: Sea Transport and the Cultures of Colonialism, 34. For a patriotic account of the all-red route see ‘Men and Things Abroad’, The Brisbane Courier (29 July 1905), 12 [accessed 6 Feb 2014 at http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article1932943].

This was a 24 day mail service, and a 35 day service to London (overland by train, a gain of a few days over the Suez Route). Competition from Matson eventually forced the closure of USSCo.’s route. Ibid., 33.

It expanded from James Burns’ trading outlets in Queensland in the 1860s, and a partnership with Robert Philp in 1876. A regular shipping run was established between Sydney and Townsville, and branches established along the Queensland coast at Normanton, Thursday Island, Burketown, Cairns,
shipping and commerce in the British protectorate was not consistent and BP's early ventures abroad struggled. Similarly, trips to the Solomon Islands and New Hebrides were intermittent until 1896, when the purchase of two steamships allowed BP to offer a circuit from Sydney to British New Guinea returning via the Solomon Islands, and a circuit from Sydney to Vila via the New Hebrides. From 1902 BP operated a service to the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, gradually extending into the Marshall Islands and transporting phosphate from Ocean Island. In 1904, they established a six-weekly service from Sydney to Java and Singapore. BP diversified its commercial operations into purchasing land, operating plantations, opening trading stores, acting as agents for other shipping companies, and even issuing its own stamps and banknotes. Copra, phosphate and sugar were their major investments. The 1910s and 20s were marked by an expansion of its inter-island trading networks through its Suva-based offshoot, Burns, Philp (South Sea) Company.
The Australasian United Steam Navigation Company (AUSN) initially disrupted BP’s attempts to monopolise the entire Melanesian trade. AUSN was another Australian-owned shipping company formed in 1887 by the amalgamation of the Australasian Steam Navigation Company and the Queensland Steamship Company. By this time, routes had already become well established between Australia and New Zealand, and between Sydney, Brisbane, Fiji and Noumea. In cooperation with USSCo., the newly formed AUSN expanded its services to, and within, Fiji and the New Hebrides. After World War I it gradually abandoned these services until it had completely withdrawn from Pacific trade by 1928. Careful to avoid conflict, BP operated copra trading in Fiji through a subsidiary company Robbie, Kaad and Co., and in 1923 poached the government contract from AUSN for an inter-island Fiji service. This was the first of many contracts that AUSN lost to BP.

Due to their size and the nature of their routes, these companies had a significant and long-lasting impact on Australian travel to the Pacific. However, there were many other competitors engaged in Pacific transportation. European liners dominated passenger traffic between Fremantle and Sydney until the late 1890s when Asian companies such as Nippon Yusen Kaisha and China Navigation Company


17 From 1866 Australasian Steam Navigation ships were chartered by Panama Company to provide a mail service to Honolulu and then to San Francisco in 1871. From 1873 to 1876 ASN took over the mail contract and ran a ‘forked service’ from San Francisco to Kadavu to Sydney (on the inward run) and Auckland (on the outward run). A regular service from Sydney to Fiji via Auckland ran from 1874 to 1928. AUSN also established a fortnightly service to Noumea from 1887. Competition from MM caused the direct service to be abandoned in 1891 and Noumea was served once a month by Fiji steamers. This was abandoned in 1908 when French government subsidies were withdrawn. See Norman Lang McKellar, *From Derby Round to Burketown: The A U.S.N. Story* (St Lucia 1977); Ronald Parsons, *A History of Australasian Steam Navigation Company and Australasian United Steam Navigation Co. Ltd.* (Adelaide 1960).

18 From 1895-1908, USSCo. and AUSN had contracts which shared services between Sydney and Suva. Cargo for the Colonial Sugar Refinery operations in Fiji were also divided between them. AUSN provided routes to the New Hebrides from 1888 until 1897 (this included a direct service from Sydney in 1888 and an inter-island service from 1889). From 1892 services were provided in cooperation with the Australasian New Hebrides Company.

began to undercut prices. The Singapore route was also crowded by German, Dutch and British shipping companies. Other smaller ships plied the Pacific waters, owned by trading companies such as Lever Brothers, W.R. Carpenter & Company, and Colonial Sugar Refinery, as well as Christian missions, such as the *John Williams* and *Southern Cross* fleets.

Colonial rivalries shaped, and were shaped by, the routes of steamships. Frances Steel shows that the mobility of steamships meant that they crossed multiple colonial spheres of influence. In this competitive environment steamship companies had to negotiate political rivalries, at times acting as agents of an informal imperialism, and at other times challenging them. This competition was particularly rigorous prior to World War I, when shipping monopolies had yet to form, and Australia was one of many colonial powers asserting themselves in the Pacific. The economic viability of routes was often determined by government subsidies and mail contracts. Although subsidies did not guarantee success, and ships remained heavily reliant on passenger and freight fares, they were crucial for assisting companies in beginning a route. French government subsidies of MM limited the efforts of BP and AUSN to expand to New Caledonia, whilst Australian subsidies were used to stabilise Australian and British interests in the New Hebrides. Within Australia, too, colonies were eager to receive mail first. New South Wales government mail contracts favoured routes that would deliver mail to Sydney direct, rather than via Melbourne or Auckland. Similarly, the Queensland government subsidised the British India Steam Navigation Company for a direct mail service from 1880.

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20 Ibid., 206.
21 These included the German company Norddeutscher Lloyd (connecting Singapore and New Britain, but did not regularly link with Samoa); the Dutch-owned Koninklijke Paketvaart-Maatschappij; the British India Steam Navigation Company (BISN) running from Singapore to Brisbane; and the British-owned Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P&O) which operated routes to Sydney from the Cape Horn and Singapore from 1852, gradually acquiring companies under its umbrella (like BISN and USSCo. in 1914). In 1932 P&O and its sister company Orient Steam Navigation Company offered cruises from Brisbane to Norfolk Island and from Sydney to Noumea respectively.
22 Steel, *Oceania Under Steam: Sea Transport and the Cultures of Colonialism*, 43.
23 Ibid., 31.
24 McKellar, *From Derby Round to Burketown*, 194.
Shipping companies also had to negotiate port regulations. In 1900, the United States declared Honolulu a coastal port, prohibiting foreign ships from trading between Hawaii and the US mainland. This forced foreign steamships to divert to Canada, or transfer passengers to American steamers at Honolulu. In 1904, BP publicly protested being charged exorbitant fees for trading licences in the Marshall Islands, as German company Jaluit Gesellschaft protected its monopoly. It pursued the company for compensation to Europe, where a settlement was agreed upon two years later.\(^2^5\) Protectionist government policies in Noumea secured MM's services, and the regulation of the banana trade spelled AUSN's demise. Even at home, Australian companies had to abide by the law. The implementation of the White Australia Policy resulted in a clause being added to government contracts with BP prohibiting foreign labourers on their ships from entering Sydney harbour. This meant that foreign crews had to be unloaded from the ships at the last port of call before Australia, and picked up on the next journey out.\(^2^6\)

As Australian companies grew in size and strength, they became significant players in the federation debate. Steamships were bestowed a symbolic status of national pride, as Steel demonstrates in the choice of names for vessels, and their routes were 'highly politicised relationships.'\(^2^7\) Foreign vessels were eyed with suspicion, according to Frank Coffee's recollection of the impressions of a Sydney journalist when the first passenger boat arrived from America in the 1870s:

> Her entry into the trans-Pacific trade aroused jealousy in the breasts of many people, who thought that the new line would interfere with the P. & O. steamship service, and, furthermore, by bringing Australia into closer

\(^{25}\) Buckley and Klugman, The History of Burns Philp, 149.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., 82.

\(^{27}\) Steel, Oceania Under Steam: Sea Transport and the Cultures of Colonialism, 36, 43. She cites the example of New Zealand Prime Minister Seddon taking a Pacific Island tour in 1900 to advertise the country's regional aspirations.
Within the Australian colonies, resistance to foreign influence was also applied to British shipowners, as was evident in debates regarding the Navigation Bill. When convenient, both colonies and companies clung to each other, but loyalty was not absolute. In the case of New Caledonia, French officials happily turned to AUSN when MM became indolent. Shipping companies competed, but also formed alliances, particularly in response to unionism within Australia. There was public suspicion of large monopolies and their agendas, evident in popular nicknames such as Bloody Pirates (for BP), and Would Rob Christ (for W.R. Carpenter & Company). Other organisations, such as missions or major export businesses in the islands, also provided lucrative subsidies.

In this contested, competitive environment, BP and USSCo. were quick to recognise the potential of Pacific Island tourism directed at an Australian and New Zealand market. BP’s general manager, James Burns, had a strong flair for publicity and was ahead of his time in aiming for the tourist trade, according to Buckley and Klugman. The first tourist trip offered by BP was in 1884 aboard the *Elsea* from Thursday Island to Port Moresby and back in seven to eight weeks providing ‘capital shooting and fishing is sure to be had, and intending passengers should therefore take rifles and fishing tackle.’ In the same year, BP published and distributed 5000 copies of a *Queensland Handbook of Information* designed to publicise its shipping services. It was followed by a booklet *British New Guinea* in 1886, and quarterly magazine

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29 The Navigation Act of Australia 1912 had a major impact on Australia shipping wages and the use of coloured labour. During the debate, BP lobbied to include Papua within Australia’s coastal area. See Buckley and Klugman, *The History of Burns Philp*, 235-241.
30 McKellar, *From Derby Round to Burketown*, 175.
31 Steel, *Oceania Under Steam: Sea Transport and the Cultures of Colonialism*, 37; McKellar, *From Derby Round to Burketown*, 147.
Picturesque Travel in 1911. This magazine series (later renamed The BP Magazine) printed 20,000 copies initially. Trips offered by BP varied from a round-the-world trip from Sydney to a three-week trip for school teachers during the Christmas holidays.\textsuperscript{34} USSCo. expanded its New Zealand coastal tours to the Pacific in 1883, running a winter cruise from Auckland to Fiji. From 1884 to 1899 it offered several round trip tours, initially a circuit to Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, and expanding to eastern Polynesia and Melanesia.\textsuperscript{35} USSCo. made efforts to publicise its tours, publishing its first Pacific travel guide in 1895 \textit{(A Cruise in the Islands)} and a periodical \textit{(The Red Funnel)} from 1905-1909.\textsuperscript{36} In these publications, cruising was marketed as superior to regular sea travel because it prioritised the interests of tourists and brought them to islands that lay outside the major trading routes, offering a more complete Pacific experience.\textsuperscript{37}

USSCo. was unique in that it constructed a passenger steamer, the \textit{Waikare} and catered ships specifically for cruising. Initially, passenger travel to the islands was another source of income, and travel schedules were second to the demands of cargo. Cruises specifically for tourists were not economically viable in their early form either, as USSCo. found out. They did not become profitable and were not conducted on a mass scale until the interwar years. This was because the market was smaller than the trans-Atlantic trade, economic prosperity remained limited until the 1920s (made worse by the 1930s global depression), and companies were too small to weather economic depressions or the loss of boats to shipwrecks and storms. In the Islands, development of infrastructure to cater for large numbers of travellers was slow, requiring significant investments by shipping companies and colonial governments. This infrastructure was important for vessels restricted to tight schedules, usually staying at one port no longer than a day. Smaller trade vessels carried cargo which had

\textsuperscript{34} Buckley and Klugman, \textit{The History of Burns Philp}, 269.

\textsuperscript{35} Their cruises were as follows: 1884 two trips to Samoa, Fiji, Tonga; 1898 six week tour to Cook Islands, Tahiti, Samoa and Tonga; 1899 Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, New Hebrides, New Caledonia, Norfolk Island, Sydney. Steel, ‘An Ocean of Leisure’.

\textsuperscript{36} USSCo. also composed \textit{Maoriland: Illustrated handbook to New Zealand} (1884); \textit{Trip to the South Sea Islands by Union Steam Ship Company’s S.S. “Waikare”: July-August, 1898} (1898); \textit{The all-red route: the scenic route to London} (n.d.); and published Thomas Bracken’s \textit{The New Zealand tourist} (1879) and Beatrice Grimshaw’s \textit{Tours to the South Sea Islands, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji} (1914).

\textsuperscript{37} Steel, ‘An Ocean of Leisure’.
a limited shelf-life, and larger liners of the 1920s and 30s required larger docks and more efficient services to ensure a smooth and rapid transition of passengers and goods ashore. The absence of adequate docks, refuelling facilities, quarantine and customs officials, shipping branches, stores, hotels, cars, roads, and reliable communication in some islands meant they were ‘fenced off from desecrating tourist feet’ according to Beatrice Grimshaw.\textsuperscript{38} For tourists, the most common complaint was directed at quarantine and customs officials, for being either too slow or too strict.\textsuperscript{39}

The annual colonial reports of Fiji provide some insight into the gradual development of tourism in the Pacific Islands. In Fiji, visitors increased from an estimated 3,000 in 1926 to 5,001 by 1938.\textsuperscript{40} In 1926, the report proudly attributed the growth of tourism in Fiji to ‘increased shipping facilities, the advertising which the Colony received at the Wembley and Dunedin exhibitions, the opening of a bowling green, and other increased facilities in Suva, and the issue of advertising matter by the shipping companies and the local tourist bureau.’\textsuperscript{41} The reports also provided reasons for fluctuations in tourist traffic. In 1929 for example, they recognised that tourism was ‘hampered by the lack of good road communications and of hotel or rest-house accommodation away from Suva’ and that the majority of Australians and New

\textsuperscript{38} Grimshaw, \textit{From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands}, 169.

\textsuperscript{39} According to one visitor to Suva, ‘The Doctor from the shore was very slow in making his appearance, and the steamer waited, drifting, in the harbor, much to the discontent of the passengers’. The same passenger in Honolulu resented being interviewed by a US immigration officer and having to pay an Alien Tax to enter. George Stanley Littlejohn, \textit{More Notes & Reflections on the Road} (Sydney 1911), 13, 24. Another complained that the ‘red tape in Tahiti is awful’. Albert William Pearse, \textit{A Windjammer ‘prentice} (Sydney 1927), 7. George Taylor noted, ‘Everyone’s nerves were all askew, and by the time the medical officer came along to inspect, with his ferrety little eyes piercing through fierce bushy eyebrows, seeming to look into one’s soul, one felt as if he had all the ills in the big medical dictionary.’ George Augustine Taylor, \textit{There!: A Pilgrimage of Pleasure} (Sydney 1916), 42.

\textsuperscript{40} In 1926, the report recorded 3,722 visitors from overseas and deducted twenty percent to account for Fiji-residents returning from overseas, hence an estimated 3,000. It noted this was an increase of 1,300 since 1925. Fiji: Annual General Report for the Year 1926 (London 1927), 9. In 1938, 5,001 people ‘arrived on ships engaged in tourist cruises and staying in port from one to two days.’ Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress on the People of Fiji, 1938 (London 1938), 31. Colonial reports for the Solomon Islands and New Hebrides did not list tourism figures. Shipping company records were not as specific. According to Buckley and Klugman, BP made 30,500 bookings between 1913 and 1914. Buckley and Klugman, \textit{The History of Burns Philp}, 270.

\textsuperscript{41} Fiji: Annual General Report for the Year 1926, 9-10.
Zealanders travelled during the winter months.\(^2\) This fact was well known by shipping companies who targeted Australian tours during the winter months.\(^3\) By 1937 their statistics were more detailed, recording 11 vessels bringing 6,426 visitors specifically engaged on tourist cruises, 13,923 passing through Suva on other boats, and 1,328 people staying a week or longer.\(^4\) Only in Honolulu was there another tourist bureau established as early as Fiji, initially driven by the efforts of Honolulu businessmen. The origins of the Fiji Visitors Bureau in 1923 are less clear but were likely to be business oriented as well.\(^5\) According to figures published in the first edition of the *Pacific Islands Yearbook* in 1932, Hawaii received 44,452 tourists, almost half of whom stayed two days or more.\(^6\)

The position of Honolulu and Suva at the crossroads of multiple trans-Pacific routes contributed to their possessing the most advanced infrastructure in the Pacific Islands. Honolulu was admired for its luxury and modernity by Australians who frequently identified it as being part of America rather than the Pacific. In 1909 one Australian observed that Honolulu was ‘fast becoming completely Americanised’ and by 1937, another traveller remarked that it was ‘a typical American city.’\(^7\) In many ways it was, the Hawaiian Islands having been annexed by the United States in 1898 and formally made a territory in 1900. Hawaii was valued for its agricultural output, its strategic location in the Pacific, its proximity to the American mainland, and later

\(^{43}\) USSCo.’s first Pacific cruise was during winter, and it subsequently added Melbourne to its Pacific routes during winter months.
\(^{44}\) The 1937 report described this as an increase from the previous year when 11,017 visited by boat and 1,380 stayed a week or longer. Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress on the People of Fiji, 1937 (London 1938), 33. In 1938, 17,580 people passed through the port, and an additional 5,001 on tourist cruises. 1,390 people were estimated to stay one week or longer. Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress on the People of Fiji, 1938, 31.
\(^{45}\) The tourist organisation went by many names: Hawaii Bureau of Information in 1892, the Hawaii Promotion Committee in 1903, the Hawaii Tourism Bureau in 1919 and the Hawaii Visitors Bureau in 1945. I was unable to find a copy of R.J. Scott, *The Development of Tourism in Fiji since 1923* (Suva 1970).
\(^{46}\) Robert William Robson, ed., *The Pacific Islands Yearbook* (1st ed.) (Sydney 1932), 102. 22,190 tourists spent two or more days in Hawaii and 22,262 were travelling via trans-Pacific steamers. The yearbook credited this success to ‘additional advertising expenditure’ by the tourist bureau and shipping companies as well as ‘sufficient hotel accommodation and adequate steamship facilities.’
\(^{47}\) Littlejohn, *More Notes & Reflections on the Road*, 24; Baume, *I Lived These Years*, 168.
as a tourist destination. Christine Skwiot's *The Purposes of Paradise* explains how tourism in Hawaii was a tool to legitimise and strengthen American colonial authority, used initially to attract permanent white settlers to Hawaii, and after World War I, to provide for, and entrench, privileged whites within Hawaii. White residents ("haole") offered the tourist an opportunity "to act out their fantasies of royalty and empire" in luxury resorts, and the indigenous Hawaiian featured only as a "hula girl" or "beach boy." Waikiki Beach was constructed in the 1920s specifically with this goal in mind.

The account of Australian businessman George Stanley Littlejohn, who visited Suva and Honolulu en route to the US in 1909, is typical of many Australian travellers. Aged 47, Littlejohn was an experienced traveller, and having visited both islands three years previously was able to make comparisons on the progress of development. In Honolulu he observed "great improvements effected in the wharfage accommodation within the last five years, coal elevators have been erected, and large vessels can get good berths with plenty of wharf space and plenty of water under the keel." He also noted "there is a good service of electric cars, electric light, and a telephone system. The streets are well cared for, and there is an adequate police corps...building is progressing rapidly...the hotels are excellent." Honolulu was frequently admired for its modern development by travellers, but it came at the expense of its other Pacific qualities, including its local scenery and agriculture, and its indigenous inhabitants,

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49 Skwiot argues that "haole" used and idealised Hawaiian royalty to sell "royal resorts" as "ideal combinations of the aristocratic and the democratic, the feudal and the modern, the foreign and the familiar". Ibid., 88. Thus a narrative was produced of "an imagined aristocracy of white tourists and settlers that had inherited their power and privilege from the Hawaiian monarchy". Christine Skwiot, "Genealogies and Histories in Collision: Tourism and Colonial Contestations in Hawai‘i, 1900-1930" in Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds., *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Urbana 2009), 200.
50 The Ala Wai Canal was built to drain Waikiki beach and reclaim 1400 acres for development. It was completed in 1924. Two American companies, Matson and Castle & Cooke, planned to make Waikiki an upper class resort, and constructed the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, the Waialae Country Club and the ocean liner *Malolo*. For further discussion of the opening of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in 1927, see Skwiot, *The Purposes of Paradise*, 104-107.
52 Ibid.
who were often ignored in travel accounts. Pago Pago, another American possession, ‘has also trodden the Coney-phoney path’, according to Eric Baume, its deep harbour making it a convenient stopover.53

Similar developments were occurring in Suva, but at a slower pace. Compared to Hawaii, Littlejohn found Fiji poorly developed, with ‘plain roads’ and ‘no means of public conveyance other than a few hack carriages.’54 His disappointment stands in stark contrast to others like William Allan, who enjoyed taking a ‘stroll’ through the shopping area and was impressed that Suva had two picture houses, which he noted was ‘better than Australia’.55 This inconsistency suggests that first impressions of Suva were also dependent on individual expectations, what specific comparisons were being made, and personal allegiances to colonial governments.56 Although Suva was not as developed, its status as the British colonial centre of the Pacific, as well as being a major copra and sugar producer, required it to meet the demands of high levels of shipping traffic. According to a 1916 AUSN handbook, ‘this wharf is soon to have a compeer in the great cement and rock structure, now in course of construction a short distance away. The cost is estimated at a quarter of a million.’ The handbook also advertised the convenience of ‘palatial buildings’, swimming baths, five hotels, ‘several good boarding houses’, a library, museum, Office of the Pacific Cable Board, New South Wales and New Zealand bank branches, a Chamber of Commerce, a hospital, two newspapers and ‘several sporting and athletic clubs.’57 The most popular and well known symbol of modernity in Suva was the Grand Pacific Hotel, constructed by USSCo. in 1914 to match the luxury and opulence promised by hotels in Hawaii. This hotel was ‘Suva’s Ritz’ according to Australian resident Betty Freeman and

53 Baume, I Lived These Years, 44.
54 Littlejohn, More Notes & Reflections on the Road, 13.
55 William Allan, Homeward Bound. From Australia to Scotland: Impressions by the Way (Helensburgh 1915), 24.
56 Littlejohn was particularly scathing of the British rule in Fiji, arguing for an Australian or American takeover. As Christine Skwiot notes, ‘such travel narratives presented bad hotels, inadequate infrastructure, and poor public health as proof that the government in power was incapable of moral or material progress.’ Skwiot, The Purposes of Paradise, 3.
vastly improved on existing accommodation. Beachcombers Edward Way Irwin and Ivan Goff described it as ‘Suva’s only hotel – the others were just pubs...This was indeed an occasion for Suva’s aristocracy. Hardly any half-breeds were there. Government officials, well-to-do planters, and leading storekeepers.  

Other Pacific Islands developed port and tourist facilities at a slower pace. This partly depended on shipping companies, such as USSCo. routes through Samoa, Tonga and Tahiti which brought increasing numbers of passengers to their shores. It was also dependent on location and geography, New Caledonia’s proximity to Australia making travel quick and affordable, and deep harbours facilitating the berthing of larger ships. Security and local governance were important in encouraging or discouraging further travel. It was common for visitors to make observations on the local police, prisons, crime, and the effectiveness of local governance. The location of ‘attractions’ was influential in luring more visitors. As will be discussed later in this chapter, these attractions were distinctive natural or historical sites, and required ease of access. Journalist Julian Thomas alludes to this in his description of one of the New Hebrides group: ‘They have not, on Tanna, visitors sufficient to make it pay as a show place, a la Vesuvius.”

Norfolk Island and Lord Howe Island are prime examples of the importance of these factors, as both islands were viewed by Australians as ideal tourist destinations. Both islands benefited from their close proximity to the Australian coast and their status as Australian territories. Alan John Villiers described Lord Howe Island as the ‘Tourists’ Paradise’, particularly for ‘holiday-makers from New South Wales.’ M. Kathleen Woodburn also remarked that visitors ‘still felt within the pale

58 Freeman, Fiji - Memory Hold the Door, 57. Freeman also noted that ‘most of the G.P.H. young ladies were very aristocratic. They had gone to schools in England or Australia and not to a Suva school, where they might meet a half-breed. They didn’t speak to any of those few young ladies present who somehow looked too deep a tan.’  
59 Edward Way Irwin and Ivan Goff, No Longer Innocent (Sydney 1934), 97.  
60 Thomas, Cannibals and Convicts, 281. Julian Thomas was one of many pseudonyms used by Australian journalist John Stanley James (see chapter four).  
of civilisation.' In Norfolk Island too, tourist handbooks sold the benefits of its 'tropical charm with the calm reasonableness of the temperate zones' as well as its natural scenery and isolation. The main tourist attraction on Norfolk Island was its convict and Pitcairn Islander heritage. Of course this was a sanitised version of a brutal past, with visitors searching for local ruins of prisons and hoping to meet an old Pitcairner. One traveller described how 'an atmosphere of tears, and sighs, and curses hung around these pens.' The absence of Pacific Islanders on both islands, except for those training at the Melanesian Mission station, added to its appeal. Further development of Australian tourism to these islands were hampered by their small resident populations, their limited economic resources, the difficulty of landing due to reefs and the absence of suitable harbours, and the steamship routes themselves, which determined if the visitor could stay a few hours or have to wait a month for a returning boat.

On Board Ship

Part of the popularity of steamship travel was the ability of companies to offer services that were safe and reliable, comfortable, and affordable. Coffee reflected on his numerous trans-Pacific voyages: 'For the most part, the service has been comfortable and safe, and as fast as the remuneration warranted...the rates were reasonable, and most of the time the seas were smooth – indeed, enjoyably so.' Although steamship cruising did not reach its peak until the interwar period, by the 1880s and 1890s steamships began to challenge the idea that sea travel was dangerous, boring and uncomfortable. For the first time, sea travel could be undertaken as a leisure activity rather than a necessity and large corporations saw value in tourism as a

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63 'The Charm of Norfolk Island' in Robson, *The Pacific Islands Yearbook* (1st ed.), 129.
64 Thomas, *Cannibals and Convicts*, 35. Over fifty years later, Woodburn described the island as 'subdued by the aura of misery'. Woodburn, *Backwash of Empire*, 32.
65 According to the *Pacific Islands Yearbook* of 1932, 'both landing places [at Norfolk Island] are very primitive and much money would be needed to improve facilities'. It also warned that changes to the BP steamer schedule would force visitors to wait for four weeks at Lord Howe Island to leave, instead of the usual two weeks. Robson, *The Pacific Islands Yearbook* (1st ed.), 124.
66 Coffee, *Forty Years on the Pacific*, 5.
separate venture, not one to be tacked onto trade and cargo operations.\textsuperscript{67} BP’s magazine \textit{Picturesque Travel} marketed its travel to the ‘change-seeking tourist’ or those seeking a ‘healthful holiday’ away from the colder climates.\textsuperscript{68}

An example of this is AUSN’s 1916 handbook which provided ‘Picturesque Travel and General Information’ to ‘those who desire rapidity of transit with high-class comfort.’\textsuperscript{69} Like BP and USSCo. publications, AUSN’s illustrated handbook emphasised modern conveniences and luxury on board ship, for ‘a very moderate expense.’\textsuperscript{70} Its passenger ship \textit{Levuka} was ‘specially designed for this service’, catering for one hundred first-class passengers and fifty second-class passengers, with ‘4000 cubic feet of refrigerated space’ and ‘lighted with electricity throughout.’\textsuperscript{71} There are photographs showcasing the luxurious interiors of the drawing rooms, smoking rooms, and dining rooms, as well as tourists lying on deck chairs. The handbook was careful to militate against preconceptions of monotony, claiming ‘at no time is the vessel more than a few days out of sight of land.’\textsuperscript{72} The handbook suggests specific activities for tourists to do ashore, offering connecting services with the inter-island vessel \textit{Amra}, motor launches and motor cars, and providing detailed timings and costs.\textsuperscript{73}

Steamships changed the rhythms of mobility in the Pacific, shaping individual experiences of travel and arrival. As sociologist John Urry argues, rapid transportation can transform how passengers view landscapes, as well as creating new public spaces such as docks, and restricting social activities to a specified timetable.\textsuperscript{74} Young travel

\textsuperscript{67} Steel, ‘An Ocean of Leisure’.
\textsuperscript{68} Burns, Philp & Company, \textit{Picturesque Travel} (1911), 50.
\textsuperscript{69} Lees, \textit{Around the Coasts of Australia and Fiji Illustrated}, 3.
\textsuperscript{70} 22 pounds for a return trip from Melbourne to Suva in saloon class, and 13 pounds in steerage. Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{71} At 6,130 tons, the \textit{Levuka} travelled at 15 knots from Melbourne to Sydney to Suva every four weeks. Second-class passengers shared four berth cabins. Ibid., 14, 161.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 161. Ironically, the steamship’s ability to collapse distance meant that it became more closely connected to land than sail ships. Steel, \textit{Oceania Under Steam: Sea Transport and the Cultures of Colonialism}, 16.
\textsuperscript{73} The \textit{Amra} (535 tons) offered a seven day trip around the Fiji group to Suva, Levuka, Taveuni, Mago, Loma, Cicia, Rabi, Malua (Labasa), Devo, Buca Bay and Wailagilala. Lees, \textit{Around the Coasts of Australia and Fiji Illustrated}, 14.
companions Irwin and Goff were excited to place themselves at the mercy of the machine:

She was dead to time, remorselessly to time, ruthless and efficient. What knowledge, what organization, what perfection of machinery was required to bring that mass of steel to Suva wharf, to a pin-point in an ocean, arriving at the scheduled second! Pilot, captain, deckhands, greasers – all at their jobs. On shore, clerks, stevedores, carriers, customs men...It was all a huge machine of brains and flesh and steel, adjusted to the penny and the second. Into that machine, blindly, we must toss ourselves.  

Frequently the modern conveniences of the steamship were contrasted to the primitivity of Islanders. Pictorially, the contrast of traditional canoes and steamships were common (see figure 2). Steamships were objects of national and imperial pride, and one of the defining images of modernity. They embodied the values of progressive Europe, with luxury interiors catering to wealthy travellers by the late nineteenth century. The emphasis on modern comfort and safety assured travellers of a familiar refuge in a savage and exotic land. Of course not all promises made in advertisements were fulfilled. Some customers, like Littlejohn, were impressed: 'This steamer is practically a floating hotel. There are many conveniences on board, including a barber's shop...and a laundry.' Others, like writer Alan Durward Mickle, who travelled aboard the Amra in 1908, discovered 'on the shipping plan in the office the two-berth cabin looked quite spacious, but shipping plans can be very deceptive, and this one was. We found that there was a space of about nine inches between the parallel bunks and that the bunks were extremely narrow...the first night on board was not exactly peaceful.'  

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75 Irwin and Goff, *No Longer Innocent*, 114.
78 Alan Durward Mickle, *Of Many Things* (Sydney 1941), 180-181.
Travelling through the Pacific by boat meant close-quarter living for extended periods of time. Unless travelling in small, private sailing vessels, most paying passengers entered a microcosm of Western society on board, with its own traditions, social etiquette, and with physical areas demarcated according to the fare paid. As larger iron hulls allowed for more room below deck, companies could offer two fares, and by the interwar period another fare was introduced between first and third to serve a growing middle class. First-class passengers enjoyed grand saloons and steerage class varied between small cabins or sleeping berths. Earlier steamships were hot and cramped, and passengers struggled in the tropical heat. Some steamships also catered specifically for female travellers by employing stewardesses and making segregated areas on the ships. Crew members, many of whom were Islanders, were also segregated. Elinor Mordaunt, a 51-year-old Australian woman visiting New Caledonia
in 1923, travelled aboard the *El Kantara* with twenty first-class passengers, an unspecified number in second class, cargo, French soldiers, and an international crew including a 'colored steward called Chocolat.'

Several travellers describe these social distinctions on board, and the gradual breakdown in conventions during travel. Irwin and Goff were eager to escape the 'cage of conventions' at home in Perth and described their adventures as beachcombers and stowaways in *No Longer Innocent* (1934). When they were caught sneaking aboard a USSCo. ship to Honolulu, they described their newfound fame amongst the passengers:

> We bore no stigma. We were, in fact, celebrities. Passengers ventured from the dim splendours of the first and second class to view the stowaways and to take photographs to thrill their friends at home. Among the steerage passengers our prestige was enormous.

They gave one example of a woman who visited them from first class, and was convinced to travel steerage next time, because she considered the people 'more interesting' and 'courageous.'

> For some travellers this mixing was an attraction. Thomas Allan McKay was a self-proclaimed 'plain British-Australian business man, wearing no political party labels, disowning all class prejudice' who gladly recalled, 'on shipboard especially, thrown pell-mell into contact, one meets, to the confusion of many preconceived ideas, all sorts and conditions of men. They range from red-rag revolutionaries to artistically crusted Tories; from people whose mental horizons are rimmed by racehorses and film stars, to intellectuals copiously crammed with “perilous stuff” that must out.' Freeman also recalled first class travel as an opportunity to 'actually get to know' the

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79 Elinor Mordaunt, *The Venture Book* (New York 1926), 11-14. In first class she counted one Englishman and the remainder French. In second class there were a few more Englishman.


81 "I think I'll travel steerage next time," she told us afterwards. "The people are so much more interesting down here. Third-class passengers aren't just holiday-makers or whisky-drinking business men. They're more human. They're poor people, and struggling, and courageous." Ibid., 135.

famous and the successful. For others, certain class distinctions remained uncrossed; European refugees and Chinese immigrants travelling in steerage were ‘reserved’ and ‘messed by themselves.’ For Eric Muspratt, who faced a sea voyage home after working for six months overseeing a copra plantation, steamships created an ‘atmosphere of petty snobbery’ and steamer passengers ‘seemed to be offensively smart and smug and sleek-looking in their well-laundered white ducks.’

The liminality of sea travel, or ‘cruise culture’ as George M. Foster describes it, was the result of the confined spaces on board ship, the nature of travel as a time of transition and uncertainty, and the shared interests of many travellers. These interests included a desire for leisure, seeking self-education and improvement, or a pilgrimage ‘home’ to Europe. Group activities also generated a sense of ‘communitas’ aboard, or as one traveller observed, passengers became ‘a happy family.’ Such activities included deck games, common dining, reading and smoking rooms, lectures, regulated patterns of meal times and sightseeing departures. Deck games ‘comprise racing, jumping quoit-throwing, bull-board, drafts, chess, &c. Nearly £50 were subscribed and distributed in prizes during the voyage to America. Several games were specially arranged for ladies.’ This effect was even more acute in the smaller confines of yachts, as expressed by Ralph Stock at the conclusion of his voyage: ‘already, we were changed to each other’s eye.’

The most popular and widely practised communal ritual on cruise ships was reserved for crossing the equator, and relegated all passengers to an equal social status as ‘landlubbers’ and ‘polliwogs’ (those who had never crossed the equator). Based on

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83 Freeman, Fiji - Memory Hold the Door, 77.
84 Ibid., 78; Sydney Walter Powell, Adventures of a Wanderer (London 1928), 132.
85 Muspratt blamed the missionaries and government officials for ‘this constant sense of social distinctions.’ Eric Muspratt, My South Sea Island (London 1931), 21.
87 Alfred Joseph, A Bendigonian Abroad: Being Sketches of Travel Made During a Ten Months Tour Through Europe and America (Melbourne n.d.), 249.
88 Charles Henry Matters, From Golden Gate to Golden Horn, and Many Other World Wide Wanderings: Or 50,000 Miles of Travel Over Sea and Land (Adelaide 1892), 13.
a seafaring tradition which began as a religious offering, and gradually became an initiation rite, crew members dressed as King Neptune and his court attendants.\textsuperscript{90} Traveller Charles Henry Matters described the sight of Neptune and his wife ‘enthroned in royal state, and mounted on a car, the sailors in line wheel them round and round the deck.’ Based on the notion that those who refused to pay Neptune a bribe of silver must be punished, ‘several victims are selected. In quick time, with great pomp and ceremony, they are lathered and shaved in comic style, and suddenly doused in a salt-water pond, formed by a sail tied up at four corners.’\textsuperscript{91} This was an event of horseplay and fancy dress which became more elaborate as shipping companies sought to attract more passengers. It was also a convenient excuse to break up the monotony of travel and appease any conflicts aboard.

Another important activity on board ship centred around reading, writing and cultural discussion. Shipping companies emphasised the benefits of travel for education and self-development, resonating with the European tradition of the ‘grand tour.’ As a result, Australians were avid readers prior to the journey, with guidebooks providing recommended reading lists for prospective travellers. Many ships were equipped with libraries, well stocked with canonical Pacific literature. Woodburn notes that even on the small, no-frills boat \textit{Morinda}, there was an adequate library, with Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall’s trilogy of the \textit{H.M.S. Bounty} mutiny being most popular.\textsuperscript{92} Published travel accounts often provided their own reading recommendations, and it was common for authors to compare their own first impressions to those of previous writers. The books read aboard ship allowed travellers to process their journeys, shaped their expectations and equipped them with familiar literary tropes which they could fall back upon. Writing was also an important activity to pass the time, and gain a sense of progress at sea.\textsuperscript{93} Diaries and letters both served

\textsuperscript{91} Matters, \textit{From Golden Gate to Golden Horn}, 13.
\textsuperscript{92} Woodburn, \textit{Backwash of Empire}, 14-15. ‘Morinda was just an island boat, built for use, cargo space, and with limited passenger accommodation, without frills.’ In the library, the books ‘worked overtime, having the advantage of local colour.’
\textsuperscript{93} Hassam, \textit{Sailing to Australia}, 102.
as *aids de memoire* and as records to be sent home and shared amongst family and friends. Travellers would also discuss with one another their experiences of travel, and sometimes ships would organise lectures. In his *Notes of Travel* (1894), J.C. Hickson mentioned listening to the Reverend George Brown aboard ship as it returned to Auckland.  

The journey itself and the experience on board ship could play a major role in a travellers’ expectations, and this was something of which many writers were well aware. As William Ramsay Smith noted, ‘there must be something about shipboard life that changes one’s ordinary standards regarding socially permissible or individual duty, or the practice of shore etiquette.’ The most common complaint was seasickness and bad weather, which could heighten an individual’s experience when landing on shore. Wilfred Burchett, an experienced traveller and journalist, recollected a bout of terrible seasickness and vividly described smells such as the ‘rancid smell of rotting copra’ and the ‘tantalising fragrance’ of Tahiti. He likened his arrival on land to ‘scurvy-ridden sailors from whaling fleets of old’, and his experience of weariness and impatience was shared by many. When taken to the extreme, such as the case of Fred Rebell who sailed solo from Sydney to San Francisco, the experience of sickness and danger whilst travelling could stimulate a religious epiphany. Reactions to the Islands could also be shaped by the direction of the journey, as Joseph explained: ‘It may easily be understood that passengers who are returning home are far more difficult to satisfy than those who are leaving Australia on their holiday trip. The latter are full of anticipation and expectancy.’

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94 J. C. Hickson, *Notes of Travel: From Pacific to Atlantic, with Description of the World’s Fair at Chicago: Also Travels by Sea and Land Round the World* (Parramatta 1894), 4.
98 Joseph, *A Bendigonian Abroad*, 249. Ahrens, Lindstrom and Paisley also argue that the direction of the journey was important: ‘Melanesia, heading west, comes after Polynesia and thus serves – as it did for Jack [London], Charmain [London], and Martin [Johnson] – as sensationalist climax.’ Prue
Of course other passengers on board could be important in a personal journey. Baume’s case is an extreme but demonstrative example. Travelling with his parents to San Francisco, Baume recalled ‘the spectacle – amazing to my eleven-year-old eyes – of a missionary making violent physical love to one of the Rarotongan natives brought aboard the ship for the two days’ run from Rarotonga to Tahiti.’

By mentioning it in his autobiography, it is clear this made an impression on him, and Baume’s attitude to the islands was marked by dismay at the corruption of natural beauty by foreign influences. Mordaunt’s experience of tension and conflict between crew members aboard small vessels was typical of Australian yachting narratives: ‘these men have, indeed, been so long at sea that, apart from the usual taciturnity of sailors, they are acutely on one another’s nerves, can scarcely bear the sight of one another.’

Sometimes a traveller’s first encounter with a Pacific Islander was on board ship, particularly on smaller sailing boats and traders, but occasionally on larger cruise vessels. For some, especially prior to the 1900s, the stereotypes of lazy, incompetent or dangerous Islanders were confirmed. Tourist Richard Cheeseman observed, ‘his crew were composed of white officers and colored seamen, these latter continually deserting, so others have to be taken on wherever opportunity offers. They are good working fellows when well officered, but useless otherwise.’

Of all accounts, those of traders, in particular labour traders, offer the most detailed descriptions of Islander crews (see chapter six). ‘The force majeure of circumstances was overcoming all my prejudices’, remarked Thomas whilst aboard a recruiting ship in the New Hebrides in 1883.

The use of individual names in travel writing, as opposed to generic terms like ‘native’ or ‘Tommy the Tongan’, suggest that travellers had close and intimate personal contact aboard ship. Some Australians, like Joseph Hadfield Grundy, even


Steel also notes that Islanders were frequent travellers in the Pacific, both as crew and passengers. Steel, *Oceania Under Steam: Sea Transport and the Cultures of Colonialism*, 98, 193-198.

Cheeseman, *The South Sea Islands*, 2.

Thomas, *Cannibals and Convicts*, 164.
made lifelong friends. What was different about these encounters was that they occurred in a safer, more familiar environment than the beach, and shaped attitudes and expectations before they had even arrived.

First Impressions

The moment of first arrival was a significant event for many travellers, and was commonly described in greater detail than the rest of the journey. As Mary Louise Pratt argues, ‘arrival scenes are a convention of almost every variety of travel writing and serve as particularly potent sites for framing relations of contact and setting the terms of its representation.’

First arrival commenced with a period of observation rather than engagement, the slow approach of the ship giving passengers time to appraise the scene before encountering any inhabitants. This ‘tourist gaze’, as coined by Urry, visually consumed the islands, and was driven by ‘anticipation, especially through day-dreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures.’ William John Stephens remarked that ‘Landing in Suva...is an adventure in itself. Long before we reached the harbor we began to see the islands.’ Despite the majority of travellers agreeing that the Islands possessed an ‘indescribable beauty and charm’, few could resist describing the scenery, focusing on vivid colours, pleasant fragrances and abundant vegetation that spoke of mystery, potential and natural perfection.

Upon closer inspection, evidence of colonial settlement came into view. For example, Allan wrote,

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104 Grundy maintained a friendship with a Fijian crew member for eighteen years. According to Grundy, Tim was ‘a young nipper aged 13’ who could speak Fijian, Hindi and English, and had seven brothers and two sisters at college in Suva. Tim later married and moved to New South Wales. Joseph Hadfield Grundy, *A Month in New Zealand: A Trip to Fiji, Tonga and Samoa* (Adelaide 1931), 7.


106 Urry, *Consuming Places*, 132. There is ‘a much greater sensitivity to visual elements of landscape and townscape than is normally found in everyday life.’ These expectations are also mediated through advertising.


The dawn was quickly merging into daylight, and in the gathering brightness the coast line was losing much of its quondam vagueness. The brilliant green of the prolific tropical vegetation was assuming a richer tint, and the saw-edged configuration of the mountains, which slant upwards from the city...was becoming more plainly outlined...The city rose in irregular tiers from the water front, and the partiality for red and ochre, so much in evidence at Auckland, was found here also.109

The dominance of the visual gaze in shaping first impressions is most clearly demonstrated in the prolific use of the term ‘picturesque’. This label was indiscriminately applied to all aspects of the Pacific Islands, not only the natural scenery, but also the people, artificial constructions, objects, even sounds and personal expressions. The picturesque was universally accepted as conforming with ‘standard pictorial representations of beauty’ and was ‘immediately compatible with all one’s fond preconceptions’ according to Malcolm Andrews.110 Originating in the vocabulary of mid-eighteenth century tourists to the English countryside, the term developed as travellers appraised a scene according to the conventions of landscape painting and classical ideas of beauty.111 Just as these tourists viewed locations through the frame of a painting or a clau de glass, so too did travellers of the twentieth century to the Pacific view the islands within specific frames (of the painting, of the camera lens, or even framed by the ship itself). In his travel account meteorologist Clement Lindley Wragge frequently referred to the scenery as a ‘panorama’ and a ‘tableau of tropic beauty’, and later exclaimed, ‘what a picture for an artist does the wharf present!’112

109 Allan, Homeward bound, 22. The contrast of red rooves against green vegetation was a common observation.
111 The term was derived from the French pittoresque and Italian pittoresco which originally meant ‘in the manner of a painter’. As Andrews shows, it initially had no particular reference to landscapes, rather it signified the kind of scenery proper for a painting. Ibid. According to John Urry, the European concept of landscape ‘began as a technical term standing for natural island scenery; then it came to mean a particular tract of land seen from a specific point of view as though it were a picture; and finally it came to mean the whole natural scenery.’ Urry, Consuming Places, 175.
112 Wragge, The Romance of the South Seas, 128, 165.
Travellers to the Pacific Islands remained bound by European artistic conventions. Like those who idealised the English rural landscapes, tourists to the Islands continued to use 'picturesque' to 'aestheticise nature and the natural.' In chasing this ideal, the search for the picturesque usually involved a selective modification or improvement. In some cases, the realities of industrial development at the wharves were ignored in favour of conventional descriptions of natural scenery and vegetation. In other cases, features that were not consistent with romantic ideals, such as Indian labourers or European convicts, were labelled 'unpicturesque.'

According to these conventions, travellers responded more positively to volcanic islands than coral atolls. Volcanic islands offered scenery that was comparable to celebrated locations in Europe, and thus aligned with classical notions of aesthetic beauty. The dense, green and 'luxuriant' vegetation, and the 'rugged grandeur of its mountain peaks' were features that travellers identified and admired. Wragge recalled Scotland when he visited Tahiti, noting 'the frowning mountains, wreathing clouds along the steeps, and the gurgling burn of the Fautaua, all remind one of the Land of Burns.' In comparison, coral atolls were small, low and flat, and less fertile. Sydney Walter Powell observed, 'We called at several atolls, which do not need description, since all atolls are of the same character."

Mountains (and volcanoes) also offered the promise of the unknown, of danger, and of potential wealth. As one guidebook described, 'the purple hills... seem to speak of a mysterious life hidden in their vastnesses.' Imposing mountain ranges, and the

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113 Ann Bermingham in Bernard Smith, Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages (New Haven 1992), 64. Smith argues there was a shift between the 1750s and 1890s away from classical naturalism (which selected the human figure as the perfect natural form) to empirical naturalism (which preferred plants and animals).


115 For example, see Robert Brummitt, A Winter Holiday in Fiji (Sydney 1914), 45; Richard Reynell Bellamy, Mixed Bliss in Melanesia (London 1934), 18.

116 Pearse, A Windjammer 'prentice, 141. Many travellers were affected by what traveller Aletta Lewis described as 'a consuming thirst for green'. Lewis, They Call Them Savages, 6.

117 Wragge, The Romance of the South Seas, 232.

118 Sydney Walter Powell, 'Each To His Taste', Papers of Sydney Powell [circa 1920-1950], MS10012, National Library of Australia, 258.

119 Robson, The Pacific Islands Yearbook (1st ed.), 70.
potentially savage peoples they contained, suggested to travellers a quality of
greatness, power, chaos and monstrosity, hinting 'at masculine virile sublimities in
opposition to the feminine charms of the ordered.' Atolls and reefs presented their
own dangers to foreign travellers, yet it was the mountains that inspired the
'picturesque' and the 'sublime.' In Mordaunt's account, her experience of navigating
dangerous reefs was monotonous, marked only by atolls 'overhung by a thick cloud
of mosquitoes.' In contrast, the first sight of Tahiti prompted her to 'tremble with
excitement.'

Coming ashore, tourists of the twentieth century encountered Islanders at the
wharf rather than the beach. This experience of contact was different to that of
previous European explorers and traders, who rowed ashore in smaller exposed boats
to islands where settlements or people may not have been visible from the shoreline.
Their accounts are marked by apprehension as they carefully looked for signs of
welcome or hostility. For Australian travellers straying from the main islands or tourist
routes, the beach landing was still used, but the reception was usually more predictable
and safe. At the major steamship destinations, the modern wharf was a new and vibrant
public area, and 'Steamer Day' was a major event for island residents as much as it
was for the new arrivals. The crowds created a festive atmosphere for visitors, full of
exotic sights, sounds and smells. Aletta Lewis observed, 'it was a happy intimate scene.
Every one and everything seemed to belong in the circle of the sheltering arms [the
mountains].' An AUSN shipping guide described how 'the mixture of races is
noticed on every side as one passes to the end of the wharf.' Powell was struck by
the 'brightness, lightness and cleanness' of dresses, Allan was entertained by the
'curiously dressed, mahogany skinned Fijian wharf lumpers', and others described the

120 Burke in Andrews, The Search for the Picturesque, 45.
121 Mordaunt, The Venture Book, 59.
122 Lewis, They Call Them Savages, 6. Powell was surprised that 'there was less the air of comic
opera, and more that of a festival.' Powell, 'Each To His Taste', 182.
123 Lees, Around the Coasts of Australia and Fiji Illustrated, 174.
white ‘ducks’ of European residents and the distinctive uniforms of indigenous police.¹²⁴

The industrial nature of working wharves sometimes dampened travellers’ expectations of arrival. Overseer Walter Gill was disappointed not to see a single Fijian at Lautoka, only an ‘iron and steel behemoth’ that was the wharf, and ‘the dark phallus of a tall chimney.’¹²⁵ Tourist M. Lloyd was disappointed by the ‘very dirty wharfs and black labor’ at Honolulu, and Powell was repelled by the settlement at Rarotonga because it was ‘so prim, so British.’¹²⁶ Disembarking the ship could also be another source of disappointment as local tour guides and opportunists took advantage of the new visitors. In Suva, Littlejohn described ‘crowds of evil-smelling men offering at high prices rubbishy mats, spears, cocoanuts, shells, coral, and fruit.’¹²⁷ Because of advice on board the ship, Ivan and Goff refused to have their bags handled by labourers at the wharf, instead sprinting away with them and earning the scorn of the residents: ‘all united in a strenuous jeer of disapproval...Even a group of palm-trees that had nodded a welcome to us as we entered Suva Bay seemed suddenly aloof.’¹²⁸

Beyond the wharf, travellers wandered the town, their evaluations serving as judgements on the effectiveness of colonial rule. Visually pleasing architecture, neat clean streets, and sculpted gardens impressed, whilst ramshackle and disorderly dwellings, poor roads and disagreeable people reflected poorly. However the final judgement was reserved for the view from above, as travellers climbed to higher ground. Handbooks and travel guides directed travellers to look-outs, promising ‘magnificent views’ and ‘unforgettable’ scenes, and printing pictures of these

¹²⁴ Powell, Adventures of a Wanderer, 133; Allan, Homeward bound, 22; Muspratt, My South Sea Island, 255; Gay, Through Other Lands, 4.
¹²⁵ Walter Gill, Turn North-East at the Tombstone (Adelaide 1970), 24.
¹²⁶ Lloyd, Wanderings in the Old World and the New, 6; Powell, Adventures of a Wanderer, 132.
¹²⁷ Littlejohn, More Notes & Reflections on the Road, 15.
¹²⁸ Irwin and Goff, No Longer Innocent, 39.
panoramas as evidence. Climbing allowed the visitor to acquire the power to possess and evaluate the scene, by becoming the ‘monarch of all I survey’ according to Pratt. The colonial gaze from above, and the subsequent naming, mapping, writing and knowing of the island expressed aesthetic control and ownership. By allowing the observer to view and inscribe the islands as miniature, this gaze also contributed to the nostalgic romanticisation of the Islands.

Given the constraints of shipping services, tourists had a limited time to explore the surrounding areas, and both island economies and shipping companies responded by offering day trip packages. AUSN’s 1916 guide offered a selection of day trips by boat and car which would be ‘very picturesque, and...full of interest to tourists’, complete with details of costs, timings, possible hotels and transportation. These publications highlight the development of specific tourist sites or attractions in the Pacific Islands. Tourist attractions arose out of the collective travel patterns of visitors to the Islands, their accounts acting as markers that identified specific sites to subsequent travellers. As these sites were ‘named’, ‘framed’ and ‘elevated’, according to Dean MacCannell, their status as tourist attractions became cemented, reproduced in photos, prints, guidebooks and shipping advertisements. Tourist sites in the

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129 For example see Robson, The Pacific Islands Yearbook (1st ed.), 70; Percy S. Allen, Stewart’s Handbook of the Pacific Islands: A Reliable Guide to all the Inhabited Islands of the Pacific Ocean - For Traders, Tourists and Settlers, with a Bibliography of Island Works (Sydney 1920), 85.
130 Pratt, Imperial Eyes, 200.
131 Weaver-Hightower, Empire Islands, 15.
132 ‘The miniature always tends towards tableau rather than towards narrative...The observer is offered a transcendent and simultaneous view of the miniature, yet is trapped outside the possibility of a lived reality of the miniature. Hence the nostalgic desire to present...the cultural other within a timeless and uncontaminable miniature form.’ Susan Stewart, On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection (Durham 1993), 66.
133 These trips include journeys ‘via the Reservoir, Soma Bula, and also via the Flagstaff Hill, each from 11/2 to two hours...The return journey is via the Indian settlement, and then past government House, Botanical Gardens, and the new Grand Pacific Hotel’, or trips by motor launch to Bau, Navua, Nausori or Levuka. Their advertisement for a trip to Levuka was typical of those offered at the time, promising ‘old time sailing ships’, a ‘native village’, a Catholic mission station, the Waitovo waterfalls, the Totoga swimming baths, and a walk to the peak. Lees, Around the Coasts of Australia and Fiji Illustrated, 186.
134 A tourist attraction is an empirical relationship between a tourist, a sight and a marker (a piece of information about a sight). Markers can include guide books, and travelogues, and are important in distinguishing sites, particularly natural ones. MacCannell argues the process of ‘site sacralisation’ is as follows: naming; framing and elevation; enshrinement; mechanical reproduction; social
Pacific Islands included natural features, colonial settlements, and historic locations or remains. In response to the commercialisation and popularisation of Pacific Island travel, tourists were increasingly motivated by a desire for the authentic and ‘real’, their routes shaped according to the collection of signs of ‘islandness’ or more specifically ‘Fijianess’ or ‘Samoaness.’ Ironically, this did not usually require contact with an Islander.

Natural formations were popular for their ability to generate a sense of wonder and awe amongst travellers, as well as a picturesque location for picnics. These included hilltop lookouts, volcanoes, waterfalls, caves, rivers, lakes, lagoons and reefs. In particular, tourists frequented Pali Pass in Honolulu, Flagstaff Hill in Suva, the Rewa river in Fiji, the Mapu'a 'a Vaea blowholes of Tonga and the Papase'ea sliding rocks of Samoa. Although ease of access was important, some natural formations were attractive because of their relative inaccessibility, a journey up-river or ascending a volcano offering a sense of adventure, mystery and, afterwards, achievement. This sense of mystery was expressed by artist Arnold Safroni-Middleton who described the caves ‘where the tourist doubtless enters to take a snap-shot of Nature’s transcendent beauty of coral, flowers and ferns, little dreaming of the secret they held for the guile of men years ago.’ Colonial constructions were also important in assisting tourists to access nature, such as glass-bottomed boats and an aquarium in Hawaii, the development of Waikiki Beach, or the Botanical Gardens of Fiji. Although many islands contained impressive natural formations, their isolation and lack of development were barriers to tourism. This encouraged judgements from popular handbooks that warned, for example, ‘to the ordinary tourist or globe-trotter the [Solomon Islands] Protectorate offers few attractions.’


135 Urry, Consuming Places, 133. Subsequent travellers were compelled to visit popular tourist sites as confirmation of their travels.

136 Arnold Safroni-Middleton, Wine-Dark Seas and Tropic Skies: Reminiscences and a Romance of the South Seas (London 1918), 137. The ‘Swallows’ and ‘Mariners’ underwater caves in Tonga were popular attractions.

137 Allen, Stewart’s Handbook of the Pacific Islands, 9.
Structures of colonial settlement also attracted foreign visitors because of their familiarity and their curious local adaptations. The reputation of particular hotels for luxury and opulence made them popular attractions, especially the Moana and the Royal Hawaiian in Honolulu, and the Grand Pacific Hotel in Suva. Even if you were not a resident, it was a popular rest stop and place of refuge after a long day's travel. Travellers visited government buildings, museums, public squares and market places. The Coconut Square in New Caledonia was particularly entertaining (see chapter four). Churches and mission stations were also popular, as travellers admired the exotic architecture of chapels, and enjoyed observing Pacific Islanders in an environment that was safe and controlled. Travellers were also interested in local industry, visiting sugar mills, plantations, pearling stations and trading stores, usually under the guidance and protection of a European resident (see chapter two).

Historic sites in the Pacific Islands were perhaps one of the earliest attractions for foreigners. The graves of martyred missionaries and 'brave' explorers were significant markers in the Islands, reminding tourists of the turbulent history of first contact. Along with other ruins, of abandoned dwellings, derelict prisons, and shipwrecks, these images of decay were valued for their historical worth. Freeman's observation on an abandoned church in Fiji highlights this: 'These hallowed ruins in a picturesque setting amongst palms and bures were evidence of religious fervour and grandiose plans thwarted by hurricanes and hard times.' Some indigenous ruins were also popular. In the case of the Tongan trilithon and royal tombs, these sites were viewed as evidence of an ancient and superior civilisation, part of a general tourist fascination with royalty. Alleged sacrificial sites were also highly desired, the island of Bau in Fiji being especially popular and well-known, described as the 'cannibal capital of the Pacific' (see chapter six). For Australian travellers, the island was only

138 Freeman, Fiji - Memory Hold the Door, 81.
139 A chance to meet living kings and queens of the Pacific Islands was prized by many tourists. Joseph tried to visit the Hawaiian queen but was refused, and Henley observed that the Tongan queen shrinks from 'inquisitive passengers, sometimes of the globe-trotting American type, who, from mere motives of curiosity, wish to interview her on the monthly steamer day.' Joseph, A Bendigonian Abroad, 253; Henley, A Pacific Cruise, 40.
distinguished by some graves and a sacrificial stone, but their travel accounts describe in detail an imagined scene of barbarity and horror.¹⁴⁰

Australian fascination with these ruins can also be explained by the attraction of the ‘sublime’, which like the term picturesque, had origins in earlier accounts of travel in Europe. Distinct from the beautiful, the sublime was terrifying, reckless, powerful, and vast. As described earlier, mountains symbolised this greatness and potential danger. Ruins were also prized as evidence of these past horrors.¹⁴¹ Richard White has demonstrated a similar fascination amongst tourists in Australia with sites made famous by convicts and bushrangers, motivated by a ‘vulgar curiosity’ and a subversive interest in the darker aspects of history that authorities were trying to suppress.¹⁴²

Robert Louis Stevenson’s legacy in Samoa was a major attraction to tourists passing through the Pacific. According to Grimshaw, ‘Apia and Stevenson’s home have been written about and described by almost every tourist who ever passed through on the way to Sydney.’¹⁴³ Stevenson, who had settled in Samoa in 1889, was considered an authority on the Pacific, his books frequently quoted in Australian travel accounts. A select few boasted having met him, including Coffee, Muspratt and Safroni-Middleton. After his death in 1894, he was buried on Mount Vaea overlooking the village of Vailima. Both his house and his grave became well-known tourist attractions in spite of the difficult mountain climb to get there (the route uphill took roughly an hour). Travel accounts reveal that Stevenson was inspirational as a writer,

¹⁴⁰ According to the AUSN shipping booklet, Bau was ‘still the place of residence of Fijian aristocracy’ and once a ‘seat of former empire’. It encouraged travellers to visit the marble graves of Ratu Cakobau and his family, and the old sacrificial stone which was being used as a christening font in the local Wesleyan church. Lees, Around the Coasts of Australia and Fiji Illustrated, 182.
¹⁴¹ Andrews, The Search for the Picturesque, 43-44.
¹⁴² Richard White, ‘The Subversive Tourist: How Tourism Re-Wrote Australian History’ (paper presented at the National Library of Australia, 28 February 2012). White argues that authorities wanted to encourage a respectable history, but the subversive tourist gaze instead favoured stories of bushrangers, convicts and rebels. He offers Port Arthur prison, the convict ship Success, and postcards of the Kelly gang as examples.
¹⁴³ Beatrice Grimshaw, In the Strange South Seas (London 1907), 303. Stephens also wrote, ‘inextricably bound up with Western Samoa is the name and works of Robert Louis Stevenson. His life was what we call picturesque.’ Stephens, Samoan Holidays, 60.
traveller and idealist. Rather than being criticised, Stevenson was admired for choosing to live as an 'exile' in the Pacific Islands, as he was frequently named, and his internal struggle was romanticised. Visiting the tomb was described as a 'pilgrimage' by many travellers, revering the grave and the experience of travel both as sacred. Stephens's detailed description of his visit to Vailima focused on the challenging climb and the view itself, rather than Stevenson's grave. He wrote:

The view is delightful; on either side we see the winding trail up the hillside, the vast pinnacles of sculptural rock, the most stupendous scenes of nature, its overpowering grandeur and its inexpressible beauty...Among the green hills and rich woods the memories which the peaceful country scenes call up are not of this world, or of its thoughts and hopes.

The appeal of Vailima was distinct from any other tourist attraction at the time that was based on the life of a famous European visitor because of Stevenson’s permanent residence there, as well as his literary fame. At other sites, such as Mariner’s Cave in Tonga and Point Venus in Tahiti, the initial contact that marked it as historically important was momentary. Although the mutineers from the H.M.S. Bounty resided in the Pacific, their home on Pitcairn Island was too far for the average tourist to reach, and their numbers too large and dispersed to attract the same interest as Stevenson.

Conspicuous in its absence was the role of Pacific Islanders as a tourist attraction. Tourists did not often engage with Islanders face-to-face, and when they did it was short interactions with taxi drivers, baggage handlers, waiters and housekeepers. Rarely were tourists left alone without the supervision of a European resident or guide. As missionary John Wear Burton observed in Fiji in 1910, ‘At present, Fiji is but little known to the tourist world; and when visitors do come, it is

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144 At the summit Winifred Ponder noted, ‘a simple thing enough it is, this grave that the pilgrim had come so far to see.’ Harriet Winifred Ponder, An Idler in the Islands (Sydney 1924), 86. Henley wrote ‘we seemed to be trespassing on holy ground...there is on top of Mt Vaea a very distinct feeling of solitude, an apartness, an awayness from all that is mundane. One speaks in a whisper and is silenced by wonder and reverence.’ Henley, A Pacific Cruise, 78-79.

145 Of the tomb he wrote, ‘the spot is sacred to the memory of a great man, beloved by the whole English-speaking world, and venerated by the people.’ Stephens, Samoan Holidays, 64.
difficult and expensive to get beyond the European towns. Each year, however, is taking away these reproaches. The colony is gradually becoming known by reason of the 'All red' route. Travel advertisements and guidebooks encouraged visits to local villages, yet observations made in individual travel accounts were usually glimpses from a motor car or the porch of a resident's home. The village domain and its people rarely crossed into the town space, except at wharves and local markets where tourists could purchase curios, pose with a decorated warrior, or watch a dance performance. In these instances, Islanders figured as an attraction in a vague, non-individualised way. Occasionally Australian travellers commented on Islanders working as guides, although they were reported as desperate or unreliable.

Fiji was a notable exception, with travellers frequently commenting on visiting a local village. Stock's experience of 'A Day with a South Sea Prince', as he titled his chapter, was typical of travellers to Fiji at the time. Stock described visiting Bau Island and being hosted by a local chief, where he swam, ate, and participated in a kava ceremony. Stock was impressed by the well-educated chief, emphasising 'a mingled atmosphere of past and present, barbarism and culture, truly bewildering in its contrasts.' Like other travellers, Stock perceived his experience to be authentic, allowing him to see 'the real life of the Fijian people, lying hidden, but not dead, beneath the-as-yet-thin veneer of civilization.'

There is little evidence of how these village visits were arranged or structured. According to an AUSN guide, a trip to see the firewalkers of Beqa Island in Fiji could be organised: 'special arrangements have to be made with the chief to secure an

146 John Wear Burton, The Fiji of To-day (London 1910), 34.
147 There is amateur video footage of tourists standing next to a Fijian male dressed as a warrior and brandishing a club at Suva wharf. [Pacific Islands Leg of Boat Trip to U.S.; Sydney to Los Angeles by Boat]. Title # 64121, National Film and Sound Archive, c.1927.
150 Ibid., 169.
exhibition, and the cost is said to be considerable. Island residents were also opportunistic and familiar with the demands of the growing tourist group, responding with their own 'staged authenticity.' The success of these village visits may have been due to Fiji's location on the major trans-Pacific routes, and the benefit of good road access and tourism promotion by the local bureau and shipping companies. It may also be attributed to the popularity of the kava ritual, and the structure of Fijian villages themselves as large concentrated settlements (compared to other islands whose villages were more spread out). Government policies designed to ensure the protection of the indigenous Fijian population probably also played a role.

Reactions Against the Tourist

Travellers were just as eager to serve judgement upon their fellow passengers as they were on the residents, and those Australians who chose to stay ashore for an extended period of the time quickly looked with scorn upon transient visitors. There was a tension between what Urry has termed the 'romantic' and the 'collective' tourist gazes. Travellers possessing the romantic gaze valued solitude and 'a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze.' They considered their mode of travel superior to the well-worn path of conventional tourists, who formed the second category. This group relied on the social atmosphere created by the collective members, and stimulated the growth of services catering to larger groups. Those who looked disparagingly upon tourists as foreign intrusions often adopted a self-righteous persona and failed to acknowledge that they may also have been implicated in some of the developments they derided.

So far this chapter has focused on the collective tourist gaze, but there were many travellers who were vocal in their criticisms of this voyaging mass in the Pacific. Criticisms of tourists were diverse and varied, and they were often depicted in opposition to the 'real' traveller, a figure which George Meudell identified as one who

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rejected the modern trappings designed for American tourists. The term itself was used more frequently in the twentieth century, and was associated with modernity, represented by a growing middle class who had the ability to travel for leisure. Very few travellers identified themselves as tourists, as it was a status in opposition to the romantic and heroic notions of a Pacific explorer. Many were conscious of conventional tourist accounts of the time, and avoided them. As John J. Gay wrote in his introduction, ‘This is a story of the world and its people, written by an Australian journalist and business man, while wandering leisurely over land and sea. It is not the fevered chronicle of the typical globe-trotter who...with smug complacency inflicts upon long-suffering humanity a medley of crude impressions, banal platitudes and “cheap” criticisms mainly directed against his own country.’

Tourists were disliked because they followed the routes prescribed by shipping companies. Paul McGuire warned travellers to Fiji that, ‘one should avoid that pilgrim’s progress favoured by the Indian taxi-drivers for tourists up past the hospital and by the asylum to the cemetery...the Fijian deserves to be seen in his own land.’ They were also shunned for travelling en masse, Safroni-Middleton describing them as ‘swells from the Australian cities’ and Alan John Marshall recalling that when ‘some seventeen hundred tourists vomited on to the beach’ at Espiritu Santo (in the New Hebrides), the noise ‘caused the natives to flee in terror to the hills.’

Tourists were frequently identified with consumption, as Lewis identifies:

They had gone ashore in noisy gangs to buy things and see things and take things with their kodaks – in short to do Samoa in the way passengers do places at which their ships so obligingly and, thank God, so temporarily put them down. I did not want to be one of them any longer.

155 MacCannell, The Tourist, 1.
156 Gay, Through Other Lands.
157 McGuire, Westward the Course, 66.
159 Lewis, They Call Them Savages, 7.
'Armed with guide-books and cameras and the totally unnecessary puggaree that the traveling Briton loves to deck himself withal', tourists were rejected for their reckless consumerism. This included being identified with sloth, greed and arrogance. Mordaunt described one tourist boat 'fattened with Philistines' and Marshall described in detail a 'tourist invasion' which 'mistook the Residency for a sort of a club and immediately took charge, consuming the bewildered D.O.'s [district officer's] beer and wines with a speed that amazed even that worthy as he wandered about in a daze trying to guard his possessions.' Occasionally they were identified as American. Perhaps this was an expression of pride in Australia's British heritage, although it may have also had practical reasons as Freeman suggests:

During this prohibition era in the United States, Suva was the first 'wet' port of call on the voyage south. Following visits to local pubs, American tourists bedecked in souvenir necklaces of shells and seeds regularly made spectacles of themselves. Tipping generously, they fell out of taxis, lipstick and hats awry and tripped up steps. Their loud voices, broad accents, two-tone shoes, horned-rimmed spectacles, bobby socks, scarlet lips and finger-nails shocked and astonished all races. At Suva fancy dress parties, the prize for the most original costume now went to the 'American Tourist.'

In addition to consuming alcohol and food in excess, tourists were identified by their desire for souvenirs or 'curios.' Collecting curios was an important part of most experiences of travel, serving as a trace of an authentic experience. Residents were aware of this demand, Alfred William Hill warning readers to 'remember that the native Indian shopkeepers and hawkers are keenly alive to the gullibility of the tourist.' Islanders were familiar with posing for photographs by the 1900s, and travellers described a wide variety of items for sale, ranging from fans and skirts to

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160 Grimshaw, *From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands*, 24.
162 Freeman, *Fiji - Memory Hold the Door*, 57-58.
163 Stewart, *On Longing*, 135, 146. Souvenirs display the 'romance of the contraband', and 'allow the tourist to appropriate, consume, and thereby "tame" the cultural other'.
weapons, ‘cannibal forks’ and human bones (see chapter six). These items changed over time in response to these visitors, ‘thus the tourist aesthetic ensures that the object is continually exoticised and estranged.’

Stereotypes of the Pacific Islander as childlike, innocent and gullible were shown to be false as tourists were forced to bargain with shrewd sellers. One traveller, J. Mayne Anderson, advised ‘the tourist on the look out for curios had better remain at home, and make his selection from a city dealer.’ Some lamented that the natural primitivity of Islanders was being corrupted by tourists, one being Julian Thomas, who predicted as early as 1888 that the Tannese descendants may ‘be a race of guides, cheats, and liars, who will peddle to the personally conducted tourists of the period all the bones they can scrape together, as those of white men consumed inwardly by their cannibal ancestors.’ Alternatively, these instances can be seen as evidence of Islander agency and European gullibility, as British government official Hugh Hastings Romilly did in 1886:

> Ignorance of native languages prevents these travellers from collecting information from native sources, and is often the cause of their mistakes. More than one “old hand” has told me that the sight of the note-book in the Globetrotter’s hand prompted him to draw on his imagination to a rather immoral extent, and caused him to supply ready-made facts which would astonish no one so much as the natives themselves.

His comments confirm that Islanders responded to the demands of visitors well before the tourist masses of the twentieth century had arrived to ‘corrupt’ them.

As travel to the Pacific Islands became increasingly structured, commodified and standardised in the 1920s and 30s, criticisms of the effects of tourism intensified, and more Australians searched for alternative paths and more remote destinations. Yet

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in their attempts to distinguish themselves from the tourist masses, and seek out the ‘authentic’ Pacific Island. Australian travel writers repeated common descriptions and tropes, and their texts contributed to the popularisation of routes and locations. Similarly, criticisms of colonial rule overlooked the role that colonialism played in facilitating Australian travel. The steamship itself was an important new mode of transportation for Australians, as well as a symbol of the modern industrialisation which was so rapidly transforming the Pacific Islands. This colonial reality conflicted with the idealised image of the Pacific traveller as explorer, and the Pacific as an unexplored region awaiting discovery.

This chapter has discussed how the establishment of regular steamship routes brought an increasing number of Australians in contact with the Pacific Islands from the 1880s onwards, contributing to the growth of Australian travel writing and the popularity of Pacific tourism. These steamship companies promoted a powerful new image of the Pacific that specifically catered for the leisurely tourist, an image that filtered into Australian travel writing over time. Not only did these routes influence the development of the islands to receive visitors, but they also shaped the travellers and their experience of travel. This chapter has shown that the first stage of the journey, from the moment of departure to the initial arrival at the islands, was a formative moment. Steamships became temporary homes and refuges for travellers during a period of heightened emotion, uncertainty and acclimatisation. These liminal spaces influenced how Australians represented the islands, and affected how they positioned, and re-positioned themselves. This is evident in their travel accounts, which dedicated more page-space to documenting their expectations and first impressions than any other part of the journey or aspect of the islands. Although travel writers tried to present themselves as lone explorers, they often followed in the footsteps of others, and fell back on familiar tropes and themes to describe the foreign and unknown.

The next chapter explores the equally important commercial motivations that stimulated Australian travel in the Pacific Islands. It discusses the Australians traders, farmers, prospectors, overseers and sailors who forged new paths through the Pacific
in their search for fortune, distinct from those travelling for leisure and respite. Their accounts fed into the broader European imagination of the Pacific as a place of economic prosperity and potential.
CHAPTER TWO

In Search of a Profitable Pacific

I join the Australian Argonauts in their search for the land of the golden coconut. They are the genuine article all right — hard-handed anxious-faced men — shearsers, mechanics, miners, farmers, prospectors, out-back men, and a few born wanderers never happy unless they are on the move...They very often got a spear through them, and they invariably had a bad time but they saw the world. A lot of these settlers were like walk-about blacks and if a new venture were started at the North Pole they would be off to it.1

‘Banjo’ Paterson’s reflections on the voyage of a group of prospective settlers from Sydney to the New Hebrides in 1902 are often overlooked in light of his contribution to Australian literature and bush mythology. Commissioned by an Australian shipping company to report on a newly-established settlement scheme to the island group, Paterson’s brief visit to the Pacific provides a momentary glimpse into the diverse range of motives that underscored Australian travel and shaped how the islands were perceived. Following on from the previous chapter which charted the expansion of steamship routes and the growth of tourism in the Pacific, this chapter explores the commercial motivations of travellers and travel writers. In doing so, it discusses the popular perception of the Islands as a lucrative location for Australian commercial enterprise.

The enterprising Australian worker visited the Pacific Islands seeking opportunities for economic and social betterment well before those travelling for leisure. The masculine and heroic figure of the intrepid trader, prospector, overseer

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1 Andrew Barton Paterson in Clement Semmler, The Banjo of the Bush: The Life and Times of A.B. Banjo Paterson (St Lucia 1984), 141. Dated 31 May 1902, this quote was taken from an unpublished radio script for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s production of The Pioneers (1935).
and farmer was the most frequent type of Australian traveller in the nineteenth century, and it was not until after World War I that tourists began to outnumber them. This chapter focuses on the public perception of Australian workers and commerce in the Pacific, and explores how the accounts of these workers encouraged and challenged popular stereotypes. Simultaneously caught between two worlds, these workers often occupied a position as mediator in European-Islander relationships. Their close encounters and day-to-day observations of the Islands made their accounts distinct from the shallow tourist impressions of the region and its peoples. Often self-motivated, their descriptions were distinctive from the biases that missionary and government records were subject to. Of course their accounts were not always honest or accurate, but their close experience with Pacific Islanders legitimised their authority as Pacific experts in Australia. This authority underscored the popularity of accounts written by these opportunists-cum-writers when they returned home.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first examines the literary legacy of Australian author Louis Becke, and the nineteenth century romanticisation of the life of a European working in the Pacific. I trace the persistence of this image in popular Australian representations of the trader and planter in twentieth century travel writing, and the influence of Australian nationalism in developing this character. The second section discusses how Australian travellers contributed to the broader imagining of the Pacific as a place of economic potential, a theme that was used to the advantage of Australian government and businesses with interests in developing the region. It explores the role that writers played, both intentionally and unintentionally, to encourage investment and public interest in the Pacific. Drawing on a selection of diaries and impressions of Australian workers in the Pacific, the third section highlights the realities of life as a European living in the islands, and how this reality conflicted with distorted expectations encouraged in popular literature. In particular, I examine issues such as the difficulty of making a profit, the challenge of adjusting to life in Australia and the Islands (and satisfying the expectations of two different cultures), and the role that Australians played in negotiating conflict with, and for, other people.
Louis Becke – the Archetypal Australian Trader

Historically, commerce motivated initial contacts between Australians and the Pacific. Along with whalers, traders searching for pearl shell, sandalwood and bêche-de-mer were amongst the first to pioneer new routes to, and relationships with, the Pacific Islands in the nineteenth century. Initially these traders were mobile and transient, running their operations from the safety of their ships and having limited contact with Islanders. Gradually trading stations were established in the Islands, although the resident trader was not as permanent as the station he ran. The hardships of living in a foreign environment meant that traders were constantly moving and changing professions, the high turnover attracting new itinerant opportunists. These pioneers were amongst the earliest contacts between Australia and the Islands and provided a new communication link across the Pacific, yet their accounts did not reach far into the colonies. Instead, these figures inspired fictional tales of adventure for children and adults, many proliferating from England and English authors in the late nineteenth century. Whilst many of these tales encouraged romantic notions of the life of a European working and living in the Pacific Islands, it was Louis Becke who made a significant contribution to Australian knowledge of the Pacific, becoming an archetypal figure of the Pacific trader by the early twentieth century.

Louis Becke was Australia’s most famous travel writer of the late nineteenth century. His significant contribution as a writer and a knowledgeable expert on the Pacific has been acknowledged in the biographies compiled about him, as well as literature studies. Born in 1855 in Port Macquarie, New South Wales, George Lewis Becke first encountered the Pacific when he travelled to San Francisco with his brother at the age of 14. Two years later he stowed away on the Rotumah for Samoa, where he worked as a bookkeeper in a local trading store. Over a twenty year period, Becke

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2 For further discussion see Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure*; Saxby, *A History of Australian Children’s Literature 1841-1941*.
worked throughout the Pacific, including as a supercargo [representative of a vessel’s owner] in the North Pacific, as a resident trader in Kiribati, and in a variety of short-term jobs in New Britain, the Marshall Islands and New Caledonia. Unable to find regular work in 1892, Becke turned to writing. Becke found employment with the Sydney-based periodical, the *Bulletin*, his first story appearing in 1893. In 1894 Becke’s first collection of stories was published under the title *By Reef and Palm*, launching him into the spotlight. Subsequently Becke gained local and international commercial success, going on to publish 34 books as well as numerous articles in newspapers and magazines, and earning the reputation of ‘Rudyard Kipling of the Pacific.’ Though others tried to emulate his success, Becke’s international popularity and his influence on Australian ideas of the Pacific region were exceptional.

Becke’s literary success has been attributed to his first-hand knowledge of the Pacific as much as his writing style. Whilst his subject matter conformed to other English adventure fiction (pitting courageous white men against ‘savage’ people), his work also represented a departure from the romanticism and moral justifications of previous English literature. This proved popular amongst Australian audiences who welcomed the ‘authentic’ realism of his stories (which he based on actual

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4 In 1873 Becke sailed to the Marshall Islands where he joined American trader ‘Bully’ Hayes for three months on the *Leonora*. It was shipwrecked during a typhoon on Kosrae in 1874. Becke was rescued, and taken to Brisbane to face charges of piracy. He was acquitted, and stayed in Queensland as a prospector and bank clerk until 1880. Then he took up a position as trader in Kiribati where he married Nelea Tiken in 1881. After yet another shipwreck in which he lost his possessions, he returned to Sydney. He briefly worked in New Britain and Majuro from 1882 to 1885, and in Noumea from 1890 to 1892, both times returning to Australia. He married Elisabeth Maunsell of Port Macquarie in 1886. Despite his success as an author from the 1890s, Becke ended up broke in Sydney by 1909, and died of cancer in 1913.

5 *By Reef and Palm* was published in London, and went through several editions. Prior to this, Becke had won a plagiarism case against T.A. Brown (also known as Rolf Boldrewood) who used Becke’s stories in his novel *A Modern Buccaneer* (1894). As a result, Boldrewood was forced to acknowledge Becke’s part of the book.

6 Day, *Louis Becke*, 63. Six of these were written in collaboration with Walter James Jeffery, the Australian editor of *Town and Country Journal*.

7 Jack McLaren wrote about the difficulties of becoming a published writer in his travelogues *My Odyssey* (1923) and *My Civilised Adventure* (1952). Like Becke, McLaren juggled various jobs whilst travelling throughout the Pacific in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, before turning to the *Bulletin* as a writer in 1911. It was not until he reached London in 1925 that he secured his reputation as a fictional writer, producing over twenty popular novels and travel accounts, as well as becoming a radio broadcaster.
experiences). He was regarded as an authority on the South Seas in England, with his main publisher T. Fisher Unwin producing multiple editions for the British and colonial markets. Many of his stories were published as collections of short, unconnected tales, similar to sailors’ yarns, with a narration that was abrupt, intense and dramatic. Although his tales were often fictional, Henry Maude, Nicholas Thomas and Richard Eves have highlighted the historical experiences of Becke which underscored many of his stories.

Becke’s style of writing was nurtured and influenced by Jules Francois Archibald, the editor of the Bulletin. It reflected and contributed to a new literary culture that was growing in Sydney from the 1890s. Under Archibald’s leadership the Bulletin encouraged new Australian authors rather than relying on overseas articles. It also fostered a literature that was patriotic, protectionist, masculine and racist. On its masthead was written ‘Australia for the White Man’, from the first issue until the early 1960s. The Bulletin editors preferred realism over romance, the latter considered ‘foreign, unmanly and unsuited to expressing radical, egalitarian and nationalistic ideas’ according to Robert Dixon. The popularity of the Bulletin meant its ideas about the Pacific were widely circulated. By 1900 its circulation was 80,000. Despite being regarded as the ‘bushman’s bible’, it did publish articles about the Pacific Islands, and many of its contributors wrote Pacific fictions and travelogues elsewhere (for example, Ion Idriess, Vance Palmer, Dale Collins, Lewis Lett, Albert Dorrington

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8 Many of his stories, particularly the earliest ones, were partly autobiographical. Dixon, Writing the Colonial Adventure, 180.

9 Day, Louis Becke, 75; Pearson, Rifled Sanctuaries, 78.

10 According to Maude, ‘The division made between fiction and non-fiction writing is, however, rather artificial and disguises the fact that Becke based much, probably most, of his so-called fiction on the stories of actual events which he heard recounted by the traders and natives with whom he mixed, supplemented by library research.’ Maude, ‘Review Article: Louis Becke: The Traders’ Historian’, 226; Thomas and Eves, Bad Colonists.

11 Donald Denoon argues that the Bulletin was a voice for writers with an isolationist view of Australia that did not include the Pacific Islands, one that was ‘racist, anti-Semitic, anti-Imperialist and loudly misogynist.’ Denoon, ‘Re-Membering Australasia: A Repressed Memory’, 298.

12 Dixon, Writing the Colonial Adventure, 184.

and artist Norman Lindsay). Even Paterson, an author best-known for his rural Australian subject matter, had experience travelling in the Pacific.\textsuperscript{14}

The *Bulletin*’s content incorporated and encouraged popular ideas about Australian masculinity and national character that were developing from the 1880s. Marilyn Lake identified the *Bulletin* as one of the domains in which the ‘gender wars’ of the 1890s were played out, drawing attention to its ‘masculinist’ representations of the iconic Australian ‘bushman’, and the response by feminist social reform campaigners.\textsuperscript{15} In this environment, Australian literature overwhelmingly represented the nation as young, pure and innocent, and in the figure of the ‘coming man’, idealised a people superior to the British stock, shaped by the Australian climate and proven in sport and war. This coming man displayed ‘independence, manliness, a fondness for sport, egalitarianism, a dislike of mental effort, self-confidence, a certain disrespect for authority.’\textsuperscript{16} In a similar way that the Australian bush was seen to shape the coming man, so could the tropics be a proving ground for the Australian character (see chapter five).

Becke’s writing conformed to these masculine ideals, often representing European traders, prospectors, planters and sailors as the protagonists. Whether villainous and heroic, Becke’s characters were men of action rather than romanticists,

\textsuperscript{14} Like Becke, Paterson was groomed by Archibald in the *Bulletin* when he joined in 1886, aged 22. He later served as Becke’s lawyer in a plagiarism case against author Rolf Boldrewood. In 1902 he accompanied a group of Australians moving to the New Hebrides as part of a commercial settlement scheme.

\textsuperscript{15} Lake argued that the Australian ‘bushman’ that was celebrated as a national figure in the *Bulletin* not only represented mateship, but was also idealised for his freedom from the responsibilities of marriage. Marilyn Lake, ‘The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context’, *Historical Studies*, 22 (86) 1986, p.116-131. Although this was the dominant trope at the turn of the century, women were not completely absent from the production or representations of Australian culture at the turn of the century. This is evident in the figure of the ‘Australian girl’ who was symbolic of modernity and independence, qualities embodied by the female traveller of the early twentieth century (see chapter three). Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 157; Ann Curthoys, ‘Identity Crisis: Colonialism, Nation and Gender in Australian History’, *Gender and History*, 5 (1993), 165-176; White, *Inventing Australia*, 77.

and women often appeared only as love interests in formulaic interracial dramas.\textsuperscript{17} This representation acquired greater significance in parts of the Pacific where Australians were actively involved (such as Papua and New Guinea). According to Nigel Krauth, Becke ‘established the pattern of the New Guinea colonial short story: its superficially tough male characters, its dangerously enervating female characters, its constant theme of white survival, its avoidance of the ethics of that survival in practice, its description of an environment devoid of divine assistance, and its blood-bespattered adventure drama.’\textsuperscript{18}

In particular, Becke’s tales often focused on the trader, often through his alterego Tom Denison and in the popular tales of villainous American labour trader ‘Bully’ Hayes. By their transient nature, traders lent themselves to fictional tales, allowing writers to situate them in various exotic locations with different actors and new adventures. They were distinct from the nineteenth century beachcomber who had completely abandoned ‘civilisation’, or the government official or missionary, who were constrained by specific regulations and expectations pertaining to their job. Rather, this was the enterprising Australian pioneer, the trader, miner, farmer and businessman traversing and acquiring the Pacific region. This predominantly male figure was heroic and noble, portrayed in literature as adventurous, ambitious, and grappling with the dilemma of maintaining civilised standards in a savage environment. According to Louis Becke, he was ‘generally a rough character – a runaway from some Australian or American whaler, or a wandering Ishmael who, for reasons of his own, preferred living among the intractable, bawling, and poverty-stricken people of the equatorial Pacific to dreaming away his days in the monotonously happy valleys of the Society and Marquesas Groups.’\textsuperscript{19}

Becke’s tales often situated traders as protagonists in his stories because of the dramatic tension achieved by focusing on their struggle to negotiate between two cultures. As one of Becke’s fictional characters said, ‘Had I gone back to Sydney,

\textsuperscript{17} Day, \textit{Louis Becke}, 144.
\textsuperscript{18} Krauth, \textit{The New Guinea Experience in Literature}, 87.
\textsuperscript{19} Louis Becke, \textit{By Reef and Palm} (London 1955), 98.
where would I be now? – a mate, I suppose, on some deep-sea ship, earning £12 or £14 a month. Another year or two like this and I could go back a made man... No, I’ll stay here: “Kapeni Paranili” [his island name] will always be a big man in the Paumotus, but Fred Brantley would be nobody in Sydney.”^20 As such, they were popular protagonists for interracial romances (By Reef and Palm was a collection of entirely interracial romances published in 1894), or for stories in which they crossed from ‘civilisation’ to ‘savagery.’ Like previous European literature about interracial romances, the possibility of an interracial relationship was alluring, yet ultimately forbidden, thus these fictional romances rarely had positive outcomes. However, this focus on romance influenced popular imaginations of Australians living in the Pacific. According to Paterson, ‘Everyone recalled Louis Becke sketches of traders, languid, cultivated men of leisure, whose talk was mostly about square gin, and whose occupation was mostly fighting over the afflictions of brown maidens.’^21

Becke’s trading tales contributed to a popular perception of Europeans living and working in the Pacific Islands. This romanticised image of the trader, planter or overseer infiltrated everyday travel accounts about the Pacific Islands, as tourists were keen to meet a Becke-like trader or plantation owner face-to-face. Even before they arrived in the Islands, tourists encountered traders on ships and at ports en route to the Pacific. With the beginning of the tourism industry in the Islands, companies would organise day trips to local missions and plantations. White residents, either looking forward to good company, or hoping to gain some financial benefit, welcomed visitors and offered tours around their properties. Marshall described this process in detail:

Throughout the South Seas you’ll find them; little kingdoms wedged between a green wilderness... you will see a central group of buildings near the beach, flanked by an ordered forest of perhaps a hundred thousand coconut-palms... If it is steamer-time, when most visitors arrive, your most vivid

^20 Ibid., 174-175.
^22 Stock described many traders crowding the ships at Norfolk Island as they returned from the New Hebrides. Stock, The Cruise of the Dream Ship, 141.
impressions will be a harassed figure in soiled white...Sail in on any other
day in the month and you will be met by a hardy individual in shirt-sleeves
and a battered helmet, whose hospitality is as boundless as his capacity for
conversation. He will suggest a drink and lead you to a shady thatched kiosk,
and after lunch, if you are interested, will take you around the plantation.23

Marshall’s observations were typical of Australian travel accounts which generally
described residents as hardy workers (often emphasised by their alcoholism).
Although occasionally criticised for succumbing to ‘uncivilised’ temptations, the
resident European was mostly respected by visitors for their hospitality and their
resilience.24

Travellers also regularly admired the life of a plantation overseer. These men
appeared wealthy and successful, possessing large spacious houses, ‘picturesque’
grounds, well-behaved servants and employees, and an abundance of resources.
Marshall observed that ‘the planter, perhaps a white storekeeper, and usually a half-
caste overseer, constitute an oligarchy which rules the coconut kingdom and its
hundred-odd coloured labourers.’25 Their lives were seen to be carefree and
unburdened. As Julian Thomas noted, ‘from the point of view of a cane-bottomed
chair and a full tumbler, a planter’s life in the New Hebrides was one to be envied.’26

This romantic image of the life of a European or Australian resident in the
islands was increasingly irrelevant by the twentieth century. By his own admission,
Becke’s trading fantasies in the Pacific were nostalgic. He reminisced that the
nineteenth century ‘wave-punchers’ were different from the new steamers which
‘exploited’ the Islands for trade.27 Not only had transportation routes and trade goods

24 Marshall described the New Hebridean trader as ‘generally a hard-living, hard-drinking philistine
who acts first and talks a lot afterwards. He learns his job in the wind, out in the sun and the driving
rain; he is hospitality itself.’ Ibid., 289.
25 Ibid., 283.
26 Thomas, Cannibals and Convicts, 222.
27 The old ‘wave-punchers’ carried ‘their “trade” of knives, axes, guns, bad rum, and good tobacco,
instead of, as now, white umbrellas, paper, boots and shoes, German sewing-machines and fancy
prints.’ Becke, By Reef and Palm, 97.
changed, but so too had the Islands. Popular tales of lone pioneering individuals living amongst ‘savage’ and dangerous islanders may have resonated with the experiences of Australian sandalwood and labour traders of the nineteenth century, but by the 1900s Islanders and Australian visitors were more familiar with one another (see chapter six). Though instances of violent encounter were less frequent, Australian travellers continued to imagine the trader, planter, overseer or miner as heroic and successful in the twentieth century. This was in part due to the persistence of conventional European notions of the Pacific’s economic potential, an idea encouraged by Australian governments and businesses looking to encourage investment and expand commerce in the region.

**Economic Potential in the Pacific**

Becke’s exciting tales of trading adventures fed into a wider narrative which had traditionally imagined the Pacific Islands as a region of unknown riches and a place of prosperity. These idealistic descriptions were persistent from the 1880s through to the 1940s, and applied indiscriminately to all the Pacific Islands (the following chapter explores its resonance with particular ideas of Polynesia and Tahiti). This trope was underscored by a European literary tradition of imagining the Pacific as an idyllic paradise, and Australians’ unfamiliarity with many of the islands assisted the perpetuation of this image. Travellers such as Henry Tichborne, who ‘began to dream of a new El Dorados’, exaggerated the potential rewards hidden within the islands, and encouraged expectations of finding paradise, gold, or other treasures that had yet to be tapped. In addition to descriptions of gold mining and pearl diving, travel accounts often included vivid imagery of jewels and gold to describe the Pacific Islands. In 1900 Ernest Osborne described an atoll of the Gilbert Islands as a ‘gemlike idyll’, and in 1927 Arnold Safroni-Middleton observed that the mountains of Fiji ‘have

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28 For example, in 1900 government agent John Gaggin remarked, ‘To be eaten is mostly the ultimate fate of many of the hardy white adventurers in the western South Seas; such is the final result, if the trader remains long enough.’ John Gaggin, *Among the Man-Eaters* (London 1900), 137.
29 Tichborne, *Rambles in Polynesia by Sundowner*, 74. Tichborne also wrote under the pseudonym ‘Sundowner.’
become storied windows of nameless crimson hues and burnished gold.’\textsuperscript{30} This imagery also hinted at the subconscious desires of travellers to possess these rich islands, as Elinor Mordaunt did in 1926 when she described the islands: ‘all in the little, small as a jewel, so that it seems as though one were able to take it up in the hollows of one’s two hands, feel the warmth of it, turning it, catching the glow upon it as upon a jewel.’\textsuperscript{31}

As well as the direct allusions to gold and other minerals, Australian travellers noted the abundance and fertility of the land, with its propensity of fruit and vegetation, the richness of the soil and the value of the goods that could be garnered. J.B. Nicoll, a tourist on a cruise through the Solomon Islands in 1902, was relieved ‘to see the signs of cultivation and clearing after looking at so much virgin forest.’\textsuperscript{32} In 1909 Presbyterian minister Charles Stuart Ross noted that Fiji possessed ‘a large area of wonderfully fertile soil that is hardly equalled...[which] have been yielding annually crops of cane, cotton, maize, tobacco and other products without manure and without apparent impoverishment.’\textsuperscript{33} In 1920, businessman Frank Coffee wrote about the Solomon Islands that, ‘all trade is done with Australia. With copra and other products exported, and merchandise imported, the amount runs to hundreds of thousands of value a year, and the war has not made any appreciable difference.’\textsuperscript{34} These observations highlight the development of business and industry in the islands in the 1900s, and reinforced Australian perceptions of the Pacific Islands as ripe for the taking.

Aside from the obvious descriptions of natural resources, travellers also commented on the suitability of the tropical climate for Europeans and on the utility

\textsuperscript{30} Ernest Osborne, \textit{Through the Atolls of the Line} (Five Dock 1900); Arnold Safroni-Middleton, \textit{Tropic Shadows: Memories of the South Seas, Together with Reminiscences of the Author’s Sea Meetings with Joseph Conrad} (London 1927), 20.
\textsuperscript{31} Mordaunt, \textit{The Venture Book}, 328.
\textsuperscript{33} Charles Stuart Ross, \textit{Fiji and the Western Pacific} (Victoria 1909), 289.
\textsuperscript{34} Coffee, \textit{Forty Years on the Pacific}, 111.
of Islanders as labourers. These issues were highly contested in Australian travel accounts, as conventional stereotypes of the inherently lazy or ‘savage’ Islander, and popular fears of the potentially dangerous tropical environment, contradicted efforts to promote business and settlement in the Islands. These two issues are discussed in further detail in chapters five and six respectively.

Other travel publications also focused on economics and trade as a major feature of the Pacific Islands, reflecting the growing interest in the early 1900s shown by Australian business, investors and governments in the potential resources of the Pacific Islands. Travel guides such as the Pacific Islands Yearbook gave detailed economic overviews, listing imports and exports figures for each island group, as well as current market prices and tariffs. The first edition in 1932 included an article by the editor Robert William Robson describing the ‘opportunities for new settlers in the Pacific.’ There he noted that the Pacific Islands were ‘enormously rich in natural resources’ and awaiting ‘men of pluck, vision, determination and moderate capital.’

Shipping and trading companies published their own travel ephemera as well, and regularly commissioned travel writers to compose favourable articles. As part of BP’s successful expansion from its Australian coastal operation into Pacific trade and shipping, it began a quarterly magazine entitled Picturesque Travel (later renamed BP Magazine) in 1911. This periodical aimed to encourage tourism whilst also promoting itself as an informative and educative magazine. In its earliest editions during the 1910s, BP Magazine emphasised the Pacific Islands as a primitive holiday destination,

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35 The labour issue also informed debates about the supposed indigenous depopulation of the Pacific. For example, Paterson described the New Hebridean as ‘an indifferent labourer, and it would pay the planters well to allow the kanakas to live on their own gardens in their own sweet way, and to obtain coolie labour, as is done in Fiji.’ Paterson, ‘The New Hebrides: The New Pilgrims’ Progress’, 12. Ross’ travel account allayed fears of tropical diseases in the Islands in order to encourage European settlement. He argued that ‘settlers and European tradesmen can work in the open air constantly throughout the year, exposed to all changes of weather, without feeling any bad effects.’ Ross, Fiji and the Western Pacific, 290.

36 Robson, The Pacific Islands Yearbook (1st ed.), 9. He continued to argue that ‘Australia and New Zealand as a field for individualistic enterprise, are being gradually restricted by trade union tyranny and political lunacy; but there is plenty of room in the Islands for what some simple soul has called “blokes wiv guts”.’
and marketed the resident trader or planter as an exotic attraction to potential tourists.  

Later, BP Magazine began publishing articles specifically about trade in the Pacific, explaining particular industries and the goods and wealth they produced. Articles had titles such as ‘Coconuts and Copra’, ‘Pearl Shelling in the Torres Strait’ and ‘Phosphate Island.’ Efforts to promote their trading operations by showing examples of industry and labour in the Pacific were mediated by images of idyllic relaxation and natural landscapes which advertised its tourist cruises.

BP’s rapid expansion in the Pacific made it a powerful and influential Australian company by the 1900s. According to Judith A. Bennet, ‘to a world largely ignorant of island conditions the semi-monthly steamer was a continued source of information. It became the [Solomon Islands] protectorate’s unofficial publicity agent in Australia.’ The company’s political influence was widely recognised by Australians at the time. Paterson described one of its founders, James Burns, ‘as near to an Empire builder as we ever saw in these parts’ and noted that, ‘anywhere that there was a risk to be run and money to be made you would see the flag of James Burns. If he had been dealing in diamonds instead of copra and bananas, he might have been another Cecil Rhodes’s understudy.’ BP’s periodicals were one part of a diverse strategy to justify and extend the company’s reach throughout the Pacific Islands.

Other Australian periodicals concerned with the Pacific Islands devoted much of their content to issue of trade and commerce. In the Pacific Islands Monthly from 1930 to 1945 there were 148 general articles on agriculture, 74 on commerce, and 205 articles on trade. 

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37 For example, an early issue advertised a guided ‘walk through the Government plantations’ and ‘a round of visits’ to the local rubber and coconut plantations in the Solomon Islands. Burns, Philp & Company, Limited, Picturesque Travel (1914), 40, 42. See also Dora Payther, ‘The Planter’s Wife’, BP Magazine, 2:4 (September 1930), 50; Cina, ‘A Trader’s Tale’, BP Magazine, 5:3 (June 1933), 90. 


on the economy, not including those articles about trade in specific islands. A similar focus can be seen in *Walkabout*, a monthly geographic magazine published by the Australian National Travel Association from 1934. *Walkabout* included many articles informing readers about the lives of island residents and the processes involved in particular industries. Articles about coconut plantations were most common, but titles also included: ‘The Story of Nauru’, ‘Vanua-Lava and its Sulphur’, ‘Life on a Coco-nut Plantation’, ‘Tuamotu Archipelago: Amongst the Pearl Divers’, ‘The Coco-nut Tree’, ‘Cannibals and Talkies’ [about a plantation owner], ‘The Tricolour in the South Seas’ [about French mining], and ‘Fiji Gold.’ These were all positive portrayals of life as a trader or planter, as William C. Groves suggests: ‘What a wonderful life these plantation chaps have. I’d give the world to exchange places with that chap we met to-day.’

Although these examples may reflect the visibility of Australian business and settlement in the Pacific by the 1930s, a brief survey of earlier periodicals with Pacific content suggests that Australian readers were interested in trade and commerce in the Islands much earlier. *The Lone Hand* (1907-1921), a sister publication of the *Bulletin*, published 22 articles about the Pacific Islands, ten of which were about trade. This included articles such as ‘Fiji Sugar Plantation’, ‘On a Fijian Cocoanut Plantation’, ‘Ocean Island and the Phosphate Industry’, ‘Australia and the Nauru Phosphate Deal’ and ‘Trading in the South Seas’. Also, in the magazine *Sea, Land and Air*, which

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41 Margaret Woodhouse and Robert Langdon, *Pacific Islands Monthly Cumulative Index: Volumes 1 to 15* [August, 1930 to July, 1945] (Sydney 1968). The majority of these articles discussed the copra trade.
42 Quanchi, ‘Contrary Images: Photographing the New Pacific in *Walkabout Magazine*’, 78.
focused mainly on transportation technology between 1919 and 1923, 27 articles were published with Pacific Island topics and six focused on trade or economics. Titles include ‘Nauru Island’, ‘Isles of Pearl and Gold’, ‘Copra: A Gigantic Tropical Industry’, ‘Waters of Adventure’ and ‘Cocoanut Industry in the South Pacific: Its Growth and Possibilities.’ This reflects a broader popular interest in trade in the Pacific, as well as a patriotic view of Australia’s ability to garner these resources. Some magazines emphasised this economic potential as part of a nationalistic message which advocated Australian development, progress and empire. As one author wrote about the coconut industry, ‘Why should not Australia make a bid for much of this trade?’

In addition to these generalised observations of the Pacific Islands as a region of wealth and prosperity, I also stress the specific historical context in which observations occurred. For individual travellers, the attraction of economic prosperity in the Pacific fluctuated in accordance with periods of economic strife in Australia and the Pacific, such as the Great Depression. Edward Way Irwin and Ivan Goff left good jobs in Perth in the 1930s in search of adventure and instead found depression and unemployment in Fiji. They described struggling to find jobs in Suva, pawning their belongings and raiding the pantry of the boarding-house where they stayed. In their travel account they wrote: ‘Half of Suva was waiting for something to turn up – and so was half the world, it seemed.’ John Archibald Fraser, a gold prospector in Fiji, described the fluctuations in the number of gold prospectors from Australia once news of a new discovery got out. Between 1933 and 1935, Fraser observed the sudden

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47 White argues this belief in development is more accurate than descriptions of patriotism and nationalistic sentiment. White, Inventing Australia, 115.


49 Irwin and Goff, No Longer Innocent, 93. ‘Half of Suva was waiting for something to turn up – and so was half the world, it seemed.’
revival of Australian interest in prospecting, noting that 'most of the people we met in Fiji at that time were more or less infected with gold-fever.' Fluctuations in the global economy could also affect Pacific Island economies, such as the fall in copra prices during the 1930s Depression, and the general decline in island trade during the interwar years.

The visibility of Australian workers and industry was different amongst the Pacific Islands as well, and businesses and governments played an active role in encouraging investment and settlement in particular islands. According to Thompson, 'Australia’s informal economic empire was dominant in Fiji, the Solomon Islands and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands.' Fiji’s proximity to Australia, its British colonial status, and its location as a key stopover destination in the Pacific meant Australians frequently encountered Australian enterprise there. The Colonial Sugar Refinery (CSR) represented the largest Australian economic interest in the Pacific Islands in 1883, followed by the goldmining industry from the 1930s.

Beatrice Grimshaw’s From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands directly addressed the economic potential of Fiji in 1907. In Fiji, she noted,

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50 John Archibald Fraser, Gold Dish and Kava Bowl (London 1954), 155. Two years earlier, Fraser had noted the persistence of gold prospecting in Fiji despite a New Zealand report disputing potential gold deposits. He wrote that 'practical miners' were 'undeterred', and that 'if any spur were needed it was supplied by the news of the phenomenally rich finds in New Guinea and the jump in the price of gold, which had doubled in the space of a few years.' (54-55)

51 Bennett, Wealth of the Solomons, 218; Thompson, Australia and the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century, 94.

52 Thompson, Australia and the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century, 30-31. Australians also benefited from commerce in New Caledonia, mainly from nickel exports which was Australia’s second most valuable export trade.

53 Fiji was becoming an ‘Australian economic colony’ in 1900 according to Thompson. Ibid., 19. Most of Fiji’s imports came from Australia, mostly from New South Wales. CSR was based in Melbourne with most of its leading shareholders being Australian initially. By 1901 it had invested over 2 million pounds in Fiji. Thompson, Australian Imperialism in thePacific, 164. The Bank of New South Wales also opened branches in Fiji. Australian companies invested in the Fiji copra trade included Burns, Philp & Company and AUSNCo. Also the Methodist mission was dominant in Fiji and controlled by the Australian Methodist Mission Board in Sydney. Gold mining increased in Fiji when gold was discovered in Viti Levu in 1932. There were 22 companies by 1935, most of whom were financed in Australia, including the two most dominant companies, Emperor Gold Mining Company and Loloma Gold Mines. Thompson, Australia and the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century, 20-21.
Withal, there were tens of thousands of acres all over the islands unused and unoccupied; white settlers and planters seldom or never came to try their luck, and the resources of this, the richest of all the rich Pacific archipelagoes, were not one-hundredth part developed.\textsuperscript{54}

Later she asked, "Why should these great wastes of grass lie idle?"\textsuperscript{55} Travelling amongst various plantations in Fiji, she romantically likened them to the scenery described in 'Swiss Family Robinson', emphasising the natural vegetation, ‘and a whole regiment of other useful or pleasant things, “flourished” (as the early Victorian novels used to say) “in the richest luxuriance”.’\textsuperscript{56}

This travel account was one of many texts Grimshaw wrote which blended personal narrative and commercial advice, as she was frequently commissioned by shipping companies and the Australian government to publish materials which stressed the potential for economic development and the suitability for white settlement. She published eight prospectus pamphlets, as well as three travel accounts and fictional romances ‘based on the endeavours of the new planter-settlers and the pioneering fortune-seekers.’\textsuperscript{57} Grimshaw did not disguise these ulterior motives from her readers. In her other travelogue, \textit{In the Strange South Seas}, she wrote: ‘To find out, as far as possible, what were the prospects for settlers in some of the principal Pacific groups, was the main object of my journey to the Islands. It had always seemed to me that the practical side of Pacific life received singularly little attention, in most books of travel.’\textsuperscript{58}

Grimshaw was not alone in publishing commercial agendas within travel narratives. Albert Fuller Ellis, an Australian-born prospector who published the only travel accounts of the phosphate industry in Ocean Island and Nauru at this time, was also blatant in his emphasis of the wealth to be found in these islands, which were

\textsuperscript{54} Grimshaw, \textit{From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands}, 31.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 39.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{57} Krauth, \textit{The New Guinea Experience in Literature}, 4.
\textsuperscript{58} Grimshaw, \textit{In the Strange South Seas}, 51.
The discovery of phosphate on Ocean Island and Nauru stimulated mining operations by the British-owned Pacific Islands Company, later the Pacific Phosphate Company. These companies employed Australian workers, had their headquarters in Australia and exported valuable quantities of phosphate for Australian agricultural use as fertiliser. Both islands were far from the Australian coast and relatively small, and as such they were rarely visited by Australian travellers other than those employed by the mining company. Those few descriptions of these islands that do exist in Australian literature usually focused on the benefits of mining, such as Thomas McMahon’s article on Nauru in the Penny Pictorial, titled ‘Let’s-all-be-thankful Island.’

In two books, Ellis’ mixture of personal recollections and business history overlooked the exploitation of the islands’ resources and romanticised the role of the prospector: ‘prospecting for phosphate gets into the blood…for does it not bring one into close touch with lonely islands, frequently uninhabited, with their possibility of all sorts of discoveries and mysteries?’ In doing so, he portrayed the Islanders as primitive and isolated, and framed the mining operations as an adventurous endeavour that benefitted all those involved. This was a process which he argued the Islanders were complicit in and agreeable with, noting that they were ‘eager to come into closer...

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59 Ellis worked as a manager of the Pacific Islands Company for 18 years, spending 11 of these years on Ocean Island. He described his first book as ‘a labour of love.’ Albert Fuller Ellis, Ocean Island and Nauru: Their Story (Sydney 1935); Albert Fuller Ellis, Adventuring in Coral Seas (Sydney 1936).

60 The PIC mined phosphate on Ocean Island from 1902. The company’s headquarters was based in Sydney, and then Melbourne from 1906. Following World War I, the Nauru Agreement of 1919 divided the resources of both islands between Australia and Britain (42%) and New Zealand (16%). The BPC was appointed in Melbourne, composed of Australian, British and New Zealand representatives who managed the extraction of phosphate, and Nauru remained under Australian administration. Australia’s share was worth a yearly average of £103,000 in 1921-23. Thompson, Australia and the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century, 30, 83, 93.

61 Thomas McMahon, ‘Let’s-all-be-thankful Island’, Penny Pictorial (20 September 1919). McMahon also contributed to a photo series on Nauru and Ocean Island in The Queenslander in the same year. Max Quanchi, ‘To the Islands: Photographs of Tropical Colonies in The Queenslander’ (paper presented at the 18th Pacific History Association Conference, University of South Pacific, Suva, 2008), 4. Another Australian visited these islands in 1922 with the BPC and wrote a fictional novel about American agents bent on cornering the world’s phosphate supply. Thomas Watson Haynes, Our Daily Bread: Or a Story of the Phosphate Islands (London 1933).

62 Ellis, Ocean Island and Nauru: Their Story, 51. ‘Looking back, it has been a wonderful experience, a strenuous and stirring life that called for initiative and resource, in fact a man’s job.’ (164)
touch with civilisation." Ellis emphasised the development that was created by the mining, including the construction of buildings, schools, hospitals, sewerage, water storage, and the provision of medicine, teachers, missionaries and governance. As a consequence, 'It seemed as if a magic wand had been waved, transforming an enforced idle community into an industrious one.' It conveniently ignored the disputes between Australian administrators and Nauruans, or the devastating impact of the mining which ended up stripping 90% of the islands' surfaces by the time it ceased operating in the 1980s.

The British protectorate of the Solomon Islands was also profitable, its commerce being entirely with Sydney in 1904 and 1905. The copra trade was its most lucrative asset, with many companies based in Sydney or Brisbane invested in planting and trading operations there, most notably the British-owned Lever Pacific Plantations and subsidiary companies of BP. This development of plantations in the Solomon Islands peaked between 1905 and 1913, and the popular idea of profits to be made in the island group was encouraged by books and newspapers articles at the time. Bennett highlights one full-page spread in the Sydney Sun on 6 August 1910 titled 'The Wealth of the Solomons' which encouraged Australian investment. Coffee made similar observations in 1920, observing that 'in the last twenty years the development has been marvellous...There are many thousands of acres being

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63 Ibid., 58. They were paid for the mining although the compensation was minimal, and he argued that the company was on very good terms with the islanders (70).
64 Ibid., 62. He also argued that they were active in ‘encouraging the preservation of their old-time arts and crafts’ and justified the recruiting of foreign labour for the mines. (254, 268)
65 Thompson, Australia and the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century, 93.
66 Ibid., 28.
67 The Lever brothers operated a soap factory in Balmain, Sydney in 1900. In response to its growth, BP formed the Solomon Islands Development Company in 1908, and the Shortland Islands Plantations Ltd and Choiseul Plantations Ltd in 1910 and 1911. According to Thompson, ‘by 1913 there were 23 limited liability companies engaged in planting or trading in the Solomons “mostly registered in Sydney of Brisbane.”’ ibid., 28-29.
developed into well laid-out, well managed cocoanut plantations, some in the first stages, and others already come to fruitful and profitable stages. Although copra was sourced from further afield, including the New Hebrides, Tonga, and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, it faced competition from other colonial powers.

Though Australian investment and industry in the New Hebrides was not as extensive as it was in the Solomon Islands or Fiji, Australian governments and businesses made considerable efforts to entrench the narrative of economic development there in order to contest French influence in the island group. This narrative supported the economic subsidies and settlement schemes for Australians that were launched in response to widespread public opposition to the shared Anglo-French colonial rule from 1887 (see chapter four). In the New Hebrides, fertile land and favourable economic conditions were advertised to attract potential settlement, as part of a broader scheme to bolster British and Australian resident numbers in the island group. The Australasian New Hebrides Company (ANHC), in which BP had a controlling share, was one company which pushed this narrative in the 1890s. In a propaganda pamphlet, it argued: ‘Copra, coffee, ramie fibre, tea, spices and tropical fruits will be the principal produce, and in raising these a great exchange market for Australian produce and merchandise is opened up. The rich volcanic soil will grow almost every tropical product.’ The nationalistic tone of these pamphlets reflected Australian public debate about the annexation of the New Hebrides at the time, and evidence of this argument can be seen in ordinary travel accounts as well. For example, Thomas’ account in 1886 used the natural resources of the Islands as justification for their annexation: ‘If this were a sample of the soil of the New Hebrides, and if it would last, and not become impoverished, the islands were certainly worth annexing.’

69 Coffee, Forty Years on the Pacific, 108.
70 Australia and the New Hebrides (Sydney 1899), 6. Established in 1889 as a joint venture by several companies and prominent businessmen and politicians, ANHC purchased land titles in the New Hebrides, secured an inter-island shipping subsidy from the New South Wales government, and began leasing land in 1890. By 1892 this experiment failed and ANHC collapsed in 1897. It was taken over by BP. Buckley and Klugman, The History of Burns Philp, 63.
71 Thomas, Cannibals and Convicts, 180.
Popular ideas of a prosperous settler’s life in the New Hebrides continued into the early 1900s. BP attempted another settlement scheme in 1902, when Paterson was invited to accompany the settlers and report on their progress. His account admired these men and their journey, which he termed the ‘Pilgrims’ Progress’ in his series for the *Sydney Morning Herald* in July 1902. He described them as ‘bona-fide settlers, hard-handed, anxious faced men: they all have a little capital to lose, and they feel the responsibility of their undertaking very keenly.’ He returned to Sydney confident that ‘anything that could be done by a middle-aged Frenchman with a slightly protuberant outline could surely be done by these hard-handed men who had milked cows and shorn sheep and watched over travelling mobs of cattle on the dry stages of the outback.’

Paterson’s account was not the only one which issued a challenge to enterprising Australian readers. Grimshaw also described ‘a veritable gold-mine of copra’ and though she was concerned about the instability of the condominium, she framed this volatility as a challenge: ‘These are the things that mere schoolboys of the British race can do, when you take them away from the grandmammas and aunts at home, and turn them loose in the wilderness to shift for themselves.’ Accounts which described the resilience of the Australian trader or planter acquired particular significance in the New Hebrides, where opponents to French rule represented him as an innocent victim who was subject to ‘one of the most inefficient and unfair systems

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72 Walter Lucas was particularly active in pushing for increased trade and settlement in the New Hebrides. The 1902 deal increased BP’s mail contract subsidy in exchange for Commonwealth access to the company’s land in the New Hebrides to promote Australian settlement. Lucas himself oversaw the first Australian settlement. He interviewed 500 settlers and took 13 with him in May 1902 to Santo. By February 1903 there were 31 men, 5 women and 14 children in Santo. Buckley and Klugman, *The History of Burns Philp*, 101.


75 She was referring to Tanna Island in the New Hebrides. Grimshaw, *From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands*, 312, 198.
of government in the civilised world.'76 Yet they also fed a broader theme of the ‘pioneer planter’ who colonised and pacified the Pacific Islands in general.77

Ultimately tariff restrictions, British restrictions of labour recruiting and settlers’ lack of capital contributed to the failure of these early settlement schemes, and by the 1910s the French outnumbered and out-traded the British and Australians.78 Australian and French allegiance to the Allied cause in World War I also prompted a decline in Australian interest in the New Hebrides. Although public hysteria about the New Hebrides dissipated, some travellers continued to describe the economic potential in the island group in the 1920s and 30s. With the ‘promise to yield handsomely in the near future’, Coffee argued, ‘the New Hebrides are truly a paradise for planters, and only await a different form of government to make them a desirable place to settle in.’79 Whether in Fiji, Nauru, Ocean Island, the Solomon Islands or the New Hebrides, the alluring myth of Pacific Island riches and resources continued to resonate amongst Australians in spite of the increasingly harsh economic realities of Pacific commerce and trade.

The Realities of Australian Enterprise

Although the bulk of Australian travel writing presented a romantic view of Australian enterprise in the Pacific, some travellers recognised the difficulties that workers faced. In 1886 Thomas noted that disease, fear of death and fluctuating copra prices were factors that made a copra trader’s life difficult.80 In 1915, J. Mayne Anderson’s voyage to the New Hebrides left him with the impression that ‘altogether

76 Marshall, *The Black Musketeers*, 284. Marshall described planters that were cheated of their ‘just returns’, and noted that ‘the New Hebridean planter, particularly the Briton, is probably the worst situated in the Pacific.’
78 According to Australian resident (and government spy) Wilson Le Couteur, in 1908 there were approximately two French to every one English resident in the New Hebrides (by his count, 200 British subjects and 400 French, including missionaries). ‘Seven years ago we were equally divided.’ Wilson Le Couteur, ‘The New Hebrides: Old Order and New: French Strides Forward’, *Sydney Morning Herald* (29 August 1908), 8 [accessed 23 June 2014 at http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article15021313]. See also Thompson, *Australia and the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century*, 27.
79 Coffee, *Forty Years on the Pacific*, 106.
80 Thomas, *Cannibals and Convicts*, 245.
here, as in most countries, the lot of the man on the land is not entirely free from care. In 1937, Marshall observed that ‘prolonged isolation and monotony have extraordinary effects upon some men.’ Unlike the lone pioneers of nineteenth century trading tales, commercial development in the region by the twentieth century meant that individual workers faced more competition, regulation and public scrutiny than ever before.

Close encounters with these Australian workers in the Islands usually stimulated a more realistic portrayal of their characters. Not all traders and planters were necessarily heroic, the Pacific attracting those with criminal backgrounds or opportunists who were broke or desperate. Many workers could appear quite ordinary, as Caroline David observed when meeting an Australian trader in Funafuti in 1897: ‘He was not the sort of man that we expected the trader to be: he was neither a low-down ruffian, nor a romantic, adorable scamp, like some novelists’ creations; he was just a normal, decent fellow.’ Paterson’s close encounter with the ‘farmers, prospectors, labourers, bushmen, and tradesmen’ who signed up for a settlement scheme in the New Hebrides noted that these men were ‘well seasoned to the world’s affairs’ and were very discerning:

They are decidedly cool-headed men, very unwilling to believe anything till they see it. They seem to have had hard experiences in their lives, and they take all the statements with a grain of salt. They hold a sort of Parliament in the fore-hatch each day, and talk over the maps and pamphlets they have got; also they cross-examine the missionaries who are on board…the French

83 Bennett shows that economic instability during the 1930s placed many traders in debt and forced changes in company operations. Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons*, 220.
84 Ibid., 58.
settlers question also troubles their minds a good deal, as they think the French will resent their coming.  

These people were uninterested in romantic notions of defending the Australian nation, according to Paterson, who noted that 'they want money now, not glory here-after.'  

Whilst some travellers questioned popular stereotypes about these heroic figures, it was the travel accounts of Australians working in the Pacific Islands that offer the clearest insight, possessing 'an astonishing knowledge of the most intimate affairs of his neighbours for several islands around.' In this section, I have selected the accounts of traders John Ernest Philp and Joseph H.C. Dickinson, gold prospector John Archibald Fraser, and plantation overseer Walter Gill to highlight some of the specific issues their accounts addressed. These accounts demonstrate the difficulties of commerce in the Pacific, despite the popular romanticisation of a life of freedom and wealth. Although it can be argued that some of these writers were residents, their visits were temporary and their accounts describe the experience of travel within the Islands, thus I consider them part of the broad and ambiguous category of travel writing.  

Philp's unpublished log recorded daily life as a roving trader in the Solomon Islands during the 1910s. Philp had worked as a railway surveyor in Tasmania before leaving his wife and family in 1912 to be a copra trader and labour recruiter in the Solomon Islands for two years. He arrived in the Pacific eight years after the termination of the labour trade in Queensland. Thus, Philp would have been aware of the heroic and villainous representations of labour recruiters during the fierce public  

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86 Two were Victorians, two were from New Zealand, 'a few' Queenslanders, one Englishman and 'the rest' were from New South Wales. Paterson, 'The New Hebrides: Voyage of the Pilgrims', 5.  
87 Ibid.  
89 Philp returned to Australia for holiday in December 1913 intending to take his family back to the Solomon Islands but war broke out. He returned to his clerical work in Tasmania. He died in 1937. He was interested in sailing, writing two books about Tasmanian shipping. He was also an avid collector but his collection is now dispersed. John Ernest Philp, A Solomons Sojourn: J.E. Philp's Log of the Makira, 1912-1913 ed. Richard Allen Herr and E. Anne Rood (Hobart 1978).
debate about the Queensland labour trade in the late nineteenth century (see chapter six).

Philp’s account of his travels around the Solomon Islands was marked by a mundanity compared to other published accounts. Though he read other popular travel accounts, including Grimshaw and Becke, his own account contained short, simple observations with little embellishment or personal reflection. In fact, he was critical of the popular accounts of amateurs who drifted through the Islands, calling American author Jack London’s description of the Solomon Islands a ‘piffle’ and noting that it was ‘reckoned a huge joke’ by the residents. He also crossed the paths of several other travel writers, including those by American authors and filmmakers Martin and Osa Johnson, British author Clifford Collinson, and Australian workers Eric Muspratt and Dickinson. Philp’s log has since been used to highlight the exaggerations and inaccuracies within these travel accounts.

Philp’s experience of the Solomon Islands was generally positive, and diverged from conventional ideas of hostile and ‘savage’ Melanesians (see chapter six). Apart from some difficulties trading with locals whom he described as ‘cheeky’ or ‘hard bargainers’, Philp himself rarely experienced violence (noting that his recruits were ‘all very jolly’). Though he recalled many past events of conflict at each island he visited, Islanders and Europeans were more familiar with one another by 1912. His prosperous time in the Islands was not always shared by the resident traders and plantation overseers he visited, including Dick Richardson, Frank B. Rigby and

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90 Philp wrote that his wife sent him a copy of Grimshaw’s In the Strange South Seas. He also admitted he admired Becke when he received news of the author’s death whilst in the Solomon Islands. Ibid., 128.
91 Ibid., 112.
92 Herr and Rood in ibid., 15.
93 Ibid., 42, 88, 93. ‘Our recruits all very jolly, and among themselves express their satisfaction with our ship and their treatment aboard.’
94 In Ugi he was shown the grave of trader who was ‘treacherously murdered’ on the beach by a canoe party from Malaita; Another time he noted that ‘it is now about 7 years since a white man was murdered on Guadalcanar.’; He also observed that ‘the returned Queensland “boy” is much in evidence here, and for cheek generally, commend me to a native who has sojourned for a term in Queensland...he evidently thought that qualified him for same things as white folk.’ ibid., 33, 69, 87-88.
Dickinson. His interactions with them show that Europeans were vulnerable to violence, illness and commercial strife. As Bennett’s history of the Solomon Islands shows, European residents were the most vulnerable in the commercial network. They were susceptible to local politics, to competition with other traders, planters or prospectors, and to conflict with other resident Europeans (particularly missionaries). They were also constrained by government regulations, and often beholden to their investors or employers in Australia. Fluctuating trade prices, and shifts in supply and demand, both in Australia and the Islands, could have devastating impacts too.

Dickinson’s account, like Philp’s, also stressed the hardships he faced as a resident trader, planter and labour recruiter in the Solomon Islands in the 1910s and 20s. Although his book, *A Trader in the Savage Solomons* (1927) was a more exciting and exaggerated account published for a wider audience, he framed it as a response to the negative depictions of traders:

There are missionaries, authors and American movie artists, who present to civilization a given type of white man who serves them as an asset for the collection of dollars. The South Sea trader is generally made to lend the colour. We see or hear of him exploiting the natives, and committing all kinds of villainy. Native girls are his pet diversion. A blackguard of the deepest dye. You may even see him knocked down on the movies by an admirable hero, and just in the nick of time.

Instead, Dickinson argued that ‘the trader in everyday life is the least able to defend himself.’ Dickinson’s experience stressed the vulnerability of the white trader, and

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95 Philp made several short comments about these episodic troubles such as, ‘Have news that the natives down Flat Rock attacked Dickinson and we are warned to be careful about landing there’; ‘Rigby very unwell; Mumford a cripple with sore feet; myself the only sound white man aboard’; ‘a white man must be killed before the Government will move to protect him.’ ibid., 106, 141, 144.


97 His background is unknown. Dickinson describes 18 years spent in the Solomon Islands (approximately from 1908 to 1926). He was a resident trader for 12 years, initially for Pacific Plantations Ltd., before going solo.


99 Ibid., 81.
his role as mediator in the Islands, often deftly negotiating with potentially hostile Islanders. He was aware of conflicts between Europeans and Islanders, as well as internal blood feuds. In one example from March 1909, he described negotiating a truce during a Malaitan war council to prevent a revenge attack on a corrupt German resident.\textsuperscript{100} He also described encounters with local residents, noting the common struggles they faced, most commonly debt and misunderstandings with Islanders.\textsuperscript{101}

Dickinson may have presented his work as an authentic depiction of life in the Pacific Islands, yet his impressions are distinct from Philp’s because he often portrayed himself as heroic. This was most clearly demonstrated when he described the Union Jack flying above the British governor’s residence in the capital, Tulagi:

it floats high above the tree-tops in a little-known, savage land; for it signifies protection over its people, along with the advance-guard of pioneers, and those which follow them...Beneath its shadow the pioneer and settler knows that there should be one of the Empire’s representatives, who, traditions have taught them, will reflect what the flag stands for, and who, when they are in need, will extend assistance, sympathy and encouragement.\textsuperscript{102}

Perhaps this patriotic emphasis explains why Dickinson did not mention any quarrels with British officials or missionaries – in fact he praised them.\textsuperscript{103} His heroism was further supported by his observations of Pacific Islanders which repeated the usual stereotypes of Melanesian savagery.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 118. ‘Danger often became most real when familiarity had bred contempt for it.’ (152)
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 111. ‘On my first trading trip to San Cristoval I found that all my native traders, excepting two, had accumulated debts. Instructions had been given me to get these in, but to keep friendly. It was no easy task. ...There were missionaries who used to criticize these costs. One I have known went so far as to supply natives with good at bare, landed cost....bad debtors generally had sufficient discretion to be away from home on my arrival.’
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 29-30.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 39, 205. For example, Dickinson was impressed by two female missionaries working for the Melanesia Mission. He described them as ‘a very sensible and brave couple’ and praised the ‘many successes’ of mission work.
\textsuperscript{104} For example, he wrote, ‘Treachery is a fine art with all Melanesian savages...the South Sea savage seldom makes a mistake when bent on murder, but avoids any personal risk when about to commit the deed.’ ibid., 41.
Fraser’s travel impressions whilst prospecting for gold offers a more nuanced account of Fijians, and of Australian mining endeavours in Fiji in the 1930s. Born in Victoria, Fraser was an experienced miner who visited Fiji twice as a gold prospector, first to Tavua for nine months in 1933, and then with his brother in 1935, travelling extensively around Viti Levu. After a year in Fiji, he prospected in Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands and returned to Australia unsuccessful. Following his death in World War II, his manuscript was published posthumously in 1954 under the title *Gold Dish and Kava Bowl*. Fraser’s account offers an insight into the practices of prospecting, the constant disappointment experienced by miners, the struggles of living and working with little financial support, isolation, conflict amongst miners, and the fervour that drove many inexperienced Australians and New Zealanders to try their luck. He wrote,

Gold-seeking in these scattered island-groups had its difficulties. Their distance from main centres of industry, the rugged and jungled nature of the country, the tropical climate with its scorching heat and drenching rains, and the prevalence of malaria and other tropical diseases all combined to make the search for gold a costly and hazardous enterprise.

Despite these difficulties, Fraser enjoyed living abroad and the opportunity for intimate encounters with Islanders. When he wasn’t at work prospecting, Fraser was actively travelling to local villages, exploring along the coast and in the mountains, and conversing with his Islander workers: ‘There was also a language to be learned, and a happy and likeable race of people to become better acquainted with, who still retained enough loyalty to their old traditions to make them intensely interesting.’ He had good relations with the ‘boys’ who worked for him, and considered them...

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105 Fraser, *Gold Dish and Kava Bowl*. He served in an anti-aircraft battery in the Middle East and New Guinea during World War II where he died in 1946. Unlike other travelogues which usually omit a traveller’s origins, Fraser dedicated several chapters to reflecting on his family history.
106 Ibid., 239. He continues, ‘Few of even the strongest companies would take the risk of sending out well-equipped prospecting parties. Thus the task was left mainly to the lone prospector, sometimes backed by a small local syndicate.’
107 Ibid., 93.
excellent craftsmen and workers, 'kindly, courteous, patient, and good-tempered.' In contrast to many accounts of allegedly lazy and indolent workers, Fraser described them as hard-working, even competing amongst themselves to see who could lift the heaviest load.

Fraser also travelled through inland Fiji and gained a more thorough understanding of indigenous Fijians than most tourists (though he did not encounter Indian Fijians). In doing so, he sympathised with the plight of the Fijian: ‘I think that a white man coming to know the Fijian well might sometimes feel, as Kipling’s soldier did about brown-skinned brother: “You’re a better man than I am, Gunga Din!”’ He noted that ownership of land was often a cause of Islander dissension but also conceded that it was a difficult job for government surveyors to resolve. His admiration of Fijian villages was in contrast to his distaste for the urban environment of Suva. In particular, he was critical of ignorant Australian tourists there. On one occasion, he observed a Methodist ship from Australia that unloaded four hundred passengers to celebrate the Church’s centenary, and consumed the village’s entire stock of food in the process. His reflection on whether any tourists ever send the photos they take back to the islands was very unusual for his time. Fraser’s sensitive account of Fiji and his overall harmonious experience with the Islanders contradicted popular tales of Australian miners battling hostile tribes in the Pacific, and romantic notions of Australians finding untold riches in the Islands.

Gill’s impressions of Fiji whilst working for CSR draws attention to the difficulty that Australian employees had in maintaining control over a supposedly ‘docile’ labour force in the Islands, as well as satisfying the demands of their employers. Though his book was published in 1970, Gill’s account discusses his role

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108 Ibid., 97.
109 Ibid., 81-82.
110 Ibid., 131. Fraser shows respect for native traditions, is interested in understanding the origins of their practices, and on one occasion when discovering an ancient cave grave, departs because he feels intrusive. He also considered Fijian cannibalism no less moral than the British treatment of Aboriginal Australians.
111 Ibid., 213.
112 Ibid., 68.
as an overseer from 1915 to 1926 in which he writes openly about sexual liaisons, abuse and violence, issues which were not usually discussed in travel writing. In fact, I was unable to find any travel accounts written by Australian CSR employees. Travel writing about Fiji rarely described the CSR operations in detail, and when it did, the comments were superficial. For this reason, I include Gill’s account in my research even though he was a longer-term resident in Fiji who published his account after 1941.  

Gill describes his experience as a very challenging time, in which he had significant responsibilities, and struggled to maintain an obedient and efficient Indian labour force (for more on Indian indentured labour in Fiji, see chapter five). In his early twenties, Gill was young and naïve, unaware of the complex racial and religious divisions amongst the workers. He held a disparaging view of most of the workers, describing them as ‘feral unpredictables’, ‘apes’ and ‘cramped maggots in cell-like hutments.’ Gill often felt isolated and vulnerable as the lone European among them, noting, ‘I lived in their jungle as one of them.’ Incidences of violence were common, such as one fight in which Gill disarmed a worker who threatened him with a knife. According to Michael Moynagh, ‘growers saw the overseer as a man who acted arbitrarily, who demanded of them work which they were reluctant to perform, and who used brute force at times to ensure that his orders were carried out.’ In addition, Gill described numerous instances of suicide, murder, sexual abuse, prostitution, disease, drunkenness, and constant power struggles between ‘sirdars’ [Indian

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113 Born in Melbourne in 1895, Gill served in the Australian Imperial Force in both World Wars and was plantation manager for CSR in Fiji from 1915 to 1926. Later he was a cattle property owner and commercial fisherman. He died in South Australia in 1969. It is not clear whether his account, *Turn North-East at the Tombstone* (1970) was based on diaries and notes, or written from memory. Betty Freeman’s 1996 memoir is the only other travel account that describes CSR, although it focuses more on life at home rather than the sugar mills. Freeman grew up in Fiji from 1916 to 1930 whilst her father was a surveyor for CSR, and from 1943 to 1954 when her husband worked for the same company. See Freeman, *Fiji - Memory Hold the Door*. 
114 Gill, *Turn North-East at the Tombstone*, 38. 
115 Ibid. 
116 Ibid., 45. 
supervisors] and European overseers. Whether out of propriety, or because these events were not visible to the ordinary tourist in Suva, these were topics that were not usually discussed in travel accounts.

Gill also documented his struggle to satisfy the demands of CSR and implement his required role in a business which he began to fundamentally disagree with. Gill increasingly felt alienated from the company and other Europeans, writing that 'among my own countrymen I had made few friends; a pattern which was to remain constant over the years.' He often felt hopeless resisting the CSR organisation, a system which demanded loyalty and conformity. This disillusionment, compounded by the close relationships he developed with some of his employees, forced Gill to reconsider the merits of indentured labour:

If we, the overseers and sirdars caught up in the rotten system of indenture servitude fathered by Big Business on that most fecund of whores, cheap Asiatic labour, had managed to survive in the tooth-and-claw jungle of the cane game, it was only by out-animalizing the horde of near-human apes in our charge.

Whether this reflects the isolation and difficult working environment at the time, or a more conciliatory attitude made in hindsight, is unclear. Yet Gill's account remains an important source because it addresses issues that have conventionally been avoided in travel writing.

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119 Ibid., 32.
120 Ibid., 38. According to Moynagh, CSR 'demanded of their subordinates hard work, honesty and, above all, dedication to the company. Loyalty, indeed, has been a distinctive feature of CSR Ltd...Family connections have bred a remarkable esprit de corps which has helped the company achieve its objectives. From the sense of loyalty has come, till recently, a great emphasis on experience. The length of time in the company's service used to be a prime qualification for advancement.' This discouraged innovation or change within the plantations. Moynagh, *Brown or White?*, 28.
121 Gill, *Turn North-East at the Tombstone*, 65. One friendship was struck with a loyal Bengali worker John Baili Khan, and another with a large Muslim worker he named 'Mohammed Ali'. In the latter case, Gill bought him out of indenture. (91-96)
Gill’s open admission about his sexual affairs was also unusual. Sexual liaisons between European men and local women (including Islanders and other non-Europeans) were notable only for their omission from the majority of Australian travel accounts, most likely because it was a subject unsuitable for polite conversation. British traveller Richard Reynell Bellamy admitted that French attitudes to ‘sex and other veiled subjects’ were superior to the British ‘hush-hush attitude’.

In spite of this apparent silence, sexual encounters did occur frequently in the Pacific, where female inhabitants were believed to be ‘sexually precocious’ and freely available, according to conventional European representations. Observations of ‘half-castes’ and venereal diseases in the Pacific also point to the prevalence of European sexual encounters (see chapters three and five).

Though tourists to the Islands imagined sexual transgressions, these intimate encounters tended to be more common amongst longer-term residents than temporary visitors. This was due to the nature of employment in the Islands, as traders, planters and overseers were in regular contact with local females. This is reflected in the numerous descriptions of the trader or planter and his ‘native wife’.

Sydney Walter Powell was surprised when he met a couple in the Tuamotus and realised that she ‘was not the shrinking half-wild creature commonly presented in South Sea stories as “the

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122 Gill described his affair with an 18-year-old Muslim girl called Appelema. He admitted he was very lonely (‘I needed her body’), and at first paid her for sex. Later they forged a regular relationship until a cane inspector discovered the affair, forcing Gill to resign. Ibid., 74-84. I was able to find only two other explicit descriptions of sexual intercourse, by Safroni-Middleton (see chapter three) and by journalist Eric Baume (who observed a missionary ‘making violent physical love’ to a Rarotongan woman on board ship). Baume, I Lived These Years, 34.

123 Bellamy, Mixed Bliss in Melanesia, 118.


125 ‘Gunga’ described meeting George Wright and his ‘native wife’ in New Caledonia. Gunga, Narrative of a Trip from Maryborough to New Caledonia (Maryborough 1878), 18. Osborne attended a wedding of a German trader and his ‘native wife’ on the missionary ship Morning Star. Osborne, Through the Atolls of the Line, 9. Irwin and Goff met a beachcomber in Fiji with a Tongan wife. Irwin and Goff, No Longer Innocent, 47.
trader’s wife”. In fact, popular fictional tales of traders in the Pacific did not always employ ‘native’ women as tools to reinforce traditional gender roles.

The marriage of European workers and residents to non-Europeans in the Islands was generally not frowned upon in Australian travel writing because it was widely recognised that the life of a trader or planter was lonely and ‘to take a white wife there is also almost impracticable’. Bringing their wives to Australia could create complications though, as Joseph Hadfield Grundy observed when he met a 35-year-old trader who married a ‘native woman’ but remained in the New Hebrides because she ‘could not live in Australia being as Asiatic.’ These interracial relationships were not always sustainable, nor were husbands or wives necessarily expected to be lifelong partners. Dickinson fell in love with one woman, Tora-kene, but soon abandoned her upon threat from other Islanders. Becke married Nelea Tiken in Kiribati in 1881, but did not bring her to Australia, and remarried soon after returning home. According to Safroni-Middleton, it was common for both European men and Islander women to have multiple partners.

In contrast to the simplified stereotypes of the Australian male worker in the Pacific Islands, the accounts of Philp, Dickinson, Fraser and Gill show the complex nature of European encounters with the Pacific Islanders. Not only do they highlight

127 Michael Sturma has argued that although Becke’s tales were conventionally associated with the masculine tone of the *Bulletin*, his stories can also be read as more ambiguous statements on traditional gender roles. He gives examples of Becke’s male characters fulfilling domestic roles and acting as dutiful husbands. Sturma, *South Sea Maidens*, 110-111. Similarly, Thomas and Eves argue that in his writings, Becke ‘articulate[d] some of the contradictions of colonial discourse and thought.’ Thomas and Eves, *Bad Colonists*, 144.
129 According to Grundy, ‘on his last visit to Sydney his friends looked askance at him. The reason was that Dimple had married a native woman. It was a missionary wedding, but should have been a native one. His wife could not live in Australia being an Asiatic.’ ibid.
130 ‘Desirable women, white, black or brown, have been the germ of mischief’ he wrote. Dickinson, *A Trader in the Savage Solomons*, 80.
131 Many of Becke’s tales described violence motivated by sex and interracial relationship, according to Sturma. Sturma, *South Sea Maidens*, 112.
132 ‘Women in Tahiti are as jealous as the European ladies, and will brook no rival; but of course when their husband is away with his other bride on some far-off Isle they do not let the grass grow under their feet.’ Arnold Safroni-Middleton, *Sailor and Beachcomber: Confessions of a Life at Sea, in Australia and Amid the Islands of the Pacific* (London 1915), 150.
the vulnerabilities of the supposedly courageous and enterprising Australian trader, planter, overseer and prospector, they also offer glimpses into the more unsavoury behaviours of Australians abroad, particularly regarding violence and sex. Dixon argues that ‘sex, commerce and labour are inextricably connected in these networks of exchange.’ These first-hand accounts of the intimate interactions between itinerant Australian workers and Islanders reiterate the significance of trade in shaping Australian perceptions of the Pacific Islands.

By focusing on trade and commerce as a major theme in Australian travel writing, I have attempted to show how Australians reinterpreted and repeated popular ideas about the economic potential of the Pacific, and how they perceived the men who travelled in search of this wealth. For many Australian traders, planters, overseers and prospectors who put their experiences to paper, distinguishing them as resident and visitor was not always clear. Commercial networks and industries in the Pacific encouraged mobility and opportunism. Until the growth of tourism in the 1920s, these Australians seeking a better economic fortune were the most common Australian traveller in the Pacific. Their lived experience of the Pacific was regarded by Australian readers as a sign of authenticity, privileging their version above the momentary observations of the steamer tourist. According to a 1928 book review, ‘we must confess to being rather tired of stories of the South Seas written for the most part by authors whose acquaintance with the Islands is, one suspects, of a very casual description.’ Whether Australian readers were more discerning and critical of Pacific travel narratives by this time is unclear, and the perpetuation of ideas of economic wealth suggests changes in popular perceptions were slow. Given that Becke’s soaring Australian popularity in the 1890s was based upon his departure from the formulaic British stereotypes of the nineteenth century, perhaps readers of the

133 ‘The dominant metaphor of relationships between whites, and between white and Islander, is... trade. Dixon, Writing the Colonial Adventure, 185.
interwar period also grew tired of the market's saturation of predictable travel literature and sought a more authentic perspective.

In this chapter I have discussed the literary legacy of Becke and his contribution to Australian romanticisations of the trader or planter in the Pacific, and the broader imagining of the Pacific as a place of economic potential. Whilst emphasising the persistence of nineteenth century stereotypes of trade and commerce in the Pacific, I have also shown how the archetype of the European trader was modified into the figure of the enterprising Australian in the early twentieth century. This individual reflected the nationalistic, masculine and racial ideals within Australian society at the time, as well as serving as a convenient tool to promote commercial development in the Pacific. Travel writers and travel literature were used by Australian governments and businesses to encourage investment and public interest in the region by framing the Islands as available and rich in natural resources. A close analysis of the first-hand accounts of these Australian travellers who sought economic prosperity in the Islands shows that reality rarely met expectations, and that the enterprising Australian was vulnerable and unsuccessful, rather than heroic. Nonetheless, the promise of a profitable Pacific remained consistent throughout the early twentieth century.

The next chapter continues to explore Australian ideas of prosperity and promise in the Pacific Islands. It locates several idyllic notions of an exotic, erotic and utopian Pacific paradise that underscored Australian travel writing in the region of Polynesia, and discusses the persistence of these ideas in Australian perceptions of the broader Pacific.
CHAPTER THREE

Polynesian Promises

For climate, for loveliness, and grandeur of scenery, for comparative freedom from disease, for the gentleness of its own people – now so pitifully few – and because it is under the control of the convivial French, Tahiti is the best tropic island in the world...I like Tahiti. I have always liked Tahiti. I do not know anyone who has been there twice who does not wish to return – some day, somehow. But I do not blind myself to what has happened on this fair island which was once near to Paradise – to what has happened, and is happening still.¹

The promise of an exotic island paradise in the Pacific was hard to resist. For Australians disenchanted with their lives at home, weary of the constraints of their society, or apprehensive of the winter season, the Pacific offered escape and reprieve, either temporary or permanent. Just as explorers had done, travellers of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries reinscribed the Pacific as a region where fantasies could be enacted, freedom and prosperity could be sought, and true happiness found. Ultimately, it was in the region of Polynesia that popular tropes of the exotic, erotic and utopian Pacific Island were most frequently located. These tropes reinforced the romanticised image of the Polynesian as feminine, alluring and inviting, in contrast to the masculine and threatening Melanesian ‘savage’. Within Polynesia, Tahiti was upheld as the ideal and authentic tropical island, and Tahitians the preferred type of ‘native.’

This chapter argues that Australian representations of Tahiti generally mirrored the sentiments expressed in European literature. This idyllic representation remained relatively unchanged from 1880 to 1941. The geographic isolation of Tahiti and French Polynesia, and their enduring dominance within European literature and fantasy, contributed to a persistent Australian fascination with the island group. This was in spite of a widespread awareness of the fragility and temporality of this paradise in the early twentieth century. Although the majority of Australians confirmed Polynesian stereotypes, I also argue that travel writing can show traces of a more nuanced understanding of Australian notions of femininity, masculinity and sexuality in the Pacific Islands. This is evident in the accounts of Australian idealists and escapists who pursued the utopian lifestyle in Tahiti, and described the limitations of the Polynesian ideal. I argue that gender played an important role in shaping Australian descriptions of Polynesia, and the wider Pacific.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first examines the characteristics of Tahiti that contributed to its enduring popularity with Australian travellers. It explores why Polynesia was the preferred choice for escape over other islands within the Pacific. The second section discusses the reasons why Australian travellers were consistently disappointed with Tahiti, and sought more isolated island refuges in French Polynesia. The third section compares the travel accounts of two male Australian writers who described their Island romances, both real and imagined, whilst temporarily residing in Polynesia. Their accounts reveal the pitfalls that Australians encountered when attempting to live in the islands, in particular the limitations of interracial romances and the difficulties of completely abandoning 'civilisation'. Finally, I explore the limited number of Australian travel accounts written by women and the ways in which their representations challenged and confirmed gender stereotypes about the Pacific Islands.

**Paradise Found**

Australian representations of Tahiti and Polynesia were based on an extensive corpus of European literature, both fiction and non-fiction, that employed
romanticised stereotypes to categorise the region as superior and idyllic. These stereotypes persisted well into the twentieth century, becoming commercialised and standardised as the ‘authentic’ tropical island experience. The most powerful allegorical device was the female body, which was used to portray the Islands as natural, fertile, abundant and inviting, and Islanders as carefree, primordial, physical and impassioned. Ascribing feminine characteristics to unexplored territories in America, the Orient and the Pacific reflected the masculine nature of travel and exploration, and legitimised European colonisation.\(^2\)

The reports of three European explorers, Samuel Wallis, Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, and James Cook, were influential in marking Tahiti (and to a lesser extent, Hawaii) as ‘sites of desire.’\(^3\) Reaching Tahiti in 1767, 1768, and 1769 respectively, their accounts emphasised the beauty, sexual desire and desirability of the women they encountered, drawing on European myths of Arcadia, paradise and utopia which had origins in classical antiquity and medieval Christianity.\(^4\) Although

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\(^2\) European encounters in Africa and the Orient influenced subsequent exploration in the Pacific in the 1760s, argues Patty O’Brien. Descriptions of Africa were reapplied to Melanesians, whilst characteristics of the Orient were transferred to Polynesians. The idea of the *south* Pacific was contrary to the European north, suggesting a region subject to physical impulses and where the laws of nature were inverted. Patty O’Brien, *The Pacific Muse: Exotic Femininity and the Colonial Pacific* (Seattle 2006), 37, 57.

\(^3\) Margaret Jolly, ‘Desire, Difference and Disease: Sexual and Venereal Exchanges on Cook’s Voyages in the Pacific’ in Ross Gibson, ed., *Exchanges: Cross-Cultural Encounters in Australia and the Pacific* (Sydney 1996), 187. Wallis and Bougainville did not reach Hawaii, and when Cook did, he found Hawaiians had stricter rules of ‘kapu’ (taboo) regulating sexual exchanges. The nature of American commercial tourism development in Hawaii in the 1900s meant that the island group was less mysterious, and thus less desirable to Australian travellers, than Tahiti.

\(^4\) Wallis was the first to discover Tahiti and his depiction of Oberea, whom he mistook for a Tahitian queen, was the first Pacific muse according to Patty O’Brien. O’Brien, *The Pacific Muse*, 61. When Bougainville arrived shortly after, he named the island Nouvel-Cythère after the mythical island where the Greek goddess Aphrodite was born. In one of his observations he wrote, ‘The girl carelessly dropped a cloth, which covered her, and appeared to the eyes of all beholders, like Venus shewed herself to the Phrygian shepherd, having, indeed, the celestial form of that goddess [sic].’ Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, *A Voyage Round the World*, trans. John Forster (London 1772), 108 [accessed 7 May 2013 at http://www.archive.org/details/VoyageAroundTheWorldByLewisDeBougainville1766-9]. Naturalist Philibert Commerson accompanied Bougainville and described Tahiti as a utopia to European audiences. Cook made three voyages to Tahiti accompanied by artists, and Bernard Smith argues that visual representations of Tahitian women following Cook’s voyages were as important as the landscape in defining Tahiti as paradise. Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific* (Sydney 1985), 43.
the sexual practices of Tahitians held sacred and cultural significance, they were interpreted by Europeans as symbolic of social freedom or of moral weakness.\(^5\) These first reports of Tahiti, compounded by the arrival of Tahitians in Europe as early as 1769, generated public excitement and interest. As a result, Tahiti became symbolic of the Pacific Islands as a whole in European imaginations. As a 1932 handbook described, ‘Ever since the exploration of the Society Islands by Cook, 150 years ago, writers and travellers have vied with each other in giving to tired humanity picturesque and delightful descriptions of the Society Islands; until Tahiti has come to be known, throughout the world, as the place of all others which most truly presents the beauty, charm and romance of the South Seas.’\(^6\)

Initially the term ‘Polynesia’ was imbued with a sense of promise and potential. First coined by French geographer Charles de Brosses in 1756, it was employed to encourage French expeditions to the Pacific, suggesting that the Pacific Ocean held ‘a large number of islands rich in spiceries.’\(^7\) The impressions of other popular European travellers, including American writer Herman Melville, Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson, French artist Paul Gauguin and French novelist Pierre Loti, contributed to popular ideas of the Polynesian idyll. Indeed, arrival at Tahiti was highly anticipated by Australian travellers of the twentieth century, whose first glimpses of the island confirmed it was a natural paradise. As one 1920s handbook noted, ‘Every traveller has extolled the beauty of Tahiti and the title “Paradise of the Pacific” is well bestowed.’\(^8\)

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\(^5\) All three accounts describe the openly sexual nature of their encounters with Tahitian women, with Cook describing his attempts to restrain his men. There was a particular fascination for the sexual practices of the *arioi* in Tahiti. Rather than a vice, as it was considered by Europeans, sexuality and intercourse was considered sacred and a ‘desirable and crucial sign of adulthood’ by Tahitians. Jolly, ‘Desire, Difference and Disease’, 197. It was also used by Tahitians as a tool for manipulating foreigners. Gavan Daws, *A Dream of Islands: Voyages of Self-discovery in the South Seas* (New York 1980), 8.


\(^7\) In this usage, ‘Polynésie’ referred to all the islands of the Pacific. DeBrosses in Tcherkezoff, ‘A Long and Unfortunate Voyage’, 179.

\(^8\) Allen, *Stewart’s Handbook of the Pacific Islands*, 293.
The island of Tahiti, and its capital port Papeete, inspired travellers with its mountain peaks and luxuriant vegetation which were deemed the ‘most beautiful and picturesque’ and ‘superbly beautiful’ in comparison to others. As journalist Sydney Elliott Napier approached the island in 1938 he wrote, ‘and there, beyond, embowered in its scented groves, and bright against the dusky and contorted walls of triple-crowned Mont Diademe, we saw the roofs of queer, anomalous Papeete.’ Notably absent was any sense of danger or the sublime attributed to these mountains in Australian travel accounts. Other observations included the use of jewel metaphors to signify its worth, such as ‘pearl of the Pacific’ and ‘a perfect gem of an island.’

Australians also applied mystical and mythical qualities to Tahiti, the island acting as a blank canvas upon which imaginaries and desires could be cast. Tahiti was frequently noted for its dream-like and supernatural qualities. Rather than following in the footsteps of heroic explorers, Australians like Wilfred Burchett believed they were visiting untouched territories: ‘We had discovered what for us was an entirely new world.’ Eric Muspratt characterised the island as ‘a dramatic citadel of land’, and Sydney Powell claimed ‘it belongs to fairy-land: an earthly beauty purified of earth’s grossness’, whilst Arnold Safroni-Middleton imagined ‘some celestial harbour of a world beyond the stars.’ These romantic visions were sometimes tinged with regret, as in the case of sailor Alan Villiers who noted ‘the loveliness of the Tahitian hills, abrupt and grand, the summits of the high mountains often hidden in the clouds, as if the gods of Orohena dislike to look too long upon the Tahiti of today.’

First impressions of the scenery usually confirmed Tahiti’s status as a primordial Garden of Eden, ‘a place where time melts like the mist upon the

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9 Ibid; Villiers, *Cruise of the Conrad*, 286.
14 Villiers, *Cruise of the Conrad*, 292.
mountains', protected by its isolation. Christian allusions were frequent, and not reserved for missionaries. The mountain ranges 'resembled some old chaos of unhewn creation' populated by 'the savage children of Adam and Eve' according to Safroni-Middleton. Meteorologist Clement Lindley Wragge labelled Tahiti as 'the Summer Isles of Eden', possessing 'a warm, soft atmosphere, sweet as Elysium.' And wealthy yachtsman Harold Nossiter was pleased to encounter 'Nature's gentlemen.' The popularity of descriptions of Eden reflected the influence of Christian missionaries who were well established in the eastern Pacific, and whose conversion efforts had been more successful than in Melanesia.

Allusions to Eden also rested on an assumption of the natural abundance and fertility of Tahiti: 'It was truly a land of plenty, where those lucky sons of Adam who had found it could live as their forefather before he was sent packing.' Under this logic, encouraged by profuse descriptions of fruit and vegetation, Australians believed Tahiti to support a carefree lifestyle for all its inhabitants (as opposed to possessing suitable resources for exploitation by Europeans). This was most clearly demonstrated by the depiction of Tahiti and the Pacific Islands in general as 'a lotus-eating race of happy, carefree idlers.' A reference to Homer's Odyssey, 'lotus-eaters' alluded to a mythical island where the people ate lotus plants, a narcotic that brought relaxation and apathy. This idle existence was attractive to many Australians seeking a better life, as Powell noted: 'the lotus isles, these islands used to be called, and you can still see the name in steamer advertisements. You were supposed to spend your life under a tree waiting for the fruit to fall. This idea retains a strong appeal.'

15 Mordaunt, The Venture Book, 68.
16 Powell, 'Each To His Taste', 266.
17 Safroni-Middleton, South Sea Foam, 73; Wragge, The Romance of the South Seas, 125; Nossiter, Southward Ho!, 123.
18 Powell, 'Each To His Taste', 200.
19 Fraser, Gold Dish and Kava Bowl, 174. Fraser was referring to Fiji in this example. Australian tourist Robert McMillan described Hawaiians as lotus eaters, and journalist Wilfred Burchett applied the term to Tahiti. Robert McMillan, There and Back: Or Notes of a Voyage Round the World by 'Gossip' (Sydney 1903), 353; Burchett, Passport, 109.
20 Sydney Walter Powell, A South Sea Diary (London 1942), 53.
Imagery of flowers and their scents were popular literary devices in travel accounts. Flowers suggested beauty, femininity, fertility, and love, whilst fragrances were effective metaphors to articulate the more mysterious and indefinable qualities of the tropical island. Flower ‘leis’ were popular tourist souvenirs in Hawaii. In Tahiti, visitors commonly associated flowers with women, aware that their position when worn by women signified their availability. Fragrances, be it coconut oil, frangipanis, or even ‘the indefinable scent of dusky humanity’, were often alluring and satisfying in descriptions of Tahiti. The H.M.S. Bounty mutineers were frequently cited as a reminder of the potentially overpowering nature of this ‘lure’ and the attraction of forbidden pleasures. In contrast, Melanesia was rarely identified with flowers or fragrance, and if so, they were usually associated with scents of stench and decay.

Utopian ideals were also applied to the Tahitian people, with observations about their appearance and behaviour informing (and informed by) racial theories about the Polynesians and their place in the racial order of the Pacific. The term ‘Polynesia’, as it was used by Australian travellers in the 1900s to articulate physical, social and mental differences amongst Pacific Islanders, was defined in opposition to Melanesia. This racialised category was distinct from the original use of the term ‘Polynesia’ to describe a geographical region consisting of ‘many islands.’ Serge Tcherkezoff has shown that the perceived dichotomy between dark and light-skinned peoples was first noted in the Pacific in 1595 by Spanish explorers. Searching for the Solomon Islands, Quiros’ report emphasised the Marquesans’ beauty, admiring the naked women, and observing that they appeared ‘almost white’ and did not practise cannibalism. Following this first European-Polynesian exchange, a ‘science of race’ developed in the nineteenth century that challenged Christian beliefs in a common

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21 ‘The housemaid and parlormaid – I use the only words I can find to describe the nymphs who bring out the punch – have changed into even brighter silks than they have worn during the day, combed out their long hair, and placed hibiscus blooms behind their ears and it is the left ear for the girl who wants a lover and the right ear for the girl who is contented, or vice versa; I can never quite remember which. Not that it matters, for they themselves make certain of not being left in the lurch, wearing a bloom behind each ear.’ Mordaunt, The Venture Book, 77.

22 Napier, Men and Cities, 18.

humanity with a proposed concept of race as innate and absolute (see chapter five). Most Australian travellers of the twentieth century repeated many of the racial debates and theories of the previous two hundred years, but in forms that were simplified, indiscriminate and inconsistent.

Few Australians challenged the assumption that ‘the true Polynesian’, as labour recruiter William Twizell Wawn noted in 1893, was superior to the ‘Malay’ and ‘Papuan/Negrito’ races (this included Australian Aborigines and Melanesians). Tourist Albert William Pearse admired the ‘handsome’ Polynesians because they were ‘without a trace of the Melanesian or “nigger” type.’ This racial superiority was believed to be identifiable by their lighter skin colour, described as romantic shades like ‘copper’, ‘brown’ or ‘mahogany.’ Journalist Paul McGuire even argued that Polynesians were ‘basically Europoids’ and descended from the West. Polynesians were admired for their physical beauty, the men for their handsome muscular physiques and the women for their graceful beautiful forms.

Polynesians were also believed to be morally superior. Compared to the ‘inelegant and cruel Melanesians’, Polynesians were ‘kind and sympathetic’ according to Safroni-Middleton. Henry Tichborne admired ‘their sterling qualities, their large hearts, their lovable natures, and their genial humours’ and argued that ‘no women of any colour or kind are more beautiful or tender-hearted than theirs, no men on earth more modest or brave.’ Wilfred Burchett noted ‘the noble, kindly character of the Tahitian people’ and Muspratt, in admiration of their primitivism, wrote, ‘the very soul of these people turned away from money and all modern values.’ An extensive

24 William Twizell Wawn, The South Sea Islanders and the Queensland Labour Trade: A Record of Voyages and Experiences in the Western Pacific, from 1875 to 1891. ed. Peter Corris (Canberra 1973), 7.
25 Pearse, A Windjammer 'prentice, 133.
26 Louis Becke, Notes From My South Sea Log (London 1905), 142; Allan, Homeward bound, 22.
27 McGuire, Westward the Course, 46.
28 Safroni-Middleton, Tropic Shadows, 23.
29 Tichborne, Noqu Talanoa: Stories from the South Seas by Sundowner (London 1896), vi; Tichborne, Rambles in Polynesia by Sundowner, 5. He continues, ‘There they all are in their pristine simplicity, without vice, temper or waywardness... The Polynesian men and women are great, big, lively babies, all mirth and innocence.’
30 Burchett, Passport, 107; Muspratt, Fire of Youth, 182.
history of Christian evangelism in the east encouraged this distinction between Polynesians and their 'heathen' Melanesian neighbours.\textsuperscript{31} Political organisation within the islands (which was often more centralised than in Melanesia), and the existence of 'kings' and 'queens' in Hawaii, Tahiti and Tonga, also reinforced popular assumptions of Polynesian superiority.

Symbolic of this superiority was the Polynesian woman, a popular stereotype that was usually situated in Tahiti. The trope of the 'South Sea Maiden' or 'Pacific muse' possessed numerous appealing characteristics: she was pure, natural, fertile, beautiful, graceful, exotic, sexually alluring, compliant, passionate and available.\textsuperscript{32} The Polynesian woman became symbolic of youth and purity in the same way that Australia's purity was represented by a young female figure.\textsuperscript{33} This figure was consistently connected to nature with imagery of ripening fruit and blooming flowers, descriptions of her oceanic characteristics, and by photographic portrayal as naked or semi-naked. Her docile, passive and graceful nature, which served to justify colonial dominance, was held in tension by her potential to be a seductress or \textit{femme fatale}.\textsuperscript{34} In the art of seduction, Tahitian women were believed to be especially skilled. Nossiter observed: 'The charm of the women is hard to define. They possess a certain seductiveness helped by a femininity that women are losing to-day, and an assurance and experience of men, whom they well understand... There is a glamour about these women, for they had a reputation for beauty which seafarers have given them in the past.'\textsuperscript{35} Nossiter's reference to the loss of femininity also reflected wider concerns amongst some Australian men that European women were becoming more masculine as the feminist movement for equal rights gained momentum worldwide.

\textsuperscript{31} According to Reverend John Burton, Polynesia contained 'loyal converts' and 'higher and more vigorous races' because the east was Christianised first. John Wear Burton, \textit{The Call of the Pacific} (London 1914), 15.
\textsuperscript{32} O'Brien, \textit{The Pacific Muse}, 3-5.
\textsuperscript{33} White, \textit{Inventing Australia}, 120.
\textsuperscript{34} Allusions to the creation myth of Adam and Eve, sirens of Greek mythology, or the temptation of the crew of the \textit{H.M.S. Bounty}, reinforced the seductive nature of Islander women. Their closeness to nature was also believed to make them subject to unbridled passion. O'Brien, \textit{The Pacific Muse}, 44.
\textsuperscript{35} Nossiter, \textit{Southward Ho!}, 139.
The only exception to this stereotype was the Polynesian queen, a popular figure in the royal kingdoms of Tonga (Sālote Tupou III), Hawaii (Lili‘uokalani) and Tahiti (Pōmare IV). Since face-to-face encounters with the female monarchs were rare, they were usually fantasised about, with romantic notions of power and prestige replacing ideals of beauty and youth. Narratives that celebrated their status were ‘usually linked to a nostalgia about their past romances and a lament about their faded beauty’, argues Margaret Jolly. Representations of the queens varied from exotic romanticisations (at ‘once Helen of Troy and Cleopatra’) to respectful admiration (‘stood out above all of them in her dignity and serenity’). Whether admired for innocent youth or royal wisdom, Polynesian women were portrayed in stark contrast to Melanesian women who were usually represented as ugly, savage, and undesirable ‘beasts of burden.’ Similarly, whilst naked Polynesian men were depicted in active positions, often symbolising ‘virility and aggression as warriors’, Melanesian masculinity was portrayed as a violent and sexual threat.

For many Australian travellers of the 1900s, interactions with Polynesian women were limited. In the Islands they remained supposedly static and silent objects for visitors to gaze upon, just as they had been frozen in position as alluring photographic illustrations in travel accounts and advertisements. Dance performances presented an opportunity for Australians to remark on the local females, however descriptions tended to emphasise the primitive and savage nature of dances over the seductive and sexual. Missionary influence had restricted more provocative dances, and Australian accounts suggest the Hawaiian ‘hula’ was not popular and well known until after World War II. Gradually the image of the Polynesian woman was commodified and standardised by tourism advocates. Young travellers Edward Way

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37 Safroni-Middleton, Sailor and Beachcomber, 83-86; Mordaunt, The Venture Book, 180; Henley, A Pacific Cruise, 40; See also John Mahlmann, who had close contact with the Hawaiian royals whilst escorting a Japanese delegation in 1885. John James Mahlmann, Reminiscences of an Ancient Mariner (Yokohama 1918).
39 Jolly, ‘From Point Venus to Bali Ha’i’, 119.
Irwin and Ivan Goff recalled being beckoned to the Pacific by an Auckland billboard in the 1930s showing with a girl with 'gleaming brown skin', 'black curly hair' and 'warm eyes.'

Cinematic productions of the thirties also distributed a Hollywood version of the Polynesian, blending Hawaiian characteristics such as the lei and the hula dance, with European actors and fantasies. Polynesian tropes even spread to inland Australia, as Aboriginal women performers were given Pacific Island personas and names.

Although this distinction between Polynesian and Melanesian was clearly articulated in Australian travel accounts, the differences between Islanders within these racial categories were less certain, and dependent on the personal sympathies of the traveller. Every individual discovered their own paradise. For example, Hawaii’s location on major shipping routes, and the development of a commercial tourism industry, explains the large number of Australian impressions recorded about it. Samoa was also a popular stopover, and Stevenson’s legacy prompted further European fascination with the island. Accounts of Fiji, which was situated between the eastern and western Pacific, sometimes stressed its Polynesian attributes because they were more favourable. Other accounts of the Maori in New Zealand considered their people the most advanced.

Tahiti was generally regarded by Australians as the superior, ideal Polynesian island. This is in part due to the literary legacy of past explorers, and more recent works by artists such as Gauguin, who inspired future travellers and influenced their style of writing. It was also due to the isolation of Tahiti, and its limited exchange with

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40 Irwin and Goff, *No Longer Innocent*, 31.
41 O’Brien argues that in the 1930s the white woman dressed as an Islander was replaced in film by the 'Hollnesian', a white woman who adopted Pacific characteristics. This reflected the demise of the flapper and discomfort with interracial romance. The portrayal of women in cinema was also affected by the use of sounds (the talkie being invented in 1929) and subject to censorship (most clearly demonstrated by Chauvel’s struggle to show nudity on screen in his 1933 movie, *In the Wake of the Bounty*). O’Brien, *The Pacific Muse*, 240-244. See also Brawley and Dixon, *Hollywood’s South Seas and the Pacific War*.
42 Kate Hunter noted names such as 'Fifi from Tahiti' and 'Gigi from French Polynesia' were used in travelling shows in rural Australia in the mid-twentieth century. Hunter in Angela Woollacott, *Race and the Modern Exotic: Three 'Australian' Women on Global Display* (Clayton 2011), 48.
Australia, which allowed fantasies about these islands to endure much longer than other places. Romanticised ideas about Tahiti were perpetuated by the nature of French colonialism in the region, which overlooked narratives of conquest and conflict in French Polynesia in favour of a narrative based on love, alliance and devotion, according to Matt K. Matsuda. Christian outreach in Polynesia encouraged a more sanitised representation of the region in comparison to a dangerous and ‘savage’ Melanesia. As a result, Australians were convinced of the safety of these islands, overlooking a history that included violent resistance, war, and traditional practices such as cannibalism and infanticide.

Unlike Australian attitudes to the French territories of New Caledonia and the New Hebrides (see chapter four), Australians were not opposed to French colonial rule in Tahiti. Narratives of the natural abundance of Tahiti and French Polynesia did not allude to the possible exploitation of resources and wealth, as they did in Melanesia. In fact, Australian travellers often admired the influence of French culture in Tahiti, which was believed to have brought a particular refinement to its people: ‘The French had a flair for gaiety that appeals to the Polynesian with his own happiness of heart.’ Australians acknowledged Tahiti’s importance as a regional hub, but they recognised it was a region beyond Australian colonial desires. According to Ralph Stock, Tahiti was the ‘metropolis of the southeastern Pacific Islands, just as Honolulu is of the northeastern.’ As a result, Tahiti was enshrined as an exotic ideal because it was out of Australia’s imperial reach.

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43 Australian exchange was limited to the pork trade between New South Wales and Tahiti which lasted from 1801 to 1826 and took over three million pounds of salted pork from the island group. Colin Walter Newbury, *Tahiti Nui: Change and Survival in French Polynesia, 1767-1945* (Honolulu 1980), 9. Transportation to Tahiti from Australia was limited (see chapter one) and communication was made difficult by the absence of a wireless telegraph in Tahiti until 1915.

44 Matsuda argues that whilst British Empire was focused on settlements and plantations, French colonialism was more concerned with alliances and indigenous assent. He demonstrated how official French narratives argue that King Pomare V surrendered his authority willingly to the French, and obscure the indigenous resistance in the war of 1843-6, and the Leewards War throughout the 1880s and 90s. Matt K. Matsuda, *Empire of Love: Histories of France and the Pacific* (New York 2005), 7, 94.

45 Villiers, *Cruise of the Conrad*, 292.

Paradise Lost

The expansion of shipping routes through Polynesia encouraged the marketing of the Islands as an untouched paradise, whilst simultaneously making the region more available, and vulnerable, to Australian tourist traffic. As a result, the imagined ideal was increasingly challenged by the colonial reality. The establishment of a regular steamship route to San Francisco via Rarotonga and Tahiti by USSCo. from 1909 to 1936 opened a new region to Australian travellers that was once out of reach. As Wragge noted in 1906, 'People don’t know; they have no conception of the glories of Tahiti; the globe-trotter follows the beaten tracks, and leaves this fascinating spot out of his calculations.'47 This growth in travel is evident in the number of travel accounts. Between 1880 and 1900, three Australians described their experiences of travel to Tahiti. They were of similar age and class, and their accounts emphasised similar themes of the alluring Polynesian maiden, picturesque scenery and adventures involving reefs, storms and cannibals.48 Between 1900 and 1918 seven Australians wrote nine accounts of Tahiti, and between 1919 and 1941, 14 travellers wrote 18 accounts. This growing body of travellers expressed dissatisfaction with Tahiti as it failed to live up to expectations of a pristine paradise. This was in part prompted by the impact of war, with physical destruction caused during the German bombardment of Papeete in 1914, and a general disillusionment with the European world order.49 Yet it can also be attributed to a gradual weariness of exaggerated stereotypes, and the colonial impact of development and commerce within the Pacific. As Eric Muspratt noted, it was 'too good to be true and too good to last.'50

47 Wragge, The Romance of the South Seas, 247.
48 George Robertson Nicoll, a wealthy businessman, published his diary of his worldwide travels privately for his family. Henry Tichborne was a writer who published a series of anecdotes, some fictional and others he claimed were based on his travels titled Noqu Talanoa and Rambles in Polynesia. William Meeke Fehon was a railway worker who took a six week Pacific cruise aboard a USSCo. ship in 1898.
49 For descriptions of the aftermath of the bombing, see Taylor, There!: A Pilgrimage of Pleasure; Stock, The Log of a Woman Wanderer.
50 Muspratt, Fire of Youth, 182.
Evidence of colonial settlement in the port of Papeete frequently tarnished the natural paradise that Australians expected. For those seeking 'wondrous scenery', Villiers advised to trek beyond the 'unlovely little town', regretfully noting that 'if it had been still a native island I should have loved it.' Nossiter's reaction was mixed, finding Tahiti to be 'a land of glamour and false romance', and Papeete filled with 'a conglomeration of artistic and unsightly buildings.' He also was surprised by the strong presence of Chinese, as was Napier who wrote, 'what we found was a somewhat prosaic dusty little town, filled – or so it seemed to us – with Chinamen and bicycles.'

The town's residents were also unappealing and amoral, the 'debauchery and drunkeness' shocking several Australians, and expectations of a carefree life were shattered by the reality of economic depression and corruption: 'There is the depression now; there had been, it was vaguely whispered, a financial scandal. Some of the leading citizens had been in jail.'

Within this environment, the Tahitian was seen to be corrupt and ignoble. Stock found the Islanders to be 'a sad relic...of a once-superb race' and Muspratt noted 'some strange quality dwelt here, a lonely forgotten spirit now dying in isolation in this modern world. Like Honolulu, only more so.' Blame was generally attributed to contact with Europeans, although the specific causes were varied and speculative. Safroni-Middleton deemed missionary efforts to be futile, observing that 'girls and boys made love to each other and eloped with the missionaries chasing after them' and 'the brave old chiefs...loved their old customs deep down in their heart...and cherished hopes that some day the gods would help them drive the white men into the sea.' Others blamed the influence of traders and beachcombers for bringing disease,

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51 Villiers, Cruise of the Conrad, 292, 287.
52 Nossiter, Southward Ho!, 138.
53 Napier, Men and Cities, 21.
54 Safroni-Middleton, Sailor and Beachcomber, 149; Villiers, Cruise of the Conrad, 287, 292. Villiers found Papeete ‘full of drunkenness and disease’.
57 Safroni-Middleton, Sailor and Beachcomber, 149-150.
alcohol, and misguided ideas of progress. Upon reflection, Stock questioned the merits of his own ‘civilisation’: ‘Perhaps – who knows? – these things are but another proof that we harbingers of progress were not intended to invade the sanctuary of the South Seas.’ Tourists were also held responsible, with Villiers remarking, ‘the nasal tones of loud Americans being ‘free’ offend an ear that strains for the loveliness of Polynesian speech’ and Baume recounting the view of a female resident in 1913 who resented the ‘Americanisation’ of Tahiti and the ‘bastardising’ impact of Gaugin-impersonators. George Meudell also argued that the ‘Isle of Dreams’ had been ‘spoilt by the tourists’ and predicted the future construction of large hotels and a casino.

Some Australian travellers found faults with French colonialism, such as Nossiter who regarded Tahiti as ‘an island that Britain should never have allowed France to possess.’ However, this was a minority view, as French Polynesia was too distant from Australia to be of strategic interest. This attitude also reflected the reality of French rule in Tahiti, which allowed trade to be dominated by foreign enterprise, and had limited impact on the development of the island. When Stock questioned a British resident, he replied that he preferred French rule because ‘they leave you alone.’ Nossiter, on the other hand, judged French rule inferior because they failed to recognise racial hierarchies:

> In justice to the British I must say they fall for native women less than do men of other nations, for the pride of race and caste is more strongly embedded in

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58 Stock, The Cruise of the Dream Ship, 195; Safroni-Middleton, Sailor and Beachcomber, 149; Allen, Stewart’s Handbook of the Pacific Islands, 293.  
59 Villiers, Cruise of the Conrad, 292; Baume, I Lived These Years, 43.  
60 ‘Papeete is a pleasant enough place, though crude, raw, primitive. The truth is it has been spoilt by the tourists and the Chinese. It is not an Isle of Dreams.’ Meudell predicted Tahiti would have big hotels and a casino for American tourists. Meudell, The Pleasant Career of a Spendthrift, 145.  
61 Nossiter, Southward Ho!, 130. Pearse also noted the potential of the harbour for use by Britain if she purchased it. Pearse, A Windjammer ’prentice, 13.  
62 Newbury argues the foreign-dominated trade exerted significant influence in Tahiti. France was not directly connected to Tahiti by steamship until 1924, and French protectionism was not stimulated until the global depression of the 1930s. Newbury, Tahiti Nui, 227, 315.  
63 Stock likened giving Australia and New Zealand mandates to, ‘giving a kid something to play with. He’s bound to break it.’ Stock, The Cruise of the Dream Ship, 193.
the British character and it is that aloofness from coloured races that makes the British the best colonizers. Not that the British despise the natives, far from that...but the British simply do not mix with the natives, except, of course, in isolated cases...A native or half-breed of good circumstances is treated by the French as an equal and for this reason they do not look upon the Frenchman as a superior being.\(^{64}\)

Australians were surprised by the racial diversity in Tahiti, Safroni-Middleton observing a population of 'all kinds of half-castes.'\(^{65}\) In particular, Australians found the prevalence of Chinese most surprising and disturbing. In 1911, when the number of French citizens in Papeete was 2,153, the Chinese numbered 975, and by 1917 this number increased to 2,481.\(^{66}\) Pearse wrote, 'It is a pity that the Chinese and other races are interbreeding.'\(^{67}\) Nossiter observed that the 'Chinaman' owned most of the businesses in Papeete, threatening to 'dominate this land if his march is not stopped.'\(^{68}\) He argued that the desire for expensive European clothes drove Tahitian women to 'drift to the Chinaman' and thus, 'the pure Tahitian is doomed.'\(^{69}\) Although there were other nationalities residing in Tahiti, the prominence of the Chinese challenged Australian notions of a racially pure and uncorrupted paradise (see chapter five).

Whilst Australians were disappointed by the supposedly corrupted Tahitian ideal, they continued to believe that a utopia could be found in the vicinity, and sought more isolated islands within French Polynesia and the Cook Island group. These islands possessed the Polynesian traits that travellers desired, isolated enough to discourage tourists, yet reasonably accessible from the major stopovers of Tahiti and Rarotonga. For those with access to a small yacht or charter, the Marquesas Islands were 'extraordinarily beautiful' wrote Mabel Stock, and Meudell recommended them

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\(^{64}\) Nossiter, *Southward Ho!,* 139-140.
\(^{65}\) Safroni-Middleton, *Sailor and Beachcomber,* 148. This included ‘Chinese, French, and Tahitian brigands.’
\(^{66}\) Newbury, *Tahiti Nui,* 271. The Chinese were well entrenched economically and freely intermarried with Polynesians.
\(^{67}\) Pearse, *A Windjammer 'prentice,* 134.
\(^{68}\) Nossiter, *Southward Ho!,* 141.
\(^{69}\) Ibid.
to ‘real travellers.’ Rarotonga was also popular because it was relatively unknown and isolated. Nossiter argued ‘To me it is more beautiful than Tahiti and Bora Bora, whose charms are much exaggerated’ and Pearse concluded that ‘although Tahiti is supposed to be the loveliest island, I think Rarotonga is better.’ In Nossiter’s case, British colonialism in Rarotonga provided familiar reassurance, as he remarked, ‘What a contrast the Government of this island presents in comparison to the Marquesas and Society Islands!’

**Relationships, Real and Imagined**

In addition to steamship tourists, for whom Tahiti was an exotic point of transit, there were Australians who were attracted to the Pacific by the promise of a more permanent escape. For them the alluring Pacific Islands were more familiar than the harsh and uninviting Australian outback. They were also isolated from the social conventions of civil society in Europe, America and Australia. Whilst there were many islands to choose from, and lucrative incentives to move to Melanesia, the more distant islands of Polynesia proved a popular attraction, particularly for a band of wanderers, vagabonds, artists and idealists. Their accounts distanced themselves from the fleeting observations of tourists, and display a closer interaction with Islanders and a more earnest endeavour to embrace and understand island life.

Part of the attraction of French Polynesia was the difficult voyage and long distances to be traversed, presenting an irresistible challenge to those seeking the road less travelled. Pearse, Stock, Nossiter and Villiers described in detail the romance of sailing to their own schedule in the 1920s and 30s, their accounts tinged with a nostalgia for the sailing culture that was being lost to the steamship. Sailing resisted the trend towards modernisation, and in doing so it was perceived to be closer to nature.

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71 American yachtsman Morton Gill Clark noted: ‘What was once the lure and romance of the South Seas still lingers in the air of Manahiki.’ Clark, *Glory Be*, 65.


and a more idyllic past, in the same way that Polynesia was. As Stock noted in his book *Cruise of the Dream Ship*:

> You begin to see how the average sailor-man feels in ‘polite society’, and your heart goes out to him. ‘How’s the wind?’ Ah, of course, it makes no difference to this smoke-belching machine that bears you at thirteen knots, and according to schedule towards civilization."74

The nostalgia for sailing was symbolic of a wider search for a more authentic way of life, away from the constraints of modern urban society. This sentiment was prompted by a moral disillusionment following the Great War, economic depressions, and a growing urban middle class and cultural maturity in Australia in the 1920s and 30s. This is evident in the targeted advertising of *BP Magazine*, which directly addressed ‘the busy city man seeking a few weeks’ respite for his tired brain from the hurry and bustle and strain of modern high pressure of commercial life’ as well as the ‘squatter’ and ‘mining man’.75

Reports of utopian settlements frequently appeared in Australian newspapers, as they imagined escape from life’s hardships throughout the twentieth century.76 The tropical island was a popular location. Islands promised isolation from civilisation and its temptations, natural abundance that fostered a carefree lifestyle, and a pleasant climate that encouraged nakedness. ‘There is a fascination in remoteness’ argued Beatrice Grimshaw.77 Islands that were uninhabited, such as those along the Queensland coast, or islands that did not have indigenous inhabitants, such as Pitcairn,
Norfolk and Lord Howe, were preferred. However the utopian dream had its faults, as one anonymous author warned,

The ‘comic-opera’ simple life, as you may live it now in Tahiti, Bali, or Capri, is very much simpler than trying to discover Utopia on primitive islands. After all, it is very unpleasant to revert to the primitive. In theory it sounds all right, but so few can be nicely, and picturesquely, primitive. The search for the perfect island is really but part of the universal search for happiness.

The isolation of French Polynesia made it a popular choice for Americans as well as Australians. The most famous attempt was by Ernest Darling, also known as the ‘nature man’, who left the United States to pursue a life close to nature in Tahiti in the 1900s. Living ‘on berries’, naked and discarding ‘all the institutions of civilisation’, according to a 1912 article in the Daily Herald, Darling’s existence was admired: ‘the ideal wife, the ideal life, and ideal work are now awaiting any man who cares to follow the example of Mr John Darling’. Australian couple Mr and Mrs Briggs also made a highly publicised attempt to establish an ‘International Goodwill Settlement’ at Nukuhiva in the Marquesas Islands. The media hype quickly disappeared when their yacht failed to make it beyond the Bass Strait.

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78 According to a news article about Pitcairn Island, ‘It is as isolated in its position, as secluded from the paths of men, as it is possible for any speck of land to be that is surrounded by the broad and open highway of the ocean. Yet the tiny population of this little islet is one of the strangest communities of the earth, and has reached its present condition of peace, sobriety, honesty and contentment through the wildest.’ ‘A South Sea Utopia’, Wagga Wagga Advertiser (7 December 1901), 2 [accessed 28 January 2014 at http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article101857168].


80 His story was widely publicised by Jack London, who met him in 1907 in Papeete. He had left Oregon sometime after 1895 when he was suffering from illness. American author Frederick O’Brien met Darling in 1920 when he was trying to return to Tahiti, after being deported by French authorities with a group of nature-worshipping followers. Subsequent reports emphasised his nakedness and fruit diet. Ahrens, Lindstrom, and Paisley, Across the World With the Johnsons, 30. Other attempts were reported in Australian newspapers, such as Mr and Mrs De Havas of South America in 1936. ‘Tahitian Utopia’, Advocate (17 November 1936), 7 [accessed 28 January 2014 at http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article68094451].


Of those Australian travellers that attempted to live a utopian existence in Tahiti and Polynesia, writers and artists formed the majority, leaving behind detailed records of their experiences that provide a greater insight into their personal struggles than the short and observational tourist account.\(^{83}\) The remoteness of Tahiti offered these travellers the promise of escaping the 'repressiveness of civilised life', and being able to cross conventional sexual, racial, and gendered boundaries, as famous artists like Stevenson and Gauguin had attempted.\(^{84}\) Their experiences often mirrored these artists, their romantic ideals, and their disappointment with the reality of living in the Pacific. Arnold Safroni-Middleton and Sydney Walter Powell were two prolific writers whose works offer insights into this struggle.

Arnold Safroni-Middleton (1873-1950) was a writer, poet, musician, composer and self-styled vagabond who wandered Australia and the Pacific Islands during the late 1880s and 1890s. Following his early travels, he returned to England and became a successful writer, publishing five travel books between 1915 and 1927.\(^{85}\) His books were a collection of anecdotes, fictional tales, and reminiscences, often written in the style of a sailor's yarn and dominated thematically by a romantic nostalgia for a primitive paradise. He also wrote poetry, romance and mystery novels with Pacific settings.\(^{86}\)

\(^{83}\) Nine Australian artists or professional writers described their travels to Tahiti: Eric Baume, Beatrice Grimshaw, Henry Tichborne, Elinor Mordaunt, Sydney Napier, Sydney Powell, Arnold Safroni-Middleton, Ralph Stock and Henry Somer.

\(^{84}\) Daws, A Dream of Islands, 256. Daws described Gauguin as 'using the South seas to decolonize himself.'

\(^{85}\) These are Sailor and Beachcomber (1915), A Vagabond's Odyssey (1916), Wine-dark Seas and Tropic Skies (1918), South Sea Foam (1919) and the autobiography, In the Green Leaf (1950). Safroni-Middleton was included in Edmund Morris Miller’s bibliography of Australian literature, and the AUSTLIT database, presumably because of his formative experience as a youth in Australia and his detailed descriptions of the country.

\(^{86}\) Some titles include Thakombau’s Conversion: a South Sea Iliad (1918), Gabrielle of the Lagoon: A Romance of the South Seas (1919), An Island Wooing: A Romance of the South Seas and Lotus Land (1921), A Child of the Fores: The Romance of the Last of the Marquesans (1922), Ragged Romance: Out of Sapphire Seas and Tropic Lands (1923), No Extradition: A Romance of the South Sea Islands (1923), Island Princess (1924), Sestrina: A Lyrical Drama of the Pagan South Seas (1931).
Safroni-Middleton’s experience was typical of those Australians who blended imaginary and realism to create an exaggerated and romanticised account of the Pacific. He frequently admitted that his reminiscences were nostalgic and idealistic, describing one book as a ‘frank autobiographical romance.’ What he failed to acknowledge in his texts was the effect of World War I in shaping his reminiscences as he wrote them down in England. Claiming inspiration from his personal encounters with Stevenson and Joseph Conrad, Safroni-Middleton was a bohemian who cherished artistic expression and rejected the ‘analytical conclusions’ of science books. He regarded Islander myths as ‘poetic babblings of the children of nature’, and ships’ crews as ‘true sea-poets.’ His own memories, he argued, ‘become tinged with that indefinable glamour, that something which men call poetry.’ The influence of these sailors is evident in the style of his texts, which resemble a selection of yarns, sometimes loosely organised in chronological order, but also blending myths (both Islander and European), fictional tales and personal experience.

Safroni-Middleton was critical of the corruption caused by civilisation in the Pacific, which he described as ‘immense vandalism’, and he frequently alluded to an ancient lost empire, the ‘past splendour of the South Sea Rome’ or ‘the never-to-be South Sea Empire.’ Of all the islands, Samoa was where he spent most of his time, and he favoured it as the ideal Polynesian paradise. Yet he also admired the old beachcombers and traders he met in the islands, ‘those old-time semi-embalmed sea-apostles of ancient “salt-junk”’ and the role they played in his ‘boyish contemplations

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88 Safroni-Middleton, *In the Green Leaf*, 72. In another text he wrote, ‘Oh, you aspirants, you musicians and poets of this world, all you who love art for art’s sake, for you, and you alone, I write this. You will understand; you are my brothers.’ Arnold Safroni-Middleton, *A Vagabond’s Odyssey: Being Further Reminiscences of a Wandering Sailor, Troubadour in Many Lands* (London 1916), 32.
89 Safroni-Middleton, *South Sea Foam*, vii, 53.
90 Ibid., 326.
91 Safroni-Middleton was prone to exaggeration and fiction. In *Tropic Shadows* he claimed to have drunk beer with Ratu Cakobau in a saloon, to have been speared whilst acting as ambassador for the Samoan chief Mataafa, and to have encountered an undiscovered tribe protecting its hoard of gold in Borneo.
over the great world of romance that I had thought existed beyond undiscovered seas.\footnote{Safroni-Middleton, \textit{In the Green Leaf}, 7, 74.}

Safroni-Middleton was well aware of the stories of interracial romance. He wrote that he often mixed with sailors and traders who drunkenly shared their stories of sexual exploits.\footnote{Safroni-Middleton, \textit{Sailor and Beachcomber}, 150. You could recognise a trader by ‘his warty nose, that had started to blossom after drinking some oceans of beer’ and a black eye, when ‘mistaking their Tahitian wife for their Marquesan wife.’} He was also highly critical of the missionaries, many of whom ‘succumbed’ [sic] to women yet wrote pious accounts home.\footnote{Ibid., 76.} Many of the women that Safroni-Middleton described conformed to the stereotypical alluring female:

One of them, she is one of many, wears almost nothing, the curved, thick lips in her wide mouth murmur forth alluring Samoan speech. Her girth is enormous, and her brown bosom heaves with simulated professional passion, like a wave on the treacherous deep dark ocean of sensuality – whereon so often travelling men are shipwrecked. Her eyes are large, the pupils widely encircled with white, and warm with the sunlight gleam of downright wickedness; she has been taught her art in the vast university of experience with white men in the foremost ranks of civilisation’s pioneer tramp.\footnote{Sabon-Manton, \textit{Sailor and Beachcomber}, 142.}

Within his accounts, Safroni-Middleton also portrayed Polynesian women as active seductresses and emphasised his own youthful innocence. Samoan girls were ‘born flirts’ he claimed, who ‘longed for the romantic white youth.’\footnote{Ibid., 79.} When staying with a sailor in Apia, Safroni-Middleton was seduced by his Samoan wife who ‘made violent love to me.’\footnote{Ibid., 67.} In another encounter, a Samoan woman whom he fell in love with, Papoo, left him because the novelty of dating a white man wore off.\footnote{Safroni-Middleton, \textit{A Vagabond’s Odyssey}, 59.}

Safroni-Middleton’s stories of romance also betray the racial prejudices common at the time. He frequently noted ‘all kinds of half castes’ living in the islands

\footnote{Ibid., 79.}
during his travels, and was critical of non-European races, such as Indians, Chinese and Malays. In Tahiti he observed,

the varied offspring of men from many lands, the half-caste children of white traders, Chinese mongrels, Polynesian niggers, descendants of wandering, adventurous viciousness, mixed up with the outcasts of civilisation, and more often than quite enough the puny offspring of touring American and German missionaries, and English too.  

In another text, he criticised foreign sailors who left children behind to return to their families in Europe. Although this suggests Safroni-Middleton perceived this as the irresponsible corruption of Tahitian racial purity, his fictional and actual romances encouraged interracial liaisons. Like most fictional romances set in the Pacific, Safroni-Middleton represented the mixed race woman as desirable (‘she was the most English-looking South Sea Island girl I ever saw’) and described the ideal life as being married to a ‘native’ woman. This desire for the ‘half-caste’ was amplified in Tahiti, which was considered ‘a country where the colour line is indefinite, where West comes nearer to meeting East than possibly in any other part of the world.’ Few acknowledged the reality, as M. Kathleen Woodburn did in 1944, that ‘the life of the half-caste is a continual internal war.’

In practice, Safroni-Middleton failed to maintain a permanent relationship, or one that was more than sexual. He gave many reasons, women being unwilling or unable to leave, his own preference to remain a wanderer, or in the case of a Maori woman he desired (Hine-e-moa), having love stolen by another. Rather, Safroni-Middleton only found happiness in imagined relationships. These fantasies permeated his travel accounts, such as in Wine-Dark Seas and Tropic Skies, where a large portion

100 Ibid., 57.
101 Ibid., 118.
102 Ibid., 217.
104 Woodburn, Backwash of Empire, 107.
of the book was dedicated to a fictional tragedy of Waylao, a 16-year-old girl of mixed Marquesan and European ancestry. Portrayed as the 'the dusky heroine of a romantic South Sea novel', Waylao was coveted by Safroni-Middleton, but never within reach, much like his other romances. The incomplete nature of these encounters suggest the problematic nature of Safroni-Middleton’s 'reminiscences', and a reluctance to transgress the boundaries of European convention beyond a fictional and imagined space. This response was shared by other travellers and readers who preferred fictional romances to reality. For example, Michael Sturma argues that popular notions of the H.M.S. Bounty mutineers tended to focus on the idyllic nature of their love affairs with Tahitian women, overlooking the realities of married life once settled on Pitcairn Island and the inevitable conflicts that arose between sailors and their Islander wives.

Sydney Walter Powell (1878-1952), like Safroni-Middleton, was also a wanderer and writer, and was more vocally 'Australian.' Best known for his descriptions of World War I, Powell’s fiction and poetry about South Africa and the Pacific Islands has been overlooked. Born in England and raised in South Africa, he moved to Australia to work for various jobs in the country before joining the artillery. His posting to Thursday Island sparked his interest in the Pacific Islands, and he began writing for the Bulletin. Before serving in World War I, he visited Tahiti and it became the subject of his two published travel accounts, Adventures of a Wanderer (1928) and A South Sea Diary (1942), as well as an unpublished autobiography, 'Each To His Taste.' Each text provides a different perspective on Powell’s journey to Tahiti from

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105 'I often sit dreaming far into the night. It is then that she comes back from the shadows and kneels with me at the altar of my dreams – and sings some far-off strain of my beautiful, dead Romance.' Safroni-Middleton, Wine-Dark Seas and Tropic Skies, 26, 304. Waylao was seduced by a ‘Malay Indian’, becomes pregnant, runs away in fear, and eventually dies of leprosy. Elements of the story overlap with, and contradict other accounts that he wrote, and his omniscient narration of some scenes, such as the secret marriage of Waylao, suggest this is a fictional tale.

106 Sturma, South Sea Maidens, 52.

107 His fictions, many of which were published by New South Wales Bookstall Company, include The Maker of Pearls (1920), Hermit Island (1921), The Great Jade Seal (1922), The Pearls of Cheong Tah (1922), The Trader of Kameko (1923), The Game: A Tale of Trade and Adventure in the Eastern Pacific (1925), A Trader’s Tale (1926), Tetua: A Tale in Five Parts (1926), Tales from Tahiti (1928), The Cocoanut Inn: An Extravagant Story (1929), South Sea Fortune (1944). Tales from Tahiti and
New Zealand in 1908, and his residence there, followed by return trip in 1916 to the Tuamotus Group in French Polynesia. Despite being adamant in his introduction of *Adventures of a Wanderer* that ‘this book is not fiction’, ‘never inventing nor falsifying’, his second and third texts contain inconsistencies in dates, his reasons for leaving and his relationships with women in Europe and Tahiti.108

Powell’s experience as a writer shaped his journey and the subsequent texts he wrote. Like Safroni-Middleton, he drew inspiration from Robert Louis Stevenson, observing at Rarotonga ‘the sight of which from the sea answered perfectly to the descriptions of South Sea writers. I felt that Stevenson’s lyricism was justified.’109 *A South Sea Diary* was not meant to be a diary ‘in the literal sense’, Powell wrote, and it is unclear whether sections were written later than the time of travel, which could explain inconsistencies between the content of each text.110 He was also explicit about the difficulties in finding work as a writer, his change in outlook over time, and the writing technique itself. On the importance of using active dialogue in text, he wrote, ‘Treat a thing as completely past and the indistinctiveness of the past begins to descend on it; the dissolution of the past has already commenced. Hold it in the present…it preserves the present’s vividness. And no record is worth a damn that is not vivid. It is the one essential virtue of a diary, which lives in the day-to-day present.’111

*Tetua* are both set in Tahiti and focus on interracial romances between a European man and a Tahitian girl.

108 In *Adventures of a Wanderer*, Powell claims to live in Tahiti from c.1910 to December 1912, and return to live in Tuamotus as a trader four years later. He does not mention his wife and claims to leave due to lack of work. In *A South Sea Diary*, the text is dated from 9 February 1912 to 27 April 1913. He describes Tahiti and Tuamotus and focuses in detail on his Tahitian wife Tehiva, whose death by drowning prompts him to leave Tahiti. In ‘Each to his Taste’, his story confirms the first version, but Tehiva is not mentioned and his reason for leaving was to prepare for the arrival of his English wife in Australia.


110 ‘This will not be a diary in the literal sense. I shall write only when I have something to write about, making a sort of chapter of each entry.’ Powell, *A South Sea Diary*, 7. Some chapters appear to be based on diary entries written at the time, yet Powell claims to have written *A South Sea Diary* two years after he published his travel account. Whilst the time difference may account for some inaccuracies and romanticisms, it may have also allowed him to publish details that would previously been inappropriate, such as the marriage to a Tahitian woman.

111 Ibid., 62. Powell admits in the preface of *To Each His Taste* that with time his outlook has changed since his last book.
Initially Powell was ‘exultant’ to be in a foreign environment, and considered Tahiti ‘the land of my dreams.’\(^{112}\) Gradually he realised the Tahitian ideal that he expected was to be found outside of busy Papeete, and he preferred residing in the village as a more authentic way of life: ‘I don’t care for merely visiting places: I want intimacy or nothing. I hate tourism of any sort.’\(^{113}\) At times his life appears ideal, especially in his second text, as he describes purchasing a coconut plantation in a rural village in Tahiti, building a house, establishing himself in the community, and falling in love. He wrote, ‘I have never been anywhere where my instincts had such freedom, my diversity so much satisfaction, where I felt so much a harmony.’\(^{114}\) This freedom was espoused by the Tahitians themselves, whom he admired for their sense of equality and respect.\(^{115}\) Yet he was also disappointed with colonial influence, observing ‘the corrupting power of money on a primitive people’, referring to ‘illusions’ of paradise, and ultimately moving to the outer Paumotus group because Tahiti was too ‘sophisticated and Europeanised.’\(^{116}\) Contracting elephantiasis was another blow to his utopian dreams.

Powell’s travel accounts were less prone to fictional embellishments than Safroni-Middleton’s. This was acknowledged in an Australian book review which commended his knowledge as being ‘of a more intimate and familiar kind.’\(^{117}\) His intimate relations with a Tahitian woman provided insights into the practicalities of interracial romance and what was permissible in society at the time. Inconsistencies in details between the three accounts, most notably the omission of his Tahitian wife Tehiva in his first and last works, cast some doubt on the accuracy of his recollections. The reason for omitting Tehiva is unclear – perhaps it was due to changing readerships,

\(^{112}\) Powell, *Adventures of a Wanderer*, 134.
\(^{113}\) ‘This old fellow’s talks of the outlying islands always give me a hankering for them, not just to visit them but to live in and know them. I don’t care for merely visiting places: I want intimacy or nothing. I hate tourism of any sort.’ Powell, *A South Sea Diary*, 47.
\(^{114}\) Ibid., 40.
\(^{115}\) ‘He would take any man at face value; but only until he had tried him…Nor was any man given respect because his skin was white. If he did not deserve it he was not accorded it.’ Powell, ‘Each To His Taste’, 196.
\(^{116}\) Powell, *A South Sea Diary*, 33, 81; Powell, ‘Each To His Taste’, 188.
the first book published in 1928, and the second in 1942 when attitudes to cross-cultural romance may have been more conciliatory. The final work was an unpublished manuscript and may have been meant as an authoritative biography rather than a work for public consumption, thus Tehiva may have been a fictional character.

As a resident, Powell had more detailed observations about Islander women, and their roles and responsibilities within the family and society. He gave them a greater agency than other authors, noting that whilst staying as a guest of a chief in Tahiti, he observed that the wife and housemaids talked to the chief freely, treating him ‘with respect but without servility.’ He recognised that their idea of modesty was different, though ‘his [Tahitians’] sense of it is strong enough to make him charge us [Europeans] with immodesty.’ He distinguished his relationship from other interracial romances, noting that to associate with foreign sailors was the utmost degradation, and that although many girls went to Papeete in search of men, it was for better social prospects rather than pleasure. Prostitution was not desirable.

Powell’s description of marriage in Tahiti departed from conventional narratives of interracial romance. He wrote that his attraction to Tehiva was primarily based on her personality rather than appearance, and not a ‘craving of the hour’ or ‘an appetite to be indulged and done with.’ Similarly, Tehiva was serious, and her affection was not easily given. ‘I knew that she was no hulahula girl, and I had learned that girls in Tahiti are not to be got for the mere asking.’ He elaborated further on the moral codes of women, ‘In Tahiti the moral code may be called easy, but this gives a latitude of choice which makes a girl more particular than she could otherwise afford to be. And the girls of Tahiti have quite pronounced tastes…for I had learned a little

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118 Powell, *Adventures of a Wanderer*, 147. ‘This freedom was never abused…He was their master and noble rank, but no social barrier separated him from them.’
119 Ibid., 167.
120 ‘There was a plethora of girls. Papeete is the hunting ground of girls from every country district and from most of the outlying islands. All look for men; some work, some live on men, but few are what we should call prostitutes.’ He also noted that the worst thing is a girl who associates with foreign sailors: ‘Then, and then only, she ranks as a whore.’ Powell, *A South Sea Diary*, 24, 28.
121 Ibid., 15.
122 Ibid. He continued, ‘that had been a slight surprise to me, as it is, I think, to the majority of men that come here.’
already of Tahitian psychology.123 This idea was reinforced by his visit to Rarotonga, a place he considered inferior because of regulations that prohibited mixed marriage: 'As a result, there was far more promiscuity here than in Tahiti and relations between white and brown were furtive instead of frank.'124 In *South Sea Diary* he described his daily life, living in a bamboo thatched hut, with a native oven, selling just enough copra to cover his living costs. Powell and Tehiva’s relationship appeared to be equal, Powell writing that the work was shared equally between them, that 'no man is above cooking the dinner', and that Tehiva’s ‘natural intelligence’ was good as his.125

Powell’s adaptation to Tahitian life had its limitations. In some cases, he refused to eat without cutlery: ‘my European blood revolted at doing this habitually.’126 When meeting an elderly English resident whose marriage had failed (named Tioti or George), Powell reflected on his own marriage. He much preferred his informal partnership with Tehiva, criticising the formal marriage arrangements required in Europe, and also noted the limitations of having children in the Islands:

> I am intelligent enough to see that the children of a Tahitian mother must be Tahitian, unless the father has exceptional strength of character...I think that every marriage of this kind where there are children must be a disappointment, even in those rare cases where the dominating character of the father has left its indelible stamp, for it is never so strong as he would wish it be.127

Occasional references suggest it was not all smooth sailing for Powell’s relationships either. One relationship in Tahiti had already failed according to his first account, and after trying to relocate to the Tuamotus group as a trader he realised that Tehiva was opposed to being away from her home for too long.128

123 Ibid.
124 Ibid., 66.
125 Ibid., 13-14.
126 Ibid., 18.
127 Ibid., 49.
128 ‘Tahitians are fond of travel, but they are fond of home, and for most of them, home means Tahiti. Many a girl has refused to leave Tahiti with her man...Now I am beginning to know the extent of my ignorance of her.’ ibid., 74.
In contrast to Safroni-Middleton, a self-styled vagabond who was reluctant to settle in one spot, Powell was opposed to the temporary tourist, and eager to make a new permanent life in Tahiti. His works show an empathy for the people, and a deeper understanding and appreciation of their culture and traditions (for example, his comparison of adoption in Europe and Tahiti\(^{129}\)). His relationship with Tehiva was crucial to this appreciation, according to the conclusion of *South Sea Diary*, in which he justifies his decision to leave upon her death. It was also a relationship that could not be shared with another European woman:

> I would not live here with a European woman; she alone would be enough to separate me from the life in which I now participate; having no natural link with the people, we should become a foreign body; and I would not live here under such conditions. Unless you are merged in the life about you, you cannot realise your own life. You must yield yourself up unconditionally in order to possess yourself.\(^{130}\)

Powell’s aversion to white women in the Pacific Islands was shared by many travellers. Not only does it reflect the tensions between European male and female travellers abroad, but it points to the overwhelming dominance of masculine narratives of the Pacific in Australian travel writing, and the frequently silent, or discreet, female voice.

**‘Damned Civilized Women’**

Travel to the region was a male-dominated activity at this time, encouraged by the remoteness and perceived savagery of the islands, and the rudimentary berths provided for females aboard ships until the 1920s. Female travellers also encountered social resistance or hostility to accept them.\(^{131}\) They were criticised for spoiling the

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\(^{129}\) Ibid., 55.

\(^{130}\) Ibid., 54.

\(^{131}\) Margaret Jolly argues describes three stereotypes of white women in the colonies – that they were idle; preoccupied with petty gossip, rivalry and sexual jealousies; and responsible for stricter racial segregation and the conflicts of the later colonial period. Margaret Jolly, ‘Colonizing Women: The Maternal Body and Empire’ in Sneja Marina Gunew and Anna Yeatman, eds., *Feminism and the Politics of Difference* (Sydney 1993), 106. Claudia Knapman argues that women were regarded by European men as the ‘ruin of empires’, perceived to cause sexual jealousy and racial hostility within the Pacific Islands. Claudia Knapman, *White Women in Fiji 1835-1930: The Ruin of Empire*?
romanticised ideal, as one male artist in Tahiti exclaimed, ‘You damned civilized women ought n’t to be allowed in the place, spoiling everything!’\(^{132}\) Women were also considered vulnerable, and criticised for travelling unaccompanied, a statement expressed by both men and women. British traveller Mabel Stock argued that the Pacific Islands were ‘too uncivilised and out of the world for a young girl to be happy in.’\(^{133}\) Australian professional travel writer Elinor Mordaunt was one woman, however, who sought to disprove this assumption during her travels: ‘What altogether mistaken ideas people have about the women of the Victorian age!’\(^{134}\)

Mordaunt was one of only 15 Australian women who wrote about their Pacific travels between 1880 and 1941, second in fame only to Grimshaw. This group of Australian women were drawn from diverse social and economic backgrounds: six were tourists, two were professional writers, as well as a painter, war nurse, delegate for the Institute of Pacific Relations, and three accompanied their husbands.\(^{135}\) Born in England, Elinor Mordaunt lived with her newborn son Godfrey in Melbourne from 1903 to 1909 after a failed marriage. Fiercely independent, she refused offers of help and scraped by a living on earnings from sewing, painting, decorating, and briefly editing a women’s monthly magazine. In 1909 she and her son left for England, and she continued writing to support herself. She published over 40 volumes, mainly novels and short stories. Following a round-the-world trip for the London *Daily Mail* (Sydney 1986), 6, 161. See also Claudia Knapman, ‘Western Women’s Travel Writing About the Pacific Islands’, *Pacific Studies*, 20:2 (1997).

\(^{132}\) As reported by Elinor Mordaunt. (Mordaunt, *The Venture Book*, 108.)

\(^{133}\) Stock, *The Log of a Woman Wanderer*, 144. When she met a European resident in Tahiti who planned to ask his 18-year-old wife to join him, Stock wrote, ‘I cannot imagine an intelligent, energetic girl being content to live her life on an island, however beautiful, where she would be the only white woman.’

\(^{134}\) When meeting two elderly maiden ladies staying at a Suva hotel, she remarked, ‘they leave me absolutely gasping at the things which they, and their mothers before them, seem to have taken for granted. Their attitude is in strong contrast to that of the young married women of to-day, with their complaints of it all.’ Mordaunt, *The Venture Book*, 195.

\(^{135}\) These include Florence Bond, Hannah Chewings, Alice Combes, May Cook, Caroline David, Beatrice Grimshaw, Doris Hayball, A. Jamieson, Rosa Kirkcaldie, Aletta Lewis, Janet Mitchell, Elinor Mordaunt, Harriet Ponder, Betty Freeman, and M. Kathleen Woodburn. Three wrote diaries. Three followed their scientist, missionary and overseer husbands. Other well-known Australian females who travelled the Pacific include the missionaries Florence Coombe and Florence Young, actress Annette Kellerman, and editor Judy Tudor.
Mordaunt was as enamored of Tahiti as Safroni-Middleton and Powell, writing that it excelled all her expectations.\textsuperscript{137} Dreaming and writing from the veranda of a boarding house in Papeete, Mordaunt used conventional tropes to describe Tahiti, of natural beauty, childlike innocence, timelessness and a carefree life. 'Love and langour' was 'the keynote to Tahiti' she argued.\textsuperscript{138} Islander women were part of this ideal, and her observations resonated with romanticised images of the 'half-caste': 'a tall, deep-breasted creature with great dark eyes swimming with passion, love, and melancholy.'\textsuperscript{139} Although Mordaunt admired several male chiefs whom she encountered, they were not portrayed as alluring or sexual (nor were any European men). This may have been due to her mature age, and the social conventions regulating relationships between white women and Islander men. Jolly also identifies this trend in the work of Grimshaw, whom she argues adopted the white male gaze, eroticising and exoticising females, and rarely objectifying men.\textsuperscript{140}

As a white woman, Mordaunt was privileged to access some of the island customs reserved for male guests, as well as witnessing the domestic spaces within villages, and the women that inhabited them. She was allowed to drink kava, had titles bestowed upon her such as Sinabada ('Lady King'), and was hosted by chiefs.\textsuperscript{141} During one such occasion, she reflected on her ambiguous status as a white woman: 'He [the chief] is very polite to me, very punctilious about helping me first, but I

\textsuperscript{136} Elinor was one of several pseudonyms she used. Her real name was Evelyn May Mordaunt (1872-1942). In 1897 she went to Mauritius with her cousin and married a sugar-planter the next year. Wasted by malaria she returned to England alone, then left for Melbourne in 1902. In 1903 she gave birth to her son Godfrey in Australia. During her travels she visited Tahiti, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, New Guinea and the Trobriand Islands. She carried a typewriter with her, and took her own photos and sketches, mostly of 'typical' scenes. Her texts do not follow a chronological order, and she wrote in the present tense, often noting where she was currently writing.

\textsuperscript{137} Mordaunt, \textit{The Venture Book}, 60.

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 78.

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 75.

\textsuperscript{140} Jolly, 'From Point Venus to Bali Ha’i', 110.

\textsuperscript{141} Mordaunt, \textit{The Venture Book}, 189; Elinor Mordaunt, \textit{Sinabada} (London 1937), 246.
wonder what he really thinks about civilized women, for even his own wife never eats with him." Similarly, painter Aletta Lewis recognised the confusion she created within the Samoan community she stayed with, as they debated what rank and status she occupied because she was unmarried, white and female. However, gender could also be advantageous. In Mordaunt's case, she was able to have close interactions with women, bathing or sleeping in areas prohibited to men, helping with domestic duties, and other activities such as making tapa. She often recorded her conversations with women, a characteristic which distinguished her account from other male perspectives which rarely mentioned women except for their physical appearance.

Mordaunt’s insights into domestic life in the Pacific Islands resonate with other Australian female travellers, many of whom had closer access to Islander women and their families, and wrote more detailed descriptions of them. Caroline David accompanied her husband on a coral-boring expedition to Funafuti in 1897, and made extensive observations of daily life in the village, with chapters titled, ‘food and cooking’ and ‘clothes and plants’, as well as English translations of local myths. Like Mordaunt, David was independent and critical of the role of women, noting that women did most of the work in the village, and making nuanced observations of the behaviour of females. Although she still used colonial rhetoric to describe the people, she became very attached to the village, adopting a ‘native mother’, Tufaina, and ‘native daughter’, Naina.

143 Ibid., 97, 189.
144 For example, Mordaunt visited a Fijian chief’s widowed sister, Adi. During their conversation they discussed family and sorcery. When Mordaunt asked why Adi did not have any more children, she replied that it was because she broke customary law. Ibid., 208-209.
145 She wrote, ‘all natives are “boys” so long as they can work; when they are too old to do anything but eat, smoke, and palaver they are “men”’. David, *Funafuti*, 35-36. She also described the young girls as clever and manipulative around the men, pretending to be shy for certain occasions.
146 Tufaina ‘was an aged and wise woman, who had the character of being one of the best hands at doctoring and at making all native goods, such as tiki, takai (native dresses), fans, baskets and wreaths, in addition to which she was an excellent cook from the native point of view... Soon after I had formed the habit of dropping into her cook-house, she told me that I was good, that she loved me, that she was my mother. I thanked her, said that I loved and respected her and was proud to be her daughter.’ Ibid., 133.
Similarly, Helen Cato described her domestic responsibilities as a missionary’s wife, teaching, cooking, gardening, cleaning, and offering medical advice. Writing in 1947, her account reflects the changing gender values of the time: ‘A woman’s place, we are told, is in the kitchen. It is not surprising that this particular kitchen window, so situated, is like a peephole upon life. It commands a grandstand view of many little dramas played out in Richmond from day to day, dramas of which the marama (lady) is the only witness.’ For Woodburn, also writing in the 1940s, living in the islands made her grateful for the relative freedom she possessed in Australia: ‘Erromanga is a man’s world into which the vexed question of woman’s suffrage has not as yet entered. They are the heavy draught workers, and apparently content to remain so. Children, clothes, gardens, drudgery of all kinds, that is the woman’s share.’

In some cases, women fulfilled the traditional gender role expected of them. Caroline David, though representing herself as independent of her husband, published her account under the name Mrs. Edgeworth David. This was not an unusual convention at the time. Jolly has demonstrated how women were not simply victims of male myths, but also contributed to them, naming Grimshaw as one who entrenched gender roles. Betty Freeman, who grew up on a CSR plantation in Fiji in the 1920s, described the part her mother played in maintaining social etiquette and British customs. She organised social outings and activities with the European residents, and passed down her knowledge of good manners to her daughter: ‘A successful hostess needed discretion when arranging bridging tables. Standard of play had to be considered and it was crucial to know whether a coolness existed or worse, if any two were daggers drawn. Homemade delicacies...were nibbled all the afternoon but alcoholic refreshment never offered before sundown.’ The maintenance of these

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149 David, *Funafuti*. Other examples include British travel writer Anna Brassey (who published under the name Mrs. Brassey in the 1870s) and American writer and filmmaker Osa Johnson (who published under the name Mrs. Martin Johnson in the 1920s and 30s).
150 Jolly, ‘From Point Venus to Bali Ha’i’, 108.
151 Freeman, *Fiji - Memory Hold the Door*, 43.
protocols was important when living in a foreign environment, argues Penny Russell, and the task usually fell to women.\textsuperscript{152}

Mordaunt, who represented herself as an adventurer and social outcast in her books, was opposed in principle to the ‘people who go to the same English seaside resort every summer of their lives.’\textsuperscript{153} She considered herself a recluse (‘there is nothing on earth that I desire so little as human companionship’), yet headstrong, willing to confront anyone that offended her, no matter their status.\textsuperscript{154} She also chose the path less travelled, preferring to travel by trading schooner rather than liner, living in boarding houses, traversing up river in canoes, and inland on horseback. Her account resonates with other famous Pacific adventurers such as Australian Grimshaw and American Osa Johnson. Like these women, Mordaunt projected an ambivalent identity, as a woman who challenged gender conventions, yet still maintained a sense of decorum.\textsuperscript{155}

In her account, Mordaunt expressed the challenge of ‘one’s own quick readaptation’ during travel, and the ‘difficulty there is in preserving any kind of fixed standard.’\textsuperscript{156} Encountering other Europeans on the way whom she considered amoral and corrupted in contrast to the hospitable Islanders, Mordaunt began to question her own identity, ‘wondering if this was, indeed, I.’\textsuperscript{157} Throughout the text, her self-identification is unclear, at times contradicting Victorian principles and societal constraints, yet also comparing herself to other English travellers and referring to

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\item[152] Penny Russell, \textit{Savage or Civilised?: Manners in Colonial Australia} (Sydney 2010), 212.
\item[153] Mordaunt, \textit{The Venture Book}, v.
\item[154] Ibid., 20. She had several arguments with a female hotel owner, a male artist, and even the Tongan queen.
\item[155] For example, Mordaunt was careful to avoid bathing naked or publicly undressing, and she was conscious of transgressing Victorian sensibilities in the Pacific: ‘I wonder what on earth the other guests would think of me if they could see me now, without shoes or stockings, my wet hair dripping down my back. Or if they could have seen me eating pork and chicken with my fingers.’ Ibid., 186.
\item[156] Ibid., ix.
\item[157] She also wrote that ‘manners are, like morals, the merest matter of latitude and longitude.’ This was confirmed by a white landlady in Navua, Fiji, whom she called a ‘slut’ and a ‘derelict specimen of civilization.’ Ibid., xii, 187, 294-295.
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England as home. Lewis also recorded a similar experience, although her youthful account highlighted a willingness to completely abandon her European-ness. For eight months in 1929, Lewis lived in American Samoa, first in Tutuila, and later on some of the outlying islands of the Manua Group. During this time, she passionately embraced Islander culture, rejecting the tourist trade and American society in Pago Pago. She appears to have been sincere in her admiration of Samoans, and her willingness to be a part of the community: ‘I had come to respect him so sincerely that I had quite forgotten the division that lay between his experiences and mine, and his race and mine.’ Yet despite her best attempts, her self-understanding remained ambivalent, as she wrote, ‘The Samoan and the palagi [European] attitudes were at war inside me, and I felt oddly traitorous to both.’

The ambivalent identities expressed by Mordaunt and Lewis resonate with other studies of female travellers in the Pacific which emphasise the diverse experiences of women abroad. Whilst not every account challenged European gender conventions and Polynesian stereotypes, it is important to consider these sources and recognise the overwhelmingly masculine narrative of the Pacific Islands. The works of Jolly, Claudia Knapman, Angela Woollacott, Prue Ahrens, Lamont Lindstrom and Fiona Paisley have drawn attention to the spectrum of representations of the Pacific Islands by Australian women, from those that reinforced the masculine colonial gaze to those that advocated a modern Australian woman, and a more nuanced depiction of

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159 Aletta Lewis (b. 1904) was an English-born artist who trained at the Sydney Art School from 1927 to 1930. When she arrived aged 23, she taught at the school and was a regular exhibitor in Sydney, winning the Archibald prize in 1928. In 1929, the director of the Macquarie galleries funded Lewis to go to the Pacific Islands to fulfil her desire ‘to paint brown people’. She recorded her experience in They Call Them Savages (1938) and exhibited her art at a solo show in 1929 before returning to London. Her artwork has been lost since then, apart from those illustrations included in her book.
160 ‘I was beginning to feel caged in by the wire-netting of the commodious little palagi house. I had learned enough about the Samoans to know how much more there was to learn.’ Lewis, They Call Them Savages, 76.
161 Ibid., 109.
162 Ibid., 252.
Pacific women. Female Australian travel writers were well aware of the social conventions they were expected to fulfil, not only whilst travelling, but also in the accounts that they wrote. Their texts show that women were adept at presenting ambiguous and diverse personas to serve a wide-ranging audience.

As an isolated and remote region far from the Australian mainland, Polynesia was a suitable location for Australian travellers to negotiate and transgress the social, racial, sexual and gendered expectations of European ‘civilisation’. Not only did this geographical distance encourage Australian visions of a paradise or utopia, it also contributed to the perpetuation of standardised tropes to describe these imagined isles. This chapter has argued that Australian perceptions of Polynesia (and Tahiti in particular) closely resembled conventional European narratives of the region. Unlike other regions in the Pacific, Polynesia remained largely unchanged within the broader Australian imagination. Despite a growing awareness of the fragility of this Polynesian paradise, popular stereotypes persisted in Australian travel writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Australians continued to travel to Tahiti in search of Polynesian promises, ignoring the travel accounts which repeatedly expressed disappointment when faced with the realities of colonial impact.

163 Jolly, ‘From Point Venus to Bali Ha’i’; Knapman, White Women in Fiji; Knapman, ‘Western Women’s Travel Writing About the Pacific Islands’; Woollacott, ‘“All This Is the Empire, I Told Myself”: Australian Women’s Voyages “Home” and the Articulation of Colonial Whiteness’; Woollacott, To Try Her Fortune in London; Woollacott, Race and the Modern Exotic; Ahrens, Lindstrom, and Paisley, Across the World With the Johnsons; Paisley, Glamour in the Pacific: Cultural Internationalism and Race Politics in the Women’s Pan-Pacific. Studies of public figures Annette Kellerman and Osa Johnson have shown how both women used their bodies (as an aquatic performer, and an explorer) to transgress gender boundaries. This allowed them to express ‘the values of freedom, emancipation, and non-conformity’ which were consistent with the ‘Modern Girl’ of the 1920-50s. Ahrens, Lindstrom, and Paisley, Across the World With the Johnsons, 94-95.

164 Woollacott demonstrates how Kellerman, who had international fame as a performer and film star, played with the identity of a Pacific Islander on film. She was ambiguously portrayed as exotic, often a mermaid or nymph, and yet cast herself ‘as outside Western civilisation, as having been born and brought up in the south Pacific, and as being a better swimmer and diver than the islanders themselves.’ Woollacott, Race and the Modern Exotic, 39. Similarly, Osa Johnson simultaneously portrayed herself as a devoted wife and mother, as well as a physically fit and courageous white woman living amongst savages. Ahrens, Lindstrom, and Paisley, Across the World With the Johnsons, 82.
Through the experience of Safroni-Middleton and Powell, I have attempted to show the difficulties that Australians encountered when trying satisfy their idyllic visions of Polynesia. These few who actually attempted to permanently escape the constraints of civilisation recorded their struggle to reconcile their expectations with reality. These travellers were also representative of the dominant masculine narrative that shaped Australian perceptions of the Pacific Islands. By drawing attention to the often understated female voice in Australian travel writing, I have argued that women travellers can offer a more nuanced perspective on Australian notions of gender roles and relationships in the Pacific Islands.

In the following chapter, I move from Australian travel accounts of Polynesia to the New Hebrides and New Caledonia. Australian representations of these two island groups were distinct from the generalised tropes applied to Polynesia. They reflected and contributed to wider Australian debate about French colonialism in the Pacific Islands. Whilst this chapter has argued that French colonial rule in parts of the Polynesian region was of little concern to Australians, the location of the New Hebrides and New Caledonia close to the Australian coast significantly shaped Australian descriptions of these island groups, often prompting a hostile response.
CHAPTER FOUR

Conflict, Convicts and the Condominium

Everyone knows that ‘La Nouvelle’, as it is popularly called, is a French penal settlement, and thereby hangs a tale.¹

It was September 1905. The Anglo-French Convention, so Australians hoped, would get to work on the New Hebridean question almost immediately... Altogether, the New Hebrides were providing much food for talk and guesswork. It was an odd fact, under the circumstances, that no one really knew anything to speak of about the place.²

The French colonial presence in New Caledonia and the New Hebrides meant that Australian representations of these two island groups would be distinct from any other Pacific Islands. In contrast to French Polynesia and Tahiti, which were represented as ideal, romantic and remote destinations, New Caledonia and the New Hebrides were widely perceived by Australians to pose an imminent threat in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This chapter will explore how Australian travel accounts reflected popular stereotypes and fears about French colonial rule from 1880 to 1914, and how individual travellers responded to French influence in the Pacific. As suggested by the two quotes above, made by Australian travellers in 1906 and 1907 respectively, Australians were preoccupied with French convicts in New Caledonia and the joint Anglo-French political system in the New Hebrides. Although public interest in these island groups peaked in the late nineteenth century, Australian travel accounts continued to remind Australians of the French colonial legacy in the Pacific until World War I.

² Beatrice Grimshaw, From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands (London 1907), 166.
In this chapter I argue that Australian representations of New Caledonia and
the New Hebrides were marked by three main themes – conflict, convicts and the
condominium. Australians were aware that New Caledonia and the New Hebrides
were closely tied, politically, economically, and physically via steamship routes. As
such, Australian observations of conflict in New Caledonia in the nineteenth century
between French settlers and Islanders reflected wider concerns about the legitimacy
of French colonial rule in the New Hebrides. Convicts were another persistent theme
identified in New Caledonia and I argue that the representation of convicts shifted
from a perceived threat in the nineteenth century to a historical attraction in the
twentieth. This reflected New Caledonia’s increasing popularity as a tourist
destination for Australians by the early 1900s. Whilst convicts and conflict were
clearly associated with New Caledonia, travellers’ descriptions of the New Hebrides
were more ambiguous. I argue that their reactions to the joint Anglo-French
condominium were characterised by confusion and uncertainty due to the diverse
nature of the island group, and the unresolved nature of the agreement. This was in
spite of the increasing number of travellers to the region, and the widespread publicity
of the expansion of French interests with New Caledonia and the New Hebrides.

In the first of four sections, I discuss Australian responses to conflicts between
French colonials and the Melanesian inhabitants of New Caledonia in the late
nineteenth century, and the widespread public opposition to the penal colony there. I
identify these two issues as persistent themes in Australian perceptions of New
Caledonia, and argue that both served to justify Australian criticisms of French
colonialism in the New Hebrides. Second, I explore how Australians contested Anglo-
French agreements for the New Hebrides from the 1880s, and the role of businesses,
governments and missionaries in shaping discourses about the island group. I also
review how ordinary travellers reacted to representatives of these organisations when
travelling the New Hebrides in the twentieth century. Third, I examine the popularity
of New Caledonia as a tourist destination from the 1900s and how Australians
identified its historic convict past and exotic French culture as attractions rather than
detractions. Finally, I discuss the decline in popular awareness of these island groups
post-World War I, and the ways in which Islanders from both groups were frequently stereotyped, or omitted completely from travel accounts.

**Conflict and Convicts in New Caledonia**

Situated only 1500 km east of the Australian coast, New Caledonia was of great public interest to the Australian colonies in the mid to late nineteenth century. Yet there is limited travel writing about it prior to 1900. Although New Caledonia may not have been the preferred holiday destination at this time, it had sustained contact with Australians from the 1840s. This was mostly in the form of sandalwood and *bêche-de-mer* traders, London Missionary Society (LMS) and Marist missionaries. Australians also travelled to New Caledonia as labour traders, although New Caledonia was a site for deploying rather than recruiting labour. The systematic recruiting of labour for New Caledonia began in 1865 to help develop the colony and most of these recruits were drawn from the New Hebrides, Solomon Islands and Gilbert Islands. Some indigenous people from New Caledonia travelled as ships’ crews, with Loyalty Islanders having a good reputation amongst Europeans as seamen. The development of the mining industry encouraged the continuation of the labour trade beyond the 1940s, as well as encouraging British and Australian prospectors and entrepreneurs, such as John Higginson. However, Australian settlement was limited.

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3 Of the nineteen sources I found which described travels to New Caledonia, three were published between 1880 and 1899, nine between 1900 and 1914, and seven between 1915 and 1941.


5 Shineberg gives as an example the year 1882, when approximately 14,000 New Hebrideans worked abroad, 7,000 of these were in Queensland, 3,000 in Fiji, 2,800 in New Caledonia, and 1,000 in Samoa and Hawaii. Apart from two temporary suspensions of the labour trade in New Caledonia in 1882-1884 and 1885-1890, the labour trade was not stopped by French officials until after World War II. Shineberg, *The People Trade*, 5, 9.

6 See for example, Thomas, *Cannibals and Convicts*, 147; Wragge, *The Romance of the South Seas*, 33.

7 John Higginson was an Anglo-Irish Australian who arrived in New Caledonia in 1859 and became a successful businessman. He advocated provisioning New Caledonia from Australia, not France, and was later naturalised as a Frenchman. James Paddon was a British businessman and resident in New Caledonia who employed Higginson.
It was not until the 1880s that a regular steamship service brought more Australians into contact with New Caledonia. From 1882 onwards the French-owned Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes (MM) operated a service between Sydney and New Caledonia’s main port, Noumea. This was followed by a service provided by the Australasian Steamship Navigation Company (AUSN) from 1887. Noumea was often a layover port on the journey to the New Hebrides, stimulating comparisons in Australian travel accounts between the two island groups. Few Australians went beyond the mainland (Grand Terre) to visit nearby islands, such as the Loyalty Islands or the Isle of Pines.

Since its annexation in 1853, the French occupation of New Caledonia was widely perceived within Australia to be a potential strategic threat to the Australian colonies, a view encouraged by sensationalised and speculative media reports. This concern was exacerbated by the beginning of penal resettlement to the French territory in May 1864, and fostered further Australian antagonism in light of the growing federation movement from the 1880s. ‘One result of the existence of this French penal settlement in New Caledonia was to hasten the growth of Australian Federal sentiment’, argued journalist Frank Fox in 1911. This hostile Australian response was distinct from benign reactions to the establishment of other French colonies, including the annexation of Tahiti in 1880, followed by the Gambier, Austral and Tuamotus groups in 1881, and the creation of protectorates over Wallis and Futuna in 1886. Not only was French Polynesia beyond Australia’s sphere of interest, but it was also not as developed or highly populated by the French.

Australian travel writing about New Caledonia in the 1880s and 90s is marked by a general theme of conflict reflecting wider concerns. Conflict was often predicted, and occasionally observed, between several parties: the Australian colonies, the French and British governments, French colonial administrators, missionaries,

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8 According to Clement Wragge, ‘There is a fine monthly service of the Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes direct from Marseilles via Australia ports; and also the regular line from Port Jackson of the A.U.S.N. company, besides tramp steamers and sailing ships.’ Wragge, The Romance of the South Seas, 7.

9 Frank Fox, Oceania (London 1911), 17. ‘New Caledonia…would be worth a visit. It is a French convict colony, and the fact that it is used still as a convict settlement gives grave offence to the neighbouring British Dominions of Australia and New Zealand.’
Australian journalist John Stanley James wrote extensively about his travels in New Caledonia in the 1870s and 80s, and his commentary offers glimpses into Australian perceptions that were prevalent in the public sphere during this time.

Born in England in 1843, James moved to Australia in 1875 when he was broke from wandering across Europe and America as a self-styled ‘vagabond’ and journalist. He began working for the *Melbourne Punch*, then for the *Argus* in 1876, writing under the pseudonyms of ‘Julian Thomas’ and ‘the Vagabond.’ James’ popularity peaked at the end of 1876, due in part to a public fascination with his anonymity, and the resonance that his subject matter had with the Australian middle class. James made several trips to the Pacific Islands sponsored by Australian newspapers, including a trip in 1878 to report on indigenous rebellions against French colonial rule in New Caledonia. His observations were widely circulated in newspapers and in his own publications, such as the travelogue *Cannibals and Convicts* (1886). As a result, James’ impressions of the Pacific Islands were a mix of journalistic reporting and personal narrative.

In his self-published materials, James described himself as a journalist ‘first and foremost’, proudly claiming to be the only reporter to visit New Caledonia and

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10 ‘Kanaka’ was a term derived from Hawaiian used indiscriminately by Australians to describe Pacific Islanders (usually workers) in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Australian travellers often confused it with the term ‘Kanaks’ which specifically described the indigenous inhabitants of New Caledonia. *Canques* was the French word for Kanaks. Today ‘Kanak’ is used to denote the indigenous New Caledonian people, in both the singular and plural form. In this chapter I will use Kanaks to refer to this ethnic group in the same way that Australian travel writers generally used the term.

11 He produced a series for the *Argus* in 1876 on ‘the social life and public institutions of Melbourne from a point of view unattainable to the majority’, and his reports offered moral lessons that resonated with Victorian middle-class values. Part of his success was due to the mystery of his identity, and James created a sophisticated, authoritative persona by suggesting he had powerful connections in England and America. His popularity diminished when his true identity was revealed in 1877. Michael Cannon, ‘Introduction’ in *The Vagabond*, *The Vagabond Papers*, ed. Michael Cannon (Melbourne 1983), 5. In previous chapters, I have referred to James by his own chosen pseudonym. In this chapter I will refer to him as James in the text, and by his chosen pseudonym in the footnote.

12 In 1883 he observed labour recruiters in the New Hebrides, in 1884 he accompanied an exploration party to New Guinea, in 1887 he returned to the New Hebrides, and in 1889 he reported on political events in Samoa and Tonga. His publications include: Julian Thomas, ‘On the War-Path in New Caledonia’, *Victorian Review*, 8:40 (1883); Thomas, *Cannibals and Convicts;* The Vagabond, *South Sea Massacres* (Sydney 1881); The Vagabond, *Holy Tonga* (Melbourne 1890). For a detailed bibliography of his newspaper articles, see Cannon, ‘Introduction’, 257-265.
the New Hebrides in 1886. He alleged that he was one of ‘that noble army of Special Correspondents who, taking their lives in their hands, amidst battle, murder, and sudden death, provide[d] not only news, but solid information, for the breakfast-tables of the world.’ James professed a desire to be impartial, although he often had to negotiate the demands of his sponsors, choosing at times to oppose the views popular amongst specific editors and readerships. James’ popularity and authority meant that his account was influential in informing Australians about New Caledonia at a time when public interest in the group peaked. His role was particularly significant given the limited number of existing Australian travel accounts about New Caledonia in the late nineteenth century.

James described his travels to New Caledonia in 1878 and 1883 in detail in Cannibals and Convicts, parts of which were published in the Australasian and Melbourne Argus. There he also mentioned travels to Fiji, the New Hebrides, and New Guinea, with a conclusion describing his views on Australian federation and colonialism in the Pacific. Sailing on the Gunga from Sydney on 20 July 1878, James made the following remark upon arrival in Noumea: ‘New Caledonia is a land of the gum-tree and the convict; but there its similarity to early Australia ceases.’ His account was typical of many subsequent travel accounts which immediately characterised the island as a penal settlement. His remarks, noting its geographical proximity to Australia, its resources (identifying mining as valuable), and its history of contact with Europeans, were also repeated in other Australian accounts. These observations did not only inform, but subtly conveyed a sense of conflict and antagonism between French and Australians. For example, a school textbook in 1888 educated Australians about Captain Cook’s discovery of New Caledonia in September 1774 and the ‘unjust’ nature of French annexation on 24 September 1853, similar to

14 For example, James was critical of British rule in Fiji in 1880, choosing to publish in newspapers other than his original employer, the Sydney Morning Herald. Later, James departed from the Argus editors’ views when defending the methods of Australian recruiters in the New Hebrides. Michael Cannon argues that James’ views were ‘liberal, conservative, free trade and anti-church.’ Cannon, ‘Introduction’, 5, 11-12. According to James in the preface of second series of The Vagabond Papers, ‘I must write the truth as I see it, and my only endeavour is to be impartial.’
15 See also Thomas, ‘On the War-Path in New Caledonia’.
16 Thomas, Cannibals and Convicts, 46.
James' assertion of Great Britain's claim by 'right of discovery.' Although James felt no open hostility upon arrival, noting the helpful assistance given to him by the French authorities, tension was evident. He reported that his telegrams home were suppressed by the French, restricting him from publishing his account until his return.

When James arrived in 1878, tension between French settlers (who had arrived in growing numbers since annexation) and the Kanaks (whose land they alienated) exploded, led by a significant chief called Atai. Historians since have shown that traditional conceptions of this conflict occurring between French colonial masters and Kanak resistance were not accurate. Rather, political alliances in New Caledonia were much more complex. Yet for Australian audiences curious about their colonial neighbours, the 1878 rebellion was but one of a series of well-publicised conflicts between French colonisers and Melanesian 'savages.'

Wilkins, Australasia: A Descriptive and Pictorial Account of the Australian and New Zealand Colonies, Tasmania and the Adjacent Lands, 236; Thomas, Cannibals and Convicts, 47. These accounts overlooked that Britain did not pursue its claim to the island group. In fact, although Cook was impressed by the people, he was not impressed by the land prospects according to Shineberg. Shineberg, The People Trade, 11.

Thomas, Cannibals and Convicts, 56, 69. His account was published in the Sydney Morning Herald from September to October 1878.

See Bronwen Douglas, 'Conflict and Alliance in a Colonial Context', The Journal of Pacific History, 15:1 (1980); Bronwen Douglas, 'Winning and Losing? Reflections on the War of 1878-79 in New Caledonia', The Journal of Pacific History, 26:2 (1991); Bronwen Douglas, 'Fighting as Savagery and Romance: New Caledonia Past and Present' in Sinclair Dinnen and Allison Ley, eds., Reflections on Violence in Melanesia (Leighhardt 2000); Linda Latham, 'Revolt Re-Examined: The 1878 Insurrection in New Caledonia', The Journal of Pacific History, 10:3 (1975); Adrian Muckle, Specters of Violence in a Colonial Context: New Caledonia, 1917 (Honolulu 2012). Adrian Muckle's analysis of the 1917 rebellion in New Caledonia argues that there were multiple forms of power relations and violence, and that after the conflict, Kanak rebels were bestialised and facts were distorted by the French. He also argues that in the following criminal trials, 'the indictment situated the “crimes” within a tradition of Kanak resistance, violence and recidivist savagery – ideas informed by entrenched attitudes about the inevitable clash of different races and inevitable doom for inferior ones…To assert that race, conquest, and colonization were the fundamental causes was to suggest that no European, least of all an administrator, could be held individually responsible.' ibid., 156.

The first major reported conflict occurred in the south of the mainland from 1856 to 1859. Open hostilities broke out in 1856 near the capital, which were quelled by 1857. The Kanaks in the south were dispersed as a result and by 1859 the French government had consolidated its occupation of these lands. Resistance from several powerful chiefs in the north of the mainland occurred from 1868, and was ended with the death of Chief Gondou in 1869. Douglas, 'Winning and Losing?', 214. There were also isolated incidents in Hienghene in 1897, and Poyes in 1901. The so-called 'last of the Kanak revolts' lasted from 1917 to 1918. Muckle, Specters of Violence, vii.
In general, James' account of French colonial rule during his visit to New Caledonia was damning. Sent to report on the so-called 'native insurrection' in New Caledonia, James arrived one month after the French Governor, Jean Baptiste Léon Olry, announced the outbreak of war. His first impressions of Noumea described French residents and officials, but Kanaks were not visible in the capital, despite numbering 60,000 according to James. From Noumea he was transported with French soldiers to the 'front' at Bouloupari. Over several months James studied 'how France treats a native population', observing French military tactics, accompanying patrols, visiting local villages of both French settlers and Kanaks, and meeting Kanak chiefs and French military commanders.

James portrayed the on-going conflict as a bloody battle, 'with over 200 [French] massacred in one week' and with even more deadly reprisals by the French, and evidence of casualties on both sides. In his reporting of the revolt, James noted the poor military tactics and lack of knowledge of the interior on the part of the French. This assessment was accurate given that French settlement and exploration of the northern inland areas was limited prior to the conflict. He was also critical of the brutality and unprofessionalism of French forces, describing French soldiers destroying houses and crops, and killing people indiscriminately and without trial: "Man, woman, and child must be exterminated," was the cry of most of the gallant soldiers of France...It seemed to me that nearly everyone in Noumea was mad." In one particular case at Teremba, he described the death by firing squad without trial of five Kanaks, including a thirteen-year-old boy, for the alleged murder of an ex-convict. James described the trial and subsequent execution of the men as 'an act illogical,

21 Thomas, Cannibals and Convicts, 42.
22 There were four theatres during the 1878 conflict, at Ourail and Bouloupari-Thio from 25-26 June, Poya-Koné from 11 September, and Bourail from 22 September. Douglas, 'Winning and Losing?', 214.
23 Thomas, Cannibals and Convicts, 48.
24 Douglas, 'Conflict and Alliance', 41.
25 This quote described the general atmosphere in Noumea, encouraged by a fanatical French press. 'A spasm of fear seized everyone, to be succeeded by hysterical shrieks for vengeance.' Thomas, Cannibals and Convicts, 79. When observing the looting and destruction of a village in Fonwharii, he wrote, 'I surveyed the senseless work going on, and felt mean that I was connected with it.' (85) His criticism was not only a moral objection, but he argued that killing Kanaks because of suspicion often made more enemies of the French, and that 'private revenge could at that time easily satisfy itself, while the odium would be thrown on the natives.' (76, 88)
unjust, and useless in its results [which.]...to my dying day they will haunt me.'

These observations, which served to highlight the brutality of French colonial rule, were repeated by an Australian mining prospector, writing under the pseudonym ‘Gunga’. He witnessed ‘frightful heart-rending scenes’ during the 1878 rebellion and laid blame on the French in the conclusion to his travel account: ‘If I was asked what brought about the revolt I should say ill treatment, unfair treatment, unjust treatment of the natives, by the Government and by the settlers themselves.’

James’ representation of the Kanaks was more ambiguous, sympathising with those who supported the French, and portraying the others as conventional savages and cannibals. By admiring the physical characteristics of the Kanaks he met in French-controlled camps and villages, James presented them in contrast to the savage behaviours of the French settlers and soldiers. When travelling inland with Kanak guides who were assisting the French, James described them as a ‘picturesque sight’, and when meeting some chiefs at a French camp, he described them as: ‘Naked and not ashamed, their supple, lithe, well-proportioned figures were beautiful to look upon. I have seen many a dusky warrior, whose form would have served the Grecian sculptor of old as a model for Apollo.’

Yet other descriptions of beheadings, ambushes and people who were ‘as ugly a “nigger” as you could find in the world’ betrayed James’ deeply-held conservative and racist views of Pacific Islanders as inferior. Though he did recognise the confusion of guerrilla warfare, his observations were consistent with other European descriptions of Melanesian tactics of fighting as cowardly and primitive.

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26 Ibid., 89-93.
27 Gunga, *Narrative of a Trip from Maryborough to New Caledonia*, 5.
29 He also described Kanaks fighting with spears, clubs and tomahawks, and cutting heads off for trophies. Ibid., 103, 109. James was sympathetic to the common man in Australia, but towards non-whites he was much harsher. He made multiple references throughout *Cannibals and Convicts* to the inferiority of Pacific Islanders in general, with descriptions such as ‘naturally bloodthirsty’ and ‘not level-headed.’ ibid., 21, 25.
30 James wrote, ‘in spite of all the reports in Noumea, the natives had seldom faced the French soldiers...The nonsense which was talked about the natives being possessed of a great knowledge of military tactics was absurd.’ ibid., 58-59. Douglas and Muckle have contested simplistic analyses of conflict in New Caledonia that depict a colonial vs resistance dichotomy, and do not acknowledge the soundness of Kanak tactics used to resist French rule. For further discussion see Douglas, ‘Conflict and Alliance’; Muckle, *Specters of Violence*.  

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Although news of the 1878 insurrection was highly publicised in Australia and contributed to ideas of Melanesian savagery and French incompetence, a more serious threat was perceived in the convicts that were sent to New Caledonia. Australians had long been opposed to the transportation of French convicts since the first convoy of 248 *bagnards* arrived in 1864, but the expansion of the penal colony to accommodate convicted re-offenders reignited opposition in the 1880s. These criminals were especially feared in Australia, James describing the recidivist as ‘an outlaw of society, the scum which floats on the surface of civilisation.’ James highlighted the danger posed by *bagnards* and recidivists by giving them characteristics usually ascribed to Melanesians: ‘thinking of the combined convict and cannibal Pierre, I was forced to the conclusion that New Caledonia sheltered a large number of most objectionable neighbours to Australia.’ James argued that the proximity of convicts so close to Australia was considered a threat for two reasons:

Here, on the island of Île Nou, one reflected that the danger to Australia was not only in the escape of the convicts (and scores have escaped and landed on our shores), but in the use to which they might be put in time of war...It may be said that France would hardly arm her convicts against Australia; but all is fair in love and war.

Sensationalised press reports inflamed these concerns, reporting on escaped convicts reaching Australia and suggestions that the New Hebrides could become another penal settlement.

In reality, the French threat to Australian security was overstated. Although several prisoners did escape to Australia, the majority who reached shore had already served out their terms or had been pardoned. Robert Aldrich argues that few, if any,

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31 Thomas, *Cannibals and Convicts*, 144.
32 Ibid., 113.
33 Ibid., 120-121.
pose any real threat to the Australian colonies. Migration to Australia was even encouraged by ambiguous French laws regarding emancipists. These *libérés*, who were unpopular in New Caledonia and struggled to find employment, were allowed to leave New Caledonia on the proviso they did not return to France and returned to the colony only after three years. Besides, the number of French-born residents in Australia was relatively small and their European background allowed them to assimilate within the community easily. As such they did not constitute a threat as other more populous and non-white ethnic groups did. As Fox noted in 1911, 'the French exiles in Sydney, Australia...have set themselves to create a little Paris for themselves in that gay and sunny city.'

James' travels, extensive publications and public reputation made him an influential observer of New Caledonian affairs. His criticisms of French colonial expansion in the Pacific reflected broader Australian public sentiment in the 1880s and 90s. By drawing upon conventional ideas of Melanesian savagery, and contributing to public hysteria about escaped convicts, James attacked the legitimacy of French colonial rule in New Caledonia. I argue that his observations, and the subsequent impressions of Australian travellers, formed part of a more urgent argument opposing French annexation of the New Hebrides. Readings of travel writing about New Caledonia, whose French ownership was largely uncontested, ought to be reinterpreted in light of these broader concerns about the New Hebrides and its unresolved political status.

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35 According to Aldrich, French authorities estimated there were approximately 936 escaped or freed prisoners in Australia in 1889. Robert Aldrich, *The French Presence in the South Pacific, 1842-1940* (Basingstoke 1990), 225.


38 Fox, *Oceania*, 18.
Contesting French Rule in the New Hebrides

Like New Caledonia, Australian travel writing on the New Hebrides was limited due to the nature of steamship routes. Consequently, the small number of reports does not accurately reflect the high level of public anxiety regarding this island group.\(^39\) Regular steamship routes to the New Hebrides were provided by BP from 1896 and MM from 1901 to service the growing number of white settlers.\(^40\) Unlike New Caledonia, the New Hebrides was further away and contained more islands. Even in 1908, BP employee Wilson Le Couteur described the monotonous journey of BP’s inter-island steamer, *Tambo*, which anchored 103 times over 33 days in the New Hebrides.\(^41\) One tourist, Joseph Hadfield Grundy, declined a round trip of the group because the vessel *Induna* was ‘not a floating palace’ and was ‘infested with rats, mice and cockroaches.’\(^42\)

Australians were familiar with these islands due to the labour trade which recruited Islanders from the New Hebrides for Queensland sugar plantations from the 1860s (see chapter six). This trade was strongly opposed by the Presbyterian Church, which was most powerful in Victoria. Led by Reverend John Gibson Paton in the late nineteenth century, the Presbyterians mobilised opposition to the labour trade in Melanesia, as well as French penal settlement and colonial ambitions in the New Hebrides, engaging public debate in both Australia and England.\(^43\) Presbyterians found support amongst some Australian traders and farmers in the New Hebrides, as well as the *Argus* and the *Age*, to push for its annexation in the 1870s and 1880s. They

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\(^{39}\) Four travel accounts about the New Hebrides were published between 1880 and 1899, seven between 1900 and 1914, and six from 1915 to 1941.

\(^{40}\) BP offered a monthly circuit from Sydney to Vila via the New Hebrides. MM operated an inter-island route between Sydney, Noumea and the New Hebrides. These routes relied on government subsidies.


\(^{43}\) This included lobbying for British annexation in 1877 (with Scottish politician James Balfour), 1883 (with Victorian premier James Service), 1884 and 1885 (in England), and 1886 (when he submitted a petition in response to French troops landing at the islands of Efate and Malekula). See Niel Gunson, ‘Paton, Francis Hume Lyall (Frank) (1870–1938)’,* Australian Dictionary of Biography*[accessed 4 April 2014 at http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/paton-francis-hume-lyall-frank-7976/text13891].
also played upon fears that the New Caledonian penal settlement would be expanded to the New Hebrides.\textsuperscript{44} Ultimately, the Australian colonies and the British government were reluctant to bear the cost of extending the empire, or to risk aggravating other colonial powers.

Several events in the 1880s contributed to a popular perception of British antipathy towards the region and strengthened calls for Australian annexation and imperialism in the Pacific. This included the unopposed German annexation of North Eastern New Guinea in 1884 and the diplomatic crisis over the New Hebrides in 1886. This crisis was precipitated by Britain’s decision not to accept the 1883 proposal for French annexation of the New Hebrides in exchange for another Pacific Island, Rapa, and an agreement by the French to stop sending convicts to New Caledonia.\textsuperscript{45} The French response was described by Presbyterian minister Charles Stuart Ross:

In September 1886...the French Republic, thirsting for Colonial expansion, having exhausted the resources for diplomacy to acquire possession of the New Hebrides, made a bold stroke for annexation by landing a body of troops at Havannah Harbour, with the purpose of seizing by force a tract of land the proprietary right to which was in dispute between certain French and British settlers...a temporary agreement was arrived...And Mr. Thurston [Acting British High Commissioner], who knew the value of the Islands to the Australian Commonwealth, and keenly watched every movement that aimed to alienate them from British influence and control, addressed a strong protest on the subject to the Victorian premier.\textsuperscript{46}

As a result, a joint Anglo-French Naval Commission was agreed upon from 1887. This event was widely remembered and repeated by subsequent travellers to the New Hebrides.\textsuperscript{47} James’ account also responded in his travel account, providing a petition

\textsuperscript{44} Thompson, \textit{Australian Imperialism in the Pacific}, 44-45.


\textsuperscript{46} The British eventually forced the French warship to withdraw by 1887. Ross, \textit{Fiji and the Western Pacific}, 169.

\textsuperscript{47} See for example, Cheeseman, \textit{The South Sea Islands}, 10. When arriving at Efate, Cheeseman noted that ‘it is more distinctly French than the other Islands in the group, and being central, France has made special efforts here. The object was prematurely exposed in an official manner a few years ago,
to the Queen signed by the chiefs of Tanna and criticising the inaction of England: ‘Great Britain should give a proof of their desire to aid us. We called out loudly against the German acquisition of territory near our shores. We still call out loudly against the further extension of the French possessions in the Western Pacific.’ As a result of these colonial tensions, Luke Trainor argues that Australian interest in the Pacific reached its peak at this time, evident in newspaper coverage and regular public demonstrations.

In response, the Australian colonies began subsidising shipping services to the New Hebrides from Sydney and Melbourne by USSCo. and AUSN. They also supported the formation of the Australasian New Hebrides Company (ANHC) in 1889, of which BP was a major investor. BP and ANHC consistently lobbied for the support of British and Australian interests in the New Hebrides, including shipping subsidies on which they were reliant. According to a brochure printed by the ANHC, these subsidies were vital for supporting ‘flourishing Australian interests’ in the group and protecting it from ‘jealous Foreign powers’, specifically the French ‘menace to Australian peace and progress’. As chapter two has shown, businesses promoted the New Hebrides as a commercial haven awaiting the heroic Australian trader or planter. This self-promotion was particularly important during the 1890s, when public interest in the New Hebrides began to wane despite the continued efforts of the Presbyterian Church and the Victorian government to push for annexation.

when France landed a number of soldiers at Havannah Harbour and, had it not been for the strong protests from Australia, this Island would now be a recognised French possession.”

Thomas, Cannibals and Convicts, 406. Although James argued that Australia had ‘grown up’, he was not arguing for a complete abandonment of loyalty to the British Empire: ‘We ask no help from England. We will protect our own doors; but we call upon our Motherland to keep clear the ocean highway.’

Trainor, British Imperialism and Australian Nationalism, 18.

This was a joint venture by several companies and prominent businessmen and politicians who viewed settlement as key to gaining a foothold in the New Hebrides. After purchasing land titles in the island group, and securing an inter-island shipping subsidy from the New South Wales government, ANHC began leasing its land in 1890. This scheme failed and by 1897 ANHC collapsed and was taken over entirely by BP. Buckley and Klugman, The History of Burns Philp, 63; Roger C. Thompson, ‘Commerce, Christianity and Colonialism: the Australasian New Hebrides Company 1883-1897’, The Journal of Pacific History, 6 (1971), 25.

Australia and the New Hebrides, 2-3.

Thompson, Australian Imperialism in the Pacific, 140.
Although the ANHC ultimately collapsed, BP positioned itself as a national institution and encouraged nationalistic narratives about the New Hebrides in the 1890s which carried into the twentieth century. The effect of this promotion is evident in Beatrice Grimshaw’s 1905 newspaper article:

to the outsider coming from far-away Britain, it seems as though France and Burns, Philp were politely disputing the ownership of the New Hebrides, rather than France and Australia. Burns, Philp is the general providence of the islands – rebelled against at times, as general providence and managers usually are; told flatly that it does not give value for its subsidy; that its freights must be lowered; that it does not do this, and ought not to do the other; but, nevertheless, clung to by the British element as its useful and true, though faulty, ally.53

By the early 1900s, BP was generally regarded as the Australian government representative in the New Hebrides, argue Kenneth Buckley and Kris Klugman.54

The turn of the century prompted renewed public debate about the New Hebrides. The newly-federated nation of Australia responded by continuing official efforts to subvert French interests there, including economic subsidies and even sending a spy in 1901.55 Although the ANHC settlement schemes of the 1890s had collapsed, negotiations over the naval commission reignited ideas about Australian annexation until an Anglo-French condominium was agreed upon in 1906.56 At the

53 Although Grimshaw was commissioned by USSCo. and the Australian government to write articles promoting the Pacific Islands, it is not clear whether Grimshaw ever worked in the same capacity for BP. Beatrice Grimshaw, ‘Life in the New Hebrides’, *Sydney Morning Herald* (25 November 1905), 6 [accessed 25 May 2014 at http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article14734425].
54 According to British High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, British interests in the group were represented by BP ‘as also to some nominal extent by the Australian Government, to whom Messrs Burns, Philp and Company seem to have made over a somewhat undefined share in their interests.’ BP was also regarded the ‘trusting advisory Agents for the Commonwealth in the Pacific’ according to a 1905 memorandum from the BP office. Buckley and Klugman, *The History of Burns Philp*, 105-106.
55 Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific*, 167. Wilson Le Couteur was Australia’s first official spy, travelling under the guise of a BP employee in the New Hebrides for three months in 1901. His report was released anonymously in the *Age*. He was born in the Channel Islands in Europe, and lived in Australia from 1921 until his death. His report was released anonymously in the *Age*.
56 Australia opposed the Anglo-French protectorate agreement in 1903 because they wanted to keep open the possibility of acquiring the island totally. Having just won office, Australian Prime Minister Alfred Deakin was aware of criticism from Australians about the previous government’s inaction. Ibid., 173.
same time, the number of visitors to the island group increased significantly, many of whom were attracted by the tourist cruises on offer, and produced more travel writing in the process.

Most travellers were aware of the origins of the condominium at this time, with many of the accounts written between 1900 and 1914 giving a historical overview or commentary on the history of France’s disputed claim to the New Hebrides. In 1915, self-described tourist J. Mayne Anderson remarked, ‘having recently read [Edward] Jacomb’s book and various newspaper reports on the much vexed condominium questions, we were naturally curious to reach Vila.’\(^57\) In 1901 whilst on a seven-week cruise, Richard Cheeseman described his trip as ‘enjoyable and instructive.’\(^58\) It confirmed his belief in Australia’s claim to the island group: ‘Australia has, in the short interval of 50 years, become a power to be reckoned with, a voice that commands attention, and were we 50 years farther on, any dispute about who should possess the New Hebrides would not remain unsettled for long.’\(^59\) Grimshaw’s account in 1907 was more alarmist, warning her Australian readers that, ‘For us, it means that the loss of our rights would place a hornet’s nest belonging to a foreign power at the gates of our most important, and least effectively defended, colony [Papua].’\(^60\)

Yet finding evidence of the merits or faults of the condominium was much more difficult in the capital of Vila. Apart from the novelty of Vila’s combined French and British influence, visitors’ accounts resemble those of other islands, admiring the harbour and panoramic views from higher ground, and describing the colonial buildings and layout of the town. In Anderson’s case, he expressed his reluctance to make any comment about the condominium at all, perhaps because of the political sensitivity of the issue, or the context at the time in which Australia was France’s ally in World War I.\(^61\) Though Australians were critical of French rule, their accounts were

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\(^58\) Cheeseman, *The South Sea Islands*, 17.

\(^59\) Ibid., 6.

\(^60\) Grimshaw, *From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands*, 177-178.

\(^61\) ‘Yet a few tourists are let go on a long-suffering island people, who have their hospitality returned by criticism of their method of government. A bad feeling is created on one side or other, and certainly no good results in any case.’ Anderson, *What a Tourist Sees in the New Hebrides*, 29.
also ambiguous about whether Britain, Australia or a combination of both
governments, should replace them.\textsuperscript{62}

If evidence of the workings of the condominium was elusive in the capital,
then travellers searched for it during the numerous short stops of the inter-island
steamer. Anderson's account shows that by 1915, locals were catering to the tourist
trade. He noted that the villages were cleaned in anticipation of the steamer's arrival,
and that Islanders sold curios, acted as guides and were familiar with being
photographed.\textsuperscript{63} A common element of the tourist experience was an encounter with
a white resident who would usually act as a guide on the island. This is evident in the
detail with which travel accounts described these encounters, often giving voice to
residents' complaints about the condominium. Anderson's meetings highlight the
diverse encounters that travellers could have with Europeans in the New Hebrides: he
met several missionaries and visited the Presbyterian missionary training college; he
met an Australian sheep farmer and visited cotton, rubber and timber plantations; and
he met scientific researchers, dining with New Zealand academic Professor Macmillan
Brown and travelling with an ethnology student. Australian travellers were as likely
to meet French residents as they were British, and these encounters were not
necessarily hostile.

Given the highly publicised settlement schemes and promotions which
emphasised the natural resources of the New Hebrides, many Australians were eager
to seek out a trader upon arrival and make their own judgement on the success or
failure of commerce in the island group. Visitors' descriptions tend to reflect the day-
to-day difficulties of adapting to the condominium, rather than the heroic or patriotic
overtones of BP propaganda. Importantly, travellers were often unsure where residents'
loyalties lay; even during the politically charged context of the 1880s, James described
meeting several residents who preferred French rule.\textsuperscript{64} Grimshaw also observed, 'the

\textsuperscript{62} Grimshaw expressed a reluctance to abandon the experience of British rule, citing the success of
British colonial rule in the Solomon Islands. Grimshaw, \textit{From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands}, 181.
\textsuperscript{63} Anderson, \textit{What a Tourist Sees in the New Hebrides}, 102.
\textsuperscript{64} James named New Zealand resident, Captain Donald Macleod, and an 'old Queensland pioneer'
plantation owner, Robert Glissan, and Dick Clifton as three who preferred French rule. He noted that
they raised some valid points. Thomas, \textit{Cannibals and Convicts}, 184, 193.
English or Australian settler often finds his way a hard one, unless need or greed drives him to discard his nationality, and take out French papers of naturalisation...Their flag [the Union Jack] is an expensive luxury, but they stick to it – generally.'\textsuperscript{65} BP's commercial influence did not always benefit European planters and traders in the Islands, as the nickname ‘Bloody Pirates’ suggested. Grundy observed this attitude during his voyage: ‘Traders don’t seem to mind whether the island is owned by the French or English. It is amusing to watch the effect on any Burns Philp people of a suggestion that the Germans should have the islands!'\textsuperscript{66} This suggests that despite the nationalistic rhetoric, traders and planters were just as concerned with profit as were the major trading and shipping companies.

It was frequently reported by Australian travellers that British restrictions on the trading of firearms and alcohol in the New Hebrides gave an unfair advantage to French traders and residents. For some Australians, such as Grundy, this was represented as a moral policy that distinguished British rule as superior: ‘In trading with the natives the French sell them firearms, ammunition and drink, but the English know well these things are not for their good and refuse them.'\textsuperscript{67} Yet many residents found this economically detrimental to their own existence, firearms in particular being useful as items of exchange to acquire land.\textsuperscript{68} According to Fox’s reference guide, ‘there is general dissatisfaction with the New Hebrides arrangement. It is said that the British trader is not allowed fair play in competition with the French, and the British government takes no interest in the affairs of its subjects.'\textsuperscript{69} Others preferred the New Hebrides to the Solomon Islands precisely because British regulations could be avoided.

Visiting steamships also created opportunities for residents to bring their grievances to the attention of Australian travellers. In their travel accounts, these visitors observed that local opposition to British labour restrictions was one major issue. The Pacific Islanders’ Protection Acts (passed in 1872 and 1875) prohibited the

\textsuperscript{65} Grimshaw, From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands, 182.
\textsuperscript{66} Grundy, The New Hebrides Group of Islands, 4.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{68} Buckley and Klugman, The History of Burns Philp, 62.
\textsuperscript{69} Fox, Oceania, 36.
transport of an Islander for employment aboard an unlicensed British vessel. Although this was designed to protect the welfare of the Islanders, the laws applied to inter-island trading within the New Hebrides, and as it was not illegal for British settlers to employ labourers if they had been recruited by non-British ships, many residents purchased Islanders from French ships instead. The French use of imported Asian labour was also resented by British and Australian residents. According to Le Couteur, ‘the Javanese are much discussed in the group as the favoured labour to introduce’ and he criticised the ‘repatriated kanaka from Queensland’ as driving labour prices high. By the 1940s this opposition had decreased, as shown in M. Kathleen Woodburn’s account which identified the French system of indenture in the New Hebrides as superior. She described the ‘Tonkinese’ labourers as ‘numerous, orderly, clean, squat, muscular, Mongolian types’, and argued that British plantations ‘languish[ed]’ because they were ‘prohibited from importing the superior coolie labour from the East.’

The rule of law was also frequently appraised by both residents and travellers. Edward Jacomb’s book *France and England in the New Hebrides* (1914) was widely read and cited in travel accounts. As a British barrister in Vila, Jacomb’s criticisms of the condominium (particularly the joint court) resonated with Australians. Their travel accounts cited incidents that demonstrated the confusing and inconsistent nature of the court system. As zoologist Alan John Marshall explained in 1937: ‘There is a Gilbertian court of justice maintaining both a French and British judge, with the presiding judge and prosecutor neutral and nominally of Spanish nationality. French residents are subject to French law; Britons to British.’ The dual system could also be used to an individual’s advantage, as a pamphlet for the ANHC argued in 1899: ‘An employee of the French New Hebrides Co., gave the British man-of-war the...”

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70 Buckley and Klugman, *The History of Burns Philp*, 61. These restrictions did not apply to locally recruited labour, however, European settlers were reluctant because foreign labourers were easier to discipline and less likely to run away.

71 Wilson Le Couteur, ‘The New Hebrides. Old Order and New. French Strides Forward’, *Sydney Morning Herald* (29 August 1908), 8. ‘The labour is difficult to obtain...and the repatriated kanaka from Queensland, far from a blessing...[are] exercising a serious demoralising influence on their stay-at-home brothers.’


information that an Australian settler expected these fire-arms from Sydney, and he actually used the British man-of-war to serve his own ends, and force Australian settlers to buy their fire-arms, &c., from his French Co.  

Policing in the New Hebrides was difficult, a common complaint being that Europeans were unable to maintain law and order amongst the Islander population. Rather than articulating the reasons why policing was difficult, in particular the legal ambiguities, limited staff and difficult geography, many Australians simply reported residents’ anger towards perceived British inaction. James recounted one trader’s observation that the French would defend the European settlers while the British would not. Government agent John Gaggin recalled a similar case when explaining why other nations had established a ‘foothold in the Western Pacific.’ He recalled the swift official reprisal for the murder of a German trader in Malekula: ‘These nations protect their individual subjects – if they deserve it. The English do not. There is the reason in a nutshell.’

As well as incorporating popular nationalist and commercial narratives about the New Hebrides, travellers also appropriated the moral tone of mission propaganda, and critically evaluated the role of the missions in the island group. Australian missions were actively proselytising in the New Hebrides and were crucial in stimulating public debate about the Pacific Islands in Australia. Of these missions, the Presbyterian Church in Victoria was the most vigilant overseer of French abuses in the New Hebrides in the late nineteenth century, and continued to watch over the island group after public interest had dissipated in the 1910s. John Gibson Paton’s son, Frank, continued his father’s efforts as a leading figure in the church at this time, although his attitude to the labour trade and French influence in the Pacific was more moderate. He published several books and pamphlets, and in 1923 led a public

75 Thomas reported that Captain Macleod, a fierce defendant of French interests in the New Hebrides, believed French annexation was necessary to stop the abuses carried out by Queensland labour recruiters. Thomas reported Macleod saying, ‘English men-of-war never come here to protect or persecute somebody – never to protect our lives and properties....The French officers are always kind.’ Thomas, *Cannibals and Convicts*, 182.  
76 Gaggin, *Among the Man-Eaters*, 116. Cheeseman also noted that ‘there is no means of arresting of detaining a wrong-doer till a warship arrives’, though he recognised the French were just as slow to respond. Cheeseman, *The South Sea Islands*, 6.
campaign in Australia to end the condominium.\textsuperscript{77} Whilst they did not achieve the desired outcome, the Presbyterians did have some success, supplying evidence to British authorities which was used in negotiations during the Anglo-French conference of 1914.\textsuperscript{78} Their strength lay not only with their influence in Australian politics, but also their sustained publishing work, bringing news from missions to Australia with regularity, and maintaining a clear and consistent message.

Mission accounts of the New Hebrides were generally influenced by the competitive nature of French and British missions in the Pacific Islands. This conflict was observed by travellers like Frank Coffee who argued there was ‘more friction’ between missions in the New Hebrides than any other group.\textsuperscript{79} In the race to convert souls, British Protestants had reached the Pacific over forty years before French Catholics. In the New Hebrides specifically, Protestants had firmly established themselves since the first LMS ministers had arrived in the late 1830s.\textsuperscript{80} They were followed by the Presbyterians and the Anglican Melanesian Mission who sent European pastors, as well as Islander preachers who were responsible for rapidly evangelising the region. By the 1880s the Presbyterian Church was influential in the southern New Hebrides and the Melanesian Mission in the north.\textsuperscript{81} In contrast, the

\textsuperscript{77} As part of the campaign he submitted a petition with 40,000 signatures to the Australian government. His publications included *Quarterly Jottings from the New Hebrides* (the magazine of the Paton mission fund published from 1895 to 1961), *Glimpses of the New Hebrides* (1913), *Kingdom of the Pacific* (1913), *Slavery Under the British Flag* (1914) and *Australian Interests in the New Hebrides* (1919).
\textsuperscript{78} David Hilliard, *God’s Gentlemen: A History of the Melanesian Mission, 1849-1942* (St Lucia 1978), 240.
\textsuperscript{79} Coffee, *Forty Years on the Pacific*, 104.
\textsuperscript{80} This was marked by the famous murder of Reverend John Williams at Erromanga on 20 November 1839 (see chapter six). Cook Islander and Samoan teachers were subsequently sent by the LMS to the southern islands of the New Hebrides in the following nine years with limited success. John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania* (Suva 1982), 167.
\textsuperscript{81} A partnership between the LMS and the Presbyterian mission (led by Scottish Reverend John Geddie) in the New Hebrides was agreed upon in 1848. The Melanesian Mission, created by Bishop George Selwyn of New Zealand, was formally established in 1861. It had made progress in the Loyalty Islands since 1849, and expanded into the Solomon Islands, Banks Group and northern islands of the New Hebrides. In 1881 the Presbyterians and Melanesian Mission reached an agreement to share the New Hebrides between them. Ibid., 294. The Queensland Kanaka Mission was founded in 1886 and assisted New Hebrideans and other Islander recruits who were working on Queensland sugar plantations. It was later renamed the South Sea Evangelical Mission and was more securely established in the Solomon Islands. For further discussion see David Hilliard, ‘The South Sea Evangelical Mission in the Solomon Islands: The Foundation Years’, *The Journal of Pacific History*, 4:1 (1969); Clive Moore, ‘Peter Abu’ofa and the Founding of the South Sea Evangelical Mission in the Solomon Islands, 1894–1904’, ibid.48 (2013).
French Catholic missions (namely the Marists) had limited success in the island group, failing to set up a base in 1848, and again in 1886. Though the Catholics were dominant in New Caledonia, it was not until the 1900s that they made headway in the New Hebrides, eventually increasing to a third of the island group’s population. The success of the Catholic missions in New Caledonia and the New Hebrides was dependent on support from the French government. The fact that Presbyterian and Catholic missions drew on congregations throughout Australia for financial and moral support further complicated matters politically. Whilst the Presbyterian Church in Victoria was actively lobbying against the French, Catholic communities in Sydney supported the French missions in the Pacific. However the religious affiliations of individual Australians did not always align with their commercial or political motivations.

In official Australian mission accounts, the condominium was portrayed as a threat to missionaries’ ability to civilise and Christianise, which they often framed within a nationalistic discourse. Missionaries were represented as champions of Australia, of traders, and of Islanders, similar to the way that BP branded itself to serve its own ends. Frank Paton’s *Glimpses of the New Hebrides* is one such example. Describing his visit to the island group in 1913 for a Presbyterian Synod meeting, Paton praised the work of the missions and described the problems associated with the condominium arrangement. When visiting the court to watch a trial, he was critical of

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82 Marists arrived in 1837 to Wallis and Futuna and five years later the entire population was nominally Catholic due to support from the local Queen. From there they established a base on the Grand Terre in 1851 after two failed attempts. Aldrich, *The French Presence in the South Pacific*, 36-38.

83 The Catholics were successful in New Caledonia because the French government forbade Protestant preachers from the Grand Terre until 1897. In the Loyalty Islands competition was allowed and Protestants were more competitive, particularly due to the high rates of conversion achieved by their Islander preachers. In 1904 Catholics were given official legal recognition in the New Hebrides, partly contributing to their success. Ibid., 37.

84 Sydney was the initial headquarters for the French Marist missions in the Pacific. Ibid., 35. Sydney Catholics also supported the establishment of French missions in New Guinea (Sacred Heart and the Society of the Divine Word). Located closer to Melanesia, Sydney was also a source of supply to the Presbyterian missions. Religious affiliations were not always binding, as shown by John Higginson, an Anglo-Irish Australian who was nominally Anglican and yet supported French colonial rule for his own commercial gain. He was later naturalised as a French citizen. Cardinal Patrick Moran, a patriotic Catholic leader in Sydney, is another example of conflicting motivations. See Hugh Laracy, *Insular Eminence: Cardinal Moran (1830-1911) and the Pacific Islands* in *Watriama and Co.: Further Pacific Island Portraits* (Canberra, 2013), 53-68.
the hostile French judge: ‘Judge Colonna was a keen-looking Frenchman – the author of the famous anti-missionary speech that called forth strong but vain protests against his elevation to a seat on the Joint Court Bench. His appointment is regarded on the British side as an absolute scandal, yet the British Government felt utterly helpless to prevent it.’ Paton also gave a summary of the Synod’s report, which stressed the missions’ struggle against French opposition:

The attitude of the French continues to be hostile. Their opposition to the work of the Mission, their policy of encouragement of heathenism, and the active interference with native Christians, constitute one of our most serious difficulties, and militates against the progress of the Gospel throughout the Group wherever French influence is felt. It is not only with regard to Mission work that difficulty is felt, but the general welfare of the New Hebrides is imperilled.

Like many other mission accounts, Paton’s positioned missionaries as guardians of justice for British subjects, and framed the condominium as a threat to British Christian morals. Using the example of an imprisoned Islander pastor, Paton portrayed French rule as ‘brutal oppression and cynical injustice’ and called for the restoration of ‘justice and mercy.’

Other travellers, resonating with calls for British or Australian rule that would restore order and ‘civilise the savage’, repeated Paton’s moralising sense of the Protestant faith. Government agent Douglas Rannie portrayed the New Hebrides in a ‘wild, uncivilised state’ with ‘many fearful acts of lawlessness’ occurring ‘under the

85 Frank Hume Lyall Paton, *Glimpses of the New Hebrides* (Melbourne 1913), 15. Paton concluded, ‘the sum total of the impression left upon our minds was that for all practical purposes the Condominium Court is a French Court, and a British subject having a case before it is at a serious and unjustifyable disadvantage. If that be the case with the British, alas for the poor native!’ (17)
86 Ibid., 47.
87 Paton visited an Islander pastor who had been arrested and imprisoned. He wrote, ‘Is not this an utterly intolerable situation? We are under joint control – the British flag flaunts in the breeze besides that of France, and yet a Christian teacher, a man whose saintly character is beyond all reproach, is arrested on British soil, and handcuffed and taken to the French prison without knowing of any single offence against the French or the Condominium... And all this brutal oppression and cynical injustice goes on under the British flag. Is it any wonder that all who love justice and mercy have resolved that this Condominium must end, and that if the British Government cannot be moved by official channels, it must be compelled by the rising indignation of the British people to bring to an end this reign of injustice and oppression beneath its own flag.’ ibid., 93-94.
influence of liquor, and the smell of gunpowder.' The supposed degradation and depopulation of Pacific Islanders was also used to prove the failure of the condominium. In Grimshaw’s view, the ‘utter barbarism’ that she observed amongst the Islanders served to strengthen her argument for strong British rule in the New Hebrides: ‘At present, the islands are in the most uncomfortable and unsettled state it is possible to conceive. There is no other place in the world where an uncivilised coloured race is to be found in an entirely self-ruling condition, owning no real master, and not even “protected” by any of the great Powers.’

By nature of their temporary visits, Australian travellers to the New Hebrides rarely observed or commented on the nuances of conflicts between Christian denominations, and between individual missionaries and government officials and traders. Missionaries were entangled in complex networks of exchange in the Islands and were not always directly opposed to traders and commerce, for example. Rather, they relied on shipping for the transportation of goods and competed with one another in offering shipping subsidies. When mission and business interests aligned, co-lobbying proved effective, as was demonstrated when Presbyterian missionaries passed a resolution in 1890 opposing British restrictions on inter-island labour recruits. Missionaries also supported new arrivals from Australia, acting as guides for tourists or helping settlers to adjust, and likewise trader and planters supported new missionaries. In light of these complex relationships, many travellers were uncertain whether missionaries were responsible for assisting or hampering the development of

88 Douglas Rannie, Notes on the New Hebrides (Brisbane 1890), 9, 28.
89 Grimshaw, From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands, 178. Later she used Christian imagery to describe the New Hebrides: ‘into one of the darkest spots on the surface of the earth the light of civilisation and decency will have been carried.’ (181)
90 Buckley and Klugman, The History of Burns Philp, 78.
91 Ibid., 62. This particular case also highlights internal rifts that can occur within mission societies. According to Buckley and Klugman, the Synod’s decision in 1890 ‘was the starting point for an extensive propaganda campaign in Victoria and New South Wales, aimed at persuading the governments of those colonies to urge the British Colonial Secretary to lift restrictions in the New Hebrides.’ John Gibson Paton opposed the Synod’s decision based on his disapproval of the labour trade.
92 For example, the first Australian settlers who joined the ANHC settler scheme in 1902 were aided by Presbyterian missionaries. Ibid., 101. Businessman and New Caledonian resident John Higginson also helped the Catholics in the New Hebrides. Aldrich, The French Presence in the South Pacific, 50.
the Islanders, local businesses and the functioning of the condominium. Travel impressions were glancing, and in their reflective narratives Australians tended towards the stereotype of missionaries as saints or sinners. Marshall remarked on this practice in 1937 whilst in the New Hebrides: 'It is customary to condemn the missionary. Every tropic traveller has met individuals who find a perverted type of pleasure in destructively, often maliciously, criticizing missionaries and their work. Both whites and natives in tropical regions are inveterate gossips and the unfortunate missionary runs the full gauntlet.'

Rather than clarifying the workings of the condominium in the New Hebrides, Australian travel writing generally contributed to confusion and speculation about what was commonly referred to as the 'pandemonium.' By 1914, Australian public interest in the New Hebrides decreased as French settlement and commerce outpaced Australian and British efforts, and the advent of World War I shifted attention away from the French towards German aggressors instead. Though support for, and interest in, the New Hebrides' annexation continued to surface in the following decades, public hostility towards French dominance in the group was not as fierce as before. In light of this general atmosphere of confusion, Australian travel writers

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93 Cheeseman was unsure if it was traders or missionaries who fulfilled the civilising role. Cheeseman, *The South Sea Islands*, 15. James found missionaries to be corrupted by power or overly pious, even responsible for 'the decadence of English interests in the Western Pacific.' Thomas, *Cannibals and Convicts*, 405. According to Paterson, the most vocal opposition came from traders, who made 'constant complaints...that the missionaries interfere with their business by getting things from Sydney for the natives, and as missionaries get their own goods freight free.' Andrew Barton Paterson, 'The New Hebrides. The Pilgrims Progress. Missionaries and Pirates', *Sydney Morning Herald* (30 July 1902), 7. [accessed 11 November 2014 at http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article14460275]. Government agent James Kirkpatrick Craig claimed 'the missionary here is simply a trader' in his unpublished journal. James Kirkpatrick Craig, 'Logbook of Vessels “Helena” and “Lochiel”' in *Inspector of Pacific Islanders, Maryborough*. Series ID 16998 (Brisbane: Queensland State Archives, 18 December 1898). Mission opposition to labour recruiting and the trade of firearms and alcohol may explain some of the source of this animosity.

94 Marshall, *The Black Musketeers*, 310. He argues that missionaries do good work and they are essential for the survival of the Islanders.


96 Australian missionaries and businesses remained effective government lobbyists on New Hebrides issues, and whilst Australians still resided in the group, there was still public support. For example, Presbyterian missionaries successfully lobbied for amendments to the condominium in 1914 which
were just as likely to direct their criticism at British apathy rather than imperial French designs. For many who advocated the moral duty of the Empire, British inaction proved hard to reconcile. Grimshaw commented: 'And I wished, most earnestly, that I could see the strong hand of Great Britain or her Colonies grasp the bridle of this wretched country, as unfit to be left to its own guidance as any runaway horse, and pull it firmly and determinedly into the road of civilisation and law-abiding peace.'

Others, like John Henry Macartney Abbott were more ambiguous: 'Here, in the very essentials of the process of civilization, we find influences brought to bear upon the native that are utterly unlike, if not to a certain degree hostile to, one another. It would be strange if some small amount of chaos did not manifest itself in these earlier stages.' Although the New Hebrides may have been considered unstable and in a period of transition in the early twentieth century, travel writing about New Caledonia by contrast highlights the latter’s transformation into a tourist destination.

**From Detractions to Attractions in New Caledonia**

As opposed to accounts of the late nineteenth century which criticised French colonial rule and penal settlement in New Caledonia, travellers of the twentieth century increasingly identified the island group as a tourist destination, considered exotic, safe, close to home and cheap. New Caledonia’s main attractions were commonly identified as its convict heritage, and the exoticness of its French culture. Dying of asthma in Melbourne in 1896, one year before the end of penal settlement in New Caledonia, James’ concerns for the threat that the colony posed to Australia were no longer shared by travellers of the 1900s. Meteorologist Clement Lindley Wragge was typical of these new visitors. He was one of five Australians identified in this study who wrote travel accounts of New Caledonia published between 1900 and 1922. They also tried to push for British annexation of the group in 1919 but failed. Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific*, 198.

Grimshaw, *From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands*, 305.

John Henry Macartney Abbott, *The South Seas (Melanesia)* (London 1908), 29. He argues that ‘there is generally an excellent spirit of fellowship between English and French planters and traders’ although the islanders must be confused by the different European authorities.’

Fitzpatrick recommended ‘any Australian desirous of having a change and of noting the manners and customs of the French people might well go, because of the cheapness and expedition of the trip.’ John Charles Lucas Fitzpatrick, *Notes on a Trip to New Caledonia and Fiji* (Windsor 1908), 47.
An additional seven travel accounts were written by Australians from 1914 to 1941. Of these writers, Wragge travelled most extensively through New Caledonia and wrote down his impressions in the greatest detail.

Born in England in 1852, Wragge ran away from home as a teenager, his travels bringing him to Australia in 1874. Appointed to the Surveyor General's department in South Australia in 1876, he married a year later and studied meteorology. In 1878, Wragge travelled to Britain for three years to set up weather observatories. Upon returning to Australia in 1883, he set up meteorological stations across the country in his effort to predict and observe weather patterns. During this time, Wragge helped found the Royal Meteorological Society of Australia and was appointed Chief Meteorologist for Queensland (1887). He resigned from his Australian post and moved to Dunedin, New Zealand in 1903 where he published his travelogue, gave lecture tours and raised a family until his death in 1922.

Wragge's travelogue *The Romance of the South Seas* was based on his travels to New Caledonia in c.1893 to set up a meteorological observatory, coinciding with the connection of the Noumea-Queensland cable, which allowed for the expansion of his meteorological observation and research network. As such, his impressions

Wragge's account was one of five Australian travel accounts that were published between 1900 and 1914. The others include the observations of a retired journalist and New South Wales state politician, John Fitzpatrick, a 45-year-old horticulturist, Richard Cheeseman, a freelance journalist, John Henry Macartney Abbott, and a series of letters sent to the *Brisbane Telegraph* by George Phillips, whose occupation is unclear. Wragge, *The Romance of the South Seas*; Fitzpatrick, *Notes on a Trip to New Caledonia and Fiji*; Cheeseman, *The South Sea Islands*; Abbott, *The South Seas* (Melanesia); George Phillips, *Notes on a Visit to New Caledonia* (Brisbane 1903).

Wragge moved to New Zealand after a financial dispute with the New South Wales government. There he had a son, Kismet, with his second wife whom he had met prior in India in 1910. He died in 1922 from a stroke. Wragge also published an *Australian Weather Guide and Almanac* (1898), and a serial titled *Wragge: A Meteorological, Geographical and Popular Scientific Gazette of the Southern Hemisphere* (1902). He was an ardent collector, and his personal collection of natural history specimens was donated to a museum in Stafford, England in 1879. The collection has since been lost.
straddle two decades before and after Federation. Although he was travelling as part of a scientific mission, Wragge explicitly chose not to write as 'some cold official or scientist.' He was also loyal to 'our Empire', referring to England as 'home.' However, Wragge did adopt some Australian customs, making frequent reference to Australian places and idioms and often wishing that Australia had annexed New Caledonia for itself. He concluded his journey with the statement, 'Farewell, New Caledonia!...we wish you could join the Commonwealth of a free Australia!' Although Wragge was loyal to British concerns, he was sympathetic to the French colonisers, describing them as 'a grand and noble people' who were supportive of his scientific mission. Wragge was also much kinder in assessment of the French and their attitudes towards Kanaks than James, noting, 'we agree with them in all but the treatment of prisoners.' Unsurprisingly, not everyone shared this opinion: writing in 1901, Cheeseman focused on the potential danger still posed by the French, describing a harbour that could fit an entire French fleet, forts and sentries everywhere, and hostile officials who scrutinised his every move.

From the beginning, Wragge’s fascination lay with convicts. He called New Caledonia ‘the Prison of the Pacific’ and wrote that ‘the convict element’ was ‘very strong’, in a similar way to James’ observations twenty years before. Like other travellers, Wragge was aware of New Caledonia’s past before arriving in Noumea, noting in his introduction, 'we knew full well of those miserable escapés who braved the seas and sharks in open boats, with parched throats and skeleton frames, just to reach fair Queensland – only to be interned there as suspects and undesirable vagrants.' Wragge’s empathy for the plight of the French convict before arriving at

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103 Wragge, The Romance of the South Seas, 10. In fact, the second part of his book about Tahiti is written specifically as a travel guide.
104 In one example he noted that a horse responded to Australian slang curses rather than French commands. Ibid., 88.
105 Ibid., 113-114.
106 Ibid., 35-36. He added, ‘With deepest loyalty we are, nevertheless, bound to say that our Rulers in England and elsewhere in the Empire regard scientific research as a minus quality.’
107 Cheeseman, The South Sea Islands, 4.
108 Wragge, The Romance of the South Seas, 20. According to James, ‘still, the passing stranger with no sources of information could see that the convict was the chief feature in New Caledonia.’
109 Wragge, The Romance of the South Seas, 4. Wragge also noted the Brisbane weather bureau where he worked was next to the police court, explaining his familiarity with French convicts. (6)
New Caledonia suggests that popular Australian attitudes of the previous two decades had shifted away from negative and threatening representations, particularly since the transportation of convicts had ceased in 1897.  

Upon arrival at Noumea, ships would pass Île Nou, the small island at the entrance to the harbour where the main prison was located, ‘that terrible islet of misery and degradation’ according to Wragge as he observed the convicts through his binoculars. From this initial reminder, travellers would then encounter convicts in the port and town. The chance of meeting a convict was high, with convicts and emancipists outnumbering free settlers until the early 1900s. Wragge observed ‘a gang of doomed condamnés’ building new wharves as soon as he arrived. Similarly, in 1903 George Phillips was fascinated that prisoners who worked on the roads were only lightly guarded and unshackled. Of even greater interest was the idea that ex-convicts could be hidden within the population, as Wragge described his surprise to have met two libérés in Noumea who were disguised as a French gentleman and a priest.

The most famous attraction in Noumea was the Place des Cocotiers (Coconut Square), its chief attraction being the convict band that played there. Wragge described the weekly concerts as ‘sublime.’ He was impressed by their ‘God-like’ harmony and ‘chords of Love’, but his applause was quelled by French authorities who did not think his appreciation was appropriate. New South Wales politician John Charles Lucas Fitzpatrick was more entertained by the ‘bizarre’ group of people intermixing in the square, in close proximity with the criminals on stage:

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11 Wragge, The Romance of the South Seas, 15.
12 By 1897, 22,315 convicts had been transported to New Caledonia. 40% died in colonial jails, but 12,000 survived to be released. By 1902 emancipists comprised 50% of the white population of the island. Merle, ‘The Trials and Tribulations of the Emancipists’, 40.
13 Wragge, The Romance of the South Seas, 113-114.
14 Phillips, Notes on a Visit to New Caledonia, 9.
15 He also argued that while a freed man in Australia is free, and ex-convict in France can never escape his crime. Wragge, The Romance of the South Seas, 39-40.
16 Ibid., 24-25. One official said, ‘the fellows are convicts and come but to amuse you; encourage them not.’
I can promise you a scene, which, of its kind, cannot perhaps be equalled in any part of the world. Here come the white-uniformed bandsmen, escorted by their officer...loud-laughing groups of buxom Loyalty Island girls...natives of both sexes, from the New Hebrides...a few, only a few New Caledonians...Solomon Islanders, and in fact, representatives of every group in the South Pacific.

Wragge, like other Australian travellers, repeated the popular myth that the band’s conductor reportedly had killed his wife’s lover and fed her his heart for breakfast. This legend highlights the transfer of popular Melanesian tropes onto the convict population and the beginnings of a tourist industry in New Caledonia.

For tourists seeking out convicts, the prison on Île Nou was most easily accessible from Noumea by boat, and more well-known than any other camps. With permission from the Minister of Penitentiaries, Wragge visited Île Nou and described it as a ‘place of utter doom and the blankest despair’, likening it to a ‘living hell’, in which ‘the clanking of chains resounds from yonder, the agonies of the condemned seem wafted on the air.’ Wragge witnessed an execution with the ‘ghastly’ guillotine, and he visited the prison cells and the cemetery, and watched the labour gangs at work. Alarmed, he wrote, ‘the French penal system is demoralizing. It does not bring out the best in man. Au contraire, it degrades him and makes him worse.’

His experience of Île Nou was similar to James’ twenty years prior, who also visited the prisoners, including a nineteen-year-old boy sentenced to death for trying to escape, a sentence that the author judged to be ‘a hard lot.’

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119 The prison on Île des Pins (Isle of Pines) was also famous but it was more difficult to access and only James visited it. It was closed in 1890. Thomas, *Cannibals and Convicts*, 118-119.
120 Wragge, *The Romance of the South Seas*, 90, 92.
121 He describes the execution in gruesome detail: ‘the blood pours from the trunk in convulsive jets from the main arteries – the body quakes, and a bag of sawdust completes the tragedy.’ Ibid., 96.
122 Ibid., 94.
123 Thomas, *Cannibals and Convicts*, 119. James also considered the dismal prospects for babies born in the prisons from convict parents.
Wragge’s experience of Île Nou was repeated during his visits to a prison in Bourail and Camp Brun. He explored the prisons in depth, with notes on the male and female quarters, interviews with officials, missionaries and prisoners, and detailed descriptions of the prisoners’ living conditions: ‘All the others appear utterly dejected and heart-broken, living but yet dead, hoping in very hope gone for that rest that should lead not to hell fire, but to eternal progress.’ Whilst Wragge’s account of the harshness of French rule shared similarities with James’ earlier reports, his view was not shared by all travellers of the early 1900s. Phillips’ challenged the notion the French prison life was horrible, and credited the penal system with producing fine public works. Other travellers did not encounter the realities of imprisonment face-to-face because the system was already in the process of dismantlement.

Wragge’s empathy with the local convicts may have been motivated by witnessing the cruelty of the penal system first hand. In fact, he explicitly stated that the ‘subsequent experience during residence and travel in the island did but tend to strengthen a sympathy in their favour, as will duly appear.’ However, his response may also signpost a broader Australian colonial sympathy with French prisoners, based on a shared convict heritage. Peter Kirkpatrick argued that the Australian Bohemian community in Sydney embraced French customs and habits because they were an alternative to conservative British values, with ideas about France as ‘the land of revolution and democratic hope’ resonating with their political ideology. This can be seen in newspaper articles, such as the Sydney Morning Herald in 1888, which described escaped French convicts as ‘bushrangers.’

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124 Wragge, The Romance of the South Seas, 63.
125 Phillips, Notes on a Visit to New Caledonia, 2. He also chose not to visit Île Nou because he ‘was assured by all that there was nothing worth seeing.’ (10)
126 Wragge, The Romance of the South Seas, 17.
127 Kirkpatrick, The Sea Coast of Bohemia, 32. Attitudes to the French differed between New South Wales and Victoria, with the Presbyterian Church and popular leaders (such as the Victorian premier James Service) orchestrating public opposition to French colonial rule in the Pacific. For anti-French lobbyists, portraying convicts as victims of French cruelty may have been based on their ideological opposition to French rule, rather than sympathizing with the convicts themselves.
The experience of the *communards* also stimulated popular public empathy with French convicts in general. The *communards* were 7,000 political prisoners transported to New Caledonia in 1872 for their role in the ‘Paris Commune’, which revolted against the French government in 1871.\(^1\)\(^2\) Initially the close proximity of these political prisoners was of concern to Australian authorities because of the revolutionary ideas they represented.\(^1\)\(^3\) However, the potential threat diminished over time, especially after they were pardoned in 1879.\(^1\)\(^4\) These divergent views were expressed in a fictional piece in *The Clipper* in 1905:

> The word ‘communard’ has two different meanings. According to some he is a social leper, who despises everything good and revels in all things evil...But there are those who suffered from their connection with the Commune of 1871...who were fighting for a principle, and who were proud to die in the cause of freedom and justice.\(^1\)\(^5\)

One *communard*, French journalist Henri Rochefort, was notable in this public debate, escaping to Australia in 1874. He was widely portrayed as a hero in the Australian press, and by James, long after the *communards* were released.\(^1\)\(^6\) Even in the 1900s, travellers to New Caledonia were aware of the *communard* story. Their imprisonment and release had become symbolic of the heroism and resilience of French convicts.\(^1\)\(^7\)

\(^1\)\(^2\) During the Paris Commune, Napoleon III was overthrown and replaced by a democratic republic, only to be quashed two months later. As a result, the *communards* were exiled to New Caledonia and held in a special location on the Île des Pins and Duclos Peninsula. Aldrich, *The French Presence in the South Pacific*, 225.

\(^1\)\(^3\) There were also prisoners from Algeria who were sent to New Caledonia in 1874 for revolting against the colonial government in 1870. They were commonly referred to as ‘Arabs.’ They were pardoned in 1895.


\(^1\)\(^5\) See for example, ‘A Famous Communard: The Adventurous Career of Louise Michel’, *The Mercury* (27 March 1905) 7. ‘Personalities: Henri Rochefort’, *Windsor and Richmond Gazette*, 24 August 1889, 12. James interviewed Louise Michel, a French anarchist and school teacher, and admitted, ‘I know her private life; and I write some defence of an often slandered and misunderstood, albeit mad woman.’ He goes on to describe her admirable spirit as a medical worker and women’s activist in France, and as a survivor of the prison system. Thomas, *Cannibals and Convicts*, 127. His attitudes may have been informed by earlier experiences, when he went to Paris to report on the imminent war between France and Germany in 1870, and sympathised with the revolutionaries opposed to the rule of Napoleon III. Cannon, ‘Introduction’, 3.

\(^1\)\(^6\) In his article, Tayler suggested that anyone who can survive the New Caledonian prisons ‘must have in his disposition a great proportion of the stuff of which true heroes are made.’ Tayler, ‘The Isle of Submarines’, 4.
In 1941, journalist Wilfred Burchett still made reference to the *communard* legacy: ‘The Communards in New Caledonia...have helped to establish a new tradition of liberty and tolerance.’

The *communard* story was part of a larger narrative of emancipation that fascinated Australian travellers. Just as Australians had ‘grown up’ from their convict origins, so too were *libérés* starting their own new lives. Empathising with the ‘poor *libéré* who has atoned for his sins’, Wragge noted: ‘With us it is not so. A man convicted; well! He atones and pays for his mistake, be it twenty years and may rise again. But to climb under French jurisdiction to a once-held position in free society is practically impossible.’ According to Muckle, the *libéré* was romanticised as the ‘archetypal vagabond’ in early colonial literature and remained a preoccupation for free residents of New Caledonia until the 1920s. As a result, Australian visitors were eager to seek them out. William Ramsay Smith was one such traveller who, in 1924, found two *libérés* who lived in a cave and photographed them.

Another element contributing to Australian fascination with French convicts was their growing popularity as a tourist attraction. This included the prison buildings as well as the convicts themselves. Wragge’s account suggests he was motivated by a subversive desire to visit the prisons. An avid collector, Wragge took unusual souvenirs from the prisons, including the wings of a bird killed by a prison guard in a solitary confinement cell, and the stuffing from a woman’s prison mattress. Despite recording the horrors of the prison system, Wragge appeared little affected by the scenes he saw. Returning to his hotel after visiting the prison, he casually remarked, ‘Ah well! Such is an experience of human life.’ His behaviour may reflect a broader tourist trend to seek the sublime in the form of ruins or evidence of past savagery or

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135 This sentiment can also be explained by Burchett’s communist sympathies at the time. Burchett, *Pacific Treasure Island*, 122. He continued, ‘The Communards in New Caledonia, the Chartists and Irish Nationalists in Australia, the Pilgrim Fathers and the long line of political refugees who for centuries past have sought sanctuary in America, have helped to establish a new tradition of liberty and tolerance.’


137 Muckle, *Specters of Violence*, 7. Australians also noted the prisoners from Algeria, commonly referred to as ‘Arabs.’ Muckle argues this group were represented as ‘bandits and bogeymen.’


139 Wragge, *The Romance of the South Seas*, 70.
terror (see chapter one). It also resonates with the behaviour of Australian tourists who visited prisons in Australia in the early twentieth century. These tourists, according to Richard White, were eager to visit historic convict sites such as Port Arthur, and even re-enacted scenes of torture or execution. This was in spite of, and perhaps in reaction to, official efforts to restrict access to these sites because of shame about Australia’s convict past and denial of convict ancestry.140

The convict element remained a lucrative attraction in the 1920s and 30s, despite the cessation of convict transportation to New Caledonia in 1897, and the closure of penal settlements there by 1922. The sense of danger or violence had disappeared, yet tourists still recounted second-hand stories and reported hearsay about past prisoners and brutality. Although the Coconut Square’s convict band was disbanded, a group still played and attracted a large crowd by 1941, with Burchett observing ‘a treasure-house of interesting characters whose stories, pieced together, would compile a voluminous and colourful history.’141 Burchett sought out and paid ex-convicts for interviews, many of whom were poor or homeless: ‘There are not many of the old convicts left now. . . .most of them are well-known characters and can always rely on a few francs a day from former employers or workmates.’142 His efforts produced mixed results – Henri Tartas offered an interesting story of escape and intrigue, whilst Quer Urbain’s story was ‘dreary rather than exciting’, with ‘much rambling and many repetitions.’143 Even the sublime charm of the prisons had been lost as the buildings were reused for alternative purposes:

To-day Ile Nou has been converted by Pan American Airways into a modern air base...Ile des Pins, where most of the Communards were imprisoned, is a charming island visited by young couples on their honeymoon, and once or

140 Richard White, ‘The Subversive Tourist: How Tourism Re-Wrote Australian History’ (paper presented at the Harold White Fellow Presentation, National Library of Australia, 28 February 2012). Given the limited number of travel accounts about New Caledonia, it is not clear whether interest in its convicts was a way of diminishing Australia’s convict past.
141 Burchett, Pacific Treasure Island, 104.
142 Ibid., 101-102. ‘Much of the colourful history of the colony could be had by searching the memories of these forlorn figures, who contributed so much to the early development of the colony.’ (103)
143 Ibid., 93. These men were used to retelling their stories according to Burchett: ‘for a few francs or a finger of rum...Henri Tartas is always willing to retell his tale.’
twice a year the object of a specially organized tourist excursion from the mainland. The Peninsula Ducos, the site of the third main penitentiary hasn’t had as happy a fate as the other two – it now houses New Caledonia’s leper colony.\(^{144}\)

For these reasons, Burchett recommended to his readers that they visit French Guiana or read other books to experience the French penal system.\(^{145}\)

In addition to its historic convict attractions, French culture was increasingly identified by Australians as an admirable and attractive characteristic of the colony in the 1900s. These features pushed the island’s Pacific characteristics into the background. According to Burchett: ‘Added to the delights of living French, eating and drinking French, hearing and speaking French, is the attraction that in New Caledonia all these things can be enjoyed in the most perfect South Sea background.’\(^{146}\) Australian visitors before Burchett had also expressed an interest in French culture, describing their daily routine, enjoying French food and drinks, and the novelty of reading French menus and street names. Fitzpatrick’s description of the daily practice of midday siestas was common in travel accounts, and he enjoyed the choice of cafes and bars in Noumea.\(^{147}\) Phillips also admired French dining habits, noting that ‘a French breakfast is a very serious undertaking…but remember that one French meal is equal to two English ones.’\(^{148}\)

Favourable descriptions of French culture were accompanied by an admiration of French sensibilities. Wragge was explicit in his admiration of the French, describing them as ‘a grand and noble people’ and ‘liberal and broad-minded’, and arguing that

\(^{144}\) Ibid., 100.


\(^{146}\) Burchett, \textit{Pacific Treasure Island}, 20.

\(^{147}\) Fitzpatrick recounted satisfying his ‘fearful fascination’ with absinthe whilst visiting several cafes and bars. He also wrote ‘In Noumea the custom is to have coffee at 6 o’clock in the morning, breakfast between 11 and 1, and dinner between 6 and 8. Between 11 and 2 o’clock the stores close religiously.’ Fitzpatrick, \textit{Notes on a Trip to New Caledonia and Fiji}, 45. Smith also commented on the lively atmosphere in restaurants, and the novelty of speaking French. Smith, \textit{In Southern Seas}, 12, 23.

\(^{148}\) He also described the French food as ‘proverbially good.’ Phillips, \textit{Notes on a Visit to New Caledonia}, 3.
France can teach us to live in the pure enjoyment of life.'\textsuperscript{149} James, writing much earlier, had acknowledged, ‘France is lovingly known by her sons as the country “la belle” par excellence. And she deserves the title.’\textsuperscript{150} In Burchett’s case, his admiration of the French was expressed with reference to its convict past: ‘Because the Old World rejected – or ejected – many of the finest spirits of the age, the New World bordering the Pacific has a virile, liberty-loving ancestry.’\textsuperscript{151} Others felt an affinity with the French because they shared a common European civilisation. James expressed this sentiment when he wrote about the New Hebrides: ‘White blood is thicker than water, and Englishman and Frenchman are akin when brought face to face with savages.’\textsuperscript{152}

Travellers also noted the impact of French colonialism, enjoying the architecture and modern advancements. Many commented on the adequate water and sewerage systems, clean streets, electric lighting, good roads, and impressive buildings such as churches, government offices, restaurants and hotels.\textsuperscript{153} According to Rannie in 1912:

> The hotels are good and the tariff uncommonly moderate. I had a bedroom and sitting-room to myself, and an excellent table, for the moderate sum of ten francs per day in a first-class hotel. The town is beautifully laid out, and fine shade trees are planted along the streets. Most enjoyable drives can be had in all directions, as the roads are kept to perfection.\textsuperscript{154}

These observations reflect the pace at which French colonial officials were developing the colony, with the help of convict and foreign labour. New Caledonia’s importance as a penal settlement, and the growth of its mining industry, meant that it was much

\textsuperscript{149} Wragge, \textit{The Romance of the South Seas}, 36.
\textsuperscript{150} Thomas, \textit{Cannibals and Convicts}, 49.
\textsuperscript{151} Burchett, \textit{Pacific Treasure Island}, 122.
\textsuperscript{152} Thomas, \textit{Cannibals and Convicts}, 162-163.
more developed and populated by the French than the isolated islands of French Polynesia. However, Australian remarks were not always consistent. In a 1938 issue of *Walkabout*, an Australian travel magazine, Elizabeth Nicholls wrote: ‘Noumea is actually a “continental” and tropical version of the Australian country town, built in the last century, which has seen better days.’

Travellers could visit more parts of the mainland by car as the French extended their network of roads. George Meudell, another steamer tourist, commented on the prospects for a day trip by car: ‘Noumea is a delightful centre for a holiday. There are two good hotels, excellent roads for motoring, and the scenery is right for motorists.’ This scenery was often noted for its European characteristics rather than its Pacific ones. Travellers drew similarities between the niaouli tree and the Australian eucalyptus, and the lush hills of the mainland (and the cattle they supported) were compared to familiar European and Australian landscapes. Visitors also remarked on the prevalence of mining to a greater extent than any other Pacific Islands. These observations generally dominated Australian travel accounts, and descriptions of Kanaks were limited. Visits to coffee or copra plantations warranted little comment on the labourers, instead focusing on their profitability or ‘picturesque’ qualities. Few visited or commented upon Kanak villages or mission stations either. It suggests that as New Caledonia increasingly became marketed as a French holiday destination, rather than a Pacific reality, travellers were less inclined to report on its island characteristics.

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155 Elizabeth Nicholls, ‘In the French South Seas’, *Walkabout* (April 1938), 36. This contrasted with James’ admiration over forty years prior: ‘An Australian visitor, accustomed to the roughness and uncouthness of our new colonial bush towns, would be astonished at the neatness and attractiveness that is often visible in Noumea.’ Thomas, *Cannibals and Convicts*, 51.


157 James and Burchett noted the niaouli tree. Burchett also included descriptions such as: ‘a scenery rivalling that of the Riviera’; ‘sleek, prime cattle up to their middles in luscious paspalum grass’; and ‘Poya, with its steely-blue river, its air of placid fertility, and its mountain background, seems to belong to the Rhone valley rather than to a South Sea Island.’ Thomas, *Cannibals and Convicts*, 45; Burchett, *Pacific Treasure Island*, 20, 40.

158 Smith’s account of New Caledonia was typical in this respect. Smith, *In Southern Seas*, 24-28.
Fading From View

From the beginning of World War I, Australian public interest in New Caledonia and the New Hebrides declined. The conflict in Europe proved French allegiance, and the Australian government were preoccupied with the mandate for New Guinea that they acquired in the aftermath. This decline was more pronounced in New Caledonia, since Australian missionaries, businesses and residents continued to contest the condominium in the New Hebrides. Even a large scale Kanak rebellion in 1917 did not elicit the same response in Australia as the 1878 conflict had, presumably because it was overshadowed by news from the front in Europe. Max Quanchi has shown in his study of Australian postcards that New Caledonia went virtually ‘unnoticed’ by Australians during the interwar period. This was reiterated by Burchett, an Australian journalist who visited New Caledonia in 1939 and 1941, and noted: ‘For many years this island has been but a name to most of us… a name that featured once or twice a year as the goal of a tourist cruise to the South Seas…[it] vaguely recalled the site of a particularly odious convict prison.’

Australians still retained greater economic, religious and political interests in the New Hebrides than in New Caledonia, but economic investment in the island group was diminishing and political will was intermittent. Australian travellers continued to describe confusion created by the condominium in the 1940s, such as Woodburn, who described it as ‘cumbersome, awkward, uneconomic and Gilbertian, but still existing.’ Yet these travel accounts about the New Hebrides were not as prolific as those of other Pacific Islands. This may have reflected the slow development of tourist routes and infrastructure because of the condominium, or the topography of the island

159 Max Quanchi, ‘A Name That Featured Once or Twice a Year: Not Noticing French New Caledonia in Mid-20th Century British Australia’ (paper presented at the 16th Pacific History Association Conference, University of New Caledonia, Noumea, 2004), 2.

160 Burchett, Pacific Treasure Island, 11. Wilfred Burchett is best known for his work as a distinguished war reporter from 1939 until the Korean War, from which time onwards he was stigmatised in Australia and the Western world as a communist and a traitor. Born in Victoria in 1911, Burchett visited New Caledonia in 1939 and 1941, the second time tasked with reporting on the reception of Australian information broadcasts in Noumea. His concern about the lack of Australian awareness of New Caledonia’s strategic importance was an exception at the time. See Tom Heenan, From Traveller to Traitor: The Life of Wilfred Burchett (Carlton 2006).

161 Woodburn, Backwash of Empire, 44.
group which meant that there were numerous ports of call and no particular site or attraction that appealed to Australian travellers. Although Vila did have some French characteristics to satisfy Australian tourists seeking the ‘exotic’, French culture and influence was less pronounced in the New Hebrides than it was in New Caledonia. These factors were visible in BP’s advertisements of its cruises through the New Hebrides, which promoted the ‘absorbing interest and changing scene’ provided by ‘over one hundred calls’ which took the traveller ‘quite out of the beaten track.’  

BP also tended to focus on the potential for encounters with Melanesian inhabitants, rather than an authentic experience of French food and culture. In fact, by 1925 BP’s advertisements downplayed the condominium, remarking in one short sentence that the New Hebrides was of ‘special interest as the theatre of a remarkable experiment in Government.’ This was in stark contrast to its previous claims in 1903 that ‘British supremacy [in the New Hebrides]...is undoubted’, a statement that was questionable by the 1920s.

BP’s promotion of New Hebrideans as a tourist attraction contributed to essentialised and racialised stereotypes of the Melanesian ‘savage’ that were repeated by Australian travellers (see chapter six). According to Abbott, ‘a native of the group is a Melanesian before he is a New Hebridean.’ Apart from these formulaic tropes, Islanders were frequently absent from travellers’ descriptions of the condominium. Rather, they were commonly portrayed as a subjugated and silent people. Rannie believed Islanders had ‘no idea of what the annexation of their island means’, and James doubted they could express their views if they had any. This supposedly silent Islander was preferable according to James: ‘In Australia we have solved our

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162 Burns, Philp & Company, Limited, *Picturesque Travel* (1925), 44.
163 Ibid., 43.
164 Burns, Philp & Company, Limited, *All About Burns, Philp & Company Limited* (1903), 106. In this publication BP was careful to allay travellers’ concerns for their safety by describing the condominium as a ‘friendly rivalry’ and stressing its inevitable peaceful resolution. Yet it also gave detailed descriptions of the history and economic development of the group, noting that ‘it is an historical fact that the British were in the New Hebrides long before the French, consequently...the British certainly possess prior rights.’
165 Abbott, *The South Seas (Melanesia)*, 25.
native difficulty by never allowing that the blacks have any rights in the soil at all.'  
Yet James was also willing to use them where necessary to support his criticisms of French rule. He claimed that every Islander disliked the French, and even produced a petition signed by Tannese chiefs asking the Queen of England to annex the New Hebrides. In this case, the purportedly savage and childlike nature of New Hebrideans was overlooked to emphasise the superiority of the British claim: ‘They were not fools; they were bloodthirsty and brutal; but they had a sense of their own rights and their own liberties.’

The trope of the Melanesian ‘savage’ was more often applied to the New Hebrideans than Kanaks, where the emphasis on French culture came at the expense of the Kanak population, who were rarely written about. The Islanders whom Australians most commonly met in Noumea were foreign workers, mostly drawn from the nearby Loyalty Islands and New Hebrides. Burchett described many ‘boys’ at the Noumea wharf waiting to carry passengers’ bags, but noted they were Loyalty Islanders. Fitzpatrick listed the variety of nationalities in Coconut Square, to which he added, ‘a few, only a few, New Caledonians.’ This did not reflect the actual population, in which Kanaks outnumbered white residents. Other foreign labourers from Japan, Indochina, Réunion Island and Java also drew the gaze of Australian travellers away from the Kanak. The development of the colony, particularly the

167 Thomas, Cannibals and Convicts, 275.
168 Ibid., 247. James was not the only one who made these claims. According to the popular encyclopaedia, Australasia Illustrated, that Islanders preferred the British was a matter of fact. Garran, Australasia Illustrated, 1254.

169 Australians were more familiar with Loyalty Islanders, probably because of their employment on ships as Europeans regarding them as superior seamen. These beliefs also had racial undertones. According to Burchett: ‘The Loyalty Islanders have a high percentage of Polynesian blood in their veins, and are consequently handsomer, according to European standards, than the Melanesians. They lack, too, the heaviness and sombreness of the New Caledonians.’ Burchett, Pacific Treasure Island, 20, 184.

170 Fitzpatrick, Notes on a Trip to New Caledonia and Fiji, 43.

171 In 1911, Kanaks numbered 16,297 on Grand Terre, 11,173 on the Loyalty Islands and 605 on the Isle of Pines. The ‘free element’ only numbered 13, 138. Muckle, Specters of Violence, 7. Contrary to assumptions of Kanak depopulation, Kanak numbers began to increase from 1921. According to the 1932 edition of The Pacific Islands Yearbook, the ‘native population’ was 28,502 in 1931, an increase from 27,100 in 1921. Robson, The Pacific Islands Yearbook (1st ed.), 297. The same publication showed population statistics from 1887-1931 in which ‘natives’ outnumbered ‘whites’ and ‘indentured labourers’ at all times.
mining industry, was built upon cheap imported labour. Travellers viewed the preference for foreign imported labour as the result of the innate laziness of the Melanesian, an observation which overlooked the role that Kanaks had played in the New Caledonian economy.

The omission of Kanaks in Australian travel accounts was symptomatic of a gradual process in which Kanaks were slowly isolated and marginalised over time by the French colonial administration. As a result of disease, warfare and violent encounters with French settlers and authorities, the Kanak population had been gradually forced into reserves. These were situated away from the major towns and urban areas, including the capital. In 1924 Smith observed these controls, noting that a ‘kanaka curfew’ from 8pm was in effect in Noumea. French control of the northern districts remained intermittent in the 1920s, and combined with the remoteness of some reserves, Australians were less inclined to move beyond Noumea to meet Kanaks. Those few Kanaks whom Australians did encounter were usually given descriptions that confirmed Melanesian stereotypes. Even in light of efforts by the French government to downplay past violent conflicts with Kanaks, Muckle

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172 Minerals were discovered in New Caledonia in the early 1860s, including nickel, chrome and manganese. The first nickel smelter began operating in 1877. In New Caledonia in 1911, 3,214 were ‘regulated immigrants’ who migrated for employment as labourers (of a total population of approximately 50,000). Muckle, *Specters of Violence*, 7. According to *The Pacific Islands Yearbook*, Javanese numbered 6,198 and Tonkinese 5,026 in 1931. Of a total population of 57,165 in 1931, 11,448 were labourers. Robson, *The Pacific Islands Yearbook* (1st ed.), 297.

173 Contrary to popular belief that Melanesians were a lazy race and did not play an important role in development of New Caledonia, Latham argues that Kanaks supplied the markets, worked in various industries, and, prior to 1878, were active in negotiating pay for labour. Latham, ‘Revolt Re-Examined: The 1878 Insurrection in New Caledonia’, 59.

174 French victories in conflicts forced the migration of Kanaks and allowed French officials to claim land for European settlement. The Kanak population were controlled by a combination of cantonnement (containment), and indirect rule through grands chefs (district chiefs), petit chefs (government agents). This was legitimised by the indigénat legal code which lasted from 1887 to 1946. Muckle emphasises that the isolation of Kanaks was a slow and gradual process from the 1880s to the 1920s. Muckle, *Specters of Violence*, 5, 11.

175 Smith, *In Southern Seas*, 22. ‘At gun-fire at eight o’clock, all Kanakas, i.e. blacks of all description, must be in their houses.’

176 For example, Burchett described ‘negroid’ physical features, cannibal ‘feasting grounds’ and one Islander guide who was ‘the perfect caricature of a missionary-filled cannibal.’ Burchett, *Pacific Treasure Island*, 41, 64. Wirth noted that ‘the New Caledonia natives were an innocent, lovable (if one can use this word on a black) people, more like little simple children.’ Wirth, *Round the World with a Circus*, 40. Cheeseman wrote ‘they are very dark-almost black, and are not a pleasant-looking race.’ Cheeseman, *The South Sea Islands*, 5. Australian naval seamen Bollard described them as ‘a rather blood thirsty looking crowd’ in his 1914 diary. Bollard, *Private Record*. 
argues that ‘the idea of a recent savage past was too tempting to ignore altogether’ in European literature, and recollections of past conflicts continued to label Kanak rebels as ‘cannibals’ and ‘savages’ in the 1920s, 30s and 40s.177

In light of diminishing Australian public interest in New Caledonia and the New Hebrides after World War I, it is unsurprising that generalisations about Melanesians in these island groups persisted. Yet given the historical relationship between Australia, these islands, and their colonial masters, it is remarkable that they could drift out of the Australian consciousness so rapidly. By drawing attention to the historical legacy of French, British and Australian competition over these two island groups prior to 1914, I have attempted to show how Australian travel writing about New Caledonia and the New Hebrides were distinct from other Pacific Islands. New Caledonia was chiefly known for its convicts, and incidences of conflict between Europeans and Kanaks. These were issues of contention in Australia during the late nineteenth century until the early 1900s, when New Caledonia was transformed into a tourist destination, with its convict heritage and French culture becoming popular attractions. In the New Hebrides, Australian descriptions were marked by uncertainty and confusion, reflecting the controversial and contested nature of the Anglo-French condominium arrangement. Representations of both these island groups were closely intertwined, as this chapter argues that New Caledonia was frequently used as a device to justify or criticise French control of the New Hebrides. Although popular opposition to French colonialism in these islands was intermittent and temporary, they occurred at a crucial time in the development of the Australian nation. As such, these islands were significant in shaping early Australian perceptions of the Pacific, and providing a setting for Australian individuals, groups and governments to debate Australia’s role in the region.

In the following chapter, I turn my focus to the Melanesian region in general, and explore the ways in which Australian travellers tested and applied ‘scientific’ racial theories in their travel accounts. This includes an examination of how these

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177 Muckle, Specters of Violence, 170. Muckle argues that ‘the trope of reawakened savagery’ was reinvigorated during World War II for English readers.
accounts reflected, and contributed to, popular ideas about disease, depopulation and ethnic diversity in the Islands.
CHAPTER FIVE

Health and Progress in the Tropics

At present it is a contest between racial debility and modern science. In places where the racial debility is far advanced, one sees the writing on the wall, though those concerned in the tragedy are not aware of it. But in the case of those who are not too far gone science will win in the long run. Some of the best brains in the world are at work on the matter, and the inhabitants of the Pacific will reap the result...It is only a matter of time before science will overcome the inertia at the fringes of civilisation and the abuses and mistakes of the past are replaced by the benefits that the white man’s knowledge can and should bring to his brother of the stone age.¹

M. Kathleen Woodburn published this evaluation of the Pacific Islands based on her experience living on a farm in Erromanga (in the New Hebrides) with her son in the 1930s. From her vantage point on ‘the fringes of civilisation’, this inquisitive traveller blended personal narrative and ‘scientific’ observations, a common technique in Australian travel writing.² Pseudo-scientific practice was popular amongst Australian travellers, both amateur and professional, and ‘scientific’ language gave an authoritative legitimacy to ordinary tourist impressions. It also formed part of a discourse which Australian travellers drew upon when confronted with the reality of human difference. This extensive racialised discourse had developed over two hundred years of European exploration and travel in the Pacific, and by the 1900s a

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¹ M. Kathleen Woodburn, Backwash of Empire (Melbourne 1944), 223.
² Woodburn went there on doctors’ recommendations to aid her son’s recovery from an unspecified illness. It is not clear how long Woodburn stayed in Erromanga. Although her book was published in 1944, its contents suggest she visited the islands prior to 1941. She does not mention the Pacific War at all. She does show an interest in, and familiarity with, general scientific theories and practices (including anthropology, biology, botany, linguistics and natural history), referring to academics and scientific texts in her account, and making scientific observations and collections on Erromanga.
racial lexicon had permeated Australian travel writing, informing expectations, pre-determining encounters, and shaping reflections. The taxonomy of race as it was used in the twentieth century was sanctioned by science, considered authoritative and absolute despite its erroneous assumptions and inherent ambiguities. For Australians in foreign environments, race was a constant, a lens through which to observe, and a standard by which they could compare themselves to others, and reassure themselves of their superiority.

In this chapter I explore how popular ideas of race and science informed three issues which regularly featured in Australian travel accounts: disease, depopulation and ethnic diversity. Australians instinctively remarked on their own health when first travelling in a foreign and tropical environment. As they acclimatised, their initial concerns about disease were replaced by observations of the health of Pacific Islanders. In particular, Australian travellers commented on the widely perceived trend of depopulation in the region, providing their own verdict on popular explanations of its causes and impact. In doing so, travellers compared the progress of Europeans and Islanders to other foreign populations in the Pacific. As Australians remarked on these issues, they fell back on ‘scientific’ assumptions that were considered to be self-evident and absolute. Yet I argue that the complex individual encounters of travel produced a diverse range of responses, with scientific theories and racialist terminology being used, misused, conflated, indiscriminately applied, and occasionally challenged, by Australian travellers.

In the first section, I discuss the scientific origins of racial theory and the ways in which Australian travellers interpreted these concepts. Next, I explore Australian descriptions of disease whilst travelling, and its connection with ideas about the tropics and tropical health in Australia and the Pacific. Then I discuss how Australians responded to a widespread belief in Islander depopulation, showing how their accounts summarised and discussed the varied explanations for the trend which were proposed at the time. Finally, I investigate Australian descriptions of three other foreign populations who Australians clearly identified in particular locations in the Pacific.
These were the Japanese in Hawaii, the Chinese in Tahiti and the Indians in Fiji. These encounters show that Australian travellers 'discovered' a vibrant and colourful Pacific of multiple intertwined ethnicities, rather than the static, black and white picture that they were expecting. Though their accounts usually reinforced this racialised view of a region in primitive stasis (or even decline), there were encounters which sometimes unsettled travellers and their convictions, and ideas about the nation's supposed role in the racial progression of the Pacific.

Science and Stasis

Rather than attempting to identify the complex racial debates that occurred in Europe, America or Australia, I am concerned here with their application by ordinary travellers to the Pacific Islands. The discourses of science and travel have remained intertwined in representations of the Pacific since early exploration. Initially, the collection of new information from the 1760s onwards about non-white people by a stream of naturalists, anthropologists, surveyors, missionaries and ethnographers (both amateur and professional) informed scientific debates, and encouraged subsequent travel to Oceania to verify racial theories. By the 1880s, Australian travellers were influenced by new scientific disciplines developed in Europe, evident in the growth of domestic scientific associations, the adoption of scientific language in twentieth-century tourist accounts, and the popularity of practices such as collecting human skulls. Science was gradually adopted as a tool for travellers to authenticate their

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3 As Serge Tcherkezoff notes, 'The transition from recording human “varieties” to placing that variation within a binary framework based on skin colour separates travel accounts from learned treatises. Often the same person was the author of both genres.' Tcherkezoff, 'A Long and Unfortunate Voyage', 183-184.

4 Michael E. Hoare argues that early scientific associations, such as the Philosophical Society of Australasia (1821), were reliant on 'individual enterprise' in the colonies and were plagued by competition. By the 1880s, federation sentiment encouraged more cooperation, and societies such as the Geographical Society of Australasia (1883) and the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science (1888) were more successful. For further discussion, see Michael E. Hoare, *Science and scientific associations in Eastern Australia, 1820-1890*, Thesis (PhD), Australian National University, 1974. These associations were precursors to institutional developments which did not begin in Australia until the 1920s.
experience and legitimate their work, and a way for writers to publicise their accounts as educative and informative.

The interpretation and application of scientific theories by ordinary travellers was varied. Warwick Anderson demonstrates that an individual's understanding of human difference was 'a situated knowledge', using the example of Australian doctors who were influenced by local training, clinical observations and their own personal experiences as much as they were by European theories. Similarly, Australian travellers did not often refer to 'key' figures or debates in academic disciplines, and they used classificatory terms interchangeably and indiscriminately. According to Raymond Evans, weekly periodicals provided Australian readers 'with a wealth of illustrative material which both popularised scientific racist theories and provided plenty of local examples to bear these theories out.' He argues that catch cries such as 'survival of the fittest' and 'white superiority' were widely adopted as a result of the popularisation and simplification of scientific theories by journalists and politicians. This simplification obscured the complex debates about human difference and development that had occurred since the fifteenth century, and contributed to fixing the Islander as static in the eyes of Australian travellers.

Bronwen Douglas has outlined the history of the term 'race' and the development of what she calls 'the science of race' in Europe, namely the 'systematic efforts in the new 19th-century disciplines of biology and anthropology to theorize collective physical differences between broad human groups as innate, morally and intellectually determinant, and possibly original.' It was this science of race that Australian travellers in the twentieth century took for granted before embarking on their journeys, often overlooking the complex philosophical debates that had occurred

over several hundred years. Measuring human difference according to physical appearance (particularly skin colour) had much older origins, with comparisons of bodily characteristics between ‘black’ (or ‘negro’) and ‘white’ to be found as early as the mid-fifteenth century in references to the slave trade in west Africa.\textsuperscript{8} Although this dichotomy bore connotations that privileged white-skinned people, collective terms used by explorers to describe people were nominalist and neutral in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A Christian theological view of a common humanity remained influential until the late eighteenth century, a position which attributed human diversity to external factors, and supported humanity’s universal potential for progress.\textsuperscript{9}

Douglas identifies a major discursive shift from human similitude to difference in the late eighteenth century, towards the assumption that rather than being subject to external change, race was innate and hereditary.\textsuperscript{10} This is evident in the meaning of the term itself which shifted from a broad definition to a more specific anatomical and biological definition.\textsuperscript{11} No longer a general grouping, race was a specific and essentialising label which was later indiscriminately applied by Australian travellers: ‘Thus naturalized as an invariable, fundamentally differentiating, measurable human physical quality with axiomatic social, moral, and intellectual correlates, the idea of race acquired the scientific authority which guaranteed its unquestioned realism over at least the next century.’\textsuperscript{12} As a consequence, attitudes to human difference hardened,

\textsuperscript{8} ‘Whereas classical and medieval slavery was not determined by skin colour, a steadily hardening anti-African sentiment paralleled growing European involvement in the slave trade in west Africa from the mid-15th century and the novel correlation of Negro with enslavement over the following century. In a matching linguistic shift, the Iberian descriptive adjective negro (‘black’), initially applied to darker-skinned people generally, was substantivized in pan-European usage as a synonym for the noun ‘African’, with mounting connotations of paganism, backwardness, ugliness, and inferiority.’ Douglas, *Science, Voyages, and Encounters in Oceania*, 9.

\textsuperscript{9} French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc comte de Buffon was representative of this prevailing discourse, his work on human ‘varieties’ influencing Charles de Brosses and J.R. Forster. Douglas, ‘Climate to Crania’, 35.

\textsuperscript{10} Anatomist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach popularised philosopher Immanuel Kant’s idea of race as hereditary. This was subsequently taken up by French naturalists (most notably Georges Cuvier). Douglas, *Science, Voyages, and Encounters in Oceania*, 12.

\textsuperscript{11} Douglas, ‘Climate to Crania’, 34.

with the inferiority of non-Europeans being attributed to human deficiencies rather than environmental or historical factors.\textsuperscript{13}

According to popular theories of race, the Pacific Islander became locked into a racial hierarchy in which Melanesians were inferior to Polynesians, a relationship that remained unquestioned by Australian travellers from 1880 to 1941. On this ladder, white supremacy was assured, and Australian Aborigines were relegated to the very bottom.\textsuperscript{14} Developments in stadial theory and natural history had encouraged the popular idea of human varieties, differentiated according to stages of progression from ‘savagery’ to ‘civilisation’.\textsuperscript{15} According to Australian anthropologist Alfred William Howitt, an early authority on Aboriginal culture in the 1880s:

The progression theory...is of modern origin, and has arisen through the scientific investigation and comparison of the social condition and customs of savage and barbarous races, of the survivals of archaic customs still met with among civilised peoples, and of the most ancient written records left to us from the past.\textsuperscript{16}

The subtle differences perceived to separate these varieties based on physical appearance, moral and intellectual development, political organisation and agricultural production, and the nuances of scientific debate and classification, were often overlooked by non-scientific travellers. This is evident in the indiscriminate use of various classificatory terms such as ‘Malay’, ‘Negro’, ‘Ethiopic’, ‘Papuan’ and ‘African’. The potential for confusion is highlighted by British anthropologist Charles

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Douglas, ‘Climate to Crania’, 73.
\item According to British marine officer Watkin Tench, who arrived with the First Fleet to Australia, Aborigines ‘rank very low, even in the scale of savages’, and were inferior to ‘the subtle African; the patient watchful American; or the elegant timid islander of the South Seas’. Watkin Tench, \textit{A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson in New South-Wales Including an Accurate Description of the Colony: of the natives: and of its natural productions/taken on the spot} (London 1793), 187.
\item Howitt in Lorimer Fison and Alfred William Howitt, \textit{Kamilaroi and Kurnai: Group-marriage and Relationship, and Marriage by Elopement, Drawn Chiefly From the Usage of the Australian Aborigines: Also the Kurnai Tribe, Their Customs in Peace and War} (Melbourne 1880), 339.
\end{enumerate}
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Gabriel Seligmann, whose work *The Melanesians of British New Guinea* (1910) proposed renaming Papuans (the inhabitants of New Guinea) as ‘Papuasians’, and dividing them into ‘western Papuasians’, and ‘Papuan-Melanesians.’ Not all Australian travellers made the distinction between Papuans and Melanesians, let alone using Seligmann’s specific categories. Similarly, the terms ‘Polynesian’, ‘Kanaka’ and ‘South Sea Islander’ had different usages over time, applied to specific regions within the Pacific, and more generally as a reference to all Pacific Islanders.

Evidence of the influence of racial thinking on Australian travellers is difficult to find in their written accounts. As Angela Woollacott argues, white Australian travellers in the 1900s frequently came from urbanised areas and were unfamiliar with other ethnicities, and therefore, ‘whiteness was more an assumed superiority than a frequently practiced subordination of others.’ A common practice upon arrival was to situate Islanders within a racial order, often in comparison to others encountered along the journey. This was done with short, matter-of-fact statements, usually based on physical characteristics. Whether it was an unconscious process, or a tool used to qualify one’s first impressions by making a scientific reference, is unclear. For example, naturalist Albert Stewart Meek wrote in his 1913 travel account: ‘There are two distinct types of native in the Solomons. At the west end of the Solomons...they are much darker than the Papuan. At the east end of the group they are more like the Papuan in colour and in character.’ References to ‘types’ and shared racial characteristics, both physical and mental, reinforced the common assumption that Islanders were fixed within a rigid racial hierarchy. This resonated with popular tropes within the literature that portrayed them as primitive, frozen in time and infantile, ‘an

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17 Not all Australian travellers recognised the distinction between Papuan (applied to New Guineans) and Melanesians. Charles Gabriel Seligmann, *The Melanesians of British New Guinea* (Cambridge 1910), 1.
18 Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 175.
19 Meek, *A Naturalist in Cannibal Land*. Meek was a trained naturalist who published a monograph of his travels in which he professed to be an adventurer rather than a scientist. Although he was born and died in England, he was included in McCormack et al.’s bibliography of Australian travel writing because he lived in Australia several times between 1890 and 1914, ranging from approximately a few months to a year each time. See McCormack et al., *Annotated Bibliography of Australian Overseas Travel Writing*.
idle people, living in the most primitive condition, so luxuriously supplied by nature that they are dying off, mainly from pure inertia.  

Strict racial categories also served a colonial purpose. According to Damon Salesa, race was 'a comparative dimension that made the Empire easier to archive, signify, consume, integrate and administer.' The need to train colonial officers for the mandated territory of New Guinea stimulated the creation of the first anthropology department in Sydney in 1925. For other groups with interest in the Pacific, most notably missionaries and businesses, signs of progress or stagnation amongst races were highly contested and people were assigned traits and forced into types in order to support a claim to authority. For individual travellers, as Woollacott shows, the ways in which they articulated their own whiteness in comparison to others asserted privilege and power.

Armed with a variety of scientific theories establishing ordered racial hierarchies in the Pacific, Australian travellers were reluctant to contradict these categories. Yet their travel accounts describe a vibrant and ethnically diverse Pacific, and reveal the difficulties of fitting particular islands and Islanders into types and models which proved to be much more ambiguous and contested than the popular Melanesian-Polynesian dichotomy. Even some Australian researchers wrote travel accounts for a broader public market, choosing to avoid (or criticise) the constraints of scientific discourse. Australian naturalist (and amateur anthropologist) William

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22 McGregor argues that leading Australian anthropologist, A.R. Radcliffe Brown, was part of a movement that lobbied for anthropology's practical relevance to administering New Guinea from 1921. This was part of a broader academic shift from evolutionary theory to functionalism: 'While evolutionists were seen as spinning speculative accounts of the early history of mankind out of fragmentary information acquired at second- or third-hand from missionaries and travellers, the new generation of anthropologists demanded a more empirical approach to the study of society.' Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880-1939* (Carlton 1997), 103.
23 Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 44.
24 For example, entomologist Evelyn Cheesman, meteorologist Clement Lindley Wragge, doctor and naturalist Thomas P. Lucas, naturalist Albert Stewart Meek, and zoologist Alan John Marshall. This thesis has avoided using the published papers and academic accounts of Australian scientific
Ramsay Smith was one of these travellers. He reflected on the value of travel accounts in his own travelogue based on his tour of the Pacific Islands in the early 1920s:

Travellers provide much information of a scientifically trustworthy nature when they record their own observations among various peoples in different parts of the world and the comparisons they have drawn from these observations. And their evidence is almost of a different sort for what is collected by an investigator in a central anthropological laboratory, being a sort of intuitional spark that lights up a conclusion without a long and painful investigation ending in perhaps doubtful inferences.²⁵

For Smith, Captain Cook was the 'ideal traveller, observer and reporter' because he embodied the ideals of both a scientific mind and an adventurous spirit.

Subsequent Australian travellers expressed a similar sentiment in their travel accounts. Although many were excited by the promise of adventure in a foreign environment, they were also informed by scientific knowledge, including medical theories of disease and the effects of the tropical climate on European bodies. Many Australian travellers faced a similar process of acclimatisation whilst travelling to the Islands and their accounts show a general concern with preserving their health whilst in a foreign and potentially threatening environment.

**Disease and the Tropics**

Disease was a common topic of observation within Australian travel accounts. Travel to any foreign environment prompted an instinctive response as travellers expressed feelings of vulnerability and a fear of contagion.²⁶ Unless they were residing in the Islands, or stricken by disease, Australian travellers did not often dwell on this

²⁵ Smith, *In Southern Seas*, 225. According to Smith, 'One's only ambition is to be an ideal traveller, observer and reporter, like Captain Cook, noting down what one sees and verifies for one's self, so that no one coming after has need to contradict or correct what one writes.' (97)

²⁶ So prevalent was this response that the *Oxford Book of Australian Travel Writing* argued that cleanliness was a major theme. Pesman, Walker, and White, *The Oxford Book of Australian Travel Writing*, xv.
subject - their comments were short, with vague summations such as 'decidedly unhealthy.' This may be attributed to the author's preference for more exotic and pleasing subjects, and a tendency not to discuss illness in detail in polite conversation. This trend may also reflect Australians' uncertainty about the specifics of disease, their causes and remedies. Disease and hygiene also became a standard against which to make judgements about the inferiority of Pacific Islanders, and the superiority of the Australian 'stock.' These judgements reflected debates within Australia about the northern tropical region, and the suitability of white settlement in the tropics.

Prospective travellers to the Pacific Islands were usually well informed about the prevalence of disease, and the potential dangers specific to the Pacific. They could read news reports of contagion outbreaks, anthropological and historical documents recording the spread of disease, fictional tales of fevers and leprosy, and the observations of other travel accounts. Commentary on island hygiene and disease was also a crucial part of the discourse of settlement. Guide books had sections subtitled 'health' and 'climate' explaining the various diseases prevalent in specific islands, and the hospital and medical services available. According to The Pacific Islands Yearbook in 1932, Fiji was 'probably the healthiest tropical climate in the world', Hawaii was 'famed for its climate', the New Hebrides was 'unhealthy' (though 'not worse than that of many other tropical places'), Samoa was 'mild and equable', and the Solomon Islands was 'unfavourable for Europeans on account of its humidity and constant heat, and particularly on account of the prevalence of malaria.' Tahiti's climate was not mentioned at all. Shipping advertisements responded by promoting the health benefits of visiting a tropical climate during the Australian winter months, 'enabling the people of Australia to escape the cold winter months and visit the tropics during the continuance of the cool and healthy south-east trade winds, which blow from the South Pacific from April to November.'

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27 Wilkins, Australasia: A Descriptive and Pictorial Account of the Australian and New Zealand Colonies, Tasmania and the Adjacent Lands, 238. The only exception was Australian labour recruiters who frequently wrote about the health of the recruits they were transporting.
29 Allen, Stewart's Handbook of the Pacific Islands, 85-86.
Passage on a ship was the first environment where disease was encountered by Australians. Sea travel allowed for a more gradual acclimatisation to the tropical climate, although conditions on the ship varied from luxurious to overcrowded and stuffy. The oppressive weather was a common complaint, with heat and dampness making the voyage uncomfortable and tiresome, and seasickness leaving passengers weak. Close-quarter living facilitated the spread of disease, and sometimes travellers were refused entry ashore because of sickness on board. Absent from the accounts of travellers is any concern with the quality of food and water (both on and off-shore) in relation to gastrointestinal illnesses – only artist Aletta Lewis recalled consuming infected food aboard the American warship *U.S.S. Ontario* in 1929. Instead, malnutrition and dysentery were frequently observed in the Islander population often as part of an evaluation of their suitability for labour.

The threat of disease transmission was reinforced by strict quarantine regulations that were imposed before they could disembark. The devastating effects of highly-contagious diseases such as influenza or measles were demonstrated in mass epidemics in the world, and specific outbreaks in the Pacific Islands. The 1918 flu pandemic spread throughout the Pacific Islands, and only American Samoa and New Caledonia employed effective quarantine that prevented outbreaks. Similarly, thirteen percent of the Rotuman population died in 1911 from the measles because the medical/port authority was absent when a passenger boat arrived. Quarantine control

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30 Harold Nossiter found that Fatu Hiva was closed to visitors in 1937 because of disease. Nossiter, *Southward Ho!*, 103. When Captain Doorly and his crew were quarantined at Papeete he described monotonous and stifling hot days. Doorly, *In The Wake*, 294. Hannah Chewings reported the death of a passenger and a crew member on board her trip in 1900. She noted ‘sickness interfered with our enjoyment, and our fever patients were wearying to be gone from the land of malaria.’ Hannah Chewings, *Amongst Tropical Islands, or, Notes and observations Made During a Visit of the S.S. “Moresby” in 1899, to New Guinea, New Britain and the Solomons Islands* (Adelaide 1900), 27, 31.

31 Lewis, *They Call Them Savages*, 231.

32 No afflicted Pacific Island lost less than 5% of its population and Western Samoa lost 22%. Sandra M. Tomkins, ‘The Influenza Epidemic of 1918-19 in Western Samoa’, *The Journal of Pacific History*, 27:2 (1992), 181. Australian quarantine was more successful in reducing the impact of the flu on Australia and softened the impact on some of the Islands which were serviced by Australian shipping.

33 The virus arrived from Samoa with an infected passenger. ‘13% of the approximately 2,600
was important in protecting the Australian mainland, as much as it was about protecting the Islands. The transfer of the bubonic plague to San Francisco from a steamship returning from Honolulu in 1900 was a reminder of the potential dangers posed by unrestricted mobility in the Pacific Ocean.\textsuperscript{34}

Once ashore, the most obvious signs of disease were visible skin diseases. Travellers noted rashes, lumps, boils and sores, such as yaws.\textsuperscript{35} As Caroline David explained in 1899:

There were Fiji sores, sprained ankles, tropical bilious attacks and sunburn, yaws or tonu, as the Funafutians call it, lafa and magesu (Tokelau ring-worm and itch)...\textit{[T]he tropical sores were the most troublesome ailments; the least scratch, unless at once disinfected and covered from flies, would inflame and develop into an ulcer needing constant care.}\textsuperscript{36}

This was commonly attributed to poor cleanliness and personal hygiene standards. Beatrice Grimshaw, for example, observed in relation to scales, ulcers, sores and other unpleasant skin diseases in Tambia village in Fiji: ‘Their clothes – only a loin-cloth apiece – were unspeakably dirty, and every unoccupied moment seemed to be spent in hunting through each other’s huge frizzled heads for certain small game, which when found, was immediately eaten by the finder!’\textsuperscript{37} In contrast to romantic ideals of naked freedom and primitivism, Julian Thomas watched as labour recruits from the residents of Rotuma died of measles, and within 1 year of the epidemic, the population of the island was reduced by nearly one-fifth.’ G. Dennis Shanks et al., ‘Measles Epidemics of Variable Lethality in the Early 20th Century’, \textit{American Journal of Epidemiology}, 179:4 (2014), 2.

\textsuperscript{35} Yaws was a common disease, and on islands like Malaita and Makira the infection rate was in the vicinity of sixty percent in the 1920s. Yaws eradication campaigns began in the 1920s, but were not fully successful until the 1950s and 1960s. \textit{Solomon Islands Historical Encyclopaedia 1893-1978} [accessed 15 March 2014 at http://www.solomonencyclopaedia.net/biogs/E000131b.htm].
\textsuperscript{36} David, \textit{Funafuti}, 48.
\textsuperscript{37} ‘Nearly half of them seemed to be suffering from unpleasant skin diseases. One or two were scaly like fish; several were marked with the horrible Fijian “thoko” – a disease that shows itself in flat, button-like eruptions, turning by-and-by to formidable sores – some had open ulcers, all black with flies, on arms and legs; and not a few were generally sick and decrepit-looking.’ Grimshaw, \textit{From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands}, 120-121.
New Hebrides ‘they ate their meals like apes’ and remarked, ‘I wished they would wear clothes.’

Although not as common, the stigma that was attached to the incurable diseases of leprosy and elephantiasis, and the physical deformities that they caused, made them a subject of fear and fascination to travellers. Elephantiasis, also known as lymphatic filariasis, is caused by parasitic worms spread by the bites of infected mosquitoes, although its cause and remedies were not well known in the early twentieth century. Australian meteorologist Clement Lindley Wragge in 1906 expressed anxiety when sharing food with an infected person, and in 1929 Lewis was upset when her friend contracted the disease in American Samoa: ‘It was intolerable to think of Ava’s straight, well-formed body falling into the clutches of this inexorable disease.’ Descriptions of the disease emphasised ‘the horrifying proportions that made a grotesque of a man’, according to plantation overseer Eric Muspratt who observed in the 1920s disfigurement so extreme that one man carried his swollen parts in a wheelbarrow. Although it was not fatal, elephantiasis caused poverty and social stigma, a consequence that Sydney Walter Powell feared in the 1910s when he was diagnosed in Tahiti: ‘I have elephantiasis, an abominable disease, which for months past I have dreaded... when the doctor told me I must leave here I dreaded banishment and forgot the disease.’

Leprosy was also a widespread disease with a severe social stigma. The first International Leprosy Congress in 1897 in Berlin recommended the isolation of patients, based on medical thought that the disease was highly contagious and incurable. As a result, colonial governments established quarantine stations on small remote islands throughout the Pacific for leper isolation. Fear of contagion meant

38 Thomas, *Cannibals and Convicts*, 336-337.
40 Muspratt, *Fire of Youth*, 43.
41 Powell, *A South Sea Diary*, 62.
42 Quail Island was a New Zealand quarantine station from 1851. The Central Lepers Hospital was built on Makogai in Fiji in 1911. During its time it treated over 4500 patients, more than 1500 died. Jane Buckingham, ‘The Pacific Leprosy Foundation Archive and Oral Histories of Leprosy in the South Pacific’, *The Journal of Pacific History*, 41:1 (2006), 82.
that missionaries and volunteers often provided care to these people. These islands fascinated Australian travellers passing by at a distance, in a similar way that the sublime decay of ruins and prisons attracted the subversive tourist, yet face-to-face encounters were avoided. Arnold Safroni-Middleton, a wandering artist and musician in the late nineteenth century, wrote tales featuring a Hawaiian leper girl who was symbolic of the romanticism of ‘martyrdom’ and forbidden romance. The leper colony on Moloka’i Island in Hawaii was the most well-known to Australians, made famous by the popular figure of its caretaker, Father Damien. The example of Moloka’i highlighted the importance of Christian charity and sympathy, while also demonstrating how colonial governments regarded the disease as ‘a symbol of native inferiority and ineptitude, requiring the custodial attention of foreigners with their assumed superior intelligence.’

Whilst encounters with elephantiasis and leprosy were limited, it was the threat of fever which posed a greater danger to Australians, the most common being malaria, consumption (i.e. tuberculosis) and ‘blackwater fever’ (a complication of malaria). As labour recruiter A. Nixon noted on 2 July 1877 about Erromanga: ‘It is a most unhealthy island. Fever ague and chest diseases seem to be...prevalent.’ In 1897 fevers were known to be spread by mosquitoes and were endemic in certain regions, so travellers like Alan John Marshall was aware of the need for mosquito nets whilst visiting the Pacific Islands. Those who fell ill in the Islands wrote vivid accounts of

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43 She was a ‘symbol of the world of poetry, and beautifully beyond my reach.’ Safroni-Middleton, In the Green Leaf, 135, 197.
44 Fr Damien DeVeuster, a Belgian Catholic priest, lived on Molokai from 1873 to 1889 to care for the lepers sent there according to the 1865 Hawaiian ‘Act to Prevent the Spread of Leprosy’. He was later canonised a saint. Robert Louis Stevenson in 1889 wrote a famous open letter defending Fr Damien and criticising the Congregational and Presbyterian churches in Hawaii. His story was referenced by authors such as Safroni-Middleton and Frank Coffee. See Gavan Daws, Holy Man: Father Damien of Molokai (New York 1973).
46 Other fevers included yellow fever, scarlet fever, cholera, chicken pox, typhoid, smallpox and polio.
47 A. Nixon, ‘Inwards Correspondence’ in Colonial Secretary’s Office, Series ID 5253, Item ID 846982, Queensland State Archives (11 April-13 August 1877).
their experience and strong warnings to prospective travellers. Jack McLaren, who suffered malaria and yaws in the 1900s, explained, ‘despite the barbarity, treachery and cunning of the natives, I think the greatest danger in the Solomons was from disease.’ In 1934, British traveller Richard Reynell Bellamy recalled the climate in Australia and the Pacific, admitting that his health had influenced his observations: ‘Perhaps it was not actually so hot as places I had been in on the Queensland coast, and my bad health might have been the reason for my feeling it to such an extent. Certainly I found it unbearable.’ Likewise, Meek looked forward to returning to Australia to ‘recruit my shattered health.’

Fear of fever was linked to a fear of the tropical environment as a cause of disease, and early colonial settler discourse about the northern Australian tropics informed expectations and observations of the Pacific. Acclimatisation to new and foreign environments was a slow and inconsistent process, as Anderson shows in early colonial settlement of Australia. Although the temperate southern climate of the continent had become normalised by the 1870s, the suitability of the tropical north for European settlement was still contested. This concern also applied to the tropical Pacific Islands, as one 1920 handbook shows: ‘It [New Caledonia] would not be so healthful as Australia, which has its cleansing and purifying hot, dry winds, and its health-giving odours from eucalypt forests as well as a population rather more observant of sanitary conditions, and, perhaps, the practice of the virtues.’ Fears of disease were founded on actual incidences of European deaths in tropical climates, yet this anxiety was also encouraged by exaggerated and distorted stories. According to Raphael Cilento, an Australian medical administrator and tropical health expert in the 1920s and 30s, the tropics were a region of imagined danger:

> to the great majority of the inhabitants of temperate climates, the word ‘tropical’ conjures up visions of sweltering mangrove flats, the haunts of the

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51 Meek, *A Naturalist in Cannibal Land*, 196.
crocodile; of rank and steaming forests that exhale the musky odour of decaying vegetation and conceal within their leafy depths ‘miasmic’ swamps; of deadly snakes and of the skulking savage with his poisoned spear.  

Indeed, these images appeared in Australian travel accounts. Trader Joseph H.C. Dickinson described ‘an abomination of stench and flies’ in Ugi, Thomas was wary of ‘noxious odours’ that emanated from the ground in Tanna, and Powell believed the soil of Tahiti had caused elephantiasis in his foot.  

The hot environment was also believed to affect the body and mind, sometimes termed ‘colonial fever’ or in Cilento’s case, ‘heat stagnation.’ Schools of ‘tropical medicine’, such as the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine in Townsville, provided scientific backing to the idea that the tropical environment could induce laziness and physical, moral and psychological degeneration. The fear of ‘going native’, which had long been expressed as both fantasy and anxiety in European literature about the Pacific, became scientifically verified and located in the tropics. By World War II, the phrase ‘to go troppo’ was used by Australian troops fighting in the Pacific Islands to describe a loss of sanity. Australian travel accounts reiterated this sentiment. Muspratt observed one Australian plantation overseer in the Solomon Islands, who had ‘practically gone native struggling with a poorly-equipped and fever-stricken plantation’, and blamed the environment for leaving him ‘broken’ and ‘so full of fever that he trembled continually.’ They also described beachcombers and residents ‘wrecked by alcoholism’ and warned travellers that the Islands were not

56 From 1899 to 1906, colonial governments established schools in tropical medicine to test the suitability of races in tropical environments, and the use of vaccines. Anderson argues that these schools proved that white bodies were not degenerating physically, but mental deterioration could occur: ‘Europeans commonly found that they suffered a loss of mental activity and power of concentration, lack of confidence and failing memory, all of which cause a decreased working capacity.’ Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness*, 119.  
57 Muspratt, *My South Sea Island*, 45, 48. On his solo sailing voyage from Sydney to California, Fred Rebell was reluctant to stay longer in Fiji for this reason. He remarked: ‘I spent only seven weeks in Suva but already by the end of that time I began to feel “Malua fever” – the disease of procrastination and disinclination to work – creeping over me.’ Rebell, *Escape to the Sea*, 88-89.
suitable for women or children. Powell’s criticism of European weaknesses was framed in terms of progress: ‘The European can rise higher than the Tahitian, but he can sink immeasurably lower. It makes me wince to see the common white man beside the common native; physically, mentally and morally he is the native’s inferior. It is not his fault: degeneration has followed degradation, as nothing can prevent it from doing.’

As racial theory gained popularity, a more hereditary view of disease shaped medical thought in Australia from the 1880s onwards. This did not completely displace environmental factors and did not become conventional until the early twentieth century. Germ theory, for example, was also influential in identifying other humans (and animals) as potential carriers of disease, rather than genetics. Yet policies of racial segregation could be justified by both hereditary and environmental explanations, and this became formalised with the White Australia Policy, with immigration and quarantine acts restricting the flow of people, particularly Asian immigration. As Anderson demonstrates, federation became couched in scientific terms, and white Australia was represented as a scientific experiment. In this experiment, the tropics were situated on the boundary, considered distinct as a ‘separate, racially dubious territory.’ In some cases, it was argued that the tropics would consume the white race, a belief that was used by many proponents of the Queensland labour trade from 1863 to 1906 to justify their claim that white labour was unsuitable for the tropics. The trade, which was driven by the demand for cheap Islander labour for Queensland’s sugar plantations, was vigorously debated in public (see chapter six).

An alternative response was that the tropics would cultivate a new version of the ‘coming man’, or as Cilento described him, ‘a definite type of North Queenslander, suitable for women or children.’ Powell’s criticism of European weaknesses was framed in terms of progress: ‘The European can rise higher than the Tahitian, but he can sink immeasurably lower. It makes me wince to see the common white man beside the common native; physically, mentally and morally he is the native’s inferior. It is not his fault: degeneration has followed degradation, as nothing can prevent it from doing.’

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An alternative response was that the tropics would cultivate a new version of the ‘coming man’, or as Cilento described him, ‘a definite type of North Queenslander,
or tropical-born Australian." A growing number of Australians visiting and residing in the tropics from the 1900s onward proved this point. In northern Queensland, the collapse of the labour trade had forced more white settlers to work in the tropics, undermining the idea that white labour was unsuitable in the tropics. In the Pacific Islands, the experiences of resident traders, plantation overseers, missionaries, and colonial officials provided additional evidence challenging this assumption. Their accounts describing day-to-day life often dealt with the impact of European disease, as their engagement required them to sustain a healthy labour force for the plantation (as in the case of Muspratt), supervise and educate a congregation for the mission (as in the case of Helen Cato), or maintain good relationships with their neighbours (as in the case of David). Concerted efforts by governments and businesses to encourage tourism and economic investment in the region by promoting a healthy climate contributed to the tropics and tropical diseases became less feared over time (see chapter two).

Depopulation

In travel accounts, immediately after initial observations of disease and hygiene, Australian travellers usually referred to depopulation, which was widely believed to exist in the region. As Australian anthropologist Herbert Ian Hogbin wrote, 'everyone who has the smallest acquaintance with the literature of the Pacific is familiar with one at least of the effects of contact with the outside world, depopulation.' Depopulation was accepted by the majority of Australians to be self-evident, and as such, travellers often referred to the issue but rarely dwelled on it. This was a notion applied to Aborigines as well, as Woollacott argues: 'By the last decades

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62 This man was ‘tall and rangy’, ‘sparely built’, moved ‘slowly’ and ‘more deliberately’, ‘conserves his muscular heat-producing energy’, and possessed ‘a pallor of the skin.’ Cilento, The White Man in the Tropics, 73-74.
63 In 1920 the Australasian Medical Congress agreed that North Queensland was suitable for ‘successful implantation of a working white race’, which many Australians referred to over next twenty years. Anderson, The Cultivation of Whiteness, 127.
64 Muspratt, My South Sea Island; Cato, The House on the Hill; David, Funafuti.
65 Herbert Ian Hogbin, Experiments in Civilization: The Effects of European Culture on a Native Community of the Solomon Islands (London 1939), 125.
of the nineteenth century, white Australians, with Western beliefs in social Darwinism
and eugenics supporting them, assumed that Aboriginal people were dying out. That
assumption was so pervasive and secure that the fate of Aborigines was little
discussed.66 Scholars such as Norma McArthur and Donald Denoon have shown that
population estimates made prior to European contact and during the colonial period
were plagued by absences, inaccuracies and inconsistencies.67 Rather than analyse
these problems, I focus on how Australians represented, and exploited, the concept of
depopulation and its supposed causes.

The most common explanation for depopulation that travellers cited was
European disease. Many were well aware of the disastrous effects of past epidemics
caused by early explorers and more recent visitors, such as the outbreak of measles in
Fiji in 1875. These events were highly publicised and well known within Australia,
and accounts usually stressed the immediate detrimental impact on the population,
overlooking other factors such as population growth and recovery.68 Frank Coffee
offers one example, his 1920 account reminding readers of the high death rates in Fiji
in 1875 (which he estimated to be 40,000): ‘Fiji affords a striking example of the
direful results to be apprehended from exposing a race to a new disease, even though
such a malady is comparatively harmless in respect to those who have become in the
course of ages accustomed to its effects.’69 Although improvements in quarantine were
significant in preventing widespread outbreaks of diseases across island groups, some
Australians also believed that Islanders had developed a resistance to European
diseases as part of the evolutionary process. In 1932 Bishop Cecil Wilson discounted
‘illnesses which steamers from Sydney often brought with them’ as a factor
contributing to depopulation. He argued that Islanders were ‘hardy and did not seem

66 Woollacott, To Try Her Fortune in London, 173.
67 Norma McArthur, Island Populations of the Pacific (Canberra 1968), 345-354; Donald Denoon,
‘Pacific Island Depopulation: Natural or Un-natural History?’ in Linda Bryder and Derek A. Dow,
eds., New Countries and Old Medicine: Proceedings of an International Conference on the History of
Medicine and Health (Auckland 1995).
68 Ibid., 336.
69 Coffee, Forty Years on the Pacific, 171.
only in very isolated islands could a contemporary effect be seen, such as David’s visit to Funafuti in 1897: ‘we were thoughtful enough to bring with us from Fiji a fine assortment of influenza germs, and these ran riot among the native population. A few days after our arrival two-thirds of the people were down with it, and dismal objects they looked.’

A more probable encounter was with diseases caused by poverty, malnutrition, overcrowding and dispossession. Growing urban centres, plantations, and mission stations were potential sources of diseases like tuberculosis because of their higher population density. In the case of plantations, poor working conditions placed Islanders at increased risk. This was framed as a clash of primitive and modern, in which ‘civilisation intrudes with toil, disease and drabness and the Pacific yields to its advance.’ Comments were more often focused on corruption evident in the main towns, with descriptions of sexual promiscuity and alcohol abuse attributed as both cause and symptom of depopulation. For government agent Douglas Rannie, depopulation in the New Hebrides was a combination of ‘natural laziness, filthy habits and syphilis…and from the vices of drink introduced by white men.’ He was also critical of mission rules which forced Islanders to wear ill-fitting clothes, a criticism that was regularly applied by others opposed to missionary influence, and reiterated in the 1920s and 30s by those lamenting the erosion of traditional ways of life. Diseases of development may have been easily observable in the main towns and ports, but the traveller’s ability to evaluate the healthiness of an island was limited as they often did not venture further inland. In some cases a traveller could misinterpret the absence of

71 David, *Funafuti*, 52.
72 Fox, *Oceania*, 3.
74 ‘It is a pity to think that having become so civilised, they will soon die off through the wearing of European clothing.’ Ibid., 11. Missionaries initially responded to early traders by arguing that depopulation was a result of Islanders acquiring European weaponry which made killing more efficient, however this argument did not survive beyond the 1800s. See Kerry R. Howe, ‘Firearms and Indigenous Warfare: A Case Study’, *The Journal of Pacific History*, 9 (1974).
sick people in villages as a sign of healthiness, rather than as a sign of low life expectancy. 

Depopulation was also blamed upon generalised racial deficiencies attributed to Pacific Islanders, including their supposed physical weakness, moral and psychological immaturity, and primitive behaviours and customs. Coffee’s explanation of Fiji’s depopulation was typically vague, placing blame on both parties by identifying ‘the comparatively weak maternal feeling of Fijian women (the infant mortality being very high), the introduction of new diseases, such as measles, whooping-cough, influenza, etc., with which the natives cannot cope, and the disappearance of many of their old social customs.’ The supposed childlike, irresponsible and lazy racial characteristics of Islanders were frequently cited as a major cause. In the 1910s, Ralph Stock described ‘an irresponsible child, and, alas, a child who is dying’, whilst Revered John Wear Burton noted, ‘if the average white resident of Fiji is questioned as to the prime cause of the decrease of the population, in four cases out of five the reply will be, “Laziness – pure unadulterated laziness”.’

Travellers who applied these racial stereotypes to Pacific Islanders found support in local government officials and missionaries who stood to benefit from entrenched ideas of Islander inferiority. Depopulation was a convenient tool to justify colonial rule. For example, in response to the measles outbreak in Fiji in 1875, a Royal Commission was established in 1893 ‘to inquire into the decrease of the native population.’ Three years later it reported: ‘Consequently many must have died of starvation and neglect; but the heavy mortality was also attributable in great measure to the people’s dire ignorance of the simplest nursing precautions, to their blind unimpressiveness, their want of ordinary foresight, their apathy and despair. They became at once…overwhelmed, dismayed, cowed, abandoning all hope of self-

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75 Denoon, ‘Pacific Island Depopulation: Natural or Un-natural History?’, 329.
76 Coffee, Forty Years on the Pacific, 171.
77 Stock, The Confessions of a Tenderfoot, 206; Burton, The Fiji of To-day, 213. When describing Polynesians as ‘big, lively babies’, Tichborne attributed their degradation to their susceptibility to white vices. He wrote, ‘None of them possess in any degree that robustness of intellect and character.’ Tichborne, Rambles in Polynesia by Sundowner, 6-7.
preservation, and becoming incapable of any effort to save themselves or others.\textsuperscript{78}
This report was widely circulated and interpreted by other travellers and residents in the early twentieth century, such as Burton, whose mission publication \textit{Fiji of To-day} reviewed the commission’s conclusions. In his summary he represented mission work as necessary to combat many of the alleged causes of depopulation (‘inbreeding’, ‘epidemic diseases’, ‘the condition of women’, ‘the narcotic influence of the communal system’, ‘sexual depravity’, ‘premature civilization’ and ‘ignorance in the treatment of disease’), although he challenged other explanations which contradicted Christian doctrine, such as ‘abolition of polygamy.’\textsuperscript{79}

Causes of depopulation in the Pacific may have been unclear to Australian travellers, yet it was frequently assumed that the process was uniformly experienced by all Pacific Islanders. The supposed racial superiority of Polynesians did not make them more resistant to the ‘inevitable’ racial decline. In fact, the depopulation trend in Polynesia may have been more likely due to the size of the islands and the nature of European contact.\textsuperscript{80} The European mythmaking of Tahiti and French Polynesia as sites of desire were influential in shaping Australian attitudes to disease there. As described in chapter three, this region was idealised as a primitive paradise and travellers who were disappointed upon arrival blamed disease and corruption, among other factors. As Muspratt noted, ‘some strange quality dwelt here, a lonely forgotten spirit now dying in isolation in this modern world. Like Honolulu, only more so.’\textsuperscript{81} A longer period of European contact with Polynesia meant that there was a larger body of literature by explorers and missionaries about disease and depopulation. For explorers, Polynesia was enshrined as superior to Melanesia, and as a land of sexual desire, it

\textsuperscript{79} Burton, \textit{The Fiji of To-day}, 197-216.
\textsuperscript{80} Denoon suggests three explanations for depopulation in Polynesia: that small island populations suffered less that islands with larger population density and size; that Melanesia was considered unappealing whilst Polynesia was desired as a place of ‘rest and recuperation’; and because Polynesia had a longer period of contact with Europeans that Melanesia.. Denoon, ‘Pacific Island Depopulation: Natural or Un-natural History?’, 405.
\textsuperscript{81} Muspratt, \textit{Fire of Youth}, 181.
was well known for the European legacy of venereal disease. For the missionaries who established themselves in French Polynesia before moving west, depopulation was a convenient myth to justify their work.

If the Polynesian ideal was degraded by its long association with Europeans, the Melanesian was doomed to die because of his or her racial inferiority. As a region less known to Europeans, Melanesia was imagined as more diseased and more dangerous than Polynesia. Melanesia was given the tropical imagery of decay and rottenness, and compared to an idealised east which had 'higher and more vigorous races.' This was supported by the presence of diseases that were not found commonly in the eastern islands, such as malaria. Its proximity to Australia, and reports from sandalwood, bêche-de-mer and labour trading with the region, had introduced stereotypes of Melanesian savagery and backwardness into the Australian public consciousness (see chapter six). According to Coffee, ‘the [Queensland] plantations turned out some of the most accomplished specimens of savage scoundrels imaginable – men who had grafted on to their originally depraved natures the vices of civilization, but none of its virtues.’ Due to scientific theories that situated people according to stages of development from savage to civilised, depopulation was considered a symptom of stagnation, or worse, degradation. In some cases, this was a call to action for Australians. For Presbyterian minister Charles Stuart Ross, the merits of Christian education were emphasised by describing the Fijian as disadvantaged by

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82 For example, Sydney Walter Powell noted that Tahiti suffered from ‘disease due to debauchery’ and that for Tahitian women, ‘to associate with foreign sailors is the utmost degradation.’ Powell, *Adventures of a Wanderer*, 165.
83 ‘The widespread belief in the decrease of this population following European discovery and settlement was probably inspired by the “lamentable” and “woeful” decreases which had been reported by an earlier contingent of missionaries in Tahiti and the Cook Islands. Their preoccupation with deaths rather than births is understandable when disasters such as hurricanes and epidemics and famines could be turned to advantage in hastening conversions.’ McArthur, *Island Populations of the Pacific*, 160.
85 Denoon, ‘Pacific Island Depopulation: Natural or Un-natural History?’, 399.
86 Coffee, *Forty Years on the Pacific*, 105.
'centuries of moral degradation and intellectual atrophy.' In others, it was accepted that extinction was the only outcome.

Australian attitudes to the Pacific Islands were informed by domestic policies and debates about Australian Aborigines, who were assumed to be the most primitive and savage race, and thus doomed to extinction. Considered inferior to Pacific Islanders (both Melanesian and Polynesian), Aborigines were widely expected to become extinct from the 1830s, an assumption that hardened through the early twentieth century. Although the Melanesian 'race' was believed to possess the same ability to stagnate or degrade as Aborigines, Australian attitudes towards the Pacific Islands were generally more positive. This was evident in government policies towards the territories of Papua and New Guinea, which were motivated by a concern for Australia's international image, and a belief that Melanesians could be 'civilised' in a way that Aborigines could not. In 1886 Labor parliamentarian Charles McDonald conceded, 'We know that the treatment of the aborigines in Australia has been a blot upon Australian history. I hope that it will not be repeated in the case of British New Guinea.'

Comparisons between Pacific Islanders and Aborigines were very rare in Australian travel accounts. This may be attributed to the focus on more exotic foreign images, or the reality that few urban white Australians came into contact with Aborigines. Even for travellers who described their encounters with Aborigines and

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87 Ross, Fiji and the Western Pacific, 133.
88 The ability of Aborigines and Pacific Islanders to progress, stagnate or degrade was highly contested within scientific circles. Advocates of soft heredity, proposed by French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Pierre Antoine de Monet Chevalier de Lamarck, argued for the inheritance of acquired characteristics. The opposing view was derived from Darwinism and argued that genetics were impervious to environmental influences. It was taken to the extreme by eugenicists in the twentieth century.
89 In practice, for example, it meant that only colonial officers working in Papua and New Guinea received specialised training in anthropology, geography and hygiene, despite the welfare of Papuans and Aborigines frequently coming under control of the same ministerial office. From 14 March 1923 - 11 December 1928 the Northern Territory and the Territory of Papua were held jointly by the Home and Territories Department, and from 24 June 1925 the territory of New Guinea was added.
90 Charles McDonald in Thompson, Australia and the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century, 8.
91 Woollacott, To Try Her Fortune in London, 175. Only William Ramsay Smith and John Wear Burton described encounters with Aborigines in detail.
Pacific Islanders within the same text, they tended to confine each meeting to separate chapters and observed racial characteristics without cross-comparison. This suggests that Australians considered Aborigines and Pacific Islanders distinct and separate races, preferring Islanders as supposedly superior, exotic and possessing greater capacity to progress. In addition, in these decades Australians displayed a more active interest in ‘civilising’ the Pacific than they did in advancing the Aboriginal cause.

Australians began to articulate more clearly their roles and responsibilities in ‘civilising’ the Pacific from the 1920s. War had energised a sense of Australian racial character and the acquisition of new Pacific Island territories post-World War I gave further impetus to a more involved Australian position in the region. According to Hogbin in 1939, ‘a definite obligation exists to encourage the social development of the natives so that they can eventually, after perhaps several generations, participate in the life of the world on the same sort of footing as ourselves.’ Depopulation provided a convenient cause to justify Australian colonial presence (and in some cases a measure of its success), resonating with the concerns of travellers post-World War I that the primitive and natural Pacific ideal was threatened.

Progress was encouraged in Pacific health and development in the hope of arresting the alleged trend of depopulation. In Australia, doctors returning from war felt empowered in managing populations, and there was a greater interest in tropical health by the Australian government, particularly driven by Cilento. Although this government interest faded by the end of the 1920s, Anderson argues, ‘it was the biological utopianism of Cilento and his coterie that resonated most loudly outside the medical profession and health bureaucracies, as it appealed especially to those political

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92 For example, Stock, The Confessions of a Tenderfoot; Safroni-Middleton, Sailor and Beachcomber; Meek, A Naturalist in Cannibal Land; Smith, In Southern Seas.
93 Hogbin, Experiments in Civilization, 231.
94 Anderson, The Cultivation of Whiteness, 129-136. The Commonwealth Department of Health was established in 1921 and it funded the study of Tropical Hygiene at the Townsville Institute. Cilento became director of the institute in 1922 and shifted its focus to more practical activities like training health officers for Pacific colonies. He offered a short course in tropical medicine for district officers, plantation managers and missionaries, and a longer course for medical graduates. Cilento went on to become director of health in New Guinea in 1924.
radicals and bohemian writers who were trying in the 1930s to distinguish a new national character. At the same time other nations were having an impact on health and disease in the Pacific, prompted by advances in medicine and post-war humanitarian sentiment. The Central Medical School in Fiji was the first of its kind in 1929, funded by the American philanthropic organisation, the Rockefeller Foundation. Building on training programs developed in Fiji since the 1880s, it began training ‘native medical practitioners.’ Australian missions and businesses were also eager to broadcast their role in developing health facilities and programs, and as a result, combating depopulation. According to Bishop Cecil Wilson,

I do not think that at the end of my seventeen years there had been any great decrease in the population...Our Mission, with its doctors, its medicines, its high standard of family life...and its opposition to harmful customs, could only help to stabilize the people, neutralize adverse influences and prevent the depopulation which so-called civilization, with its shoddy clothes, alcohol, firearms, and diseases, almost invariably brings to child races.

Although in many cases this was a blatant tool to support their own cause, the work that they did and the experience they acquired should not be overlooked.

Improved medical knowledge and treatment in the early twentieth century also shaped perceptions of disease in the Pacific, resulting in a diminishing fear of human carriers of disease, and greater confidence in medicine. Furthermore, medical and scientific discourses in the 1930s began to challenge ‘formalist taxonomies of race’ according to Anderson, who identifies this shift in government policies towards

95 Ibid., 176.
96 Annie Stuart, ‘Contradictions and Complexities in an Indigenous Medical Service’, *The Journal of Pacific History*, 41:2 (2006), 143. Stuart shows that these practitioners were caught in contradictions, being trained to a high standard in European medicine, yet considered inferior to Europeans and encouraged to retain their ‘native habits’ in order to return to their communities: ‘NMPs were to be agents of civilisation, but were themselves expected to remain uncontaminated by “Europeanisation”.’
98 For example, Albert Fuller Ellis attributed health and hygiene improvements in mining labour camps on Ocean Island and Nauru to the efforts of British colonisers. This was used to justify the phosphate mining operations conducted on these islands. Ellis, *Ocean Island and Nauru: Their Story*, 135, 138.
Aborigines changing from isolation to assimilation. Stereotypes remained persistent however, as Stuart shows in records of the Fiji Annual Medical and Health Report of 1936 and 1938, which continued to apply racialised traits to students, classing Polynesians as ‘sanguine’, Melanesians as ‘phlegmatic’ and Micronesians as ‘choleric’.

For Australian travel writers, evidence of depopulation, degradation or progress were difficult to observe during their momentary encounters in the Islands. As sailor Alan John Villiers observed in the Solomon Islands in 1937: ‘Tulagi is frankly and plainly a headquarters for white living...where white meets white, lives with white, thinks white, and plays golf and tennis and cricket and so forth.’ Thus the nature of travel meant that most accounts tended to support the racialist assumptions popular in Australia at the time. Occasionally some travellers departed from these conventions. Villiers’ narrative of yachting in the Pacific was critical of Australian administration and its effects in the Solomon Islands, which led him to question ‘whether new countries...ought ever to be entrusted with the control of native races.’ As described in chapter two, gold prospector John Archibald Fraser wrote in the 1930s that he considered the Fijian his ‘brown-skinned brother’, finding Fijian cannibalism to be no less moral than the British treatment of Aborigines. Similarly, young artist Aletta Lewis became deeply attached to the Samoan community she temporarily lived with in 1929, to the point where she forgot the division between ‘his race and mine’ (see chapter three). In 1939, lone adventurer and sailor Fred Rebell remarked: ‘There is something in those natives [of Fiji] which makes them accept life

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99 Anderson attributes this shift to the idea that Aborigines were ‘archaic’ or ‘dark Caucasian’ (advocated by Adelaide schools in the 1930s), and the changing view of Aborigines as childlike rather than savage. These contributed to the idea that Aborigines were no longer disease carriers but could be absorbed. The assimilation policy was also a practical response to the growth of ‘halfcaste’ populations within Australia. Anderson, The Cultivation of Whiteness, 206.

100 Stuart, ‘Contradictions and Complexities in an Indigenous Medical Service’, 132.

101 Villiers, Cruise of the Conrad, 173.

102 When in the Solomon Islands, Villiers criticised Australia’s record of administration as ‘a bewildering gyration between almost the pampering of the native labour on the one hand, and the creation of unnecessary difficulties for the planter on the other.’ Ibid., 175-176.

103 Fraser, Gold Dish and Kava Bowl, 131.

104 Lewis, They Call Them Savages, 76, 109.
without a struggle...And yet how much are these tendencies racial? How much are they merely climatic and geographical?" 105 The few travel accounts that depart from the conventional narrative of human difference suggest that Australians who stayed for a longer period than the average tourist were better able to witness the contradictions of racial theory and policy in the Pacific, or perhaps that Australians of the 1920s and 30s were more critical of certain stereotypes than those who had gone before them.

**The Asian 'Invasion'**

Australian travel writers also noted the growth of the other populations in the Pacific Islands. Expecting a Pacific populated entirely by primitive Islanders and colonial white masters, instead they were surprised to find evidence of substantial Asian immigration throughout the region. Asians were also encountered along the journey, as crews or passengers on ships, as well as Asian-owned shipping companies. Asian destinations were advertised side by side Pacific Islands within shipping magazines, drawing on similar exotic and alluring stereotypes. In particular, Australian travellers commented on the high concentration of Japanese in Hawaii, Chinese in Tahiti, and Indians in Fiji. These were high-profile stopover destinations for travellers, and Australians had different responses to each group, as well as a more general aversion to a perceived external Asian threat. The economic success and population growth of Asians in the Pacific was attributed to the assumed depopulation of Pacific Islanders, and made them the target of negative and derogatory labelling. Anti-Asian immigration policies in Australia were used by Australian travellers to justify the need to protect Islanders, and reassured them of their own national policy of a 'White Australia.'

Australian reactions to Japanese migrants in Hawaii were characterised by disappointment that their expectations of Hawaiian and/or American society were not met, or general concern about the growing military threat posed by Japan post-World

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War I. Japanese migration was most visible in Hawaii, though they were spread extensively throughout the Pacific Islands. They were also visible in smaller concentrations in pearling stations along the north Queensland coast, as labourers in New Caledonia, Ocean Island, Nauru and on Queensland sugar plantations, and as traders in Micronesia. Few Australians who travelled to the Pacific were familiar with Japanese culture, with the exception of mariner John James Mahlmann.

Sustained labour migration from Japan to Hawaii began from 8 February 1885 as contract labour for sugar and pineapple plantations. By 1920 the Japanese constituted 43% of Hawaii's population. This numerical dominance was a frequent observation of many Australian travellers passing through Hawaii. As Anne Rees shows in her study of Australian female travellers to America, expectations of an exclusively white American nation similar to Australia were shattered by the racial and cultural hybridity of Hawaii. Many Australians represented the Japanese threat as a reproductive one. In 1929 George Meudell suggested they breed quicker than flies or rabbits, and in a patriotic treatise, argued that the Australian 'doors' of immigration not allow 'inferior, ignorant humans.' The idea that Japanese would 'outbreed' other races was also applied to Chinese and Indians in the Pacific. Meudell observed that 'the aborigines [indigenous Hawaiians] are decadent and will shortly vanish as a race', yet his concern for the indigenous population of Hawaii was uncommon, as few


107 Mahlmann, Reminiscences of an Ancient Mariner. Mahlmann lived in Australia and worked as a second officer of a trading ship between Sydney and Auckland. After a failed gold prospecting expedition to New Zealand in 1864 he joined a trading ship which took him to Micronesia, Hawaii, Japan and China. He stayed in Japan from 1871 for 47 years, during which time he transported contract labour from Japan to Hawaii.

108 The first known arrival of Japanese to Hawaii was a shipwreck on 5 May 1806. Between 1869 and 1885 Japan barred emigration to Hawaii in fears that Japanese labourers would be degrading to the reputation of the Japanese race, as had occurred with the Chinese.


110 Meudell, The Pleasant Career of a Spendthrift, 144.
travellers encountered Islanders during their transit at the port. Rather, the Japanese were perceived to spoil the island paradise that many Australians sought, possessing a ‘pervasive, acrid smell of Asia’ which was ‘haunting, persistent, disquieting.”

Not all Australian accounts were as damming and vehement in their opposition to Japanese. Some recognised the racial tensions existing within Hawaii caused by the population growth and economic prosperity of Japanese residents. Although there were many Japanese labourers on plantations, Australian tourists frequently observed them working at the docks and within the town. In 1925 politician Richard Meagher noted, ‘There is an enormous distrust of the Japanese. Rightly or wrongly they get the credit of being at the back of various industrial disturbances.” Robert McMillan, who visited Hawaii in 1903, argued the islands were ‘just simmering in destructive discontent.” Others, such as Paul McGuire, predicted a more mixed future race, arguing ‘He is a Chinese-Japanese-Scandinavian compound with flecks of Polynesian, and he is, I suspect, Pacific Man of to-morrow.” The establishment of Pan-Pacific conferences in the 1930s, many of which were based in Hawaii, also encouraged cross-cultural encounters and sympathetic understanding to a degree.

The 1930s were also marked by fears of war, colouring Australian attitudes to Japanese residents in Hawaii. The White Australia Policy was a source of pride to many Australians, who believed it protected the nation from an Asian invasion: ‘Australia is at once the fortress which the White Race has thinly garrisoned against an Asiatic advance southward, and the most tempting prize to inspire the Asiatic to that advance.” When journalist Eric Baume visited Hawaii in 1937, he proudly stated that Australia did not have ‘any Japanese problem because we took good care we would not.” Although potential enemies were vaguely located in Asia in the

111 Fox, Oceania, 9.
112 Richard Denis Meagher, American Impressions (Sydney 1925), 8.
113 McMillan, There and Back, 358. He continued, ‘The little brown man is absolutely wicked.’
114 McGuire, Westward the Course, 44.
116 Frank Fox, Problems of the Pacific (London 1912), 107.
117 Baume, I Lived These Years, 167.
1920s and 30s, by the end of the decade the military strength of the Japanese attracted the most concern. Their skill had already been proven in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, and their acquisition of Micronesian islands after World War I was well known amongst Australians. This was evident in travel accounts, like those by Villiers, who avoided the Caroline Islands for fear of being called a spy, and Marshall, who, although expressing anti-colonial sentiments, argued for Australian settlement in New Guinea to protect it from Japanese hands.118 Similarly, Thomas McKay explicitly warned his readers that ‘Australians may wake up some fine morning to find Japan installed as their next-door neighbour.”

The Chinese influence in the Pacific Islands was also frequently noted by Australian travellers. However, the Chinese were more often identified with economic prosperity than the Japanese. Chinese, ‘Chinamen’ or ‘Orientals’ were described in various locations: ‘John Chinaman’ fishing in Hawaii, at ‘Sam Doos’ restaurant in the Solomon Islands, walking through ‘Chinatown’ in Suva, as traders in the Gilbert Islands, and ‘Asiatic’ crew on ships.120 Australians were also familiar with Chinese since their immigration to the New South Wales and Victorian gold fields in the 1850s. They were the largest racial minority in Australia, other than Aborigines, and by the late 1870s, their population peaked at 38,553.121 Their wide geographical distribution encouraged fear of a racial overpowering of the Pacific Islands and Australia.

The Chinese had a long history of contact with the Pacific Islands, first as carpenters and cooks travelling with sandalwood traders in the mid-nineteenth century, then as traders, and indentured labourers in French Polynesia, New Guinea, Samoa, Nauru and Ocean Island. Their numbers remained relatively small until the 1930s, but they were noted for their economic enterprise (as cooks and store owners) and incurred

119 McKay, Seeing the World Twice 1926 1935 xv.
120 James Park Thomson, Round the World (Brisbane 1904), 8; Villiers, Cruise of the Conrad, 172; Allan, Homeward bound, 24; Rosa Angela Kirkcaldie, In Gray and Scarlet (Melbourne 1922), 30; Osborne, Through the Atolls of the Line; Thomas, Cannibals and Convicts, 49.
121 Woollacott, To Try Her Fortune in London, 173.
the enmity of Europeans because they were frugal, willing to work long hours, lived more simply, and could undersell European traders.122 These concerns were evident in the 1932 article ‘Chinese problem in the South Seas’ in the Pacific Islands Monthly.123 Chinese were also vocal and active in defending their rights – this was demonstrated when the Chinese consul-general in Australia sent a representative to the Solomon Islands to challenge discriminatory policies, and in the New Hebrides when Chinese residents formed a ‘Chinese club’ in 1932 in response to anti-Chinese sentiment.124

In particular, Australians criticised Chinese dominance in Tahiti. This was due to the highly romanticised Polynesian ideal, the large population of Chinese residing there, their relative economic prosperity, and the low visibility of other Asian cultures.125 Initially, Australian tourists resented Chinese for spoiling the primitive ideal that they expected in Tahiti, although this was one of many corrupting influences to be blamed.126 More threatening to Australians was the potential for interbreeding, the Chinese having freely intermarried with Polynesians in Tahiti from the late nineteenth century, to the extent that Powell wrote in 1942: ‘The Chinese...are in Tahiti absorbed.’127 This reflected a wider concern about the fragility of the Pacific Islander races, and the proliferation of ‘half-breeds of various colours.’128 Some, like Powell, believed that ‘the Chinese and the Europeans here have saved the Tahitian race from

122 Willmott, A History of the Chinese Communities, 13. For example in the Solomon Islands, Chinese numbered approximately 10 in 1914, 55 in 1920, 164 in 1931 and 180 in 1941. In the New Hebrides, Chinese first arrived in 1912, and there were 30-40 men by 1934, and 75 by the end of the 1930s. New Caledonia was an exception, with Japanese labour being preferred. In 1887 there were 111 Chinese, but only 39 by 1911, and 16 by 1936.
125 The Chinese influence was strong in Tahiti, with planters dominating the vanilla trade, and possessing sufficient numbers to successfully protest tariffs on Chinese trade and vessels. In the 1890s there were 300-400 Chinese in Tahiti, increasing to 459 in 1908 (213 of whom lived in Papeete), 975 in 1911 and 2,481 in 1917. Newbury identifies two large influxes of Chinese in 1909-14 and 1922-25, as well as Vietnamese and Japanese labourers. Newbury, Tahiti Nui, 263-271.
126 For example, see Meudell, The Pleasant Career of a Spendthrift, 145; Napier, Men and Cities, 21. According to Nossiter, ‘In some streets I could imagine myself in part of China...Tahiti is to-day a land of glamour and false romance.’ Nossiter, Southward Ho!, 138.
127 Powell, A South Sea Diary, 24. See also Albert William Pearse, Recent Travel (Sydney 1914), 134; Villiers, Cruise of the Conrad, 291.
128 Irwin and Goff, No Longer Innocent, 90.
its threatened extinction,' but this view belonged to a minority. Concerns about interbreeding were not as prevalent in Melanesia, where William E. Willmott demonstrates that, though the majority of Chinese migrants were single men, intermarriage was rare.

Much more common and widespread was a fear of Chinese dominance, both in the Pacific Islands and Australia. This reflected a broader concern of an Asian ‘invasion’ in the region, suggested by travellers like Safroni-Middleton who indiscriminately blended racial characteristics to imagine a hybrid race of ‘several stealthy-footed followers of Mohammed, a kind of mongrel, half-caste Chinese-Indian.’ Whilst these exaggerated and blended stereotypes were common, other travellers experienced genuine surprise and ambivalence, as tourist Alfred Hill’s account in 1927 shows:

He is quiet, law-abiding, patient and persevering, biding his time and opportunity and then seizing it with both hands and coming out on top. This is the history of almost every island in the Pacific, and gives thought to those who consider the ultimate destiny of the lands bordering it. It comes as rather a rude shock to an Australian to find that the Chinese are treated by the whites and natives with the same deference as is extended to the white man. They also travel first class on the steamers, dine in the saloon, and frequent the smokerooms and lounges, also best seats in the pictures. At first one feels a repugnance, but, finding it is the accepted custom, one gradually sees the sense, and the Chinaman is treated an equal, which, in most cases he is, if not a superior.

As Hill’s comments suggest, the clearest danger perceived by Australians was the Chinese work ethic and their subsequent economic prosperity. Australians frequently identified Chinese as business owners throughout the region, describing them as hard

working and shrewd yet cunning and undermining. In Nossiter’s view, the Chinese took advantage of the weak:

the Chinaman works hard wherever he goes, keeps his shop open for trade day and night and quickly becomes the shopkeeper of a town or village. They undersell the other traders, whom they put out of business...In the old civilized countries as India, Ceylon, Egypt and Arabia, they are not to be found in any numbers, neither does one come across them in Europe. It seems to me the Chinaman selects the newer civilisation where the people are unsophisticated and careless.\(^3\)

Many travellers commented on ‘Chinese trade robbers’ who were seen as corrupt and amoral, or Chinese storekeepers who would manipulate or trick customers. However this resentment was tempered by the view that Chinese were necessary in the Pacific because they were racially superior to Islanders, and thus a more capable and reliable labour force.\(^4\) Upon leaving Circular Quay for the Pacific Islands in 1878, Thomas noted many Chinese ashore: ‘He, like the poor, is always with us; and, like poverty, we look upon him as a disagreeable necessity.’\(^5\)

This ambiguous attitude was also directed towards Indians in the Pacific Islands, particularly the large population living in Fiji. Its proximity to Australia and its close relationship with Australian business, trade, Christian missions and tourism, meant that race was an issue that Australian travel writers in the Pacific most frequently associated with Fiji. Fiji’s location on the border of Melanesia and Polynesia also generated uncertainty amongst Australians who were unsure how to regard people who were physically darker, yet shared similarities in kinship systems,
agriculture, language and traditions with Polynesia, as well as having British colonial affinities. United by their shared British colonial heritage, Australians approached Fiji (and its Indian population) with greater familiarity, and a confidence to pronounce judgement on the merits and faults of its people, and its colonial masters.

New South Wales politician Thomas Henley noted this colonial familiarity when he wrote about Fiji in 1926: ‘The Fijians regard Australia as the big brother, and ask for a brotherly consideration in trade matters.’ Trade and business underlay Australian engagement with the colony, promoting the exchange of people as well as goods. This British imperial connection even prompted some, like J.S. Griffiths, to argue for Australian annexation of Fiji: ‘more than two-thirds of the total trade of Fiji is with Australia, and it is largely the sons of Australia who carry on the work in the islands as overseers or clerks.’ Crucial to Fiji’s economic success was Indian indentured labour, employed from 1879 to provide a labour force that was considered more reliable than Fijian and other Pacific Islander labourers (as well as ensuring the protection of the indigenous population). By the time indentured labour immigration ceased in 1916, over sixty thousand Indians had immigrated to Fiji. Despite their numerical dominance, Indians drew little, if any, comment from Australian travellers. When they did, observations were overwhelmingly negative, repeating the commonly-held belief that Indians were ‘beasts of burden’, primarily serving a commercial purpose.

136 Henley, *Fiji - The Land of Promise*, 58.
138 Five years after its annexation as a British colony, Fiji, under Sir Arthur Gordon, began acquiring Indian indentured labour in 1879. They were considered harder than Fijians, could be obtained in unlimited numbers and were more profitable. Brij Lal and Ken Gillion have written extensively about the Indian community in Fiji, documenting the origins of indentured labour policies and the labourers themselves, their horrendous living and working conditions in Fiji, and their rise from poverty. Kenneth Lowell Oliver Gillion, *Fiji’s Indian Migrants: A History to the End of Indenture in 1920* (Melbourne 1962), 76; Brij V. Lal, *Chalo Jahaji: A Journey Through Indenture in Fiji* (Canberra 2000), 69, 138.
139 Gillion argues that Indians only served a commercial purpose in the eyes of the British colony and its peoples, and Sir Arthur Gordon did not consider a future for Indians beyond indenture. ‘In our period the significance of Gordon’s Fijian policy for the history of the Indians in Fiji lay in the impetus it gave to Indian immigration as the only path of commercial development.’ Gillion, *Fiji’s Indian Migrants*, 18.
Encounters with Indians in Fiji came as no surprise to Australian travellers, who were knowledgeable on the nature of the indentured labour trade, and familiar with Indians living in Australia. The British Empire network had facilitated the exchange of people, goods and ideas between India and Australia since the early nineteenth century. Suzanne Rickard highlights the migration of Indian seamen, servants, convicts and traders to Australia. They were followed by an influx of Indian indentured labour employed by New South Wales pastoralists in the 1830s and 40s, and camel handlers and traders from the north-west provinces of India from the 1860s to the 1890s. They were also visible on cruise ships travelling to and from Australia, preferred as servants in the saloon and on deck, as opposed to other workers who were confined below to the engine rooms. At the time of Federation in 1901, the number of Indians was estimated at 7,637. This number dropped to 3,698 by 1911 as a result of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, which classified Indians as ‘natives of Asia’, overlooking their status as British subjects. Their controlled

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*140* These migrants often travelled on British ships, or attended colonial British staff moving to Australia. Some Indians were of mixed descent, or came from other British colonies, rather than India. Suzanne Rickard, ‘Lifelines from Calcutta’ in James Broadbent, Suzanne Rickard, and Margaret Steven, *India. China. Australia: trade and society 1788-1850* (Glebe 2003), 66, 71, 75, 82. Tony Ballantyne also describes the colonial exchange between Australasia and India, including migration, an emerging print culture, religious and intellectual institutions, political institutions, missionary work, news reports, national debates about race and citizenship, and goods such as tea. Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand’s Colonial Past* (Wellington 2012).

*141* Cameleers were drawn from various tribal groups in British India (Pakistan) and Afghanistan. At their peak in the 1890s, there were an estimated 800 cameleers for 6000 camels. Some site names in Australia have Indian origins because of the cameleers who accompanied the first European explorers inland. Christine Stevens, *Tin Mosques and Ghantowns: A History of Afghan Camel Drivers in Australia* (Melbourne 1989), 26. For further discussion see Michael J. Cigler, *The Afghans in Australia* (Melbourne 1986); Pamela Rajkowski, *In the Tracks of the Camelmen* (Sydney 1987); Peter Scrivener, ‘Mosques, Ghantowns and Cameleers in the Settlement History of Colonial Australia’, *Fabrications: The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand*, 13:2 (2004), 19-41; Heather Goodall, Devleena Ghosh, and Lindi R. Todd, ‘Jumping Ship-Skirting Empire: Indians, Aborigines and Australians across the Indian Ocean’, *Transforming Cultures* eJournal, 3:1 (2008).

*142* South Asians made up 84% of crews on British sailing ships travelling on Eastern routes in 1821 (which includes Australian and Indian routes). ‘By 1855, all British merchant shipping companies were employing 12,000 *lascars* [South Asian workers], 60% of them from the sub-continent of India.’ Goodall, Ghosh, and Todd, ‘Jumping Ship-Skirting Empire’, 54.

*143* Margaret Allen, ‘“Innocents Abroad” and “Prohibited Immigrants”: Australians in India and Indians in Australia 1890–1910’ in Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake, eds., *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective* (Canberra 2005), 120.
mobility was in stark contrast to the unrestricted movement of Australians to India, many of whom were missionaries.

This discrimination was evident in Australian representations of Indians, which emphasised their role as subservient workers. This image was prompted by the jobs in which most Indians were employed, as Ravi Ahuja and Peter Scriver demonstrate with seamen, cameleers and shepherds, which encouraged a stereotype of Indians as docile, compliant and hardy. The terms 'lascars', 'Afghans', 'hawkers' and 'coolies' not only became synonymous with Indians, but also became racialised categories which relegated the Indian to a status inferior to white Australians. Despite this assumed inferiority, Australians expressed concern about the Indian's ascendency, most commonly in objections to the dominance of lascars on ships. Like the Chinese and Japanese, Indians were part of the image of the Asian menace which served to reinforce a nationalist ideology of racial purity and control. Apart from lascars, Indian migrants living in Australia did not constitute a large enough group to prompt the same hostility from Australians that was reserved for Fiji.

Upon arrival in Suva, the first impressions of Australians reveal an immediate awareness of the multi-racial nature of the Fijian community. A 'medley of races' was a phrase commonly used to describe Suva wharf, of which the prevalence of Chinese and Indians was often noted. According to Fraser in the early 1930s:

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144 Ravi Ahuja argues that strict British regulations which restricted mobility encouraged the stereotype of Indian seamen as compliant and docile. Ravi Ahuja in Goodall, Ghosh, and Todd, 'Jumping Ship-Skirting Empire', 47. According to Scriver, Afghan cameleers were notorious for being resilient, due to the nature of their difficult home terrain, their autonomous cultural practices, and their resistance during wars with British colonial forces in India. Scriver, 'Mosques, Ghantowns and Cameleers in the Settlement History of Colonial Australia', 26.

145 'Lascar', derived from the Urdu term *lashkar* meaning army, was a category describing South Asian sailors; 'Afghan' or 'Ghan' was the term used by Australians to describe cameleers of Afghan or Pakistani descent; 'hawker' has a European derivation, describing a man who went from place to place selling goods. It was also used to describe Chinese traders; 'coolie' was a term for unskilled native labourer in India, China, and some other Asian countries. It originated from the Hindi *kūlī* which meant 'day labourer'. *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (September 2014) [accessed 12 September 2014 at http://www.oed.com].

146 Goodall, Ghosh, and Todd, 'Jumping Ship-Skirting Empire', 56.
The streets of Suva were busy, and the medley of people in their distinctive costumes presented a lively and colourful picture... But by far the greatest part of the population seemed to be made up of Indians, Fijians, and Chinese, in about that order numerically. Every waiter and taxi-driver we saw was an Indian, and we learned that the most skilled work, such as that of carpenters and mechanics, was in their slim dark hands. They usually looked much the same as the Hindu hawkers of Australia.\textsuperscript{147}

It is evident from Fraser’s statement that Indians were clearly visible in Suva by the 1930s. This was not the case in the 1880s and 90s when the Indian population was small, isolated and dispersed across Viti Levu. The difficulty of access to other districts in Viti Levu explains the absence of Indians from Australian travel accounts during this time, but by the 1910s Australian visits were more frequent, more prolonged and more probing. As a result, visitors wrote of short, glancing encounters with Indian taxi drivers, Indian shopkeepers, Indian housekeepers, and Indian waiters. According to Meagher in 1924, at the Grand Pacific Hotel ‘the attendants, all Hindoos in immaculate white garb with coloured sashes, prove excellent waiters. Nearly all the motor-car drivers are Hindoos, the one I employed to drive around the island being particularly intelligent. The number of Hindoos in the place is astounding.’\textsuperscript{148} It was also possible to visit the sugar mills of CSR, which offered a passenger service on its commercial line. Harriet Ponder was an experienced traveller who fondly remembered travelling on the train in 1924:

You can travel (free) over the hundred miles of two-foot-gauge railway built by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company to serve the coastal sugar districts of Viti Levu... for a trip on this train provides a miniature pageant of island life that it would not be easy to equal... At every plantation at which the train stops to hand out the week’s pay, the stranger feels inclined to rub his eyes and wonder whether he is travelling in India by mistake.\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{147} Fraser, \textit{Gold Dish and Kava Bowl}, 45.
\textsuperscript{148} Meagher, \textit{American Impressions}, 6.
\textsuperscript{149} Ponder, \textit{An Idler in the Islands}, 18, 56, 61.
When Indians were noticed, the observations were casual, essentialist and negative. Few Australian visitors had sustained contact with Indians in Fiji, and instead drew on the stereotypes used in previous European literature which reinforced an anti-Indian prejudice. This image was enhanced by comparisons to the indigenous Fijian population, who were romanticised as primitive and innocent, and framed within a discourse of protectionism in response to their perceived depopulation.

Australian travellers seeking the exotic Islander were uninterested in Indian culture or traditions, and rarely described Indian houses, clothes, food, or cultural traditions. Indians were considered a foreign intrusion in the Pacific Islands, their population described by Robert Brummitt as ‘the Indian Invasion’ in 1914. When Indian women were described, it was to note the common practice of wearing jewellery whilst working on the plantations. In contrast to their ‘innocent’ Fijian neighbours, Indians were represented as treacherous and cunning, waiting to take advantage of gullible tourists or naïve overseers. These ideas were fuelled by speculative reports in the local press and planters’ fears of Indian uprisings, especially in the 1900s. Stock made dismal observations of Indians at work in 1913: ‘Here were the sullen, the cunning, the murderous, the fawning and the banal,...culled from the dregs of central India... The islander is a child throughout life, the coolie, for the most part, a snake.’ As Stock’s comment suggests, the Indian threat was emphasised by comparing them to the innocent Fijian. It also highlights a commonly-held belief that Indians living in Fiji were outcasts, ‘crowded out’ from their ‘old land.’

Portrayals of Indians in Fiji as outcasts conflicted with conventional representations of India in Australia and the broader British Empire. As David Walker shows, Indians were admired for their ancient cultural traditions, with Australian

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150 Brummitt, A Winter Holiday in Fiji, 132.
151 For example, see Burton, The Fiji of To-day, 319. Allen described Indian women as ‘gaudily dressed, and were ablaze with tawdry jewellery.’ Allan, Homeward bound, 27.
152 Gillion, Fiji’s Indian Migrants, 156-157. They were also encouraged by traders angered by Indian competition, and government fears of Indian unrest due to deteriorating working and living conditions.
154 Fraser, Gold Dish and Kava Bowl, 237.
travellers to India emphasising its ‘antiquity and spiritual wealth.’ Racial notions of Aryanism proposed that Europeans shared a common Aryan heritage with Indians, and identified Asia (specifically central Asia/north India) as the cradle of humanity. This racial connection was amplified by the colonial exchange between Indian and the rest of the empire, not only of goods and people, but also of ideas, as was argued in G.T. Garratt’s *The Legacy of India* (1937): ‘More and more, however, we are beginning to realize the innumerable contacts, throughout the course of history, between East and West, and their mutual indebtedness in language, literature, art and philosophy.’ Although travellers to India may have admired Indian culture, and used similar tropes to describe India as exotic and backward, when observing Indians in Fiji their descriptions became hostile and disparaging.

The strong religious and cultural traditions that Indian migrants brought with them to Fiji made the conversion efforts of European missionaries difficult. Reverend Burton noted the difficulty of converting Indians to Christianity in 1914 (a task that was not undertaken by missionaries until 1892): ‘the results, statistically, are small, and it is to be feared the impression made upon the population is only slight...So far, the Hindu and Muhammadan influences of the home and parents have been stronger than the Christian influence in the school.’ As a result, Indians were represented by missionaries in more negative terms, emphasising their stubbornness and heathenism.

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155 David Walker, *Archaic Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia, 1850-1939* (New Delhi 1999), 19. Using Prime Minister Alfred Deakin’s writing on India in 1893 as an example, Walker argues that ‘ancient India was readily celebrated while modern India and Indians were routinely disparaged.’ (22) See also Allen, ‘“Innocents Abroad” and “Prohibited Immigrants”: Australians in India and Indians in Australia 1890-1910’, 112.

156 Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand’s Colonial Past*, 30-33. Ballantyne’s description of Aryanism in New Zealand can be applied to the Australian context. He traces the spread of Aryanism to British traders who transferred Indian influences to other colonies, including those in Australasia. From the 1860s-1920s, proponents of Aryanism in New Zealand also believed that Pacific Islanders had migrated from Asia.

157 H.G. Rawlinson, ‘Indian in European Literature and Thought’ in G. T. Garratt, ed., *The Legacy of India* (Oxford 1937), 37. Garratt also wrote, ‘within the English community a new school of writers developed, attempting a wider field than history and administration...New types of Englishmen went out East, including journalists and schoolmasters; they brought their wives, and were visited by tourists...These factors encouraged the production of fiction, partly for the Indian market and partly for those in England who liked to think of India as a country where Englishmen had strange adventures.’ (413)

and contrasting them with indigenous Fijians who were often described as the model Pacific Islander because they had been Christianised. This filtered into Australian travel accounts like those of Methodist doctor Brummitt, who concluded that Indians were 'often very ignorant and superstitious...subject to the most violent passions, which often find expression in violent deed...under the influence of jealousy or of revenge.' Safroni-Middleton's comparison emphasised the fragility of Fijians, arguing that new Eastern religions threatened traditional religious beliefs:

The Indian sadhu (saint) sits by the line of dens and stores under the palms; he looks like some carved holy image as he stares with bright, unblinking eyes. The natives' wooden idols have long since been smashed, or have rotted away and that living idol of the East is one from many cargoes that have arrived to take the place of the old deaf South Sea idols. The new idols are real...the deaf, dumb wooden gods of heathen times were sanctified compared with these new immigrant idols that breathe!

The perpetuation of negative Indian stereotypes was closely connected to their association with hard labour and industry. Indians were often overlooked because they did not match the exotic imaginings of a carefree island way of life, and the realities of life working on sugar plantations and mills were not appealing or picturesque. Burton was one of the earliest Australians to detail the terrible living conditions of indentured labourers:

The coolie 'lines' (as they are called) are long rows of tarred, wooden buildings, which might be taken as the very apotheosis of architectural ugliness...In each of these miserable kennels three men, or one family, have

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159 As Reverend John Paton noted, 'Thus died a man who had been a cannibal chief, but by the grace of God and the love of Jesus has been changed, transfigured into a character of light and beauty.' John Gibson Paton, Thirty Years with South Sea Cannibals: Autobiography of John G. Paton ed. James Paton (Chicago 1964), 108.

160 Brummitt, A Winter Holiday in Fiji, 138.

161 Safroni-Middleton, A Vagabond's Odyssey, 56.
to eat and sleep...Vice, wickedness, and abjectness abound. Personal filth is ever in evidence, and life seems to have turned rancid.162 Framed within a discourse of labour and commerce, the Indian work ethic reinforced the undisputed assumption of the Fijian’s unwillingness to do work.163 Like most Europeans, Henley considered idleness a natural trait of the Fijian race, and attributed it to the natural abundance of the islands and an ‘ingrained conception of communal rights.’164 According to journalist Charles Edwin Woodrow Bean in 1909, ‘The Fijian is a gentleman, and lives in comfort...[he] is there for ornament, not for use.’165 Similarly, Indians were believed to have a natural affinity for hard labour, and to possess powers of endurance which make them suitable plantation workers.166

With this potential came a warning about their supposed tendency to violence and the need for strict discipline, a stereotype initially born out of planters’ fears of Indian uprisings.167 Fears of violence may also have been stoked by anticolonial protests in India in the 1920s and 30s.168 It was a common assumption in Australian travel writing that Indians committed many murders, often of their overseers or Indian women. For example, Bean wrote: ‘The strange part of it is that, though he seemed so spiritless, he had been committing nearly all the murders in the island...the Indian murders simply because he is passionately moral.’169 In reality, Australian travellers did not encounter violent Indians. Instead, contact was usually momentary and superficial, and Indians were described as serious and unfriendly. This may have been

162 Burton, The Call of the Pacific, 107. For an Australian account of life on a sugar plantation, see Gill, Turn North-East at the Tombstone.
163 Lal, Chalo Jahaji, 69.
164 Henley, Fiji - The Land of Promise, 56.
165 Bean, With the Flagship of the South, 57. He continues, ‘The Indian would have been a failure as an ornament. But he did not try to be one.’
166 Burton, The Call of the Pacific, 104.
167 Lal, Chalo Jahaji, 174.
168 ‘Even in the early 1920s the anticolonial Indian nationalists were already infamous in Fiji. By the late 1920s India was known among Fiji Europeans as a land of religious and communal violence and all manner of agitation and strife. If Indian political voices had been illegitimate since indenture days, they were no dangerous as well.’ John Dunham Kelly, A Politics of Virtue: Hinduism, Sexuality, and Countercolonial Discourse in Fiji (Chicago 1991), 142.
169 Bean alleged that Indians committed most of these murders against their wives. Bean, With the Flagship of the South, 58.
due partly to the general European prejudice towards Indians and the lack of sustained engagement with them. However, it also resonates with Brij Lal’s summary of Indian responses to overt prejudice and oppression, particularly in the plantations, whereby ‘active non-resistance, thus, became a strategy for survival.’ The mistreatment of Indian indentured labourers, often under the supervision of the CSR, or occasionally at the hands of Australian overseers, contributed to an Indian distrust of all Europeans, including Australians.

Although the majority of Australian travel writing overlooked the Indian in Fiji, there were some perceptive travellers who described the Indian population. Unlike the 1880s and 90s when little information about Indian indentured labour was available to British and Australian audiences, Australian interest in the indenture issue increased in the 1910s and 20s. The decline of the Fijian population and the growth of the Indians became a major concern for the British administration, which was echoed in travel accounts. Burton was a particularly influential Australian Methodist who highlighted the ‘dehumanising’ indenture system. Australians were well-informed of the nationalist movement in India at the time, and the plight of Indo-Fijians became part of an international political discourse. Indians were active in organising themselves in Fiji and forming connections with the Indian nationalist movement abroad, raising the profile of their cause. Responses were varied, as some Australians offered sympathy and support, whilst others used Indians to justify Australia’s racial purity and immigration control. Within the body of Australian

170 Lal, Chalo Jahaji, 168.
172 Indian barristers, missionaries, teachers and lawyers were sent to Fiji under the sponsorship of Indian organisations, as well as literature, in an effort to challenge the Christian and colonial masters. Ibid., 115, 142. Kelly argues that Fiji-Indians also participated in the global movement, such as Totaram Sanadhya (who published a book My Twenty-One Years in the Fiji Islands). John Dunham Kelly, ‘Fiji Indians and Political Discourse in Fiji: From the Pacific Romance to the Coups’, Journal of Historical Sociology, 1:4 (1988), 405.
173 Gillion gives an example of forty-six women’s organisations from Australia and New Zealand sending a delegate to Fiji to investigate indenture conditions in 1919. Gillion, Fiji’s Indian Migrants, 187. Australian seaman unions had a mixed response to lascars, refusing to recruit them on Australian
travel writing there are examples of this growing Australian concern for Indians’ welfare. Brummitt echoed Burton’s concerns that indenture was dehumanising in 1914; Henley’s account argued for a better organised and regulated administration in 1926; and in 1935 Bendigo miner W.J. Stephens demanded that the British government make reparations to indentured labourers.\textsuperscript{174}

Whether encountering Indians, Chinese, Japanese or other ‘Asiatic’ types, Australian travellers were generally surprised to find racial and cultural hybridity in the Pacific Islands. Their experiences of travel tested their understanding of race and human difference, and forced them to consider the merits of maintaining a racially pure, white Australia. This chapter has shown how race was an integral part of Australian travel writing, informing Australians throughout their Pacific journeys. Travel literature and science in the Pacific have been historically intertwined, as travellers adopted scientific practices and language with ease, yet applied scientific ideas indiscriminately and ambiguously. The most significant assumption that Australians carried with them was that race was an uncontested category, a rigid hierarchy in which Pacific Islanders were static, timeless, and locked into a particular position. Their observations of disease and the tropical environment, of depopulation, and of other foreigners, were informed by this assumption, an assumption that hardened over time from the 1880s to the 1940s.

Although many travel accounts repeated these racial assumptions and stereotypes, there were a few Australians who struggled to reconcile strict racial categories with the multi-racial reality of the Pacific Islands. In 1934, zoologist Alan John Marshall and his British companion, Tom, ridiculed a pamphlet given to him by a customs official titled \textit{Talking Points of Australia}:

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{174} Henley, \textit{Fiji - The Land of Promise}; Brummitt, \textit{A Winter Holiday in Fiji}; Stephens, \textit{Samoan Holidays}.
\end{flushleft}
Do you realise, Tom," I held forth, "that my country is the healthiest in the world; that my city, Sydney is the second greatest in the British Empire?...[and] you should certainly know that our White Australia policy ensures that we shall have no “colour problem”... Again, the booklet says (and it must be right) that we are rapidly developing into a distinctive race – tall, strong and athletic; proud of our freedom and progress, yet loyal, dear Tom, and living up to the best traditions of justice, humanity and hospitality!"  

The limited number of these accounts means that it is difficult to identify if these travellers were exceptional, or if they represent a trend in the 1920s and 30s. This period was a time of great social and economic change in Australia after World War I, and the acquisition of new mandates in the Pacific encouraged a more internationalist outlook amongst Australians. As discussed earlier, Anderson’s history of Australian medical theory and practice suggests that the interwar period was a significant time when conventional knowledge and racial policies were contested and negotiated within medical establishments. In the same way that the practical experience of doctors contributed to changes in medical theory, I argue that the experience of Australian travellers, who witnessed the growth of European and Asian populations in the tropical Pacific, began to undermine views of a static or hostile region. What these few travel accounts can tell us is that Australians were discerning readers and audiences, and diverse in their responses to Pacific health and progress.

The following chapter will examine the impact of scientific and racial theory on Australian representations of the ‘civilised’ and the ‘savage’ in the Pacific Islands, exploring the ways in which Australians negotiated these ambiguous concepts.

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CHAPTER SIX

Degrees of Savagery

I didn’t believe all these stories of barbarity and savagery. I had heard similar stories of the cannibals of the Gulf of Papua, and I had found those same cannibals rather good chaps in the main...I considered the inhabitants of the Solomons maligned at least in part. And I was mistaken. I was to learn that there were degrees of savagery, that the word was after all a relative term.¹

Like their European and American counterparts, Australian travellers were fascinated with the possibility of encountering the ‘savage’ in the Pacific Islands. Australian knowledge of the Pacific Islands in the early twentieth century was significantly influenced by the discourse of the savage, a persistent and dominant literary trope since the first European explorer accounts appeared. The dualism of the ‘noble’ and ‘ignoble’ savage became a popular image in Australian travel writing, and one that was distorted, conflated, and contested over time. Australians were exposed to the savage in multiple forms, a convenient and ambiguous figure used in children’s literature, newspaper reports, mission and government propaganda, film, photography, tourism and travel accounts to entertain, educate and justify. As discussed in the previous chapter, Australian notions of the savage were also underpinned by an increasingly racialised scientific discourse, which informed ideas about white racial superiority and a distinctively ‘Melanesian’ savagery.

Travel to the Pacific Islands provided an opportunity for Australians to come face-to-face with the savage of their imaginations. In doing so, some Australian travellers gave accounts that were specific and localised, accounts which adapted, or departed from, conventional stereotypes of the Islander savage. Jack McLaren’s quote

¹ Jack McLaren, My Odyssey (London 1923), 213.
above is one example of this, a popular writer and experienced traveller who at times confirmed racialised and essentialised stereotypes, yet perceived ‘degrees of savagery’ within the region. I argue that a closer analysis of travel writing, contextualised within the historical relationship of Australia’s engagement with the Pacific Islands, highlights a more nuanced and diverse range of perceptions by travellers.

This chapter discusses these nuances and examines how Australian representations of the savage in travel writing changed over time by discussing four characteristics of the savage: the bestial, infantile, primordial, and cannibal. I show that popular notions of the bestial savage were encouraged by the Queensland labour trade in the late nineteenth century. This trope was gradually eroded by persistent missionary influence in Australia from the 1900s which emphasised the childlike qualities of the savage. By the 1920s and 30s, Australians were more familiar with the Pacific Islands, and the growing tourist trade had paradoxically both exoticised and standardised Islander savagery. Tourists lamented the loss of the primitive and natural savage in light of modern developments and colonial influence in the Pacific. Finally, I explore the persistent fascination with Pacific Island cannibalism, despite the abandonment of the practice by the early twentieth century.

In doing so, I suggest that there is evidence in some travel writing of a gradual softening in Australian attitudes towards the savage in the 1920s and 30s, in spite of persistent racialised rhetoric in fictional literature, newspapers, and political debate. Conventional representations of the violent and bestial savage were eroded by several factors: a growing number of Australian travellers to the region; greater Australian interest in, and engagement with, the Pacific; and popular messages advocated by missions, governments and tourists to protect and preserve the savage. This is evident in the accounts of Australian travellers who expressed a weariness of the fictional trope of the savage, and a more discerning attitude towards representations of the Pacific Islands.
Savage or Civilised?

The term ‘savage’ was originally used to refer to a wild and untamed forest, the French term *sauvage* being derived from the Latin *silva*. It was not until the sixteenth century that ‘savage’ was used to describe ‘a wild person’. By the 1880s descriptions of the savage environment and people in the Pacific Islands tended to the formulaic and predictable, and travellers increasingly reproduced stereotypical descriptions. This was a process of confirming one’s expectations, validating and authenticating one’s travel, and often a case of writing for a commercial market demanding adventure and excitement. Terms such as ‘cannibal’, ‘headhunter’, ‘primitive’ and ‘native’ were used interchangeably to denote savagery, and travellers tended to label all Islanders with these generic markers rather than identify individuals by their actual names. ‘Savage’ was an ambiguous, versatile and value-laden term. In Australia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it was commonly used to describe Aborigines and Pacific Islanders, but it was also applied to convicts, drunkards, politicians, vagrants and people living in remote rural areas. For foreign travellers to the Australian colonies, Australia’s penal origins marked it as ‘a place where only savage natives, degraded whites and economic opportunists could thrive.’

Rather than delineating a specific set of individual characteristics and behaviours, the term ‘savage’ defined people according to what they lacked. For European explorers confronted by human difference abroad, their descriptions of the

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3 Russell, *Savage or Civilised?*, 3.
5 Historically, non-European peoples were considered inferior because they lacked the values of the centre. Nicholas Thomas argues that in pre-modern discourse there was no idea of a distinctive type (the ‘other’). He uses the term ‘barbarian’ as an example, which connoted the absence of the civilised life of the Greek polis. Thomas, *Colonialism’s Culture*, 71. Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations described the Pacific Islands as being remote ‘from the centres of civilisation.’ ‘The Covenant of the League of Nations (Including Amendments adopted to December, 1924)’, *Yale Law School* (2008) [accessed 12 March 2013 at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp].
savage ‘other’ were informed by their own notions of European civilisation. The ‘noble savage’ had appeared in European thought well before Europeans reached the Pacific, a neo-classical ideal of primitivism often attributed to Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

The noble savage was distinguished by his/her innocence, primitivity and a simple life close to nature. Uncorrupted by civilisation, the noble savage embodied a critique of European decadence. The ideal of the noble savage influenced many of the French and British explorers in the Pacific Islands who described an Arcadian paradise in the eighteenth century. Developing out of Christian mission outreach in the Pacific in the early 1800s, the ‘ignoble savage’ was a stereotype used to present Islanders negatively. Emphasising their nakedness, savage dances and warring, and idol worship, missionaries used the ignoble savage to justify their conversion efforts. Subsequent violent confrontations between Europeans and Islanders confirmed this image. The killing of Captain James Cook in Hawaii was an early symbolic marker of Island savagery that resounded with Australians who regarded Cook as a national hero.

The development of science served to confirm and explain the savagery of Islanders, and their supposed depopulation (see chapter five). This influenced later Australian travel writing, which incorporated Enlightenment ideas of progress, and biological theories of race. During the eighteenth century, the purpose of scientific study of non-European peoples was framed in terms of better understanding the civilised self and the origins of civilised ‘man’, rather than learning about how other societies functioned. Within scientific and philosophical European thought, ‘savage’ was a term to denote a level in a developmental sequence. Enlightenment philosophers often speculated that societies progressed through stages of increasing development, whereby agriculture and commerce set civilised people apart from the savages. In this process, human beings progressed from savagery (hunting) to barbarism (nomadic

6 ‘But all these accounts have a theme that must appeal to European readers entranced by another feature of savagism. They deal with difference...Difference resonated almost as cliché with the savagism-civilisation contrast also found in European romanticism.’ Gananath Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk: The Man-eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas* (Berkeley 2005), 184.


pastoralism) to civilisation (agriculture and commerce). In this usage, however, 'savage' was initially a neutral term, rather than a derogatory label.  

Gradually these ideas of progress became entangled with a biological conception of race. As described in chapter five, increasingly racialised scientific thought attributed the savage state to innate racial deficiencies, rather than environmental stimuli. For Australian travel writers of the twentieth century who absorbed and applied these scientific theories, the savage was considered a racial type, inferior by comparison to the civilised white race. In light of these hardened racial classifications, the region of Melanesia was widely perceived to be more savage than Polynesia or Micronesia. Racial assumptions about their physical and psychological characteristics supported entrenched stereotypes of Melanesian savagery, articulated by early European explorers in the Pacific. French explorer Dumont D'Urville observed that the Melanesian 'condition' was 'always close to barbarity.' In general the difficulty of access to the Melanesian islands, and the relatively late contact with Europeans compared to Polynesia, meant that Melanesia was a region of unknown possibilities, and 'an openly imagined reality.'

Whilst the savagery of Melanesians was assumed knowledge to the majority of Australian travellers in the twentieth century, this chapter will show that the

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9. Even ancient writers suggested four such conditions of the human race, of which the most primitive is held to be the *condition* of peoples living by *hunting* animals and feeding on the *spontaneous fruits* of the earth; the second is the *condition* of peoples living as shepherds, or the *pastoral*; the third is the *agricultural*; the fourth is and last is the *commercial.* Semyon Efimovich Desinitsky (1781) in Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge 1976), 5. This theory was used to prove the merits of British civilisation according to Russell: 'A civilised commercial society was polite, ordered and effectively governed, because the effective production and use of resources both enabled and required it to be so. British society had proceeded through all of these stages – they were now a "polite and commercial people".' Russell, *Savage or Civilised?*, 31.

10. In this hierarchical ladder, the savage races were useful in 'bridging the gap' between ape and civilised man according to McGregor. McGregor, *Imagined Destinies*, 31. See also Douglas, 'Climate to Crania', 35.


12. 'Melanesian savagery and cannibalism has traditionally been an openly imagined reality that gained authorization through its exoticism and conformity and longevity over time, and has been materialized through an ever-intensiifying and potentially violent colonial presence.' Tracey Banivanua-Mar, *Violence and Colonial Dialogue: The Australian-Pacific Indentured Labor Trade* (Honolulu 2007), 22.
savagery of particular peoples within Melanesia was highly contested. Media reporting was partly responsible, encouraging caricatures such as ‘Tommy Tanna’, a figure based on the Melanesian labour recruit working in Queensland sugar plantations.\(^\text{13}\) Savage reputations were also fostered by particular violent encounters with Europeans, some of which were highly publicised and remained fixed in Australian public memory. The islands of Malekula in the New Hebrides and Malaita in the Solomon Islands were frequently identified as most savage in the 1900s for their history of violence with labour traders, missionaries and government officials.\(^\text{14}\) Ascribing an island or island group as more or less savage was also a justification for colonialism, distinguishing the successes of particular mission societies, businesses or governments in comparison to others.

Given the pervasiveness of racialised stereotypes of savagery which saturated media coverage, popular fiction, public debate and official government policies, it is little surprise that the existence of the Melanesian savage was often assumed. Science offered a powerful authority to those applying the labels of ‘savage’ and ‘civilised.’ Travellers may have been influenced by these standardised and distorted images, but once travelling they constructed their own idea of the savage by selecting particular characteristics to describe. Bernard Smith identifies this trend in writers and travellers of the 1800s who combined elements of the noble and ignoble savage, as well as the civilised European, to forge a ‘romantic savage.’ This blended version of the savage, he argues, was used by travellers to reflect on the future of the Pacific, and frame both...


\(^{14}\) Also known as Mallicollo and Malaya, several travel accounts referred to these islands as the most savage. For example, see Grimshaw, *From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands*, 219; Smith, *In Southern Seas*, 39. In the case of Malaita, violent encounters with labour recruiters were highly publicised (such as the attack on *Young Dick* in 1886), and the murder of Resident Commissioner William Bell in 1927 sparked outrage within Australia, and prompted the immediate dispatch of an Australian warship. See Peter Corris, *Passage, Port and Plantation: A History of Solomon Islands Labour Migration, 1870-1914* (Canberra 1970), 130; Roger M. Keesing and Peter Corris, *Lightning Meets the West Wind: The Malaita Massacre* ed. Peter Corris (Melbourne 1980); Roger M. Keesing, ‘The Young Dick Attack: Oral and Documentary History on the Colonial Frontier’, *Ethnohistory*, 33: 3 (1986), 268-292; Wilfred Fowler, ‘The Young Dick’, *Queensland Heritage*, 2:1 (1969), 23-25.
savage and civilised within a discourse of progress. Similarly, Australians of the twentieth century blended savage and civilised attributes where they saw fit. This was particularly important for those who sought to justify their own role in the Pacific Islands (for reasons evangelical, commercial, or colonial), often with the expression ‘to bring civilisation to the savages.’

Although the savage trope could be used by some to reinforce colonial authority, it was also shaped and reformed by travellers who were sincere in trying to understand other peoples. As Smith argues, the development of the romantic savage ‘was grounded upon a longer and better acquaintanceship with primitive peoples. Faulty as knowledge still was, the conception of the romantic savage was a genuine effort on the part of the European imagination to make contact with the personal life of primitive peoples.’ Similarly, Pacific travel in the twentieth century provided the opportunity for an individual to test the merits of Australian civilisation in a purportedly savage, foreign environment. In doing so, they blended different discourses and representations of the savage according to their individual experiences, which were spatially and temporally specific. These representations contributed to a growing body of Australian knowledge about the Pacific Islands, and their voices increasingly challenged European-based theories and assumptions.

**Blackbirders and Beasts**

For Australians embarking on a Pacific voyage in the 1880s and 90s, the experiences of Queensland labour recruiters significantly shaped their expectations of the Melanesian savage. From 1869 to 1904 approximately 60,819 Pacific Islanders

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15 According to Smith, the noble savage was ‘self-sufficient and most happy in his natural state, the later [romantic savage] was a representative of the childhood of man, interesting because he possessed the unrealized accomplishments of the child. The noble savage expressed the classical desire for a state of natural perfection, the romantic savage expressed the ideal of life as a voyage, a continuous movement towards an ever-receding goal. When this romantic ideal was applied to the fields of history and sociology it tended to produce a theory of social undulation...The idea...had been frequently put into service by travellers and writers reflecting upon the future of the Pacific.’ Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, 326, 331. See also Campbell, ‘Savages Noble and Ignoble: The Preconceptions of Early European Voyagers in Polynesia’.

were brought to Queensland to work on sugar cane plantations. Queensland recruiting vessels visited the Torres Strait Islands, the New Hebrides, (including the Banks and Santa Cruz Islands), the Solomon Islands, and later Papua and New Guinea. Their inhabitants were referred to indiscriminately as ‘Kanakas’ and the trade was often called ‘blackbirding.’ The demand for cheap labour initially motivated Australians, and other colonies or nations, to recruit in Melanesia from the 1860s, a process which Clive Moore has discussed in detail. Considerable opposition in Australia, based on humanitarian grounds, and fears that Pacific Islander labourers threatened the living standards of white workers, eventually ended the trade. For both those who favoured and opposed the trade, the savage was a key figure in the debate. In Australian travel writing about the Pacific Islands, it was in debates about the Queensland labour trade that ideas about the bestial nature of the savage arose most clearly.

There are limited surviving first-hand accounts of the Queensland labour trade written by Australians. Five accounts were published by ship captain William Wawn, recruiter and trader John Cromar, government agents John Gaggin and Douglas Rannie, and traveller William Giles. Journalists John Stanley James, Joseph Melvin

17 Deryck Scarr, ‘Introduction’ in William E. Giles, A Cruze in a Queensland Labour Vessel to the South Seas (Canberra 1970), 2. The majority of the 10,000 recruits remaining in Australia in 1901 were repatriated between 1904 and 1906 under the provisions of the Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1901, although many descendants of these labourers live in Australia today.

18 The term ‘kanaka’ originally referred to indigenous Hawaiians and was derived from the Hawaiian language. It was used as a general term to describe Pacific Islanders. The origins of the term ‘blackbird’ are uncertain. It may have been slang for the local Indigenous people, or have derived from the phrase ‘blackbird shooting’, which referred to recreational hunting of Australian Aboriginal people by early European settlers.

19 The first recorded labour recruiting in the Pacific was in 1862 from Peru, and recruiting ships also departed Fiji from 1865, and less frequently from New Caledonia and Samoa. Of Moore’s extensive list of publications, those discussing the Queensland trade include: Clive Moore, ed., The Forgotten People: A History of the Australian South Sea Island Community (Sydney 1979); Clive Moore, Kanaka: A History of Melanesian Mackay (Port Moresby 1985); Clive Moore, ‘Pacific Islanders in Nineteenth Century Queensland’ in Clive Moore, Jacqueline Leckie, and Doug Munro, eds., Labour in the South Pacific (Townsville 1990); Clive Moore, ‘The Counterculture of Survival: Melanesians in the Mackay District of Queensland, 1865-1906’ in Brij V. Lal, Doug Munro, and Edward D. Beechert, eds., Plantation Workers: Resistance and Accommodation (Hawaii 1993).

20 Wawn, The South Sea Islanders; John Cromar, Jock of the Islands: Early Days in the South Seas: The Adventures of John Cromar, Sometime Recruiter and Lately Trader at Marovo, British Solomon Islands Protectorate, Told by Himself (London 1935); Gaggin, Among the Man-Eaters; Rannie, My
and George Morrison followed labour recruiting ships and published accounts in newspapers. In addition there are 26 surviving journals by recruiters and government agents. These witnesses describe the prevalence of public hostility towards recruiting and increasingly strict government regulation. Giles, a curious traveller who accompanied the recruiting ship *Bobtail Nag* to the New Hebrides in 1877, described the public tension in Australia:

The Queensland Press at this time, was constantly publishing Articles on the so-called slave trade. Several furious letters had lately been published by Correspondents denouncing the Trade, as scandalous, iniquitous, and a disgrace to our Colony. Of course on the other hand, Articles had appeared in its defence stating that without its continuance the important sugar industry along the Coast country would entirely fail.

Faced with this hostility and scrutiny, some recruiters and government officials aimed to set the record straight in their own accounts.


One such man was Wawn, whose description of his recruiting voyages in *The South Sea Islanders and the Queensland Labour Trade* (1893) was the most widely read first-hand account of the trade. His book was commonly cited by Australian travellers to the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands. Mark Twain even devoted an entire chapter to discussing Wawn’s book in *Following the Equator* (1897). Born in England in 1837, Wawn trained as a mariner and moved to Australia in 1867. He worked as a labour recruiter for Queensland and Fiji for twenty years, during which time he encountered all the typical troubles of a labour trade recruiter. Wawn’s book was primarily intended to counter the growing antagonism towards recruiters in Australia, containing scathing attacks on inexperienced and corrupt Australian authorities (including government agents on board), overregulation, propaganda and misinformation, and an ‘unsophisticated’, gullible Australian public who believed fanciful stories about recruiters. In it he also refuted multiple accusations of kidnapping, murder and theft, and contested his debarment from the labour trade for three years.

Wawn was one of many proponents of the labour trade who defended their work as heroic and their intentions as noble, often by contrasting the bestial nature of the savage to the civilised Australian trader and planter. Wawn dedicated his book ‘to the sugar planters of Queensland, to those bold pioneers, to those good men and true.’ This heroic theme resonated with popular fictional literature of the nineteenth century which juxtaposed the savage Islander to the civilised Englishman. Children’s fiction entrenched stereotypes of the savage by pitting courageous, gentle, chivalrous English gentlemen against cruel and barbaric Pacific Islanders. Just as these formulaic fictions cultivated British ideals of civilisation, masculinity and racial superiority, so too did

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24 Mark Twain, *Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World* (Hartford 1897), 53. Twain was opposed to the labour trade and critical of Wawn’s account.
26 Peter Corris has drawn attention to discrepancies between his journals and book, and the version provided by government agent A.G. Thomson, which suggest Wawn made his voyages look more harmonious in his published work. His original manuscript was lost at sea in 1890 and had to be rewritten, and Wawn was never satisfied with his publisher’s copy. Corris in ibid., xxxi.
27 Ibid., xlvi.
tales of the labour trade convey a romanticised view of pioneering Australian colonials. 28

In contrast, the 14 unpublished manuscripts by recruiters and government agents are distinguished by the absence of hyperbole and typical savage characterisations mentioned in published accounts (although seven men were involved in malpractice29). Few recruiters or government agents went ashore, or spent long periods of time living with Pacific Islanders. Instead their daily logs reflect the monotony of labour recruiting, with short descriptions of weather, the number of recruits, illnesses and ship maintenance. When they did describe Islanders, it was their humanity that quite often surprised them. Christopher Mills wrote in his journal, ‘everyone reports them as treacherous and unfit to be trusted, I find them the reverse – but I make a practice, and trust I always shall, of treating them as human beings, hence the difference.’ 30

Although the reality of Island encounters might have contradicted the savage stereotype, the temptation to exaggerate and dramatise was strong. It is difficult to determine whether this was deliberate on the part of the authors, or whether they unconsciously romanticised the savage to meet their expectations (and the readers’). Giles claimed to be inspired to join a recruiting ship by the imagined savage he expected to encounter:

the noble savage arrayed in mantle of scalps, fastened with human hair, and dyed in blood, disposed in graceful festoons around his manly form; leaning

28 According to Brian Street, ‘Woven into the very fabric of the romantic tale are the suppositions that the ‘savage’ is faithful, gullible, childlike and cannibalistic and often ugly; that friendship between the races is difficult, and only possible if a native shows the qualities of an English gentleman and that intermarriage is distinctly harmful; that some races are so low on the scale of humanity that their use as a music-hall joke is fully justified; and that the author may foist any characteristic on a whole race if it serves the purposes of the story and provides a motive for the actions of an individual member of that race.’ Street, The Savage in Literature, 55. For Australian examples, see children’s magazines such as Chums and Young Australia, and fiction tales by Louis Becke (such as The Ebbing of the Tide: South Sea Stories, 1894).
29 Scarr in Giles, A Cruize in a Queensland Labour Vessel, 17.
on his long spear tipped with human bone, and thoughtfully masticating a succulent morsel of his last victim, as he anxiously gazed on the approaching ship, and considered how many meals her crew would provide for himself and his cannibal brethren.\(^{31}\)

Although his expectations were not met, he still found reasons to criticise their ‘intolerable perfume’ and ‘unclassically shaped nose.’\(^{32}\) Similarly, despite Rannie’s opposition to the labour trade (he was motivated to be a government agent because he considered the labour trade ‘most diabolical, and a disgrace to civilisation’\(^{33}\)) his book conformed to stereotypical accounts of cannibals and savages. Titled *My Adventures Among South Sea Cannibals*, 19 years after the event Rannie recalled his first encounter with Islanders, seeing a canoe with the bleeding head of a woman on the prow upon arrival in the Solomon Islands.\(^{34}\)

Australians described various degrees of bestiality in the Pacific, ranging from the animalistic to the grotesque and monstrous. Commonly savages were situated within a foreboding dark environment – Gaggin’s impression of the Solomon Islands as ‘a very black diamond indeed’ and Joseph Melvin’s description of their ‘low type of features, the savagery of which was exaggerated by black teeth, stained by the chewing of betelnut’ were typical in their use of darkness as a metaphor for savagery and evil, both to describe the landscape and people.\(^{35}\) Islanders were often likened to animals, encouraging the fantasy that one could see savagery. In some cases there were physical similarities: Wawn describing them as ‘excited monkeys’, Ralph Stock observing ‘lizard men’ and Henry Tichborne expecting Islanders with tails.\(^{36}\) Alternatively, savages were given animalistic temperaments, regarded as

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32 Ibid.
33 Rannie, *My Adventures Among South Sea Cannibals*, 17.
34 Ibid., 26. Rannie travelled as a government agent in 1883, and published his account in 1912.
unpredictable, wild, and possessing a 'treacherous, cowardly and savage disposition'.

When travellers came face-to-face with Islanders who were physically the same as them, they were frequently ascribed grotesque features. The grotesque was a hybrid form of human and monster, and depending on the traveller, either end of the spectrum could be emphasised. In Presbyterian missionary John Gibson Paton’s case, the grotesque was part of a performance: ‘The more grotesque and savage-looking, the higher the art!’ For another Presbyterian minister Charles Stuart Ross, Fijians’ ‘occasional grotesqueness’ could be tolerated in 1909, yet he distanced himself from the local dancing which he found ‘too grotesquely wild and barbaric.’ Descriptions of grotesque body mutilation (head binding, teeth removal, piercings and scarification) were exaggerated and embellished to generate an image of a corrupted and deformed race. Gaggin claimed to witness a chief suddenly grab his young daughter and knock out her teeth with stones, supposedly in order to purchase a pig. By offering no explanation of the ritual or cultural significance of the practice, Gaggin suggested the people were exploitative and vicious. Similarly, Rannie’s remark that it was common for Islanders to carry a basket with human heads to trade for tobacco is unlikely in light of other accounts that documented Islander resistance to selling human skulls.

By portraying Islanders as monsters, Australians created an image beyond the grotesque and devoid of any humanity. Monsters embodied savagery and represented a break away from the Christian notion of a great chain of being. Margaret Hodgen

38 Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure*, 64.
39 Paton, *Thirty Years with South Sea Cannibals*, 40.
40 Ross, *Fiji and the Western Pacific*, 67, 209.
41 Gaggin, *Among the Man-Eaters*, 104.
42 Rannie, *My Adventures Among South Sea Cannibals*, 51. Many travellers observed collections of skulls in sacred houses which they were unable to access. For example, see Gaggin, *Among the Man-Eaters*, 162. Woodburn noted Islander reluctance to letting her visit burial sites, let alone collect skulls. Woodburn, *Backwash of Empire*, 188. ‘Gunga’ also described a cemetery in New Caledonia where whites regularly went to ‘pilfer’ skulls. Gunga, *Narrative of a Trip from Maryborough to New Caledonia*, 13.
argues that after Columbus’ voyages of discovery, the human monsters and wild men of the Middle Ages were carried over to representations of the savage, and contributed to the conception of the savage as not fully human. Similarly, Australian travel narratives throughout the early twentieth century reaffirmed beliefs that the Islands were populated by giants, pygmies and other monsters. When travellers encountered humans rather than monsters in the Pacific, they gave Islanders monstrous personas instead. These included descriptions of traditional ceremonies which involved monstrous masks and pagan idols, threatening war dances, shrieking and chanting to the beat of drums, and human sacrifice (all activities were typically performed at night). Artist Arnold Safroni-Middleton stood in a forest ‘as fierce, stalwart savage men and women danced around a monstrous wooden idol.’ Similarly, Gaggin wrote that ‘hideous masks are worn in their secret Masonic rites.’ Gananath Obeyesekere argues that the inability to find monsters in the real world had one notable exception - anthropophagy. Cannibalism was the most commonly identified marker of bestiality and in some cases (in Gaggin’s account for example) every Islander was labelled a perpetrator or victim of cannibalism.

As European contact with Melanesians increased over time, images of mythical beasts and monsters were gradually eroded. Incidents of violent encounters between labour recruiters and Melanesians also decreased as Islanders became more familiar with white traders. With less and less evidence of Melanesian savagery in the 1880s and 90s, Australian travel accounts emphasised the savage potential of Islanders instead, suggesting they were prone to animal instincts and unpredictable emotions.
These ideas were encouraged by labour recruiters who were wary of ambush and treachery whilst recruiting, often referring to violent encounters in the past as proof. This was evident in the tendency of recruiting accounts to preface their descriptions of each island with a summary of European deaths. For example, Rannie’s account of Ambrym Island began, ‘Belbin and Heath were shot with rifles, Craig was done to death with thirteen spear wounds in his body, while Booth and Bowen were both poisoned.’ Similarly, Australian newspapers often reported incidents of violence and Europeans’ deaths in the islands in a sensationalised and exaggerated manner, describing Islander resistance with hyperbole such as ‘massacre’, ‘butchery’ and ‘vengeance’, and framing Europeans as innocent victims trying to bring civilisation to ruthless savages. Newspapers memorialised the fallen, and maintained a historical memory of Islander violence towards whites long after the events had occurred. As a result, ideas of Melanesian unpredictability persisted well into the twentieth century, as shown by McLaren’s impression: ‘I could never be sure of them, for they were possessed of instincts at which I could only vaguely guess and over which they had no control. At all times they were liable to give expression to certain queer impulses which were their age-old heritage, and causelessly murder the stranger in their midst – to regret it deeply afterwards no doubt.’

The supposed unpredictable temperament of the savage resonated with scientific theories that some races were incapable of, or possessed limited capacity for, reason and judgment. Supporters of labour recruiting framed savagery within a

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48 Rannie, *My Adventures Among South Sea Cannibals*, 16.
50 In response to the murder of District Commissioner William Bell on Malaita in 1927, ‘for almost a year Australian newspapers printed hundreds of articles, sensationalising the circumstances of the massacre and its aftermath, dramatising the punitive expedition, voicing the opinion and protests of missionaries and reporting the trial.’ Keesing and Corris, *Lightning Meets the West Wind*, 154.
discourse of justice, contrasting a ‘British sense of justice’ with the treachery and betrayal of Islanders.\textsuperscript{52} They justified the labour trade by claiming that it could help civilise the Melanesian savages by bringing them into contact with Australian civilisation. ‘At 16 he is a man, with all his savage habits rooted in him. When middle-aged he cannot be altered, except for the worse. Take him away from savagery as a child, and you can make him what you like’, argued Wawn.\textsuperscript{53}

Despite attempts to portray themselves as fair and just, labour recruiters struggled to counter growing public antagonism towards them and their practices. Wawn described himself as innocent and just compared to the Islanders he encountered. He gave a ‘curious example of the South Sea Islander’s sense of justice’ in which he was held accountable for the physical harm done to an Islander who accidentally injured himself with a rifle.\textsuperscript{54} Similarly, Melvin questioned if the recruits understood the benefits of civilisation:

\begin{quote}
Did they realise that they were about to pass from civilisation back into savagedom – from the care of parental Government back to the lawless tyranny of island life; from bread, meat, and etceteras in abundance to a scramble for native food; from peace to war; from a country where toil is rewarded and protected to one where might only is right?\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

For opponents of the labour trade, the injustice of the system was self-evident, and it was Australian recruiters and planters who were seen as savages. The claims made by Australian planters and pastoralists that Islander labour was docile, dependable and beneficial to all parties involved were eroding in the 1880s as evidence of high numbers of fatalities on Queensland plantations came to light.\textsuperscript{56} Newspaper coverage of public trials involving members of the labour trade kept Australians well-informed of the misdemeanours of both sides, and prolonged Australian awareness of, and

\textsuperscript{52} Rannie, \textit{My Adventures Among South Sea Cannibals}, 61.
\textsuperscript{53} Wawn, \textit{The South Sea Islanders}, 76.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 239.
\textsuperscript{55} Melvin, \textit{The Cruise of the Helena}, 13.
\textsuperscript{56} Islander fatalities on Queensland plantations were 5.129\% in 1877, 8.587\% in 1878 and 6.289\% in 1880. Scarr, ‘Introduction’, 25.
interest in, Pacific Island incidents. Australian churches were vocal opponents, objecting to the labour trade in principle, and in response to the potential loss of their island congregations to recruiting ships. Paton was influential and effective in mobilising support against the so-called ‘slave trade’, and the mission’s call was eventually answered by a Royal Commission in 1885 which concluded that the labour trade was ‘one long record of deceit, cruel treachery, deliberate kidnapping and cold-blooded murder.’ \(^{57}\)

Yet opponents to the labour trade also stressed Melanesian savagery and portrayed Islander recruits as a threat to a white Australian civilisation, although this was at odds with the humanitarian reasons put forward by the missions. A growing number of white working-class Australians felt threatened by a perceived arrival of cheap foreign workers, and supported the push for government regulations that restricted non-white labour. The Queensland labour trade formed part of the discourse of a national White Australia Policy. Within this debate, the discourse of civilisation was appropriated to argue for better working conditions. H.B Higgins, a Liberal politician who, as a judge of the industrial arbitration court, was responsible for determining a living wage for Australian workers in 1907, argued, ‘we do not want men beside us who are not as exacting in their demands on civilisation as ourselves.’ \(^{58}\)

By emphasising the savage nature of Islanders, opponents to the labour trade generated fears that Islanders could not be contained within Australian plantations, let alone be trained, educated and civilised. Travellers such as Giles were susceptible to these racialised distortions, which led him to the conclusion that, ‘it is almost, if not quite a hopeless attempt, to ever civilize them in the true meaning of the word.’ \(^{59}\)

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\(^{59}\) ‘From what I have seen and know of the Papuan race generally, I consider it is almost, if not quite a hopeless attempt to ever civilize them in the true meaning of the word. Their civilisation leaves them with their clothes; which latter are thrown off within 24 hours of their return home, and are probably offered for sale to the crew of the next boat that calls in.’ Giles, *A Cruize in a Queensland Labour Vessel*, 69.
The threat posed by the Melanesian savage was made worse by the claim that they would adopt the vices of civilisation whilst working in Australia. According to Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders and Kathryn Cronin, working-class opinion became ‘positively rabid’ as Australians feared the barbarous activities of Islanders who they believed would become addicted to alcohol, gambling, opium and sexual desire. James criticised missionary attempts to Christianise the recruits as ineffective too: ‘the Kanaka, during his three years’ service in either of the labour fields, only learns the name of God as a curse.’ Australians came to different conclusions about the danger that Queensland recruits posed. Some dismissed them as ‘pseudo-Europeans’ who would abandon their civilised habits once home, while others suspected even greater potential danger because they were overly-familiar with Europeans. This sentiment was expressed by Beatrice Grimshaw who observed Melanesian labour recruits when they returned to their islands:

With Tommy Tanna of Queensland – full of civilisation’s vices, sharper and more knowing than his fellows, yet a savage to the tips of his fingers – joins in the conservative party of the island, the older chiefs, who hate the white man and all his doings, and the younger and more savage savages, who are beginning to take alarm at the increasing power of the missions...Backed up by the Queenslander Tannese, they are beginning to talk in an unpleasantly significant way. The Queensland labourer has, after all, learned something during his foreign travels; and the cry that he is now spreading about the island is: Tanna for the Tannese!

Representations of Melanesian savagery circulated during the Queensland labour trade continued to influence Australian travellers in the 1920s and 30s. Australians were familiar with the history of the labour trade, albeit a romanticised version, thanks to works such as Thomas Dunbabin’s popular history, Slavers of the South Seas (1935). Dunbabin acknowledged the brutality of the trade, but also its

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60 Evans, Saunders, and Cronin, Race Relations in Colonial Queensland, 165, 208, 222.
61 Thomas, Cannibals and Convicts, 153.
62 Abbott, The South Seas (Melanesia), 30.
63 Grimshaw, From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands, 318.
popularity with Australian audiences: 'Blackbirding was as full of horrors, of brutalities, of tragedies as was the African slave-trade—and fuller of romance, of heroism, and of self-sacrifice.' Blackbirders regularly featured as protagonists in fictional Pacific tales, simultaneously scorned and admired as villainous and heroic (such as Louis Becke's descriptions of American recruiter Bully Hayes). Although the labour trade entrenched stereotypes of the bestial savage, it also remained an example of white Australian savagery and brutality. According to Dunbabin,

Not all the faults were on one side. They never are in this world. The natives of many islands were treacherous, murderous, brutal savages... But at least the savages were defending their own country and their own freedom, and living according to the only laws they knew. They were not sinning against the light, as were too many of the white savages who came to abuse, kidnap, and murder them.  

The exploitation of the blackbirding trade was not forgotten by Australian travellers in the Pacific later in the twentieth century. When visiting Erromanga in the 1930s, M. Kathleen Woodburn lamented the damage caused by labour recruiters to Islanders' prosperity, as well as the earlier sandalwood trade. The significance of this trade to Australian commerce and development in the late nineteenth century meant the subsequent Australian travellers were influenced by a collective historical memory of this colonial exchange.

**Christians and Children**

The infantile nature of the savage was another literary trope and colonial fantasy evident in Australian travel writing. According to plantation overseer Eric Muspratt in 1931: 'My first impression of them was as big, brown children, and this I

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64 Thomas Dunbabin, *Slavers of the South Seas* (Sydney 1935), v. 'The best that can be said of the blackbirders is that they were apt to be picturesque ruffians, and that most of them were brave men, though brutal ones.' (xii)
65 Ibid., xiii-xiv.
66 Observing sandalwood stacked in a sacred burial cave in Erromanga, Woodburn reflected on the disastrous impact of the sandalwood and labour trades on the Pacific Islands. Woodburn, *Backwash of Empire*, 90.
finally decided was as near to the truth of their essential difference as one could get. While it was used by various individuals and groups to justify their colonial exploits and reinforce the racial inferiority of the savage, it was an image actively and widely propagated by Christian missionaries. Their message of salvation for the ‘children of God’ in the Pacific Islands was sustained and influential in Australia, distributed in literature, churches, Sunday schools and public arenas. I argue that the portrayal of the Islander as infantile by missionaries in the early twentieth century represented a significant departure from a traditional message which emphasised the ignoble savage.

European missionaries were initially responsible for devising the figure of the ignoble savage to justify their conversion of a heathen Islander population as they expanded throughout the region from the late eighteenth century. The LMS was the first to establish missions in the Pacific Islands at Tahiti, Tonga and the Marquesas Islands in 1797. They were followed by missionaries from Europe, New Zealand and Australia who spread westward from Polynesia, and missions from the United States which spread through Micronesia from Hawaii. Early missionaries were convinced of the utter depravity of Islanders, witnessing practices of infanticide, human sacrifice, cannibalism, homosexuality, widow strangling and idolatry. By emphasising (and dramatising) the former bestial savagery of Islanders, missionaries created a ‘narrative of conversion’ which emphasised the present successes in transforming Islanders to ‘an elevated and purified Christian state.’ Mission texts tended to memorialise and romanticise the ‘martyrdom’ of pioneering missionaries at the hands of brutal savages. Australian readers were repeatedly reminded of the murders of missionaries John Williams (1839), George Gordon (1861) and John Patteson (1871), not only in texts but also in the names of ships and institutions. In response to the deaths of white

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67 Muspratt, My South Sea Island, 35.
69 Thomas, Colonialism’s Culture, 126.
70 Gunson, Messengers of Grace, 4. For example, Archibald Murray published a historical chronology of missionary deaths in The Martyrs of Polynesia (1885) specifically for an Australian readership. Archibald Wright Murray, The martyrs of Polynesia: memorials of missionaries, native evangelists, and native converts, who have died by the hand of violence, from 1799 to 1871 (London 1885). Also, the LMS named seven of its ships after John Williams, and the opening of the Baker Memorial
missionaries, future expeditions were led by trained Indigenous pastors, who were more successful in entering hostile isolated communities (and more expendable in the eyes of Europeans).

For Australians growing up from the late nineteenth century, it was Melanesia rather than Polynesia which was the most immediate site of conversion for pioneer missionaries. Christianity did not reach Fiji until 1835, and slowly spread north through Melanesia, reaching Papua New Guinea in the 1870s. Due to the great distance from Europe, Australia was a major source of supply and support for missionaries in the Pacific. Australians were conventionally religious, carrying the religious affiliations of Europe across to their new homeland. According to census data from 1911, Christians made up 95.9% of the population. Church of England was the largest denomination, followed by Roman Catholics, Methodists and Presbyterians. By 1947, Presbyterians outnumbered Catholics. Presbyterian influence was particularly strong in Victoria, whilst Catholics were more predominant in Sydney. Australian congregations offered funding, supplies and manpower to mission societies from Europe and New Zealand (in particular the LMS and Anglican Melanesian Mission) and at home (such as the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and the South Sea Evangelical Mission). In this highly competitive environment, missionaries were justifying their efforts against other missionaries as often as they were against Pacific Islanders.

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College in 1913 prompted an article in the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* titled 'A Missionary Martyr', recalling John Baker’s death 47 years previously. ‘A Missionary Martyr’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, (3 September 1927), 8.

71 In Fiji the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society spread from Lakeba in 1830. In the New Hebrides, the death of Reverend John Williams in 1839 marked the beginning of Presbyterian expansion north. After an initially unsuccessful expedition by the Marists in 1844, the NZ-based Anglican Melanesian Mission established itself in the northern New Hebrides and Solomon Islands. According to Niel Gunson, the Pacific Islands pre-1860s were essentially Protestant and evangelical. Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, 27.

72 In 1911 Church of England made up 38.4% of the population, Catholics 20.7%, Presbyterians 12.5% and Methodists 12.3%.

73 The Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society was based in New South Wales from 1855. The Queensland Kanaka Mission expanded its mission to the Solomon Islands in 1904 (renamed as the South Sea Evangelical Mission).
Possessing a more thorough knowledge of the Pacific than the average Australian, and a vast network of receptive congregations at home, missionaries had considerable influence over Australian perceptions of the region. Missionaries were prolific writers and published a wide variety of texts for different audiences and purposes. The majority of mission texts (church newsletters and magazines, missionary biographies and memoirs, children’s textbooks) conformed to a narrative of conversion which justified mission work in the region, and asked for further assistance. Many biographies of individual missionaries were popular for their tales of pioneering heroism amongst savage peoples. Missionaries were amateur ethnographers and anthropologists as well, their observations circulating within academic circles in Australia and Europe. Notable Australian missionaries in this category include Lorimer Fison and George Brown. Although I do not include missionary publications within this study of travel writing, there were accounts of travellers closely associated with mission work, such as the wives of Pacific missionaries and those travelling aboard mission ships. There were also publications

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75 Fison was a Wesleyan missionary in Fiji from 1863. He collaborated with Alfred Howitt on a groundbreaking ethnological study of kinship systems in Australia titled *Kamilaroi and Kurnai* (1888). He also published *Tales from Old Fiji* in 1904 and edited the *Spectator* and *Methodist Chronicle* until 1905. George Brown was a Methodist missionary in Samoa in 1860 who established mission stations in New Britain from 1877. He later resided in Sydney, where he was appointed general secretary of mission from 1887-1901, and established missions in Papua and the Solomon Islands. He wrote mission pamphlets, reports, articles for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and was a regular contributor to the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science. According to Helen Gardner, he was one of several Protestant Pacific missionaries who contributed to the development of social evolutionary theory in Europe. Helen Bethea Gardner, *Gathering for God: George Brown in Oceania* (Dunedin 2006). Between 1900 and 1920, ‘scientific contributions from Anglophone missionaries declined’ according to Christine Weir. Christine Weir, “‘White Man’s Burden’, ‘White Man’s Privilege’: Christian Humanism and Racial Determinism in Oceania 1890-1930” in Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard, eds., *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race 1750-1940* (Canberra 2008), 286.

such as *The Southern Cross Log* which more closely resemble travel writing, containing first impressions of the Pacific Islands from a collection of authors including lay persons and Islanders.  

Missionaries were also leading figures in Australian public debate, their publications used to lobby for particular topical issues. Methodist minister John Wear Burton exposed the abuses of Indian indentured labour in Fiji in his book *The Fiji of To-day* (1910). He also commanded leading positions in the Methodist Church of Australasia and was editor of *The Missionary Review* for 23 years.  

John Gibson Paton was also well known in Australia for his fundraising efforts rather than his mission work in the Pacific. He motivated popular opinion in Australia about the Melanesian labour trade, and advocated a religious conviction of national destiny and duty. His son, Frank Paton, followed in his footsteps, publicising mission work and leading an Australian campaign to end the Anglo-French condominium in the New Hebrides in 1923 (see chapter four).

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*The Southern Cross Log* was a monthly publication by the Auckland-based Melanesian Mission of the Anglican Church. It gave reports on the voyages of the ship *Southern Cross* and the progress of the missions from 1895-1972, with contributions by clergy, lay persons and Islanders. Australians wrote for, and read the publication: the editorial of October 1896 noted that the log was an ‘Australasian Missionary Magazine’ and was happy to publish articles on ‘Maoris, the Australian aboriginals, and the Melanesians on the sugar-fields of Queensland and Fiji’. For more on the vessel *Southern Cross*, see Bishop Cecil Wilson’s account based on his diaries from 1894-1911. Wilson, *The Wake of the Southern Cross*.

From 1925-45 Burton was general secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia (based in Sydney). From 1945-8 he was president-general of the Methodist Church of Australasia. He also published *The Call of the Pacific* in 1914.

‘Paton later summoned the militant imperialist Protestantism of the Australian and New Zealand colonies to a paternal crusade on behalf of the people of Vanuatu against encroaching French Roman Catholics and labour traders.’ Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, 177.

Frank Paton was born in the New Hebrides in 1870, and returned there as a missionary in the 1890s. He took leading roles in the Presbyterian Church, and led a campaign to end the Anglo-French condominium in the New Hebrides in 1923. His also published a popular history of missions, *The Kingdom in the Pacific* (1913). ‘Paton was essentially a popularizer, putting into practice or promoting the ideas of his father and particular Evangelical heroes’ according to Gunson. Niel Gunson, ‘Paton, Francis Hume Lyall (Frank) (1870–1938)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, (1988) [accessed 4 May 2014 at http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/paton-francis-hume-lyall-frank-7976].
From the 1900s to the 1920s missionary activity was changing, according to Christine Weir, 'from the exuberance of the era of early conversions to the routine work of educating and guiding converts – less glamorous and more frustrating than pioneer work.' Corresponding with this shift was an emphasis on the childlike qualities of Pacific Islanders in mission propaganda. This stressed the domestication of the savage, and the welcoming of the native 'child' into the missionary family. In her study of Protestant Sunday school literature, Weir identifies a general trend towards a more child-oriented subject matter in the early twentieth century, away from evoking pity for Pacific children towards encouraging identification with them.

In many mission texts of the early twentieth century, the child-like nature of the Islander was a central tenet of their description, emphasising their ability to be 'saved' from primitive savagery. According to Burton,

We must remember, right through our study, that it is childhood with which we have to deal, and we must orient our minds accordingly. It will be child-vices – black as they have been; child-faces – though old and wrinkled; child-minds – though cunning and treacherous; and child-virtues – neither deep nor strong, which will occupy our attention.

It was an effective theme to signal the essential humanity of the savage, in rebutting evolutionary theories that the primitive races lacked the capacity to progress. This message was not universally applied. As Weir demonstrates, different missionaries negotiated between their first-hand experiences of Islanders, and broader global debates about race and racial hierarchies. On one side of the spectrum, childlike Islanders were presented in a positive light, emphasising their innocence, honesty and

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81 Weir, "‘White Man’s Burden’, ‘White Man’s Privilege’", 286.
82 Rod Edmond, Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse From Cook to Gauguin (New York 1997), 117.
84 Burton, The Call of the Pacific, 3.
85 Weir gives the example of John Wear Burton and Frank Paton, the former employing 'more strident social evolutionist language and concepts', whilst the latter attributed Islander primitivity to geographic isolation rather than race. Weir, "‘White Man’s Burden’, ‘White Man’s Privilege’", 287-288.
trusting nature. Missionary wife Helen Cato conveyed this image in several light-hearted anecdotes describing incidents of Islander misunderstanding or over-enthusiasm. In a chapter titled ‘Cumbered with much serving’, Cato described teaching Fijians not to wipe the floor with a tea towel, or not to clean the oven whilst a cake was cooking. Yet acknowledgement of a common humanity was tempered at times by accounts which affirmed racial assumptions of inferiority and applied scientific categories. This was the case with Fison, who gave cautionary advice that childlike savages left unsupervised could return to former uncivilised behaviours:

Lord Avebury...was right in saying...that savages “unite the character of childhood with the passions and strength of men.” There is, on the outside of their character, much of the simplicity and even something of the amiability of childhood; and these traits may be all, or nearly all, that comes under the notice of those who have the opportunities for no more than superficial observation...the testimony of competent observers, who have been enabled to look below the surface, is unanimous to the effect that beneath this simple and childlike exterior there is too often a horror of cruelty and filth.

The representation of missionaries as adult parents and Islanders as children, in photographs and text, simultaneously depicted this negotiation between the realities of mission life and the ideologies of white superiority and colonial rule. The trope of the family reinscribed missionaries’ paternal authority, legitimised their work and suggested the potential to civilise, educate and mould Islanders, bringing them from a proto-social condition to Christian salvation. The infantilisation of Islanders created a people in miniature, ‘a perfect interior world capable of being entirely possessed and manipulated.’ Emphasising paternal dominance was also a response to sceptics and critics who questioned the benefits of Christianity to the Pacific Islands. Missionaries

87 Lorimer Fison, Tales From Old Fiji (London 1904), xiii. Fison was notably racialist for a missionary (for example, see his article under the pseudonym Hardy Lee: ‘The Dominion of Fiji’, Sydney Morning Herald (28 February 1877), 7 [accessed 9 June 2014 from http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13396444].)
88 Nicholas Thomas described this as reconciling the contradictory colonial objectives of hierarchising and incorporating. Thomas, Colonialism’s Culture, 128-129.
89 Ballard, ‘Collecting Pygmies’, 130.
were under increasing scrutiny as Pacific Islands became more accessible, and conflicts with traders, planters, other missionaries, or colonial officials became more common.\(^{90}\) By stressing the potential for Islanders to revert to savagery, missionaries justified their continued presence in the Pacific to maintain civilised standards.

The trope of the family also reflected the structure of mission stations in the Pacific, as missionaries (and their wives\(^{91}\)) created spaces where Islanders could be incorporated into Christian living. Islanders were not only instructed in religious training, but also in ‘the whole field of practical, recreational and spiritual living.’\(^{92}\) This is indicated in the journals of missionary wives Helen Cato and Mary Cook, who describe teaching a variety of domestic skills, Christian doctrine, language, health and hygiene, as well as playing games, nursing the sick, farming, attending local ceremonies, and travelling to other villages. Their focus on children partly reflects the nature of their work, as missionaries identified children as more susceptible to conversion and potential vehicles of evangelisation. Whether missionaries had greater exposure to children or adults, they formed close attachments with the converts, which they understood in familial terms. Cato, who states that ‘with about two hundred young people daily on the station we are our own village,’ fondly recalled celebrations at the end of the school year.\(^{93}\) Similarly in 1906 Cook found it difficult to leave the mission at Naduri, Fiji:

> Tears were on many faces, and my own eyes were not dry...It was most affecting... Joeli was weeping copiously, and watched until the last glimpse had faded from his sight. Poor little chap, he is leaving country, friends, and

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90 Street, *The Savage in Literature*, 64-65. Missionaries were identified as the corrupting element of civilisation by their critics. For example, Arnold Safroni-Middleton observed, ‘little laughing angels of innocence...and the good old missionary sprees hidden in the dark of the unrecorded!’ Safroni-Middleton, *Sailor and Beachcomber*, 57.

91 Not all missionaries were men. For example, see Florence Coombe and Florence Young.

92 Thomas, *Colonialism’s Culture*, 140.

93 Cato, *The House on the Hill*, 2. She looked forward to ‘the familiar atmosphere of growing joyousness and excitement’ during end of year celebrations and noted that ‘the differences [between European and Fijian] are almost solely superficial, for, the world over, parents and friends assemble at a Break-Up Concert to enjoy the performances of the apples of their eyes. And John and Mary or Joni and Mere delight to show their prowess in song, recitation and dance.’ (117)
all, to go with us. It is nice to have a ‘Nasoso’ face to look at, he is a link with the past.94

These personal experiences, although using language that reinforced the trope of the family and its paternalistic connotations, show that Australian missionaries were often informed by the basic principle of Christian humanism which guided their work in the Pacific.

Mission representations of the infantile savage were repeated by Australian travellers, with varying emphasis on the positive and negative implications. Tourist J. Mayne Anderson believed in 1915 that the ‘primitive children of the soil’ were still governed by old savage laws in the New Hebrides, whilst in 1923 McLaren perceived that ‘many [Papuans] were too uncivilized to tell lies…they were not given to subterfuge or deceit.95 Australian tourists regularly encountered missionaries in the field, describing encounters on board ships, at official functions, and during escorted day-trips to mission stations to observe schools and church services. In 1894 J.C. Hickson wrote, ‘The Rev. and Mrs Newall, of the London Missionary Society, who were returning to Samoa, gave an address [on the ship] on the habits, customs and superstitions, of the natives of Samoa.’96 Whilst travellers often admired the progress evident in Pacific mission stations, they were sometimes disappointed that their exotic expectations were not met. For example, Grimshaw observed: ‘It is very gratifying, from a moral point of view, to see the clean, tidy, school-attending, prosaically peaceful folk that have replaced the original savage; but to the traveller, original savages are a good deal more interesting.’97

The shifting mission emphasis away from the bestial nature of the savage to an infantile one also fits into a wider public and political debate about civilisation in the 1910s and 20s. Christine Weir argues that ‘an international discourse of Christian humanism’ informed debates about Australia’s responsibilities in the Pacific

94 Cook, Fijian Diary, 120. Cook does not specify why Joeli was accompanying them to Australia.
95 Anderson, What a Tourist Sees in the New Hebrides, 46; McLaren, My Odyssey, 67.
96 Hickson, Notes of Travel, 5.
97 Grimshaw, From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands, 330.
following World War I, particularly in relation to its acquisition of the League of Nations Mandate for New Guinea, which was officially described as a ‘sacred trust of civilisation.’ Although missionaries did not completely abandon racialist assumptions, they ‘reframed them in the language of obligation’, argues Weir. Burton’s call that ‘we must still bear the White Man’s Burden’ was rooted in the popular belief that ‘the source of the European’s success in the Pacific has been our moral and intellectual superiority.’ This call to action resonated with many Australians who believed in the ultimate superiority of white Australia over the brown Pacific. Missionaries were influential in lobbying Australian governments to action, both in New Guinea policies and in stressing a national obligation to halt rampant depopulation in the Pacific generally.

Although the White Australia policy may have officially implemented ideas of racial exclusivity in Australia, not all travellers Pacific Islanders utterly depraved savages. This was partly due to the role of the missions, which engaged Australians through literature which maintained a delicate balance between science and salvation, emphasising common humanity whilst still confronting ‘darkness without Christianity.’ The depiction of the infantile Islander was central to their message, and bolstered their petitions that the civilised had a responsibility to the savage.

**Primordial Promises**

The accounts of missionaries and blackbirders, amongst other travellers, paved the way for Australian tourists who travelled in increasing numbers on tourist cruises around Papua, New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and the New Hebrides in the 1920s and 30s. As BP expanded its routes, it effectively marketed Melanesia as a primitive

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98 Weir, “‘White Man’s Burden’, ‘White Man’s Privilege’”, 289. This discourse ‘gained new urgency in response to the stridently determinist racist rhetoric emanating immediately after World War I from American secular writers.’ (290)
99 Ibid., 298.
100 Burton, *The Fiji of To-day*, 173, 265. Frank Paton came to similar conclusions: ‘Surely this is a national duty, the white man’s burden and the white man’s privilege.’ Frank Hume Lyall Paton, *The Kingdom in the Pacific* (London 1912), 35.
101 Weir, “‘Deeply Interested in These Children Whom You Have Not Seen’”, 14.
paradise, offering the safety and comfort of a luxury steamer, with the potential for a
dangerous and savage encounter.\textsuperscript{102} Descriptions of the primitive were marked by an
ambiguity, balancing moderate notions of the wild Islander savage with idyllic
promises of natural and primordial beauty. Australian travel accounts displayed a
desire to imitate adventurous expeditions into unknown lands, and a cautiousness not
to be completely immersed in savagery for fear of their own safety, or of losing their
civilisation. This notion of the primitive life was personified and exemplified by the
beachcomber, who was simultaneously admired and vilified for rejecting the civilised
world completely.

Australian tourists of the 1930s reinscribed the primitivism of the eighteenth
century, idealising the primitive as a simpler, more natural state of human being.
According to Brian Street, ‘there is a long tradition in European literature…that life
nearer to nature is more virtuous and “real” than in the superficial urban environment
that man creates for himself.’\textsuperscript{103} In the search for authenticity, travellers found it in
what they perceived to be the primitive and natural aspects of the Melanesian savage,
rather than the bestial images that dominated nineteenth-century representations.\textsuperscript{104}
McLaren searched for the ‘Real Wild’ in the 1900s because he regarded civilisation
‘with scorn’, and was critical of city life because ‘people seemed unreal-artificial like’
and were ‘denied the spice of existence.’\textsuperscript{105} For South Australian tourist Hannah
Chewings, the exotic and the savage were shaped by her Christian worldview:
‘Though some were heavily burdened with barbaric jewellery, hundreds were as bare
as our first parents in the Garden of Eden before the sense of sin caused them to blush
and the constant use of clothes turned them white.’\textsuperscript{106} Similarly, Dickinson identified

\begin{itemize}
\item Burns, Philp & Company, Limited, \textit{Picturesque Travel} (1911), 70.
\item Street, \textit{The Savage in Literature}, 120-121.
\item Dean MacCannell suggests that modern tourists react to a perceived loss of culture within their
own societies, and thus attribute authenticity to primitive societies. MacCannell, \textit{The Tourist}, 91.
\item Susan Stewart argues that the tourist aesthetic ensures that objects perceived to be traditional or
authentic are constantly exoticised and distorted. Stewart, \textit{On Longing}, 150.
\item McLaren, \textit{My Odyssey}, 11, 41, 66.
\item Chewings, \textit{Amongst Tropical Islands}, 30.
\end{itemize}
the Islands with a freedom ‘from conventions, worry, trouble and drudgery’ and attributed the ‘lure’ of the Islands to ‘a link with our long ago, primitive freedom.’

The act of marking a territory or people as primitive could also serve to justify colonialism as progress or redemption. Although Polynesia was more accessible, increased European contact had tarnished the romanticised ideal, and travellers had to travel further afield to find the unknown and unexplored. This was the case for Burton who lamented, ‘the ruthless hand of Commerce has not yet touched the wild grandeur of the mountains, nor its breath dulled the vivid greens of the vegetation... Yet he [the traveller] cannot help admitting that he is somewhat disappointed that the town is so English and civilized in appearance... What a pity there is so much civilization.’ Although Aborigines were popularly racially regarded as the most primitive, most Australian travellers separated their descriptions of the Pacific and Australian primitive. This may have occurred because Australians believed the two races were unrelated, or perhaps it suggests that Melanesian primitivity was considered preferable because of its association with generalised exotic Pacific stereotypes.

Primordiality was closely associated with the natural and the physical, so Australian travellers frequently admired the physique of Islanders and their closeness to nature. Tourists would frequently comment on the strength and form of males. William Stephens remarked in 1935, ‘the native Fijian is a handsome man, broad shouldered and slim hipped. He clothes himself in sleeveless shirts that permit his muscles full play.’ And Anderson admired New Hebrideans as the ‘ideal natives, tall, muscular, broad, brown, shining-skinned people.’ Other forms of admiration drew attention to their ‘copper-’ or ‘bronze-’ coloured skin, their dress, and in the case of females, floral decorations symbolising their closeness to nature. The natural abundance of the environment and the skill with which Islanders utilised local

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108 Burton, *The Fiji of To-day*, 74, 76-77.
109 This may also have reflected official government policies that prioritised the administration of Papua New Guinea over Aboriginals, and considered the Aboriginal race doomed to extinction, as discussed in chapter five.
materials were also seen as evidence of their close connection with nature. Although Polynesians were more frequently idealised and admired, Melanesians were not exempt. Whilst in the New Hebrides in the 1930s, scientific researcher Alan John Marshall wrote, ‘I was delighted at the opportunity to witness the spontaneous revellings of these unspoiled children of nature.’

Australian travel accounts were sometimes marked by a sense of nostalgia or regret that the primeval world was disappearing. As discussed in chapter three, Pacific Islanders were romanticised as primitive peoples from an idyllic past, sometimes specified as the Garden of Eden, a Golden Age, or a utopia. Increasingly in the 1930s, some Australian travellers displayed concern that the purity and innocence of the Pacific Islands were threatened by the spread of civilisation (and its vices). Living in Erromanga, Woodburn predicted air travel would ‘destroy the charm of simplicity.’

This fear was exaggerated by the perception of widespread population decline in the Pacific. Artist Arnold Safroni-Middleton lamented, ‘Islands that twenty years ago had populations numbering many thousand, to-day have a scattered population of a hundred or so...We have weighted ourselves with the thick armour of civilization...Nevertheless, we are the old savages, the Dark Ages, in a double sense, dreaming that we are the children of the Golden Age!’ In Melanesia, where areas were still isolated and unexplored, Australian travellers could chase the authentic primitive. In 1923 Elinor Mordaunt fondly recalled her time in the Trobriand Islands and New Guinea: ‘It delighted me to “go bush” like Adam, to “go walking in canoe.” I loved to have my tent pitched on the hard pinkish-cream sands on the very edge of the sea; listen to the patter of small waves, the swish of palm leaves far overhead, the cry of the flying foxes.’ In chasing the authentic, savagery (even cannibalism) could be tolerated, and justified, because it was primordial and natural.

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112 Woodburn, Backwash of Empire, 20.
113 Safroni-Middleton, South Sea Foam, ix, xii.
114 Mordaunt, Sinahada, 251.
Travellers who idealised the ancient in the Pacific Islands had to reconcile their romantic expectations with the scientific discourse that argued Islanders lacked brain development, and therefore lacked any sense of history or memory. The influence of this discourse is evident in numerous travel accounts in which Australians referred to phrenology, attempted to collect skulls, or would allude to an Islander’s inability to have complex thoughts. Naturalist William Ramsay Smith wrote in 1924,

He [the Pacific Islander] has none, in fact, of the complex passions which make the chief wear and tear of civilised life. His conscience is a very primitive affair, being no more than a sense of right attaching to the beliefs and customs of his tribe...He obeys his tribal conscience, as the animal obeys its instincts, without feeling any temptation to violate it.\(^\text{115}\)

By marking the other as primitive, travel writing reinforced popular assumptions of the savage’s animal instincts and infantile mentality.

It was in this setting, surrounded by the primitive and natural, that the idea of the beachcomber excited the Australian imagination. Although beachcombing was not common by the twentieth century, the archetypal beachcomber of the nineteenth century was a persistent romanticised figure in Australian literature. Like blackbirders, beachcombers were simultaneously admired for their care-free lifestyle, and scorned for corrupting, or becoming corrupted by, Islanders. They were precariously positioned on the border between the savage and civilised. Edmund Banfield was a popular beachcomber in Australia in the 1900s who produced multiple books about his self-imposed isolation with his wife on Dunk Island, off the coast of North Queensland. By living on an uninhabited island, Banfield enjoyed an idyllic island lifestyle without having to deal with cross-cultural exchange. He described the romanticism of beachcombing:

\(^{115}\) Smith, *In Southern Seas*, 56. Jack McLaren also wrote, ‘It was no easy matter to get behind the mind of a Solomon Island native...His brain reacted to impulses foreign to European understanding.’ McLaren, *My Odyssey*, 234.
The Beachcomber of tradition parades his coral islet bare-footed, bullying guileless natives out of their copra, coconut and pearl shell; his chief diet, turtle and turtle eggs and fish; his drink, rum or coconut milk – the latter only when the former is impossible. When a wreck happens he becomes a potentate in pyjamas, and with his dusky wives, dressed in bright vestiture, fares sumptuously…A whack on his hardened head from the club of a jealous native is the time-honoured fate of the typical Beachcomber.¹¹⁶

This popular trope was usually male and advocated exploitation and conquest (both sexual and physical). For Safroni-Middleton, beachcombers were ‘humanity in its most blessed state’ because they were the outcasts of a dysfunctional European society, a ‘postage-like stamp collection of men who had once been recognised as genuine currency by governments, but had long since gone through the post and had become valuable and rare.’¹¹⁷

Those Australians disenchanted with social conditions or restrictions in Australia looked favourably on white residents of the Pacific Islands, who were perceived to lead carefree, happy and profitable lives. Articles promoting economic development in the region encouraged the notion that wealth could be easily found in the Pacific Islands (see chapter two). Travel accounts by self-styled beachcombers and vagabonds encouraged the notion that travellers could start anew and occupy a position of power within the community that they could not possess at home. Muspratt ‘felt like a king’ when he worked on a coconut plantation in the Solomon Islands for six months: ‘I loved their savage, untrammeled ways, their wild, abandoned zest, simple and unspoilt as a child’s. I shed all the reserves and artificialities of civilization as easily as I shed my clothes. The only remaining difference was that I dominated and dispensed justice unswervingly.’¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Muspratt, *My South Sea Island*, 64. ‘For I was young and ambitious, and in my youthful egoism and strength I felt like a king.’ (75)
Although Australians were inspired by beachcombers, the romanticism was tempered with a concern about 'going native', a phrase which suggested that one could become uncivilised and degraded. Travellers were only willing to shrug off the social conventions and norms of Australian (and British) society to a certain extent, fearing they could be consumed by 'red, raw, primeval barbarity' of the Pacific Islands. Aside from the cautionary tales in children's literature, it was the mutiny of British sailors on the H.M.S. Bounty in 1789 that was most frequently cited as an example of the temptations of the Pacific Islands, and the limits of abandoning civilisation and its values. Rather than fearing the corrupting influence of savage Islanders, the majority of accounts exhibited a fear of prolonged exposure to a savage and/or tropical environment (see chapter five).

Penny Russell has demonstrated how Australians defined social position and etiquette at home in order to ease the discomforts of social mobility. Just as early migrants to Australia feared that civil society would be lost in a savage wilderness, so, too, did Australians visiting the Pacific feel vulnerable away from familiar, civilised surroundings. Travelling through a 'primitive Pacific', Australians reflected on the origins of humanity, the merits of their own civilisation, and the constraints of modernity. This was particularly significant in the 1920s and 30s, when representations of the Pacific Islands were shaped by rapid growth in the travel and tourism industries, a surge in Australian publishing and cinema, and a renewed emphasis on cultural vitality and self-reliance within the nation.

**Consistently Cannibal**

A constant feature of almost every travel account, imagined or otherwise, was cannibalism, the most popular and best-known form of savagery. It was simultaneously infantile, primordial and bestial, flagged by blackbirders, missionaries, and tourists alike. It was the ultimate marker of savagery and monstrosity, and

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120 Banivanua-Mar, *Violence and Colonial Dialogue*, 34.
121 Russell, *Savage or Civilised?*, 3.
accounts of cannibalism were in high demand in Europe: ‘cannibalism is what the
English reading public relished. It was their definition of the savage.’123 Although the
prevalence of the Melanesian cannibal discourse appears throughout Australian travel
writing from 1880 to 1941, it is not, as Tracy Banivanua-Mar argues, ‘chronologically
or temporally defiant.’124 Rather, the cannibal was tested, manipulated and, at times,
rejected by Australian travellers. The different Australian representations of the
cannibal correspond with the ‘degrees of savagery’ that were observed by travellers in
the Pacific.

Australians were like most Europeans in their fascination with cannibalism.
Gananath Obeyesekere and William Arens have written extensively on anthropophagy
(the actual consumption of human flesh) and the origins of the European fantasy of
cannibalism.125 Scientific theory and language, childhood fantasy, sailors’ yarns and
mission propaganda intertwined and fed a stereotype of the cannibal that ‘gained
authorisation through its exoticism and conformity and longevity over time.’126 It was
this mix that shaped travellers’ expectations on their Pacific journeys to the point where
finding evidence of cannibalism was crucial in satisfying one’s desire for the exotic
and validating one’s journey. This is evident in the growth of a vibrant tourist market
of postcards, travel narratives, exhibits and curios from the early twentieth century,
some of which still exist today.127

The vast majority of Australian travellers ‘aspired to meet real cannibalistic
savages’ from 1880 to 1941 and beyond.128 By the twentieth century, first-hand
encounters with cannibalism were rare.129 Rather than a feared reality, the cannibal of

123 Obeyesekere, Cannibal Talk, 28.
125 Obeyesekere, Cannibal Talk; William Arens, The Man-eating Myth: Anthropology &
127 The Fiji Museum continues to exhibit a ‘cannibal fork’, and sells replica souvenirs in its gift shop.
According to Banivanua-Mar, a description of the murder of Reverend Thomas Baker at the museum
mentions how the cannibals tried to consume his shoe, a fact that persisted in Australian travel writing
since the 1800s. Ibid.
128 Safroni-Middleton, In the Green Leaf, 123.
129 Trader Joseph Dickinson claims to have observed cannibalism first hand at Ugi. ‘That which I
actually saw was a leg in two parts that had been dissected at the thigh and knee...The flesh looked
the early-twentieth century was an attraction and a symbol of past savagery. This figure 'was represented as a normalised, systemic, and casual practice of the everyday, and as constantly observable through every sensory perception', according to Banivanua-Mar.\(^\text{130}\) For travellers seeking validation, physical proof of cannibalism, such as skulls, bones, weapons, and burial or sacrificial sites, was essential, regardless of the reactions of the locals. In 1924 Smith admired human teeth necklaces at a museum in Noumea, and took a tooth, tapa cloth and a skull with him.\(^\text{131}\) Woodburn, a temporary resident of Erromanga and aspiring anthropologist, searched a burial cave to acquire a skull, noting (yet ignoring) that 'every one was very serious. It was obviously a momentous occasion.'\(^\text{132}\) Journalist Wilfred Burchett in 1941 visited 'Konienne Island' in New Caledonia and reported the discovery of 'relics of a cannibal feast', in spite of his local guide's explanation to the contrary.\(^\text{133}\) Whether out of scientific curiosity or touristic desire, the search for 'curios' was paramount to many Australian travellers and Islanders responded to the demand.\(^\text{134}\) In 1897, Henry Tichborne noted an opportunistic market for curios developing:

> The phenomenal relic which is popularly treasured in Fiji. 'Baker's fork' they call it. This is the fork with which the body of poor Mr. Baker was eaten[.] I have myself seen about two hundred and fifty...Everybody has it. The traveller to Fiji is invariably sold the real 'Baker's fork.' I bought one myself and smelt horrid, and was much shrunk on the bones.' Dickinson, *A Trader in the Savage Solomons*, 128.


\(^{131}\) The populariser of phrenology in the English-speaking world, George Combe, based his study on Australian skulls. In many Australian travelogues, travellers sought out human burial sites, and often attempted to collect skulls. Smith, *In Southern Seas*, 20.


\(^{133}\) Burchett admitted his 'imagination began to run riot with the possibilities of native feasts... with perhaps a few missionaries or traders to supplement the shell-fish.' When Emile explained this was evidence of the burial practice of the Islanders, not cannibalism, Burchett remarked, 'At this time I thought Emile was only defending the honour of his Melanesian compatriots, for most natives are very loth to admit their ancestors indulged in cannibalism. Later, however, in one of the earliest books written on New Caledonia I found confirmation of Emile's explanation.' Burchett, *Pacific Treasure Island*, 48.

\(^{134}\) The souvenir can act as a trace of an authentic experience. It can be a sign of survival (of the traveller), and allows the tourist 'to appropriate, consume, and thereby “tame” the cultural other.' Stewart, *On Longing*, 146.
once for half a dollar, but the burst of laughter which greeted me when I
produced it at any hotel in Levuka made me ponder, and I was glad soon to
abandon the treasure.\textsuperscript{135}

Cannibalism was thus appropriated by Islanders as often as it was envisaged by
foreigners.

When physical evidence could not be found, it was invented. Islanders were
ascribed cannibalistic tendencies, with authors citing the historical record or hearsay
as proof. Upon arrival at Malekula in 1933, businessman Joseph Hadfield Grundy first
noted that ‘two months before we arrived there had been a murder and the victims had
been eaten...it is probable 10 other murders will be done.’\textsuperscript{136} When given food,
Gaggin cautiously ‘had a good look before the pig was cut up, to satisfy [himself] it
was...not a baked boy or girl.’\textsuperscript{137} In Santa Cruz, journalist John Henry Macartney
Abbott described ‘a sour, offensive, depressing smell’ coming from the people.\textsuperscript{138}
Savage drums and dancing satisfied Gaggin’s curiosity who described ‘three hundred
wild cannibals, of all ages, sizes, and sexes, innocent of clothes, dancing in the half
gloom of a great cavern.’\textsuperscript{139} As the link between anthropophagy and imagined
cannibalism became more tenuous, the cannibal archetype became distorted,
romanticised, and standardised over time. The cannibal could even be alluring and
feminine, as shown in Albert Stewart Meek’s 1913 travel account which included in
its frontispiece a photograph with the caption ‘a cannibal belle.’\textsuperscript{140}

To meet an ex-cannibal was the ultimate achievement, and Australians
frequently expressed admiration rather than disgust. Elinor Mordaunt recalled that ‘the
Chief of Fishermen of Human Beings’ said he did not like eating human flesh, and

\textsuperscript{135} Tichborne, \textit{Noqu Talanoa}, 40; Stewart, \textit{On Longing}, 150. ‘Thus the tourist aesthetic ensures that
the object is continually exoticised and estranged. And ironically, objects that are originally values by
tourists precisely because of their connections to a traditional, holistic, and paradisal culture are
transformed, exaggerated, and modified by the fluctuating demands of that same tourist market.’
\textsuperscript{136} Grundy, \textit{The New Hebrides Group of Islands}, 7.
\textsuperscript{137} Gaggin, \textit{Among the Man-Eaters}, 58.
\textsuperscript{138} Abbott, \textit{The South Seas (Melanesia)}, 80.
\textsuperscript{139} Gaggin, \textit{Among the Man-Eaters}, 134.
\textsuperscript{140} Meek, \textit{A Naturalist in Cannibal Land}.
Dickinson fondly remembered Taki, ‘an old genial historic cannibal and headhunter chief... a truly grand old man.’ Rather than a feared reality, the cannibal of the 1910s and 20s was ‘picturesque, polite, and gentle-seeming’ – it was a nostalgic symbol of a savage past (always hinting at the potential to revert to former behaviours). Some Australians rejected the prevailing view of cannibalism as an uncontrollable addiction or an ‘intense love of human flesh.’ They lamented the loss of a primitive custom in the face of European corruption, and recognised the ceremonial significance of the practice. In 1924 Winifred Ponder drew attention to ‘wildly impossible yarns’ in order to prove that cannibalism was a primitive custom rather than a heinous crime, whilst in 1911 Frank Fox concluded ‘that the horrors were but a slight and inconsiderable feature of Fijian life until the arrival of the white man.’

Cannibal attributes were not only restricted to Pacific Islanders. Young travellers Edward Way Irwin and Ivan Goff transferred cannibal traits onto white visitors when they described the passengers of a cruise ship arriving at Aorangi as having ‘cannibal faces, feasting themselves on us.’ Similarly, travellers to New Caledonia often attributed cannibal behaviours to French convicts (see chapter four). Others, by identifying with the savage, sought to test the merits of ‘going native.’ As Obeyesekere and Arens have shown, the origins of European fascination with cannibalism lay not only with depictions of the other, but the potential for the civilised to also turn to cannibalism. For this reason, Safroni-Middleton actively sought out a village in the ‘Rewa cannibal district’ in Fiji, within walking distance of Thakombau’s residence, and proudly announced to his readers that, ‘I became a savage of the first degree.’

As Safroni-Middleton alludes, cannibalism (and thus savagery), was perceived to occur in degrees depending on particular islands and regions. The racial segregation

141 Mordaunt, The Venture Book, 210; Dickinson, A Trader in the Savage Solomons, 203.
142 Fox, Oceania, 33.
143 Burton, The Fiji of To-day, 104.
144 Fox, Oceania, 31; Ponder, An Idler in the Islands, 39.
145 Irwin and Goff, No Longer Innocent, 145.
146 Safroni-Middleton, Tropic Shadows, 17.
of Melanesia as the most savage implied that it was also the most cannibal. According to British naval captain Cyprian Bridge in 1918, ‘to the unscientific eye of people like myself it seemed that there were three distinct races and many mixtures.’ He identified Melanesians as ‘woolly-haired negroes’ and noted that ‘except where they have been brought into close and long contact with white men, especially missionaries, they are all cannibals.’ Wawn was more specific in identifying the racial component, which encouraged the belief that the further west you travelled, the more savage you became: ‘Solomon Islanders have more Papuan blood, therefore excel the New Hebridean in cannibalism and bloodthirstiness.’ The islands of Polynesia were not commonly attributed cannibal features, even though it had been practised by Marquesas Islanders and Maori. This may have been forgotten in Australia by the twentieth century, or overshadowed by descriptions of Melanesian savagery. Some travellers to Polynesia explicitly denied any trace of cannibalism, such as Clement Lindley Wragge in 1906: ‘There appears to be no proof that the Tahitians were ever actually cannibals.’

In general, literature of the early-twentieth century placed Solomon Islanders in a more savage position than people from the New Hebrides. According to Fox’s 1911 reference guide: ‘The Solomon Islanders have been always the most notorious cannibals of the Pacific, and undoubtedly certain of their religious rites demanded that human flesh should be eaten.’ In particular Australians associated the Solomon Islands with headhunting, since the practice still occurred well into the twentieth century. Unlike the Solomon Islands, the New Hebrides had a long history of European contact beginning with sandalwooders and missionaries in the 1820s, so by the 1870s and 80s, violent encounters with whites were less numerous. Labour recruiters who found it increasingly difficult to recruit in the New Hebrides turned to the Solomon

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147 Cyprian Bridge, *Some Recollections* (London 1918), 232. In another publication he noted that, ‘They are almost invariably ashamed of cannibalism and will generally conceal their indulgence in it or discontinue it if a white man comes to live among them.’ Cyprian Bridge, *Cruises in Melanesia, Micronesia, and Western Polynesia, in 1882, 1883, and 1884, and visits to New Guinea and the Louisiades in 1884 and 1885* (London 1886), 549.

148 Wawn, *The South Sea Islanders*, 240. According to Wawn, Papuans ‘are a fierce, warlike, and treacherous race, and inveterate cannibals.’ (283)

149 Wragge, *The Romance of the South Seas*, 286.

150 Fox, *Oceania*, 38.
Islands after the 1880s, thus the group featured more strongly in the public imagination. In contrast, accusations of cannibalism towards Australian Aborigines had dissipated by the twentieth century, in spite of their perceived primitivity. This was expressed much later in 1953 by Australian travel writer Colin Simpson:

The eating of human flesh was not practised by the Australian native to the extent that it was by the South Sea Islander. The term 'cannibalism' is usually taken to mean gorging on human flesh, and with relish; and that seems a valid description of the cannibalism of the Melanesian indigenes of New Caledonia, who appear to have regarded man-meat much as we regard the Sunday joint. Not all cannibalism is the same in purpose.

In the Melanesian group, Fiji was an outlier. Situated simultaneously between Melanesia and Polynesia, geographically, racially and ideologically, Fiji was considered a 'special case' by Australian travellers. It was not considered as savage as the 'wicked cannibal groups' in the Solomon Islands and New Hebrides marked by Grimshaw in 1907, but it did not have 'the nameless dreamy charm of the Eastern Islands' either. Similarly, McLaren noted 'I went to Fiji as a tourist, a man of leisure, intent on comparing the Civilized Wild [Fiji] with the Palaeolithic Wild of my roamings.' Fiji’s development as a key stopover and a major industrial centre in the Pacific made it a well-travelled and modern destination.

The island of Bau in Fiji was frequently acknowledged as the traditional centre, or 'the shrine of cannibalism.' According to Mordaunt:

This is by far the most romance-haunted spot – the spot which almost speaks, and groans in speaking, of what is past – in all the islands. It is the center of

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151 From 1890-1904 Solomon Islanders were more than half the total recruits for Queensland. From 1894-1905 Solomon Islanders supplied 81.4% of Fiji’s indentured Melanesians. Corris, *Passage, Port and Plantation*, 1-2.


153 Grimshaw, *From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands*, 7.

all that was dreadful in the wild days of old Fiji; the home of kings and chiefs, the shrine of cannibalism. Mbau [Bau] the beautiful, Mbau the terrible.\textsuperscript{155}

Bau rose to prominence in the mid-1830s and became the seat of power of Fiji under its chief, Ratu Seru Epenisa Cakobau (also known as Cakobau or Thakombau), until Fiji's cession to Britain in 1874. Cakobau became a legend amongst European and Australian tourists – his personality exaggerated to be a ruthless former cannibal and warlord who converted to Christianity. Bau became a site for historic tourism and steamer tourists frequently went on day trips to the Rewa River and Bau where they could visit the graves of pioneer missionaries, see Cakobau’s memorial and ‘relics of heathen Fiji’ and reflect on the victory of Christian civilisation over cannibalism.\textsuperscript{156} Christian missions had been effective in promoting the success of their work, by emphasising the miraculous transformation of Fiji from a cannibal past. As John Gibson Paton noted: ‘Thus died a man who had been a cannibal chief, but by the grace of God and the love of Jesus has been changed, transfigured into a character of light and beauty.’\textsuperscript{157} In contrast to the highly publicised savagery of pre-cession Fiji, the popular image of Fiji in the early twentieth century was increasingly sanitised and romanticised, and its reputation as ‘the Cannibal Isle’ receded.\textsuperscript{158}

An analysis of Australian representations of cannibalism in the Pacific Islands from 1880 to 1941 can provide some insight into the ways Australians perceived themselves and their Pacific neighbours over time. Initially symbolic of the brutality and inhumanity of the ignoble savage, the cannibal of the late-nineteenth century was perceived as a threat to Australian civilised values in spite of the dependence of domestic agricultural production on cheap Melanesian labour. By the first two decades of the twentieth century, Australian missionaries changed their propaganda to encourage identification with the childlike savage, emphasising their common

\textsuperscript{155} Mordaunt, \textit{The Venture Book}, 199-200. Brummitt referred to Bau as the ‘capital of cannibal Fiji.’

\textsuperscript{156} Brummitt, \textit{A Winter Holiday in Fiji}, 115.

\textsuperscript{157} Brummitt, \textit{A Winter Holiday in Fiji}, 115-118.

\textsuperscript{158} Paton, \textit{Thirty Years with South Sea Cannibals}, 108.

For more on colonial violence in Fiji prior to 1880, see Banivanua-Mar, ‘Cannibalism and Colonialism: Charting Colonies and Frontiers in Nineteenth-Century Fiji’.
humanity and potential salvation, rather than their heathen past. This shift suggests a softening of racial attitudes and assumptions towards Pacific Islanders, particularly after World War I, and a greater concern for Australia’s obligations to the Pacific. In the 1920s and 30s, Pacific tourism had fostered a romanticised and sanitised version of the primitive ex-cannibal savage. Whilst this image became increasingly standardised, the growth in travel to the region encouraged more diverse representations of Pacific Islanders.

This chapter has argued that the Melanesian savage was a complex and ambiguous figure formulated and reformulated by the entanglement of scientific discourse, racial theory, childhood fiction, Christian promotion, political propaganda, tourist guides and traditional European fantasies. Whilst this complexity became simplified, standardised and stereotyped in the popular imagination of Australians over time, some strands in Australian travel writing also highlight a more discerning and nuanced collection of responses to the savage/civilised dichotomy. Some journeys reaffirmed individual preconceptions, while others found it difficult to reconcile the savage of the imagination with reality. In 1937 Marshall frequently referred to the Islanders he met as savages, yet was unsatisfied with his own ‘civilisation’: ‘Our generation are indeed a curious people...so ultra-modern, yet so hopelessly backward and ignorant of most of the things that matter...The people of the future will regard us as barbarians, much in the same manner as we regard our ancestors. And if not for a hundred other things, it will be for the appalling way we have treated and are treating the primitive races whose territories we have taken.’ In 1924 Smith reflected, ‘we are as much the slaves of habit and the creatures of convention as they are, only we assume that our habits are good and our conventions are virtuous.’ In her concluding chapter of her 1944 travel account, Woodburn asked the reader: ‘What right have we to interfere with the individual’s freedom of thought and action?’

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160 Smith, *In Southern Seas*, 57.
These particular dissenting voices may have been a minority in Australian travel writing, but I argue that they signalled a gradual shift away from traditional notions of the bestial savage, and contributed to the erosion of racialist assumptions of Islander inferiority in the 1920s and 30s. This reflected a broader shift in public attitudes post-World War I to the Pacific Islands and Australia’s role as a colonial power in the region. The increase in Australian travel to Melanesia at this time facilitated a greater number of face-to-face human encounters between Australians and Pacific Islanders. It also highlights a weariness of the conventional savage trope, a stereotype overused and exaggerated since first European contact with the Pacific.
CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have argued for a closer examination of Australian perceptions of the Pacific Islands as seen through travel writing from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. This rich and diverse collection of the impressions and observations of Australians abroad can extend our historical understanding of Australian engagement with the Pacific Islands. Once dismissed for their momentary, superficial and touristic nature, travel literature can offer new information about Australian encounters with, and representations of, the Pacific Islands. These accounts highlight that this engagement was not restricted to political and economic channels. Ordinary Australians regularly discussed and encountered the Pacific Islands outside of official or business capacities, and their accounts were crucial avenues for informing Australian readers at home.

These sources shed light on an important period in Australia’s national history, as a growing Australian-born population began to negotiate its own sense of identity and articulate its role in the broader region. Between c.1880 and 1941, Australian engagement with the Pacific Islands increased dramatically due to improvements in transportation, the growth of trade and business, Christian outreach and colonial administration in the region. Furthermore, the development of the publishing industry and literacy in Australia facilitated the circulation of travel accounts around the country. I argue that during this time Australians were closely connected to the Pacific Islands and were well aware of their neighbours. Of course, stereotypes and misunderstandings still persisted, and in some aspects Australian knowledge of the Islands was rudimentary or simplified. Yet Australian travel writing contributed to an increasingly informed Australian public. This was at a time that has often been overlooked by historians concerned with the legacy of the Pacific War in transforming Australian perceptions of the Islands. Although this war had significant consequences
for the region, it should not overshadow the long-term engagement between Australians and the Pacific before 1941.

I argue that travel writing provides a more nuanced and complex view of Australians, and their views of themselves as well as others. By highlighting the specific nature of their encounters, and the diverse backgrounds and motives of travellers, I draw attention to the individuality of travel accounts. As a result, their representations of the Pacific Islands were varied. Whilst I have emphasised the momentary, casual and individual characteristics of travel writing, I have simultaneously tried to situate these travellers within a collective group, as well as consider individual texts within a broader Australian literary corpus. These individual impressions formed layers of representations over time, substantiating and perpetuating particular tropes and stereotypes. This thesis has been arranged according to these themes, in which I have historically contextualised individual travellers and their accounts. Each chapter has acted as a signpost of a particular theme or issue in travel writing, including seaboard travel and tourism, commerce and profit, romantic and utopian ideals, gender roles, ideas of nation and empire, theories of race and science, and notions of the 'savage' and 'civilised.'

Australian travel accounts suggest that the majority of travellers conformed to popular tropes and stereotypes when representing the Pacific Islands. The development of steamship travel and tourism shaped Australian expectations and impressions of the Pacific Islands, with travellers often following well worn paths, and making similar remarks about the voyage and the moment of first arrival. Australian travellers shared expectations of the Pacific as a place of economic prosperity and potential wealth, embodied by the figure of the enterprising trader, prospector, planter and overseer. This extended to Polynesia, commonly idealised as alluring and idyllic despite the effects of European contact and development. Australian travel writers were also united in their criticisms of French colonial ambitions in the Pacific before World War I. The clearest commonality that Australian travel writers shared was popular attitudes to race and racial theory. Observations of disease, depopulation,
ethnic diversity and Islander ‘savagery’ reflected widespread assumptions of the perceived stasis of the Pacific in comparison to Australian progress and superiority.

Yet I have also shown cases of dissent and difference in these same collection of travel writing. In response to the growth of tourism, many rejected the tourist label because it contravened the ideals of adventure and exploration traditionally associated with the Pacific. Similarly, idyllic tropes of economic wealth or an alluring Polynesia were challenged by the accounts of travellers who reported on the realities of commerce in the Pacific, and the difficulties of realising a utopian life in the Islands. Closer inspection of accounts of the Queensland labour trade and the New Hebrides condominium also suggest that Australian travellers and readers were just as likely to be confused as they were convinced or conformist in their views. Whilst the science of race was popularly regarded as absolute, face-to-face encounters in the Pacific could unsettle Australians’ racialist assumptions of Islander savagery and inferiority. Though the travellers who expressed uncertainty and doubt were a minority, they offer a more complex understanding of how Australians negotiated and contested popular themes and narratives about the Pacific Islands.

These chapters have provided glimpses of the numerous accounts of travellers in the Pacific Islands, showing that the most well-known travel writers, such as Clune, Becke and Grimshaw, were not isolated cases. The travel accounts I have highlighted represent only a small fraction of a wider body of European and American literature which had described and entrenched images of the Pacific, and an even smaller percentage of the Australian travellers actually moving across the Pacific Ocean. From my analysis of Australian travel writing, it is clear that Australian travellers were well informed about the region before embarking on their journeys, knowledgeable about the islands themselves, their relationship to Australia, and the travellers who preceded them. Their own accounts contributed to a growing body of knowledge about the Pacific that was accessible to a wider readership, and preferred as truthful and educative over the exaggerated fictional tales which had been so popular in the 1800s.
Determining how widespread Australian interest in the Pacific was, or whether there was a particular time between 1880 and 1941 when Australians were more aware of the Pacific, is problematic. The 1880s and 90s have conventionally been identified by Luke Trainor and Roger Thompson as a time when Australian public interest in the Pacific Islands reached its peak, mainly due to the French and German presence in Melanesia, and the growth of the Queensland labour trade. Despite well-established maritime connections with the eastern colonies, Australian travel writing was limited in volume until the 1890s, and tourism in the Pacific was in its infancy. From these few accounts, it is evident that Australians continued to subscribe to conventional European tropes of the Pacific Island as a romantic and exotic location with the potential for ‘savage’ encounters at the end of the nineteenth century.

From the 1890s until 1914, travel writing increased dramatically. From these accounts it could also be argued that the Pacific featured more prominently in Australian discussion than ever before, encouraged by economic prosperity and social mobility in Australia, the growth of publishing, and the development of steamship and tourism industries. This was also a period of national self-confidence and optimism as the newly federated nation articulated its own role in the Pacific. Australian-born travellers began to identify themselves as distinct from their European origins, and their travel accounts began to show evidence of a more localised and specific relationship with the Pacific Islands than previous European generalisations. This included making judgements on colonial rule in the region, and discussing the potential benefits of Australian imperialism.

It could also be argued that in the interwar period between 1918 and 1941 Australian interest in the Pacific Islands peaked. Following World War I, Australians travelled to the Pacific Islands in greater numbers than ever before, and produced more travel writing too. After the social and economic upheaval of World War I, a white urban middle class in Australia drove demand for travel and literature simultaneously.

As a result, travel writers increasingly needed to distinguish themselves in a competitive commercial market. At the same time, Australia acquired mandated territories in the Pacific, which was followed by greater interest in, and criticism of, the nation’s new internationally-sanctioned role in the Pacific. In this thesis I have identified a growing number of travel accounts written during the interwar period that conveyed uncertainty about, or directly challenged, conventional European and Australian assumptions and narratives about the Pacific Islands. These include accounts which challenged or rejected stereotypes emphasising Islander inferiority and savagery, and advocated a more humanistic identification with them.

These accounts may reflect a broader shift in Australian society during the 1920s and 30s, because of what some have termed a period of ‘cultural maturity’ in Australia\(^2\), or a reaction against the racialised and essentialist assumptions that had underscored the White Australia policy. However, this response may have been limited to the cultural elite. A close analysis of travel writing shows more broadly that Australian travellers and readers grew weary of the exaggerated and overused tropes about the Pacific Islands. This response had occurred thirty years earlier, when Australian readers chose literature that departed from the formulaic British fictions of the 1880s. This apparent trend towards a more critical and nuanced understanding of the Pacific Islands may also reflect the numerical growth of travellers and travel accounts in the 1930s, offering more occasions for intimate encounters in the Pacific that challenged individuals’ preconceptions.

Our ability to understand the impact of these travel accounts on the wider Australian audience is limited by the availability of information about the publication, distribution and reception of these texts. It is important not to inflate the impact of Australian travel writing on the Pacific Islands, as argued in Hank Nelson’s study of Australian descriptions of Papua and New Guinea, which suggested that even by the 1930s most Australians rarely thought of the region at all.\(^3\) Where possible I have

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identified some clues which may point to the popularity of particular texts – the number of editions printed and where they were printed; book reviews listed in newspapers; references to particular authors or works in other travel accounts; and the persistence of certain themes or representations in the literature. The practical limitations of my research meant that I could not include travel literature on Papua or New Guinea, nor could I systematically examine images, magazines, newspapers articles or fictional texts about Pacific Islands travel. A further study of these sources could illuminate how Australian experiences of the Pacific Islands were represented in a broader Australian market.

Furthermore, Australian readers were as diverse as those who were travelling and writing. This thesis has highlighted the different responses to the Pacific Islands in the various Australian colonies and states over time. The eastern colonies of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland were more closely connected to the Pacific Islands than South Australia and Western Australia; the latter especially orientated westward. On the eastern seaboard, Sydney’s maritime connections and its location as a centre of Pacific trade fostered a regard for the Pacific Islands that was distinct from the protectionist attitudes in Victoria. As the seat of the national government from 1901 to 1927, Victoria was also the location of vigorous lobbying by the Presbyterian Church for greater involvement in the New Hebrides. Similarly, Queensland’s proximity to Melanesia, its tropical characteristics, and its demand for cheap agricultural labour are just a few of the factors that distinguished its engagement with the Pacific Islands from others. Within these regions, the rural-urban divide complicates our understanding of Australian readers and responses. So too does the mobility of Australians, many of whom moved fluidly between the colonies (including across the Tasman and to Europe), and cannot be pinned to a particular home or localised identity. These nuances within Australian readerships and travellers require further exploration in the future.

I have also argued for a more complex understanding of the Pacific Islands, by recognising the specific historical relationships between particular islands and
Australian localities. This was especially the case in Melanesia, where Australians associated individual islands with specific historical encounters, often marked by trade, conflicts, murders and reprisals. It has shown that Queenslanders were familiar with the New Hebrides as a result of labour traders, for example, and caricatures such as ‘Tommy Tanna’ demonstrate that Australians did not always consider the islands according to regional or colonial boundaries. I have discussed how Australians distinguished specific islands as more or less ‘savage’ than others, in recognition of the past martyrdom of a particular missionary or official, or in an attempt to justify their own ambitions or achievements. I have highlighted the difference between landing at a major port such as Suva, compared to a beach landing on a remote and isolated atoll. In some cases, Australian representations of entire islands or peoples were based on the encounter at a port alone. I also recognise that Pacific Islanders were extensive travellers as well, but I do not discuss the mobility of Islanders within Australia and the Pacific, or their responses to tourists visiting their own homes. Their story requires further attention in the future, as their familiarity with Europeans would certainly have contributed to the shaping of the travel experience of Australians. In the meantime, there is the need for a more localised and specific history of Australian encounters in the Pacific, which recognises that whilst generalisations and stereotypes continued to persist in Australian representations of the Islands, there were local influences in both regions which challenged and modified them.

For this reason, travel writing is an ideal source for contemporary historical studies which recognise the mobility of Australians and the need to consider Australian history in a trans-national context. Australians were, and continue to be, exceptionally mobile, to the point that it has become part of what it means to be

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4 Hank Nelson argues that in Papua and New Guinea, it was other Papuans and New Guineans rather than Europeans that formed the majority of the foreign population in communities. Nelson, Black, white and gold, 269. Frances Steel has highlighted the importance of Pacific Islander labour on the shipping trade. Steel, Oceania Under Steam: Sea Transport and the Cultures of Colonialism. Pacific Islanders were prolific travellers, yet published accounts of their travels are rare. Indigenous pastors trained by European missionaries were more likely to write travel accounts than ships crews. For example, George Sarawia, They Came To My Island: The Beginnings of the Mission in the Banks Islands (Honiara 1890).
Australian. It is hoped that this thesis can corroborate and deepen future studies in this area, and contribute to a broader study of Australian travel writing in general, particularly the recent works of Anna Johnston, Anne Rees, Agnieszka Sobocinska, Richard White and Angela Woollacott, which examine travel to Asia, Europe and North America. Furthermore, a more comprehensive study of Australian travel writing may assist researchers in articulating how Australian writers and travellers were distinct from New Zealand, American and other European visitors. Such a comparative analysis has yet to be undertaken.

Although this thesis raises questions about the broader implications of travel writing for Australians, in the end it has focused on the travellers themselves. It has explored their diverse backgrounds and motivations, and followed their footsteps abroad, tracing their progress from expectation to realisation to articulation of their experience on paper. The scarcity of information about many Australian travellers was an obstacle to identifying the inconsistencies and incoherencies within travel accounts. This research could be expanded in the future to identify other travel ephemera, fragments and unpublished sources, both oral and material, that I have overlooked, as well as travel accounts composed by Australian government officials, missionaries and residents. In some cases, particularly with travellers who were public figures, or avid writers, a more thorough biographical study was possible, offering a better opportunity to judge the effects of travel. From what sources I could access, it is clear that Australian travel writers were an assorted group of individuals, writing and travelling according to varied motives, and having a multitude of encounters within a diverse geographical region. This thesis has tried to consistently acknowledge

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these variables whilst suggesting broader themes and proposing general trends within this body of literature.

Determining the impact of Pacific travel on itinerant Australians is fraught. Australian travel writers dedicated comparatively little space to describing their departure from the Pacific Islands than they did their arrival. The moment of departure often abruptly ended the travel account – there were few reflections on steaming back into Sydney harbour, or settling back into life at home in Australia. For those embarking on, or returning from, their grand tours, the Pacific Islands were a brief chapter or subheading within a broader account, overlooked in their excited anticipation of reaching Europe or returning home. Some travellers ended their accounts with a short summative statement or paragraph, whilst published books usually included a reflection in the preface or final chapter. These remarks varied in their content and purpose, from simplistic short impressions to more well-thought out observations about the islands, themselves or their future. Frequently the author’s views were unclear, such as politician Thomas Henley who warned, ‘Readers of the foregoing generalizations may, and probably will, conclude that I have presented to them a hotchpotch collection – a mixture of many thoughts about many things, from many sources. I admit the impeachment.’

In some cases, travellers remained unmoved by the Pacific Islands. But more commonly, authors argued that the Pacific Islands had something to offer the Australian traveller. In attempting to justify their travels and distinguish their writing from others, many Australians argued that the Pacific Islands (or more accurately, their experience of the Pacific Islands) could satisfy the ‘enquiring mind.’ According to Henley, ‘My object in writing has been to present in as simple a form as possible some of the answers to the questions propounded to enquiring minds when travelling in the great archipelago of the Pacific in search of information and recreation.’

7 Henley, A Pacific Cruise, 155.
8 For example, Fred Rebell’s account of his lone west-east crossing of the Pacific had few lessons to teach except from the conquering of its vast ocean. Alan Villiers, too, was motivated by the romance of sailing, rather than the destination. Rebell, Escape to the Sea; Villiers, Cruise of the Conrad.
9 Henley, A Pacific Cruise, 155.
Beatrice Grimshaw framed her own journey as ‘a quest after information spiced with amusement’, in accordance with conventional ideas of travel as an activity in self-improvement. For this reason, travellers frequently re-iterated the accuracy of their accounts and explained their attempts to be objective. According to Dr. Casey Albert Wood: ‘Possibly the following descriptions, that I jotted down in my notebook from time to time may appear to be sentimental exaggerations and worthy of being classed with the productions of South Sea “fakirs”, but they were, at the time of observation at least, genuine impressions.’

Although most travellers tried to justify their recollections as honest, accurate and authentic, few could resist falling back on familiar descriptions of the ‘indescribable’ or ‘picturesque’, or alluding to European fantasies such as ‘the lure of the Pacific Islands.’ A few accounts were more explicit in embracing the romance that imbued the Pacific and their memories, sometimes writing years after their travel. Arnold Safroni-Middleton was upfront with the reader about his ‘half-remembered romance.’ Elinor Mordaunt was explicitly nostalgic, writing, ‘one is not really happy traveling, one is most happy in remembering.’ For others, the process of writing and remembering was cathartic. Eric Muspratt described this in his autobiography, *Fire of Youth*: ‘One had wanted to build so much into a book, the fire of youth, smokelike dreams, and the creeping shadows of final darkness.’ John Fraser completed his account before departing for war, and noted that ‘many threads go to weave the fabric of memory, and I have found the unravelling of these, during odd times of leisure, so absorbing a pastime that I have to go on and on like the Ancient Mariner who had to...’

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10 Grimshaw, *From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands*, 29.
12 In his conclusion, Joseph H. C. Dickinson stated, ‘many writers have told of the lure of the Pacific Islands and how they re-attract those who have left their shores... Why is this?’ Dickinson, *A Trader in the Savage Solomons*, 206-207.
15 Muspratt, *Fire of Youth*, 189. In his previous published account he wrote, ‘I realized quite suddenly that a phase of my life had ended. There was some comfort in the thought, for it enabled one to view the whole thing in a detached, philosophical way.’ Muspratt, *My South Sea Island*, 256.
tell all he knew." For these Australians, it was a reflection on their personal journey, rather than the physical voyage, which brought their accounts to a close.

These personal reflections, hidden amongst the sterile observations and predictable tourist tropes of the overwhelming majority of Australian travel writing, are much more difficult to find. Few travellers wrote down reflections about themselves or how their experience of the Islands changed their worldview. Comments about Australia or their homeland were more likely, although these were still limited (perhaps explained by a reluctance to disturb their exotic fantasy, or an uncertainty about what it meant to be ‘colonial’ or ‘Australian’). Instead, it was the accounts of government officials, missionaries and residents with vested interests that prevail in the discussion of broader issues related to Australia and the Pacific Islands. My analysis of Australian travel writing suggests that travel to the Pacific usually had a limited residual impact on Australians. These encounters with unfamiliar places were glancing rather than enduring.

This is not to say the travel to the Pacific did not prompt self-questioning, but perhaps that it was not articulated openly in the literature. Andrew Hassam argues that letters and diaries were written with a public audience in mind, often read aloud amongst family or friends. Scientific objectivity also required the repression of emotive language or expression in travel accounts. Despite their best efforts to maintain a dispassionate view, Australians’ descriptions of the exotic ‘other’ unintentionally reflect as much about themselves as it does about the object of their gaze. Other scholars have discussed the effects of travel on Australians, often only found in traces of travel accounts or from a detailed biographical study of an individual. Richard White argues that Australian travellers returning home from Europe sought a sense of connection to the past in Australia that they had admired there. Helen Gardner and Christine Weir have demonstrated that missionaries in the Pacific Islands struggled to reconcile hardened racial views in Australia with the realities that they

16 Fraser, Gold Dish and Kava Bowl, 252.
17 Hassam, No Privacy for Writing, xiv. Hassam, Sailing to Australia, 42.
faced when living with Islanders. Similarly, Bronwen Douglas identified the ‘mismatches between presupposition and personal experience’ in early Pacific and Australian exploration accounts, describing the use of racialised scientific language to disguise the heightened emotional state of travellers during human encounters. 20

The emotional power of human encounters can be seen in some accounts in which Australians expressed deeper sentiment than simply disillusionment. In some cases, the experience of travel destabilised certain conventional assumptions, whilst leaving others intact. Jack McLaren was one such example, who retained a colonial view of Islanders and used colonialist language and yet recognised their basic equality: ‘And I, watching, concluded that in the matters of superstition, tradition and, above all, keen sensibility to scorn the man of the Palaeolithic Wild and the man of the Civilized Wild were brothers all the while.’ 21 Ralph Stock maintained racialised and essentialised views of Pacific Islanders, yet recognised that Islanders must have looked on European practices as ‘equally ludicrous to them.’ 22 Henley, too, was also moved by empathy during his travels, noting that, ‘something may be said or written which will make for a better understanding of our relations one with the other. To that end we must work.’ 23 This compassionate view must also be weighed against his belief that the British Empire had a ‘divine’ responsibility to the Pacific.

Occasionally in face-to-face human encounters, the expected stereotype of ‘savage’ or ‘primitive’ was deeply unsettled. Aletta Lewis endeavoured to completely abandon her European-ness in American Samoa, but was dismayed to find that task impossible. 24 Alan John Marshall was critical of the impact of European colonialism in the Pacific: ‘In all my writings and lectures I have been a friend of the native, and nobody is more interested in his cultural and physical welfare than I am. I loathe that

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21 McLaren, My Odyssey, 256.
23 Henley, A Pacific Cruise, 174.
24 Lewis, They Call Them Savages.
spreading rash of civilisation which is smashing the slow sure rhythm of stone.'

Muspratt’s account vividly described his shock when returning home:

Returning to civilization was a painful experience. Again one felt the unpleasantness and the unfairness of the money standard and all the meannesses it involves. Hurt by these things I retired into quiet corners, and withdrew into myself, ashamed of myself and ashamed of humanity. Once I had belonged quite splendidly in the scheme of things but now I belonged quite badly. And so the whole scheme seemed to be bad because I had lost my place in it. It was the first taste of bitterness of life for a young man hitherto rather successful, rather self-satisfied, and rather arrogant.

These are rare and brief glimpses of the emotional vulnerability of travellers when situated in foreign environments, and the potential for disillusionment with ideas of a supposedly ‘superior’ European or Australian society.

For a historian working through a vast catalogue of texts, these particular voices stand out. This is not due to their progressive views of Pacific Islanders, or their willingness to challenge the mainstream views of the time. Rather, these Australians are notable because they openly admitted the uncertainties and fragility of travel abroad. I argue we can learn more from those whose assumptions were unsettled by the travel experience than from travellers who were utterly convinced before and after their voyage. These ambiguous accounts more accurately reflect the feelings of temporary uncertainty and flux which travel provokes. This is not only evident in their physical mobility between two different worlds, but also in the fluid nature of the texts they write, which blend fact and fiction, imagination and reality, and emotion and reason.

The travellers I have studied in this thesis were products of very different times to our own. Assumptions and expectations have dramatically shifted, and the ‘lure’ of the Pacific Islands, with its myths of hidden riches, lost tribes and pristine utopias,

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26 Muspratt, My South Sea Island, 256.
long since debunked. Yet for all these differences, there were also many similarities. Their journeys have often followed the same process, of anticipation, encounter and reflection, which all travellers undergo. Some stereotypes persist today, despite the condensing of time and space by ships and planes. Images of vastness, distance, isolation and timelessness continue to challenge contemporary ideas of a globalised world. The Pacific Islands remain a place of sojourn or transit for Australians, rather than a place to live in. The promise of adventure and freedom lingers because these islands remain largely unknown to their Australian neighbours.

In this thesis I have attempted to address the lack of historical memory about Australia’s close and sustained relationship with the Pacific Islands. By drawing on the vast archive of Australian travel accounts, I hope I have shown that Australians were more closely connected to, and aware of, the Pacific Islands, than previous studies have acknowledged. By recognising the historical legacy of Australian and Pacific Islander encounters and exchanges, I argue we can better understand, and critically evaluate, former and contemporary Australian attitudes and policies to the Pacific. This is not only important as Australian officials continue to express their role in the Pacific region, whether in the ‘Arc of Instability’ or as part of a broader recognition of the ‘Asia-Pacific Century.’ It is crucial because Australians continue to travel to the Pacific Islands, and Pacific Islanders continue to grow as a visible feature of our cultural landscape. Rather than consider these two regions as separate and distinct entities, future studies of this relationship must recognise the complexities and diversities of peoples in Australia and the Islands, their mobility within Oceania, and the historical connections that have bound, and continue to bind them.
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APPENDIX

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF AUSTRALIAN TRAVEL WRITING

This appendix contains an annotated bibliography of Australian travel writing on the Pacific Islands from c.1880 to 1941 (excluding Papua and New Guinea, and fictional accounts). I have included accounts published after 1941 which describe experiences of travel that occurred within the specified time frame. For further details about these texts and their authors, I recommend consulting the Australian Dictionary of Biography and McCormack, Terry, et al., eds. Annotated Bibliography of Australian Overseas Travel Writing, 1830 to 1970. Canberra: ALIA Press, 1996.

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Born in New South Wales in 1874, Abbott worked as a jackeroo in the Hunter Valley until he started writing for the Bulletin in 1897. He fought in the South African War in 1900 and wrote his experience in the book Tommy Cornstalk (1902). His success took him to England as a freelance journalist where he wrote four books including The South Seas (Melanesia). This was part of the 'Peeps at Many Lands' series for children, and was based on his travels in c.1907. It was illustrated by Norman Hardy. Abbott spent the rest of his life writing in New South Wales and died in Sydney in 1953.

Born in Scotland, Allan lived in Queensland as a journalist working for the *Warwick Argus*. Reprinted from the *Helensburgh and Gareloch Times*, this short book is an account of a holiday trip to Scotland via Canada and the United States beginning in Sydney on 8 July 1915. On the journey home, Allan visited Hawaii and Fiji.


Born in 1876, Allen was a Sydney journalist and librarian for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. This handbook was reprinted in eight editions, beginning in 1907 and finishing in 1923. It includes descriptions of each island or island group, as well as trade statistics, travel advice, lists of residents, photographs, and 'a bibliography of island works.' It also printed contributions from other writers, newspapers and Pacific experts, including Australians. Allen also published: *Bibliography of Works on the Pacific Islands* (1900), *Cyclopedia of Fiji* (1907), *The Pacific Islands: Fiji and Samoa* (1908), *The Pacific Islands: New Zealand's Commercial Interests* (1908), and *The Late Mr. Louis Becke* (1921).


This 'deck observation' was originally written for family and later published in a newspaper series. It is an account of a tourist cruise from Sydney in 1914 for seven weeks, visiting Lord Howe Island, Norfolk Island and the New Hebrides.


Arthur was an English-born lawyer who moved to Australia with his Irish wife and became a labour recruiter. These papers contain letters to his wife, family photographs and newspaper clippings with evidence of his time aboard
the Lady Norman in 1899 and the Fearless in 1900. Whilst travelling on the Sydney Belle he was shot dead in Malaita (Solomon Islands) on 19 April 1901 and buried at sea.

Atkin, Charles Ager. A Trip to Fiji via East Coast of New Zealand. Melbourne: Massina, 1885.

Born in 1829, Atkin was a Melbourne chemist who went on a two-month cruise on a USSCo. vessel in 1884. Atkin visited New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. He died in 1898.


Baker describes himself as a grazier from Queensland. In this account of his grand tour, he describes Hawaii, the Midway and Wake Islands, Guam and Dutch New Guinea.


Barrow was born in England in 1851, and arrived in Adelaide two years later with his father, Reverend J.H. Barrow (founder of the Advertiser). George worked as a journalist, and was incarcerated for some months for criminal libel. He lived in Victoria and West Australia, before moving to Fiji in 1904. According to his 1921 pamphlet, he lived there for 17 years. His sister, Mrs Bishop, lived in Nausori. Barrow died in Nausori in 1925 and was described by his sister as 'a fierce Protectionist.' Barrow published two pamphlets advocating reforms to Native Administration in Fiji. He was critical of the accounts of visitors like Thomas James McMahon and Beatrice Grimshaw who overlooked the plight of the Fijian. Barrow was also opposed to European capitalists who exploited and monopolised industries in Fiji, and imported
cheap Asian labour. His 1922 booklet argued that educational reform would help the Fijian to progress.


Frederick Ehrenfried Baume was born in 1900 in Auckland. He worked as a reporter and broadcaster, first in New Zealand, then in Australia from 1923 to 1939. Baume was fond of Australia, writing ‘Australia breathes freedom at a man.’ He then spent time in England as a war correspondent, where he wrote two memoirs and several short stories and works of fiction. He returned to Australia in the 1950s and became a television celebrity. He was also a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. This autobiography recalls two Pacific voyages. The first was a trip to San Francisco as a child, passing the Cook Islands, Tahiti and American Samoa. The second was in 1937 when Baume passed Fiji and Hawaii en route to the United States.


Born in Bathurst in 1879, Bean is popularly remembered for his role as an Australia’s official war correspondent in World War One. He was also a trained lawyer before he began his journalism career in 1908. In August that year he was assigned to *HMS Powerful*, flagship of the Royal Navy squadron on the Australian Station, as correspondent. In his account of this time, he describes Fiji. He died in 1968.


Beattie was born in 1859 in Scotland. He migrated with his family to Tasmania in 1878, and became a professional photographer in 1882. He married in 1886 and had two children. He was appointed Tasmania’s official photographer in 1896 and worked hard to foster tourism there. In 1906 he
toured the Pacific Islands aboard the Melanesian Mission ship *Southern Cross*. He described New Zealand, Norfolk Island, the Solomon Islands, New Hebrides and Santa Cruz Islands. He died in Hobart in 1930.


———. *Notes from My South Sea Log*. London: Laurie, 1905.

Born in New South Wales in 1855, George Lewis Becke (later changed to Louis) was a popular Australian travel writer. In 1869 he travelled to San Francisco with his brother, then stowed away to Samoa, taking a job in Apia as a book-keeper. He was 18 when he met the notorious Captain 'Bully' Hayes who was to become a central character in his later writings. In 1874 Hayes signed Becke on as supercargo on the *Leonora*, which was later shipwrecked. Becke was arrested for piracy by a British warship but later acquitted. In 1880 he worked in the Ellice Islands as a trader, then New Britain and the Marshall Islands. In 1885 he returned to New South Wales, then worked in New Caledonia from 1890 to 1892. Unemployed, Becke turned to writing and the *Bulletin*’s editor, J.F. Archibald, helped launch his career. In addition to numerous newspaper and magazine articles, Becke published 34 books (including six in collaboration with W.J. Jeffrey). Becke was known for his simple realist writing style and *By Reef and Palm* (1894) became one of his most successful texts, re-published in several editions. After various worldwide travels he returned to Sydney broke in 1909, and died in 1913.


Belbin was a master mariner engaged in the Queensland labour trade. These papers contain Belbin’s official log book from 1881 to 1883 aboard the *Barough Belle*: his ship diaries from 1881, 1882 and 1883; and his last will and testament dated 1883. He visited the New Hebrides and Solomon Islands from Port Mackay.

Blakiston was a Geelong businessman who went on a grand tour in the 1930s for eight months to Europe. He was 78 years old and accompanied by his daughter. His account describes Fiji and Hawaii and promotes the Australian Travel Service for organising his itinerary.


Bollard was born in 1894 and was a bandsman on *HMAS Australia* during World War One. In his diary he describes spending time in Fiji and New Caledonia. He died in 1952.


Bond was a wealthy Adelaide woman who made frequent travels to England, usually via the Suez Canal. One of her diaries describes her trip on the *Rotorua* from England to Adelaide, during which time she writes about Pitcairn Island. Her papers include other travel ephemera such as postcards, photos, menus, pressed flowers, tickets and letters.


Brummitt was born in England in 1851, and worked as a doctor in Adelaide, living with his Australian wife. He was also a fervent Methodist. His account of a five-week holiday to Fiji in 1912 was based on a series of articles he wrote for the periodical *Australian Christian Commonwealth*. It includes an introduction by Reverend George Brown. Brummitt also published an article, ‘Fiji and its People’ in the *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch* (1915). He died in 1927.

Born in Melbourne in 1911, Burchett worked in the travel industry in Europe in the 1930s, before returning to Australia in 1939 to work as a journalist. In 1941 he visited New Caledonia, recording his experience in *Pacific Treasure Island* as well as articles for *Walkabout*, *Pix* and Australian newspapers. He was particularly concerned by Australian apathy to German and Japanese hostility. Later he sailed with American naval fleets and reported on the Pacific war (see *Democracy with a Tommy Gun*, 1946). His autobiography *Passport* recalled these travels, and a previous sojourn in Tahiti in 1936. From 1945 Burchett lived and worked in Britain, Berlin, Korea, Vietnam, Moscow, South Africa, Cambodia and Bulgaria. He wrote over 35 books, including two which responded to the government’s refusal to grant him a passport from 1955 to 1972 because of alleged communist sympathies. He died in Bulgaria in 1983.


Government agent aboard the *Ceara* and the *Lizzie* visiting Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. On the latter journey, he travelled with Captain William Wawn.


Born in England in 1875, Burton was a Methodist minister who grew up in New Zealand from 1883 and began theological training in Auckland in 1895. After ordination in 1901 he worked in the Fiji missions. He was appalled by the indentured Indian labourers’ living conditions on the sugar estates, and exposed the abuses in his most influential and controversial book, *The Fiji of To-day*. Family illness forced Burton to return to New Zealand in 1910, then after three years he was invited to Victoria to be the secretary for overseas...
missions. From 1925 to 1945 Burton worked in Sydney as the general secretary for the Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia. He regularly visited mission stations in India, north Australia and the Pacific during this time. He also edited the *Missionary Review* and wrote several mission texts, such as the children’s reference book *The Call of the Pacific*. Retiring from the ministry in 1948, he was one of Australia’s two representatives on the South Pacific Commission until 1950. He died in 1970.


Cato was the wife of Tasmanian Methodist missionary, A. Cyril Cato. She accompanied him to Fiji in 1934 when he took charge of the Methodist Teacher Training Institute in Suva. He frequently published articles in newspapers and wrote a thesis on Fijian religious education in 1939. This account by Helen recounts details of domestic life as a missionary wife at the Richmond boarding school in the Kadavu group of islands. Helen wrote that her work was published in several Australian newspapers as well. Her other text, *Children of Fiji* (1955), was published by the Methodist Mission as an educational book for children.


Born in 1855, Cheeseman migrated to Brighton, Victoria in 1867. He became a well-known horticulturist, and was president of the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria and a member of the local Brighton council. He died there in 1916. This is an account of his seven-week tourist cruise through New Caledonia and the New Hebrides beginning December 1900. It was also printed in the *Brighton Southern Cross*.


Residing in South Australia, Hannah is possibly related to geologist and anthropologist Charles Chewings (1859-1937). This account describes a three-month voyage in 1899 from Sydney to New Guinea and the Solomon
Islands. It was reprinted from articles sent to the Advertiser. Chewings was a devout Christian and notes that Reverend George Brown had chartered the boat.


Born in 1852 in the United States, Coffee came to Sydney in 1881, leaving his journalism career behind to create the Oceanic Publishing Company. He settled in Artarmon and his success in business allowed him to travel around the world several times. These experiences formed the basis of his book *Forty Years on the Pacific*. A second edition was published in 1925. His two sons fought in World War One and he published the letters of Frank Jnr., who died at Gallipoli. Coffee died in Sydney in 1929.


George Alphonse Collingridge de Tourcey was born in 1847 in England. He was an artist, historian, teacher and cartographer who lived in the Sydney area from 1879. He was particularly interested in Portuguese maritime exploration, writing books and articles on the subject, as well as novels for children. Sometimes he used the pseudonym 'The Hermit of Berowra.' This text describes a grand tour which included visits to New Guinea, New Caledonia, Micronesia, Hawaii and Easter Island. It is an unusual and frequently incoherent collection of childhood memories and varied travels, some with a fictitious Martian companion. Collingridge died in 1931.


Cuthbert Quinlan Dale Collins was born in 1897 at Balmain, Sydney. He joined the *Melbourne Herald* as a reporter and contributed stories to the *Bulletin*. In 1922 he was engaged by A.Y. Gowen, an American millionaire,
to accompany him on a world tour aboard his yacht, *Speejacks*. This trip inspired *Sea-Tracks of the Speejacks Round the World* in which he described New Guinea and the Trobriand Islands. Collins moved to London in 1923 and returned to Melbourne in 1948, where he died eight years later. He wrote 37 books in total, including the autobiographical *Bright Vista* and ten novels for children. Other pseudonyms include ‘Stephen Fennimore’ and ‘Michael Copeland.’


Elinor Violet May Cook was born in 1877 in Victoria. She became engaged to Wesleyan minister Richard Osbourne (whom she called 'Oz') in 1899. She travelled from Melbourne to Sydney, then to Suva with Oz. They were married on 15 April 1904, then went to Macuata (near Labasa). She gave birth to her first child there, and moved to Lakeba Island in the Lau Group in 1905. The diaries end abruptly in September 1906 and she does not mention having to return to Australia for the birth of her second child. She did not return to Fiji and died in Victoria in 1958. This edited edition also contains several letters which were published in the Methodist publication *The Spectator* and some personal photographs.


Combes was a landscape painter who lived in Lithgow, New South Wales. She exhibited with the Art Society of New South Wales during the 1880s. Her account describes a trip in 1895 with her father, Edward Combes, from Sydney on a USSCo. vessel. She writes about Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. She died in 1924 in Sydney.

Coombe was an Anglican missionary on Norfolk Island and in the Solomon Islands. In 1907 Coombe visited the New Hebrides, Banks Islands, Torres Islands, Santa Cruz Islands, and Solomon Islands. She could speak Motu, a language used by many missionaries in the region. She also wrote *Schooldays in Norfolk Island* (1907), and other books about her schooling experience. This text contains illustrations by John Watt Beattie.


Logbooks of Craig, government agent aboard the *Clansman, Helena* and *Lochiel* in the Solomon Islands, New Hebrides and Papua New Guinea. Also includes material relating to Craig’s debarment from the labour trade in 1905.


John (‘Jock’) Cromar was born in Scotland in 1860, and visited Australia numerous times from 1875 as a sailor working on steamers from London. When he was 23 years old he joined a labour recruiting vessel, the *Forest King* and continued to recruit in the New Hebrides and Solomon Islands until the end of the labour trade in 1904. He was a crewman aboard the vessels *Madeline, Storm Bird, Helena, Fearless* and *Seashell* during this time. This is an account of his encounters as a recruiter, and although Cromar identified himself as a trader in the Marovo area of New Georgia, this book does not record these experiences.

Born in England in 1856, Caroline Martha (Cara) Mallett emigrated to Australia in 1882 to be the principal of a teacher training college in Sydney. Her husband was the chair of geology at the University of Sydney and she accompanied him for three months on the 1897 Royal Society expedition to bore coral reefs at Funafuti in the Ellice Islands. She also visited Fiji, Tonga and Samoa en route. Back home, Caroline wrote ‘Mission work in Funafuti’ for the *Australian Christian World* (1897), then published *Funafuti*, first in 1899, then an abridged edition in 1913. The Davids accepted responsibility for educating a Fijian princess, Adi Elanoa, who later died of influenza whilst holidaying in Fiji. They moved to the Blue Mountains, where Caroline was active in the girl guides, as well as president of the Women’s National Movement for social reform. She also turned her residence into a convalescent home for soldiers. She died in Sydney in 1951.


Dean was born in the Paton Memorial Hospital at Port Vila, Vanuatu in 1914. She was the daughter of David and Winifred Griffiths, and spent her childhood with her sister on her parents' plantation at Lenakel, Tanna. Due to repeated attacks of malaria, her family moved to Norfolk Island where they owned a banana plantation for a short time. These papers include Dean’s letters and notes recalling her time in Tanna as a child, and when she returned with her husband in 1963; a letter written by her mother on Christmas Day 1911; a photograph of her parents at Tanna in 1911; and birth certificates for Dean and her sister.


Dickinson’s background is unknown. In his book he described 18 years spent in the Solomon Islands (c.1908-1926) working as a trader, planter and labour recruiter. In his account he describes his admiration for Australia when departing Sydney for the Islands.

James Gerald Stokely Doorly was born in Trinidad in 1880 and was a seaman and master mariner. Based in New Zealand, he worked for USSCo., commanded New Zealander troop transports during World War One, and accompanied an expedition to Antarctica. He then migrated to Melbourne in 1925 and worked as a maritime pilot. He wrote two books, short stories and articles for *Blackwood's Magazine, Bulletin, Argus* and *Herald*, and also composed music. This autobiography was primarily written for his daughters and describes Honolulu, Tonga, Samoa and Tahiti. Doorly moved to Wellington in 1951 and died there five years later.


An account of a round trip aboard the USSCo. vessel *Manapouri* from Sydney to New Zealand, Suva, Tonga and Samoa in 1904. This text was part of the ‘Manapouri Messenger’, a booklet which was published privately by the passengers on board the ship. The author is possibly Dr. C. P.W. Dyring of Coburg, Victoria (as listed in the online trove database).


Sir Albert Fuller Ellis was born in Queensland in 1869 and moved to New Zealand the same year. When he was 18 years old he joined John T. Arundel and Co. as a phosphate prospector. He spent three years in the Phoenix Islands then worked off the north Queensland coast. In 1899 he was transferred to Sydney and found phosphate rock from Nauru propping open a door. In 1900 he sailed for Ocean Island and Nauru, confirmed the existence of phosphate and began mining operations there. He managed mines from 1906 to 1911 and returned to Auckland. Ellis was appointed phosphate commissioner for New Zealand.
Zealand in 1920, a position he held until his death in 1951. Ellis was an avid publicist for the phosphate and fertiliser industries, contributing frequent journal articles and three books. The first two books in 1935 and 1936 described his Pacific voyages from 1887 to 1911, visiting Ocean Island, Nauru, Fiji, and the Phoenix, Marshall and Gilbert Islands. His other book, *Mid-Pacific Outposts* (1946), dealt with World War Two. Ellis was also active in the Presbyterian Church, and a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. It is not clear from his texts whether he considered himself Australian or New Zealander.


Farquhar was a farmer of Maryborough, Queensland. He visited New Caledonia, the Loyalty Islands and New Hebrides in the schooner *City of Melbourne* from November 1870 to January 1871 to recruit labourers for himself and other farmers in his region. He made a second voyage to New Caledonia, the New Hebrides and Banks Islands in the schooner *Petrel* from September 1871 to January 1872 as a government agent.


Fehon was born in London in 1834 and moved to Melbourne in 1858 to work on the railways. He eventually became the railways commissioner and died in Sydney in 1911. This account describes a six-week trip in 1898 on a cruise ship to the Cook Islands, Tahiti, French Polynesia, Samoa, and Tonga. Fehon was commissioned by USSCo. and there are several promotions throughout the book, and a passenger list.

Fison was born in England in 1832. He went to the Australian goldfields sometime in the 1850s before becoming ordained a Wesleyan minister and heading to Fiji with his Welsh bride in 1863. In Fiji he established his reputation as an anthropologist and his work became the basis for the government’s Land Tenure Act. Fison also took a leading part in the campaign to stop blackbirding (what he called ‘moon stealing’). He retired from the ministry in 1888, settled in Melbourne and earned a livelihood by journalism (including editing the mission publication, *Spectator*, for 17 years). He died in Melbourne in 1907.


Fitzpatrick was born in New South Wales in 1862. He worked as a journalist and eventually owned a newspaper. In 1895 he was elected as a New South Wales politician until 1930. He was also a trustee of the Public Library of New South Wales and was passionate about Australian history. He compiled several books of local reminiscences, two poetry volumes, and two travel books: *Eastward Ho* (1905) and *A Jaunt to Java* (1908). This small pamphlet records his 1907 trip to New Caledonia and Fiji. Fitzpatrick was also chairman of the Lord Howe Island Board. He died in 1932.


Sir Frank Ignatius Fox was born in 1874 in Adelaide. He worked as a journalist for several papers in Tasmania, Bathurst and Sydney, including the *Bulletin* and *Lone Hand*. He moved to London in 1909 and wrote several imperialist books such as *Ramparts of Empire* (1910), *Australia* (1910), and *The British Empire* (1914). He served in World War One and continued writing in England until his death in 1960. *Oceania* is part of the ‘Peeps at Many Lands’ reference series for children and is illustrated by Norman Hardy. It includes personal experiences from Fox’s trip to Fiji and Hawaii en route to Vancouver in 1909. There were four editions (1911, 1912, 1913, 1919), the
second being 'specifically printed for the Salvation Army, Australasia.' Other publications such as Problems of the Pacific (1912) and The Mastery of the Pacific (1928) focused on the strategic value of the region.


Fraser was born in Victoria and from 1927 to 1933 he worked as a miner in Australia, before taking up a position in Tavua, Fiji prospecting for gold. He stayed for approximately nine months, returned to Australia, then visited Fiji again in 1935 with his brother. He travelled around Viti Levu in search of gold for a Melbourne company. After a year he went prospecting in Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands and returned to Australia unsuccessful. He served in an anti-aircraft battery in the Middle East and New Guinea during World War Two and died in 1946. This manuscript was published posthumously by Terence O’Brien at the request of Fraser’s sister.

Freeman, Betty. *Fiji - Memory Hold the Door*. Balgowlah: s.n., 1996.

Freeman was born in 1916 in Nadroga, Fiji. Her father was a surveyor for the Colonial Sugar Refinery. Freeman lived in Fiji until 1930 when she went to boarding school in Sydney. When she returned aged 16, her parents had moved to Lautoka. She returned to Sydney when her father retired in 1941. In 1943 she moved back to Fiji with her husband, another Australian CSR employee, living in Lautoka and Labasa until 1954 when he was transferred to Sydney’s head office. Freeman returned in 1981 and 1997 to visit. This autobiography details each time spent in Fiji since 1916.


John Gaggin was a labour recruiter from Melbourne. According to this autobiography, he worked on Fiji cotton plantations from 1871, and then spent six years as a government agent on Australian recruiting ships. He visited Fiji, the Solomon Islands and the New Hebrides. Parts of this text were originally published in Chamber’s Journal, The Age, The Argus and The Leader.

Garran was born in 1825 in London. He arrived in Adelaide in 1848, working as a journalist in small newspapers until he joined the *Sydney Morning Herald* as assistant editor in 1856, then the *Herald* in 1873. Failing health forced him to resign at the end of 1885, and he edited three volumes of *Australasia Illustrated* the following year. He was a member of the Legislative Council from 1887 to 1895, and died in 1901. Under the title ‘Insular Territories’, Garran makes references to Papua and New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, the New Hebrides, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands, and New Caledonia.


Gay was an Australian journalist and proprietor of the *Lane Cove Herald*. This text was based on letters sent to his sons whilst on a grand tour, presumably in 1930. Gay was elderly at the time, and gave descriptions of Fiji, American Samoa and Hawaii.


Giles spent five months on a Queensland labour vessel recruiting in the New Hebrides in 1877 because he was ‘in want of a holiday.’ His account was written in 1880, and was probably intended for publication, although the manuscript is anonymous and the name of the boat was concealed. Giles’ background is unknown. In his account he says he spent four years working in ‘a back district of Western Queensland’ on sheep stations where he met many Pacific Islanders. After the voyage he bought land on Emoe in the New Hebrides and grew maize. In 1879, suffering from malaria, he sailed to Levuka then to New Zealand, arriving broke. In 1880 he went back to Fiji and settled at Lomaloma on a plantation, then ran a small schooner between the islands. By 1884 he also had business in Nukualofa, Tonga and in 1885 he
became an agent for USSCo. From 1886 to 1887 he served as British Vice Consul in Tonga.


Born in Melbourne in 1895, Gill was a plantation manager for the Colonial Sugar Refinery in Fiji from 1915 to 1926. This autobiography describes Gill’s service in the Australian Imperial Force during World War One and his life in Fiji. He went on to serve in World War Two, before becoming a cattle property owner and commercial fisherman. He died in South Australia in 1969.


Beatrice Ethel Grimshaw was born in 1870 in Ireland. Initially she worked as a sports journalist in Dublin, then for various shipping companies, before reporting on the Pacific Islands for the *Daily Graphic*. In 1904 and 1905 she accepted government and company commissions to write tourist publicity for the Cook Islands, Tonga, Samoa, Niue and New Zealand, and on the prospects for settlers in Fiji. She completed three books in Europe before returning to the Pacific. Commissioned by the *Times*, London, and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, she sailed late in 1907 to report on Papua, intending to stay only two or three months. She lived in Port Moresby for the next 27 years and formed a close friendship with the acting administrator, Sir Hubert Murray. Grimshaw was commissioned by Australian Prime Minister Alfred Deakin to advertise Papua’s need for white settlers and capital, publishing pamphlets in 1909, and a book, *The New New Guinea* (1910). Afterwards, Grimshaw concentrated on fiction writing which she preferred. Most were escapist, outdoor romances with a Pacific setting, and one was produced into the movie *The Adorable Outcast* (1928). Grimshaw also managed a plantation near Samarai from 1917.
to 1922. She accompanied exploring parties up the Sepik and Fly rivers in 1923 and 1926, and in 1933 she took up tobacco-growing. In 1934 she left Papua, visiting Fiji, Samoa and Tonga one last time before retiring in Bathurst, New South Wales in 1936. She died in 1953. In total, Grimshaw wrote four travel books, 24 novels, ten volumes of short stories and countless articles for newspapers and magazines. These include the travelogues *In the Strange South Seas* (which focuses on Polynesia); *From Fiji to the Cannibal Islands* (which focuses on Melanesia, and was also published in New York under the title *Fiji and Its Possibilities*); a part-autobiography titled *Isles of Adventure* (1930); and her first Pacific fiction, *Vaiti of the Islands* (1907).

Grimshaw, Joseph Hadfield. *A Month in New Zealand; a Trip to Fiji, Tonga and Samoa.* Adelaide: Hunkin, Ellis & King, 1931.

-------. *The New Hebrides Group of Islands.* Adelaide: Hunkin, Ellis & King, 1933.

Born in England in 1856, Grundy arrived in South Australia at the age of 19. Later he founded a jeweller and druggist firm. He travelled in Europe and in the Pacific and wrote several travel pamphlets and a book of verse afterwards (some with the help of his nephew as he became blind). *A Month in New Zealand; a Trip to Fiji, Tonga and Samoa* recalled a month’s holiday in 1914. *The New Hebrides Group of Islands* described another voyage, but it is not clear when it was undertaken. He also wrote *More about Australia and the Pacific* (1929, with a short reference to his travels to Tahiti) and *Lord Howe Island and Norfolk Island* (1933).

Gunga. *Narrative of a Trip from Maryborough to New Caledonia.* Maryborough: s.n., 1878.

This is a collection of letters which were printed in the *Wide Bay and Burnett News*. Occasionally the author, ‘Gunga’, addresses them to ‘Mr Editor.’ Gunga was sent to New Caledonia to investigate nickel deposits and arrives when the so-called ‘native insurrection’ was at its height. His identity is unknown.

Hamilton was born in Scotland and came to Australia at the age of ten. From 1882 to 1883, he made voyages from Brisbane to the New Hebrides, New Britain and New Ireland in labour recruiting vessels. From the late 1890s he ran the Hamilton Pearling Company with luggers operating out of the Admiralty Islands and Solomon Islands. Later, Hamilton invested in plantations in the Solomon Islands, mainly on Choiseul. He died in Sydney in 1937. These papers include two diaries of recruiting voyages to the New Hebrides (1882-1883); a report and diary on a voyage prospecting for pearl shell in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands (1899-1901); two logs kept by the Hamilton Pearling Company in the Admiralty Islands; and logs and diaries for four vessels in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands (1903-1905).


Born in Melbourne in 1909, Doris (Ada) Hayball was a playwright, author and poet. This is an anecdotal account of a one-year grand tour in 1937. On the return trip to Australia, she visited Hawaii and Fiji. She died in 1948.


Sir Thomas Henley was born in England in 1860 and migrated to Sydney in 1884. Starting off as a building contractor, he eventually became a state politician in 1904. In *Fiji - the Land of Promise*, Henley describes a trip to Fiji in 1926, in particular focusing on the strategic value of the country to Australia. It includes a preface by John Wear Burton. In *A Pacific Cruise*, Henley describes a circuit of Fiji, Tonga and Samoa in 1928. He also wrote a book titled *New Guinea and Australia's Pacific Islands Mandate* in 1927, and some articles commenting on Samoan politics. He fell from a Manly ferry and
drowned in 1935, and left money from his estate to the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches.

Hickson, J. C. Notes of Travel: From Pacific to Atlantic, with Description of the World's Fair at Chicago; Also Travels by Sea and Land Round the World. Parramatta: Fuller's Lightning Printing Works, 1894.

This is an account of Hickson's 'hurried trip round the world' in 1893 on the Monowai with his eldest daughter. The letters he sent home during the trip were published in the local paper, The Australian Currier. He describes Samoa and Hawaii. His identity is unknown, although the preface refers to his residence in Enfield, New South Wales.


Born in 1911 in Sydney, Hilder was a cadet with Burns, Philp and Company in 1928 and worked on several of their ships on the New Guinea route. He also served in the Australian navy and air force in the 1930s. He died in Queensland in 1981. This autobiography details Hilder's career as navigator and master mariner in the Pacific Islands, with descriptions of New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, New Caledonia and the New Hebrides from 1928 to 1938. He also enjoyed art, sculpture and photography of Pacific subjects, as well as publishing articles on navigation, Polynesia and marine biology in publications such as Judy Tudor's PIM's Pacific (1965).


Hill was born in 1863 in Adelaide and was trained as a doctor in England. He was an officer in the Australian Imperial Force and a surgeon in Adelaide from 1897 to 1922. This text describes his 30-day steamer trip in the Tofua to Fiji, Tonga and Samoa in 1927. He died in South Australia in 1933.

Born in 1891 in Melbourne, Holmes was an editor of the magazine *Walkabout* and the managing director of the Australian National Travel Association from c.1930 to 1957. Holmes spent three months on a grand tour in the 1920s, visiting Hawaii, American Samoa and Fiji on his way back to Sydney. He also wrote a travelogue titled *We Find Australia* in 1932.


Hore was born in 1848 in London, and arrived in Australia in 1890. He was a Congregational missionary and seaman, working with the London Missionary Society in Africa in 1877, and on the mission ship *John Williams* from 1893 to 1900. This is a report of a six-month visit in 1895 to 36 missionary stations in the Pacific including New Guinea, Niue, Samoa, the Ellice and Gilbert Islands, and the Cook Islands. Hore wrote one other book about his African mission work, and died in Hobart in 1912.


Born in South Australia in 1862, Hoskin was a grazier and archaeologist who lived in Mitchell, Queensland. This is an account of his 1910 grand tour to London, via Fiji and Hawaii. His other publication, *My Trip Round the World* (1917), described a journey from the Philippines to San Francisco via Hawaii.

Ievers, William. *Fifty Years After, or, Old Scenes Revisited A.D. 1890*. Melbourne: Ford & Son, Printers, 1894.

Born in 1818 in Ireland, Ievers arrived in Australia in 1855. He worked as a merchant, sailor, auctioneer and estate agent. This is a travel diary published for private distribution. Ievers describes his nine-month grand tour with his eldest son, beginning in 1890. He visited Honolulu and American Samoa aboard the *Mariprosa*. He died in Melbourne in 1901.

Bill Irwin and Ivan Goff were shipping reporters living in Fremantle, Western Australia. Only 18 years old, they travelled to Fiji and across the United States and Canada in the 1930s with little money apart from the commission earned from submitting articles to the *Western Mail* newspaper. This is an account of their journey.

Jamieson, A. *With the Scottish Delegation: Impressions of the Sea Voyage, Egypt, Great Britain, the Continent, the Battlefields of France, America, Honolulu, Fiji and New Zealand.* Ashfield: A. Jamieson, 1929.

This is a report of a pilgrimage by Scottish descendants carrying samples of Australian products to Europe to ‘tell the people of the Old Land the wonderful possibilities and achievements of Australia.’ Miss A. Jamieson left Sydney in 1928 on the liner *Hobson Bay*. On the journey home she visited Hawaii, Fiji and New Zealand.


Born in 1848 in London, Joseph was a financier, stockbroker and self-proclaimed ‘Bendigonian.’ This account of a seven-month grand tour in March 1890 was originally written for publication in the *Bendigo Advertiser*. His book was privately circulated. In it he describes Hawaii and American Samoa on the journey home. He died in Melbourne in 1848.


Born in Brisbane in 1897, Kingsford-Smith served in the Australian Imperial Force and later became a famous aviator, breaking several records in his inter-country plane trips. This autobiography was published posthumously after Kingsford-Smith’s plane, *Lady Southern Cross*, disappeared in 1935. This
account describes the first trans-Pacific flight from San Francisco to Australia in 1928, including stopovers in Hawaii and Fiji.


Kirkcaldie was born in Sydney in 1887 and worked as a nurse at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney. She served as an army nurse in World War One, then returned to nursing duties as a matron in Sydney afterwards. This is an account of her trip on the hospital ship *Grantala* which went to Fiji and German New Guinea from August to December 1914. She died in Sydney in 1972.


Journal of a government agent aboard the *Lizzie* and *Ceara* in 1884. He visited the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, and his captain aboard the *Ceara* was William Wawn.


Lees was presumably an employee of the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company. According to this illustrated handbook, ‘an effort has been made to place before the reader the scope of operations of this Company and a guide to the various places around the coast of Australia and Fiji, with which the Company’s steamers have regular communication.’


Aletta M. Lewis was born in England in 1904. She trained as an artist and arrived in Sydney in 1927, where she taught at the Sydney Art School.
was a regular exhibitor in Sydney, winning the Archibald prize in 1928. In 1929, the director of the Macquarie galleries funded Lewis to go to the Pacific Islands to fulfil her desire ‘to paint brown people.’ She recorded her six-month sojourn in American Samoa in this 1928 account. She also exhibited her paintings at a solo show in 1929 before returning to London (the artwork has since been lost). Although British, Lewis frequently questioned her own nationality while attempting to become a part of the Samoan communities in which she lived.


Born in 1862 in London, Littlejohn arrived in Sydney two years later and studied at Sydney Grammar School. He became a successful businessman until his death in 1923. Littlejohn travelled to the United States via Fiji and Hawaii in 1909 for four months on doctor’s recommendations. This account was based on daily diary entries, and only 250 copies were printed for private circulation.


John Livingston (1857-1935) was a stock agent, station manager, auctioneer and politician. His brother was a station manager in New South Wales. John Thomson (1862-1934) was a New South Wales politician. They travelled from Melbourne to ‘the old country’ in 1911 as part of a political delegation to attend the coronation of King George V. On the way home they visited Hawaii and Fiji.


Lloyd was a South Australian and self-professed ‘true Britisher.’ This travel account describes Lloyd’s grand tour with his wife in 1901 for six months. On the way to the United States he visited American Samoa and Hawaii.
Lucas, Thomas Pennington. *Cries from Fiji and Sighings From the South Seas.* Melbourne: Dunn & Collins, 188?.


Lucas was born in Scotland in 1843. His father was a Wesleyan minister, and Lucas was convinced in his youth that he had a divine mission to save humanity. He studied medicine and joined the prestigious Linnean Society. After the death of his wife and his contraction of tuberculosis he moved to New South Wales in 1877, and briefly visited the Methodist missions in Fiji the same year. *Cries from Fiji* defended the Methodist missionaries there and opposed the Queensland labour trade. Afterwards he established a medical practice in Melbourne, then moved to Brisbane in 1886 where he promoted pawpaw ointment as a medical treatment. In his later life he was regarded as an eccentric and a quack, until his death in 1917.


Mahlmann lived in Australia and worked as a second officer on a trading ship between Sydney and Auckland. This text is the only source of information about his life. After a failed gold prospecting expedition to New Zealand in 1864, he joined a trading ship which took him to Japan, China and the Micronesian region (including the Gilbert and Marshall Islands, Ponape, Hawaii). His reminiscences include being shipwrecked in the Marshall Islands, living in Ponape for two years, touring Hawaii with a Japanese government delegation, and visiting his daughter in Europe. He lived in Japan from 1871 for 47 years.


Marks was born in New South Wales in 1885. He was a journalist for the *Australian Star* from 1903 and the *Sun* from 1909 to 1935. He was an amateur
military historian, particularly interested in the Napoleonic wars. Marks authored six books, contributed articles on naval subjects to the *Navy League Journal*, and was a founding member of the Australian Journalist Association. He died in 1935 in Sydney. This text warned readers of the Asian threat in the Pacific and it is unclear whether it was based on his personal experience of travel in the region.


Alan John (Jock) Marshall was born in 1911 in Sydney. Despite having lost an arm in a shooting accident at the age of 16, he was active in several natural history expeditions as a zoologist. *The Black Musketeers* described seven months spent with colleague Tom Harrison in 1934, living in Espiritu Santo (New Hebrides) on an Oxford University Expedition. Their goal was to research the effect of climate on animal reproduction. *The Men and Birds of Paradise* described his travels through Papua and Dutch New Guinea in 1936, conducting reconnaissance for a scientific expedition. He also published other books about Australia, such as *Australia Limited* (1942). He had a distinguished service record during World War Two in New Guinea and worked in academia afterwards, becoming a Professor of Zoology at Monash University. He died in Victoria in 1967. A biography of his life was written by his wife, Jane Marshall, and is accessible online.

Matters, Charles Henry. *From Golden Gate to Golden Horn, and Many Other World Wide Wanderings: Or 50,000 Miles of Travel over Sea and Land*. Adelaide: Vardon & Pritchard, 1892.

Born in 1847 in England, Matters moved to Adelaide in 1853 where he worked as a land agent and manager. This is an account of his year-long grand tour to the United States in 1891, describing American Samoa and Hawaii. Parts of his ‘rapid sketches of travel’ were published in the *Advertiser*,

Born in 1903 in South Australia, Dominic Paul McGuire was a journalist, writer, literary critic and diplomat. He worked as an overseas correspondent in Europe for several newspapers in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and was a diplomat in Europe in the 1950s. This text describes McGuire’s travels in the Pacific and South East Asia in the 1940s, including visits to Hawaii and Fiji. He frequently commented on the expansion and influence of Western empires, including Australia. He died in 1978.


McKay was born in 1887 in New Zealand, and worked in Melbourne as a publisher and businessman from the 1880s. He identified himself as a ‘British-Australian’ in his account of two grand tours in 1926 and 1935. In 1926 he visited Hawaii and Fiji, and in 1935 he visited Papua.


John (Jack) McLaren was born in Melbourne in 1884. He ran away from school when he was 16, working in various jobs in North Queensland, Papua and New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Fiji including mining, driving, pearling, trading, prospecting and labour recruiting. He described these experiences in the autobiography, *My Odyssey*. From 1911 he settled on a coconut plantation in Cape York and wrote articles for the *Bulletin* and other fiction and non-fiction books under the pseudonym ‘McNorth.’ In 1925 he moved to London for 30 years where he remained, publishing books, radio
broadcasting and writing government propaganda during World War Two. He died in 1954 in England. Of his many other books, *Gentlemen of the Empire* was devoted to Pacific subjects, describing the lives of patrol officers in Melanesia.


McMillan was born in Scotland in 1848 and ran away from home aged 14. He lived in the United States as a journalist, then returned to England before moving to New South Wales in 1890 for health reasons. He became editor and proprietor of the *Blue Mountains Express*, and also worked for the journal, *Stock and Station*. He often wrote under the pseudonyms 'Gossip' and 'Globe Trotter' and dedicated many books to children and his beloved *Stock and Station* readers. He was also a founding member of the New South Wales Institute of Journalists, and died in Sydney in 1929. In this text, 'Gossip' describes his travels to Hawaii and American Samoa on an 11-month grand tour in the 1900s.


Sub-Lieutenant McWilliam was born in 1894 and served on *H.M.A.S. Australia* during World War One. A carbon copy of his diary from 27 July 1914 to 28 January 1915 is held by the Australian War Memorial. It records McWilliam’s journey from Sydney to German New Guinea, New Caledonia, Fiji and Samoa as the ship patrolled for German vessels.


Born in 1866 in New South Wales, Meagher worked as a solicitor and state politician. This text describes his trip to the United States in 1924 when he was Lord Mayor of Sydney. He visited Fiji and Hawaii. Meagher published two other books about his political career, and died in Sydney in 1931.

Meek was born in London in 1872. He was a bird collector and naturalist who travelled across Australia, Papua, Dutch New Guinea and the Solomon Islands from 1889 to 1913. Many specimens were donated to the Rothschild Natural History Museum in England. Meek returned to England ‘weary of the South Seas life’ where he published this book with Frank Fox. Meek may be considered Australian because he spent six years working as a jackeroo on Queensland cattle stations, and he uses Australian slang in his writing. He also visited Australia regularly between his travels in the Pacific, and was married in Cooktown in 1898 (to whom is unclear).


Melvin was born in 1852 in Scotland. He worked as a journalist in Perth, then Melbourne for the *Argus*, during which time he was sent as a correspondent to report on the Sudan War in 1885, and on the Queensland labour trade in 1892. He published 13 articles on the labour trade – his experience aboard a recruiting ship was positive, and he failed to observe any offences committed. He was an active Congregationalist and rebutted Australian missionaries who attacked his interpretation of the trade. He continued working as a reporter for various Australian newspapers until his death in 1909.

Mercer-Smith, Sydney. *OM76-04 Sydney Mercer-Smith Diaries 1892-1900*.

Born in Sydney in 1857, Captain Mercer-Smith was appointed a government agent on board labour recruiting vessels from 1893 to 1902. These diaries record the author’s recruiting experiences from 1893 to 1900. They were personal diaries, rather than official logs. He died in Brisbane in 1933. See Carol Edmondson for a more detailed summary.

George Dick Meudell was a stockbroker and accountant born in 1860 in Victoria. This autobiography is a disorderly collection of anecdotes and reminiscences of his life, including his visits to Samoa, Fiji, Tahiti, Hawaii, New Caledonia and New Guinea. He reprinted a second edition in 1936, removing references to certain prominent Melbourne families because of his controversial exposé of the Victorian land boom. He also published a book about banking and kept documents and souvenirs from his American and European travels. He died in Melbourne in 1936.


Born in 1883 in Melbourne, Mickle was a poet, novelist, playwright and literary critic. This book was divided into three parts: 'autobiographical', 'of places and people', and 'travel'. The travel section described his visits to Fiji in 1908. On a later journey in 1935 he visited Samoa on a grand tour to Europe with his wife. He died in 1969.


Born in England in 1855, Millican was a businessman involved in Queensland mining and later owned a Sydney hotel. This text was based on diary notes and a collection of press interviews from *The Northern Miner* and *North Queensland Register* giving his impressions of the British and American economies. The year-long journey was undertaken in 1905 with his family for a holiday, and also to encourage investment in Queensland mines. They visited Hawaii and American Samoa. Millican died in Sydney in 1934.

Mills was a government agent aboard the *Ethel* in 1884 which visited the New Hebrides, Solomon Islands, and German New Guinea. These papers include files relating to a case of alleged kidnapping by the Captain John Loutit and First Mate George R. Burton.


Janet Charlotte Mitchell was born in 1896 in Melbourne. Janet graduated from university in London in 1922 and was education secretary of the Young Women's Christian Association in Melbourne from 1924 to 1926. She was active in the League of Nations Union and was an Australian delegate to conferences of the Institute of Pacific Relations in Honolulu (1925) and China (1931). In her autobiography she describes her trip to Hawaii, during which time she was ‘keenly interested in the immigration question’ and explored Japanese attitudes to the White Australia Policy. She also briefly mentions a trip to Rarotonga and Tahiti the following year, en route to England as part of her frequent lecture tours that she did for the Institute. Mitchell published a novel *Tempest in Paradise* (1935), based on her life as an English teacher in Manchuria, which she dedicated to her cousin George Ernest Harrison (‘Chinese George’) who was a popular reporter on the Queensland labour trade. She died in Melbourne in 1957.


Born in 1870 in Scotland, Montgomery moved to Australia in 1884 and worked as a teacher and headmistress in Melbourne. In this autobiography, Montgomery includes a short chapter describing her visit to the Solomon Islands in 1912. She died in Melbourne in 1965.


Evelyn May Mordaunt was born in 1872 in England. In 1897 she went to Mauritius with her cousin and married a sugar-planter the next year. Wasted by malaria she returned to England alone, then left for Melbourne in 1902. In 1903 she gave birth to her son Godfrey in Australia. In Australia she refused all offers of help and lived in cheap lodgings, earning money by sewing and painting. She briefly edited a woman’s monthly magazine. In 1909 she and her son left for England, and she continued writing to support herself. She published over 40 volumes, mainly novels and short stories. Her reputation as a travel writer resulted from her round-the-world trip for the London Daily Mail in 1923, which was later published in The Venture Book and The Further Venture Book in 1926. The first book described Tahiti, Samoa, Tonga and Fiji, and the second explored Dutch New Guinea and the East Indies. Her autobiography, Sinabada, recounted her Pacific travels, with additional descriptions of the Trobriand Islands and Papua. Mordaunt continued to travel throughout her life, and died in England in 1942.


———. My South Sea Island. London: Travel Book Club, 1931.

Muspratt was born in England in 1899, and after traveling across Europe and North America, he joined the Australian Imperial Force from 1917 to 1919. He subsequently purchased a pineapple farm in Queensland in 1919, then moved to San Cristoval in the Solomon Islands the following year to work as a plantation manager for six months. My South Sea Island recounts his temporary stay in the Solomons. Muspratt continued to travel the world as a seaman and vagabond, returning to Australia twice before serving with the Australian forces during World War Two. He recounted these experiences in several other books including his autobiography Fire of Youth (with descriptions of American Samoa, Tahiti and Hawaii). He died in 1949 in Sydney.

Napier was a lawyer, journalist and poet born in Sydney in 1870. He served in World War One and contributed articles to the Sydney Mail, Sydney Morning Herald and BP Magazine in the 1920s and 30s. This text was one of his contributions, describing his voyage to the Panama Canal via Tahiti in May 1938. He also published some books of verses and travel books about Europe and the Great Barrier Reef. He died in Sydney in 1940.

Nicoll, George Robertson. Fifty Years' Travels in Australia, China, Japan, America, Etc., 1848-1898. London: [The Author], 1899.


George Robertson Nicoll was born in Scotland in 1824 and settled in Sydney in 1848. He was a wealthy shipwright and businessman. Nicoll privately printed a narrative of his worldwide travels for his family in 1899, containing descriptions of Tahiti, Hawaii, Fiji, Wallis Island, Niue and Samoa. The manuscript was written in 1890, and the file contains another piece written in 1902 by his son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. J.B. Nicoll, describing Norfolk Island, New Caledonia, the New Hebrides, Solomon Islands and Santa Cruz Islands. George Nicoll died in Sydney in 1901. Information about his son is unknown.


This is a diary of a government agent aboad the Bobtail Nag which visited the New Hebrides in 1877. The papers also include a newspaper clipping from the Courier on 23 January 1878 titled ‘The True Story of a Recruiting Voyage’, presumably written by Nixon.

Nossiter was an eminent yachtsman who sailed with his two eldest sons around the world from 1935 to 1937. They became the first Australians to circumnavigate the globe in a yacht. Nossiter was aware of the historical nature of their voyage and wanted to document the trip in two books. The first, *Northward Ho!*, recounted the initial voyage from Sydney to London. *Southward Ho!* described the homeward journey via the Marquesas Islands, Tahiti, French Polynesia, Rarotonga and Tonga. Both books were published in the United States and the United Kingdom.


Details of Osborne’s life are sketchy. He worked in the Pacific phosphate trade, was in Fiji in 1917, and was a trader in the Gilbert Islands in the 1930s. He also published several fiction novels for the New South Wales Bookstall Series, and short stories for the *Bulletin* and *Lone Hand* from 1905 onwards. In this unpublished typescript, Osborne describes a leisurely cruise through the Gilbert Islands in search of a copra trading post in the 1930s.


Paton was born in Aniwa, New Hebrides in 1870, son of the Reverend John Gibson Paton. Educated in Melbourne and Scotland, he then worked as a missionary in the New Hebrides. His years on Tanna from 1896 to 1902 are described in *Lomai of Lenakel* (1903), and he also published several religious texts and translations. From 1902 he worked in administrative roles for the Australian Presbyterian Church, travelling extensively throughout Australia and the region. He also served overseas as a chaplain with the Australian Imperial Force from 1918 to 1919. Paton published many books, magazines and pamphlets for children and adults on Pacific issues, taking a more moderate line than his father on the labour trade and French influence in the New Hebrides. His publications included *Quarterly Jottings from the New*
Hebrides (the magazine of the Paton mission fund published from 1895 to 1961), Glimpses of the New Hebrides (1913, based on his visit in 1913), Kingdom of the Pacific (1913, a reference book for children), Slavery Under the British Flag (1914) and Australian Interests in the New Hebrides (1919). He died in 1938.


John Gibson Paton was born in Scotland in 1824. He was a Presbyterian missionary who went to the New Hebrides in 1858. His brief stay was marred by the death of his wife and son of malaria, as well as his own illness and violence in the islands. Paton moved to Australia to raise funds for the mission and became a household name with his stories of the Pacific Islands, and his opposition to French rule in the New Hebrides. His international fame grew and he continued to tour the world giving lectures and fundraising until his death in Melbourne in 1907. This text, originally published in 1892, is an adaptation of his 1889 autobiography and was designed for children. His two volume autobiography was compiled by his youngest brother James and was printed in numerous editions.


Pearse was born in 1857 in London, and moved to Australia in 1891. Initially an accountant, he went to sea in 1875 and worked with the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company and the Orient Steam Navigation Company, becoming a master mariner. He moved to Sydney in 1891 where he worked as an editor for a number of agricultural journals. He was politically ultra-conservative and was hostile to unionism, writing several pamphlets on White Australia and state-owned railways. He was also a devout Anglican and a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. Recent Travel described a six-week cruise in 1911 to Tahiti, French Polynesia and the Cook Islands, and a visit to Fiji and Hawaii en route to the United States in 1913. His autobiography, A
Windjammer 'Prentice, incorporated stories about the Pacific from the previous book. It was reprinted with an additional 13 chapters in 1932 due to popular demand. Pearse died in Sydney in 1951.


Born in England in 1843, Phillips was a civil engineer and surveyor in Australia from 1851. This is a collection of six letters which he sent to the *Brisbane Telegraph* describing his trip to New Caledonia in April 1903. He died in 1921.


Born in 1869 in Tasmania, Philp was a railway surveyor before he left his wife and family in 1912 to work as a labour recruiter in the Solomon Islands. This is an edited copy of his private log describing his two years in the region. During his travels he encountered other travel writers and famous personalities in the area, including Joseph H.C. Dickinson, Eric Muspratt, Osa Johnson and Clifford Collinson. Philp was also interested in collecting and sailing, and he occasionally wrote for the *Tasmanian Mail*. He returned to his family in December 1913 intending to take them back to the Solomon Islands, but the outbreak of war changed these plans. He died in 1937.


Little is known about Ponder except that she lived in Queensland, and wrote several books (about Java, Cambodia, and a biography of the singer Clara Butt). She also wrote articles for the *Brisbane Courier* and enjoyed photography. This account describes Fiji, Tonga and Samoa, and parts were published in the Melbourne *Herald* and Adelaide *Register*.


Pope was commissioner for Australia on the Board of the British Phosphate Commissioners for Nauru and Ocean Island. The first article was published in the *Journal of the Department of Agriculture of Victoria*. Pope gives a detailed description of history, geography and mining development in both islands.


Powell was an Australian writer who is remembered for his descriptions of Gallipoli where he fought in World War One. Born in England in 1878, Powell spent his childhood in South Africa, and was educated in England. He moved to Australia and worked in various jobs around the country until he joined the artillery. He was posted to Thursday Island, where he began writing for the *Bulletin* and developed an interest in the Pacific Islands. He visited Tahiti in 1912 where he (allegedly) married a Tahitian. He returned to Tahiti in 1916 after serving in World War One. He moved to England in c.1926 where he became a prolific fiction and poetry writer. Many of his stories were about South Africa, but he also wrote Pacific fiction as well as three travel accounts of the same experience in Tahiti, one of which was never published. There are inconsistencies between these three accounts regarding his marriage, the number of visits he made, and the reasons why he left Tahiti. He died in 1952.

Prichard was born in Fiji in 1883, daughter of Thomas Henry Prichard (1845-1907) who was editor of the *Fiji Times* and a writer for the *Leader* and *Bulletin*. He moved to Australia to seek employment as a result of a depression when Katherine was three years old. She went on to become a journalist and writer, and in 1908 visited Suva during a grand tour. In this autobiography she describes the first 30 years of her life, recalling her birth in Fiji, and visiting her father’s old friends. She died in 1969.


Rannie was born in Scotland in 1860 and went to Brisbane in 1883 after the death of an acquaintance in the Solomon Islands in order to ‘make myself acquainted as well as I could with the particulars of the Queensland Labour Traffic.’ He served as a government agent on Australian labour vessels from 1884 to 1892, then as an inspector at Mackay and Charters Towers, and finally working as a librarian at the Queensland museum. During his time as a government agent, he visited the Solomon Islands, the New Hebrides, New Caledonia, Bougainville and New Ireland. He died in Brisbane in 1915. His papers and photographs are held by the University of Queensland Anthropology Museum.


Ravenscroft was born in Australia and lived in Sydney. He visited Fiji and Hawaii on *RMS Niagara* in April 1914, during his grand tour to Europe. The National Library has a collection of letters, photographs and biographical cuttings related to his trip.

Born in 1886 in Latvia, Paul Christian Julius Sproge changed his name and fled to Germany to avoid military conscription, before stowing away to Sydney in 1909. Until 1928 he worked as a railway construction worker, sawmiller, farmer and carpenter, and was married and divorced. In Sydney, on the dole and desperate, Rebell decided to emigrate to the United States. He bought a derelict 18 foot boat and left Sydney on 31 December 1931. He reached California in 1933, his voyage being the first recorded lone crossing of the Pacific Ocean from west to east. He was deported to Latvia where he completed his book, and returned to Australia in 1937. His account explains how the voyage prompted his conversion to Christianity, and he joined a Pentacostal church soon after. He was naturalised as an Australian in 1955 and died in Sydney in 1968.


Robertson was born in 1859 in Ballarat. He was a confectioner, industrialist and a philanthropist, as well as a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and a knight. This travel narrative was privately published by Robertson, and describes a trip to the United States and Europe via Fiji and Hawaii in 1926. Robertson died in Melbourne in 1945.


Robson (1885-1984) founded the Pacific Islands Monthly (PIM) in 1930, the Pacific’s oldest news magazine which continued until June 2000. It accepted contributions from many Australian travellers in the Pacific. Robson was a New Zealander who moved to Sydney during World War One. He published several handbooks about the Pacific Islands, including five editions of the Pacific Islands Yearbook (1932, 1935-36, 1939, 1942, 1944). Judy Tudor (1910-1997) joined his team in 1942 as assistant editor of PIM, then became sole editor from 1955 to 1962. Together they published other books on Pacific subjects, such as Where the Trade-Winds Blow, a compilation of stories taken from PIM.


Charles Stuart Ross was born in 1840 in Jamaica. He was a Presbyterian minister in New Zealand, Tasmania and Victoria. He published nine books about the Scottish church in Victoria and Otago, New Zealand, as well as two biographies. This text is partly based on interviews with Sir John Thurston who was part of the British administration in Fiji from the 1850s to 1880s. Occasionally the author relates his own experiences of travel, visiting several islands in Fiji. He died in Victoria in 1927.

Ross, John. Overseas Travel, as seen by John Ross, O.B.E. Holbrook: s.n., 1968.

Born in New South Wales in 1891, Ross was a grazier and state politician. This privately published text is an account of a grand tour with his wife in 1925, visiting Hawaii and Fiji. He died in 1973.


Born in Scotland, Runcie was a ship builder who first visited Australia aboard the John Williams II, and then on the John Williams III. Later, as captain of the missionary schooner Ellengowan, he accompanied Samuel McFarlane and
Luigi D'Albertis on their trip to the Fly River, New Guinea in 1875. After returning to Australia, Runcie spent the remainder of his career commanding cargo ships in the Pacific Islands for companies such as Burns, Philp and Company and the Australian New Hebrides Company. Runcie died in Sydney aged 80. This collection comprises the diary written aboard the *John Williams III* on the voyage to Sydney from 1869 to 1870. It includes entries written whilst Runcie was at sea in 1878 and 1890, and account records for 1892.


George Arnold Haynes Safroni-Middleton was born in England in 1873. He wandered Australia and the Pacific Islands as a teenager, earning a living principally as a violinist. During this time he met Robert Louis Stevenson and Joseph Conrad, who inspired him to write. He wrote several novels, poems, travel books and an autobiography, as well as composing music. In his travelogues he focused on Samoa, Fiji, Tahiti and New Zealand. He died in England in 1950.

Smith was born in Scotland in 1859. Initially a school teacher, he studied natural sciences at university in England, then moved to Adelaide in 1904. In 1913 he qualified as a medical physician. He worked at the Adelaide Hospital from 1896 and was a specialist in infectious diseases (publishing in multiple medical publications) before retiring in 1929. He also served in the South African war in 1901 and commanded the Australian Imperial Force hospital in Egypt in 1915. Smith belonged to the Royal Anthropological Society and recorded Aboriginal folklore in *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aborigines* (1930). *In Southern Seas* contains many anthropological observations of New Caledonia, the New Hebrides, and northern Australia. In fact, Smith devotes several chapters to discuss methodological issues associated with anthropology and photography (five photo albums are held at the South Australian Museum). Smith died in 1937.


Born in Victoria in 1860, Somer was a journalist and newspaper editor. This travel account is reprinted from *Daily Telegraph* reports and describes his journey to the United States in 1923 for five months via New Zealand, the Cook Islands, and Tahiti. He was sent to conduct research for the Royal Agricultural Society. He died in Sydney in 1924.


Stephens was born in 1865 in Queensland and worked in various Queensland and New Zealand newspapers as a writer and editor. He was an influential literary critic for the *Bulletin* from 1894 to 1906. This account, reprinted from articles in the *Cairns Argus* and the *Darling Downs Gazette*, describes a nine-month grand tour to the United States and Europe in 1893, via Samoa and Hawaii. He died in Sydney 1933.


Stephen’s background is unknown. In this account, Stephens claims to have worked in the Bendigo mines under G.V. Wallace. He describes a round trip
from Melbourne to Fiji, Samoa and American Samoa on the *Mariposa*, with his wife.


Mabel was the sister of Ralph Stock, and likely resided in England. It is unclear whether she stayed in Australia for an extended period of time like her brother. She describes a yacht cruise from Europe to the Pacific Islands with her brother and his friend in 1914, visiting the Marquesas Islands, French Polynesia, Tahiti, Cook Islands, Niue and Tonga. In Tonga her brother sells his boat and they catch a steamer to Sydney via Samoa and Fiji (which she does not describe in further detail).


Ralph Stock was born in 1881 in New South Wales according to Edmund Morris Miller’s 1940 bibliography of Australian literature. However the AUSTLIT database has identified this as incorrect, stating that he was in fact born in London. In 1901 Stock worked his way across Canada and the Pacific Islands before returning to Australia and buying a pineapple farm in Queensland. *Confessions of a Tenderfoot* describes this voyage. In 1914 he went on another Pacific voyage with a companion and his sister, Mabel, which he described in *The Chequered Cruise*. After a stay in England (invalided due to war service in France) he made yet another voyage to the Pacific Islands via Panama in 1920. This was recorded in *The Cruise of the Dream Ship*. These three travelogues mentioned the Marquesas and Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Niue, Tonga, Norfolk Island, Fiji, Hawaii and Samoa. Stock also published three novels and four volumes of short stories, set in Fiji,
Queensland, Thursday Island, Papua and Hawaii. Stock was better known for his short stories than his larger works. He contributed to the *Captain* and *Wide World Magazine*, and some of Stock's stories where adapted into screenplays from the 1930s to the 1950s. He died in London in 1962.


Syvertsen served on *HMAS Fantome* during World War One. This diary was kept from 27 October 1917 – 3 April 1918 with daily entries. The *HMAS Fantome* was a sloop based in Suva during the end of the war which assumed the police duties in the islands. Syvertsen describes the islands of Fiji, Tonga, Niue, Palmeston Island, and Tahiti.


Born in 1872 in Sydney, Taylor worked as a cartoonist and journalist in the 1890s, and was also a town planner, inventor, engineer and draughtsman. He served in World War One, and was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical and Astronomical Societies. This account details a journey to the United States on business when he was a town planner in 1914. With two companions, ‘The Master Builder’ and ‘The Engineer’, Taylor visited Fiji and Hawaii on the initial journey, and Tahiti on the return trip. He died in Sydney in 1928.


Sir Patrick Gordon Taylor was born in 1896 in Sydney. He was an aviator and navigator for Charles Kingsford-Smith, breaking several flight records. *Pacific Flight* describes the first Australia-United States flight in the *Lady Southern Cross* by Taylor and Kingsford-Smith in 1934. Taylor recalls visiting Fiji in 1933 in preparation for the following year (Fiji and Hawaii
were refueling stations). The autobiography, *The Sky Beyond*, recalls similar events. He died in Honolulu in 1966.


Julian Thomas was one of many pseudonyms that were used by John Stanley James. Born in England in 1843, James moved to Australia in 1875, finding work with newspapers in Melbourne and Sydney for three years. During this time he became popular under the pseudonym ‘The Vagabond’ for his stories about a life of poverty because it was based on real experience (see *The Vagabond Papers*). James made several trips to the Pacific Islands: in 1878 he went to Noumea to report on native rebellions against French colonial rule; in 1883 to the New Hebrides to report on blackbirding; 1884 to Port Moresby; 1887 to the New Hebrides; and 1889 to Samoa and Tonga. He published several books about his Pacific travels before his death in Sydney in 1896.


Thomson was born in 1854 in Scotland and moved to Australia in 1877. He was a seaman, surveyor, geographer and civil servant. He was founder of the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland and worked as a land surveyor in Fiji from 1880 to 1884. In 1884 he travelled around the Pacific before settling in Queensland. He published three books on British New Guinea in the 1890s, and three on Fiji, as well as several papers for the Royal Geographical Society. *Round the World* describes a business trip to the United States via American Samoa and Hawaii in 1903 with his brother. It is dedicated to the Australian Commonwealth, which the author calls ‘my adopted country.’ Thomson died in Queensland in 1941.

Thomson was a government agent aboard the *Heath* who visited the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea with Captain William Wawn in 1884.


According to his accounts, Tichborne (also known as ‘Sundowner’) was born in England, but spent some time in Australia. There is evidence that he considered himself Australian, such as calling the British ‘new chums’, and writing that he wanted to be buried ‘with my own folk under the old gum trees on the Kolarendabri [in Australia].’ It is likely he worked as a journalist as his name appears in several Australian newspaper columns. Some of his Pacific texts were composed of anecdotes and short stories, many of which had appeared in other periodicals and were randomly ‘thrown together’, according to the author. It is difficult to tell which tales are based on Tichborne’s personal experience, but he claims to have visited Fiji, the Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Hawaii, the New Hebrides, Tonga, Yap, Tahiti, French Polynesia, Samoa, and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands.

The Vagabond. *Holy Tonga*. Melbourne: s.n, 1890.


Also known as John Stanley James or Julian Thomas. See entry for Thomas.


Villiers was born in 1903 in Melbourne. He worked in several ships since he was 15 years old, including a whaling ship, with a short stint as a journalist while injured. These texts are accounts of his voyage around the world in the *Joseph Conrad* from 1934 to 1936, training young boys how to sail. He passed through New Guinea, the Trobriand Islands, the Solomon Islands, the Caroline Islands and Tahiti. Villiers served in the Royal Navy reserve during World War Two, and later worked in a maritime museum and commanded sailing ships for famous films and re-enactments. He died in England in 1982.


Wawn was a mariner and cartographer born in England in 1837. In 1868 he made his first visit to the Pacific Islands (probably Samoa). From 1870 to 1900 he worked as a labour recruiter (for Queensland and Fiji 1876-1894), trader and salvager in the Pacific. This is an account of his labour recruiting experiences first published in London in 1893, with stories of shipwrecks, storms and violent encounters. Wawn mainly recruited in the Solomon Islands, New Hebrides and Papua New Guinea, but also visited Fiji, Samoa, New Caledonia, and the Caroline, Marshall and Gilbert Islands. The original manuscript was lost at sea in 1890 and had to be rewritten. The final published account argued that labour recruiting was not slaving but an equably beneficial trade. Wawn died in Sydney in 1901. His manuscript is held at the National Library of New Zealand, and his journals are at the State Library of New South Wales.
Wickham, William A. *Impressions Abroad*. Adelaide: Hunkin, Ellis & King, 1931.

Wickham was born in c.1882 in New Zealand and arrived in Australia in c.1896. He was a businessman in Adelaide. This is an account of his grand tour in 1929, with descriptions of Hawaii on the journey home.


Born in 1827 in London, Wilkins moved to Sydney to recover from bronchitis. His wife and child died on the voyage and he arrived in Sydney in 1851 and remarried the next year. He worked as a headmaster and teacher, and helped reform the state’s school administration, eventually becoming a public servant. This is one of several school textbooks written when Wilkins was under-secretary for Public Instruction in New South Wales. It is unclear whether he had visited the Pacific Islands. It includes a ‘catalogue of educational works specially adapted for elementary and higher schools.’ Wilkins died in 1892.


Wilson was born in London in 1860. He was ordained an Anglican minister in 1887 and in 1894 was selected to replace Bishop John Selwyn as Bishop of Melanesia. That same year he was consecrated in Auckland, then proceeded to the Pacific Islands. He married in 1899. He launched the fifth *Southern Cross* ship in 1903 and advocated for the movement of the Melanesia Anglican headquarters from Norfolk Island to the Solomon Islands. In 1911 he retired from his role, and from 1918 to 1937 he was Bishop of Bunbury (Western Australia). During this time he wrote *The Wake of the Southern Cross*, for ‘the children of our State schools’, describing daily life on Norfolk Island, and promoting mission work in the Pacific. It includes photographs taken by his wife and John Watt Beattie. He also published several articles in the mission publication, *The Southern Cross Log*. 

Wirth was born in 1867 in Victoria. He joined Ashton’s circus with his father and brothers in 1876, and later established Wirth’s Circus. This account of a seven-week circus tour in 1888 includes a description of the journey from Sydney to New Caledonia. Wirth died in 1941.


This is a letter to his friends describing a journey across the Pacific from Chicago to Sydney in 1923-24. The account is in no particular order, with descriptions of Fiji (where he stayed for six months), Tahiti, the Cook Islands, Tonga, Samoa, Hawaii and New Zealand. Wood was an ornithologist so there are many observations about the local fauna in his letter.


Woodburn’s background is unknown. This is an account of a holiday with her young son, Jack, to the New Hebrides on a doctor’s recommendation that the climate would be good for restoring Jack’s health. They travelled to Vila via Lord Howe and Norfolk Island on the *Morinda*, and lived on a coconut plantation on Erromanga for several months. They likely made the journey sometime in the 1930s as Woodburn does not mention the Pacific War in her account. Woodburn is well educated, incorporating botanical, anthropological and linguistic observations throughout the account, and collecting natural history specimens to take home. She also published articles in *Walkabout*.


Woodroofe was born in 1856 in Dublin and arrived in Australia in 1876. He was a legal clerk and cordial manufacturer. This text describes a grand tour via American Samoa and Hawaii in 1913. He died in South Australia in 1915.
Woodward, Oliver James. *Autobiography*. Tasmania: [The Author], 195?.

Woodward was born in 1885 in New South Wales. He was a mining engineer and metallurgist, with experience working in Papua in 1913-14. This is a four-volume autobiography detailing the author's career in the Broken Hill mining industry, his distinguished war record and his fact-finding overseas trip to the United States and Europe. Volume three describes his business trip to the United States via Fiji and Hawaii in 1934. He died in Hobart in 1966.


Born in 1852 in England, Wragge was trained as a maritime navigator and moved to Australia in 1876 where he joined the South Australian survey department and studied meteorology. He founded the Meteorological Society of Australasia in 1886, and started observatories in New Caledonia, Tasmania and New South Wales. He worked as the Queensland government’s meteorologist from 1887. This text is based on separate trips to New Caledonia and Tahiti in c.1893, the former to establish an observatory in Noumea. It contains photographs taken by Wragge and advice to tourists visiting Tahiti. Wragge also published an *Australian Weather Guide and Almanac* (1898), and a short-lived serial called *Wragge: A Meteorological, Geographical and Popular Scientific Gazette of the Southern Hemisphere* (1902). Having advocated the creation of a national weather bureau, he was bitterly disappointed in 1907 when he was not appointed head of the Commonwealth Meteorological Bureau. Wragge moved to Auckland where he died in 1922.