

THE AUSTRALIAN IMMIGRANT in the 20th CENTURY

Searching Neglected Sources



Visible Immigrants: Five

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CQUELINE TEMPLETON

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Division of Historical Studies
Research School of Social Sciences
The Australian National University

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COVERS:

Three Italians in cane cutting gang, Halifax,
Ingham District, Queensland, 1947.
Walkabout Collection, Mitchell Library, Sydney.
Photographer: L. Le Guay.

Immigration - Disgruntled migrants at Burwood Hostel.
National Library of Australia.

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PREFACE

The fifth Workshop of the *Visible Immigrants* series took place on 12 December 1997 at the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University. We wish to register our thanks to our hosts, Barry Higman and his colleagues in the History Program, for their warm hospitality and interest in the series. We are also grateful for the continuing encouragement of Jim Jupp of the Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies. Most particularly we wish to thank Anthea Bundock for her excellent organisational and editorial assistance.

We have become conscious of the increased need for independent research on Australian immigration. In August 1996 the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research was liquidated. Since then there has been a notable upsurge in political clamour on the question of immigration, often conspicuous for its lack of historical context and any understanding of the origins and circumstances of the modern Australian population. Indeed, one of the paradoxes of the Australian political scene in the late 1990s has been the institutional decline of research which has been running parallel with a rising public concern about immigration. We are grateful that the various universities represented in this small volume are still able to support our continuing enterprise.

Eric Richards and Jacqueline Templeton
January 1998

Eric Richards

CHANGING CENTURY

I

WHEN THIS series of Workshops began, in 1989, we decided on a number of distinctive historical tasks which then recurred through the next three sessions which followed in 1991, 1992, and 1995. Though the range of our work has been strikingly wide, and has reached into several adjacent disciplines, we have essentially focussed on the colonial experience of the Australian immigrant. In this, our fifth gathering, we have deliberately and self-consciously entered the twentieth century, as though into a new world. We may adopt a somewhat wide-eyed approach to this alien territory. The passage between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries poses cardinal historiographical and evidential questions, and we grapple with some of them in the following papers.

It may help to recollect some of the distinctive features of the *Visible Immigrants* work on the Australian immigrant in the nineteenth century, in order to ask whether these approaches can be transposed into the twentieth century. For instance, does twentieth century Australian immigration possess a fundamentally different character from that of the colonial period? When indeed does the twentieth century really begin so far as immigration phenomena are concerned? Are the sources we employ (or are currently available) generically different after 1900? Are the analytical questions commonly posed in the colonial period applicable to the twentieth century experience?

These types of questions carry too much freight for a single short Workshop. They suggest a shift of perspective and this prospect becomes the more likely where historians enter the recent past. Inevitably we begin to engage with the work of

contemporary analysts: modern sociologists, political scientists, economists, administrators and demographers.

The agenda of *Visible Immigrants*, as I look back, has been most marked by the determination to explore 'neglected sources'. The object has been to rescue the common immigrant from silence, obscurity, even invisibility. At the same time it has challenged the threadbare assumption that the poor immigrant constituted relatively 'poor stuff' for the colonisation of Australia. This approach required us to identify individual immigrants; and in the process the re-creation of the colonial immigrant experience is invested with greater precision and authenticity. To some degree, this was a reaction away from the aggregated view of the history of Australian immigration, and away from the administrative and policy orientation of the conventional story. In 1989 we were seeking new sources of documentation which took us much deeper into the texture and character of the lives which made up the immigrant experience which, we implied, contained the essence of that history. It produced closely grained evocations of past experience.¹ It was not at all surprising; that, when David Fitzpatrick's *Oceans of Consolation* was published in 1995, it was regarded as one of the finest works of 'history from below' to have been achieved in Australian/Irish historiography.

This approach also explains the high priority we have accorded to the excavation and use of certain types of source, notably individual-level data. Best of all, we have sought direct documentation from individual immigrants, most obviously by way of their letters between Australia and home. Thus we have hunted high and low for sequences and snippets of correspondence between Australia and the homelands, across

¹ The historical representation of migration tends to bifurcate. One stream flows off in the direction of ever greater aggregation, so that migrants, if they are lucky, make appearances as digits in the grander process. The other stream proceeds towards atomisation: individual migrants are accorded starring roles in heroic isolation, or feature as survivors thrown up from the mass.

what Frank Thistlethwaite called 'the salt-water curtain'.² We have equally placed much emphasis on individual-level connections, linking statistical and other material together in the re-construction of immigrant contexts and socio-familial webs across the oceans—best achieved so far in the work of Richard Reid.³ This entails the remarkable networks and chains of connection among ordinary emigrants, usually operating through kinship. But the work of nominal record linkage is labour intensive and, to be frank, we have not yet made great progress in this field.

These methods have not, of course, limited us to celebratory evocation of immigrant experience, though that has not been altogether absent. Employing our microscopic, almost ethnographic, examination of individual lives, we have also exposed some of the most basic mechanisms of migration, especially as they relate to the mass of immigrants. We have looked at the manner in which even the poorest migrants were able to negotiate the requirements of intercontinental migration; we have examined rates of return, the place of women in the process, the levels of literacy, of skill, communications, the problems of financing migration, and we have made excursions into comparative aspects of immigrant lives. Our approach has also exposed some of the more subtle and indeterminate impacts of emigration on, for instance, identity and what Patrick O'Farrell regards as the inner life of the soul. It has all yielded new varieties of historical research and new narratives of the story. The Workshop has promoted more research, some still in preparation, and much of it highly innovative in style.⁴

Now we would not claim that any of this amounts to a 'school of thought' as such, but it does work to establish a certain

² Frank Thistlethwaite, 'Migration from Europe Overseas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *Rapports, V: Histoire Contemporaine, XIe Congrès International des Sciences Historiques* (Stockholm, 1960).

³ Richard Reid, 'Aspects of Irish Assisted Immigration in New South Wales, 1848-1870', unpublished PhD thesis, The Australian National University, 1992.

⁴ See, for example, Robin Haines, *Emigration and the Labouring Poor: Australian Recruitment in Britain and Ireland, 1831-60* (1997).

identity of historical questions—many of which have not yet been asked sustainedly of the twentieth-century immigrant experience. Can our priorities be translated from one century and milieu into the next, or does this involve a tearing off the historical garment?

II

WE ARE looking, in this volume, at unusual sources in the twentieth-century context. Differences quickly emerge simply because the character of the documentation changes in the new century. Thus, most obviously, the great strength and virtues we have accorded to migrant correspondence seems to peter out in this century. The hunt for personal documents of nineteenth-century Irish immigrants, it is true, is partially paralleled by Jacqueline Templeton's searches for correspondence in Italy from twentieth-century immigrants to Australia. The parallel may indeed suggest that some European immigration of the twentieth century is most appropriately compared with immigration from rural parts of Britain and Ireland in the previous century.

In 1960 the National Library of Australia, through the agency of Australia House in London, conducted an appeal for personal documents relating to British emigrants. They publicised the search prominently in about fifty provincial newspapers, in every large town throughout Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in a concerted effort to serve the needs of scholars and Australian history in general. It has to be said that the harvest at that time was meagre—a bare handful of relevant responses, several of which were from returned migrants of the 1920s who used the occasion to vent their spleens over the maltreatment they had suffered in Australia some thirty years before.⁵ The only substantial cache, eighty-two letters in all,

⁵ The collection was initiated in 1960 by H.L. White, apparently at the instance of R. Appleyard, described then as 'a scholar at the ANU who is studying the reasons why British people came to Australia'. The appeal was for 'Letters from British emigrants to Australia, 1900-1939'. British newspapers were asked to publish the appeal. Australia House received about thirty responses, more than half of which related to the pre-19000

was that of Robert C. Keen, an Oxfordshire farmer's son who had been a young emigrant in the 1920s.⁶ His letters register the impact of the Great Depression and his melancholy return to England. He subsequently flirted with fascism, became a prosperous farmer in England, and returned again to Australia. He eventually wrote an autobiography of extraordinary intellectual confusion. His letters and recollections form an eccentric document of his times which will be treasured by immigration historians; but they are also notable as a rare record of the twentieth-century British immigrant who is generally not well documented in terms of personal correspondence.⁷

In fact our archives around the country currently hold only a few sizeable collections of personal letters of twentieth-century immigrants. It may be that there exist collections galore, waiting in the wings for a decent passage of time to invest them with archival respectability. In Britain, in 1996, a television company production team generated its own archive in an effort

period. Most of the responses were not relevant; some of them wanted to trace missing family members, and one was from a woman 'seeking assistance in compelling her husband in Australia to keep up his maintenance payment!' This information is derived from the National Library files with the assistance of Mr Graeme Powell. The letters do not appear to have been used in the thesis by R.T. Appleyard, 'Socio-Economic Determinants of Assisted Emigration from the United Kingdom to Australia', Duke University PhD, 1962 (University Microfilms, Ann Arbor).

⁶ NLA MS 1767, Letters by Robert Keen to his parents in England from Glenrowan in Culham in Western Australia, 1928-31. Keen revived his interest in Australia after the Second World War.

⁷ Robert C Keen, *Big Men, Little Men and Men in Between* (Totsworth, 1965).

to capture the world of the 'Ten Pound Poms'.⁸ But for the moment our archives are not rich repositories of migrant correspondence.⁹

Similarly, we are not generously endowed with statistical data down to the level of individual identification; shipping lists appear to be less luxuriant than those of the previous century. There survive, however, important collections of shipping lists for the pre-1914 migrants and some of the post-1947 refugee material is promising too. Barry York's paper explores some of the less obvious possibilities in the statistical remains of the White Australia period. The general statistical record is not necessarily superior in the twentieth century, even though national gate-keeping was more efficient and more regulated after the end of the *laissez-faire* regime of the previous age. The sheer velocity and quantity of movement has induced a cumulative blurring of the meaning of 'migration', creating its own statistical nightmares to challenge analysts of the past and the present.

There are, of course, massive documentary compensations in the twentieth century. If the epistolary record is ostensibly slight, it is balanced by the much larger body of autobiographical and newspaper coverage, especially since 1950. A huge literature has emerged, a great abundance of personal testimony. Even more prolific has been the great babble of immigrant voices caught by the tape recorder. Oral history is not contemporaneous with its time and therefore does not meet one of the prime requirements of historical evidence. Nevertheless it clearly yields an extraordinary mass of data which, for the nineteenth century, must be totally inaccessible. The unbuttoned (and sometimes unguarded) oral recollection often seems the least

⁸ In 1996 the BBC advertised widely for information regarding emigration to Australia from the 1950s to the 1970s. The response produced more than 1,000 letters. Only a small proportion were employed in the subsequent documentary. Dr A. James Hammerton of La Trobe University is employing the letters as a systematic data-base for his study of British immigration called 'Project Brits'. It is already clear that men responded more than women to the original appeal for information.

⁹ This is not, of course, to imply that the cupboard is bare. There are important small collections of twentieth-century immigrant letters in all the main repositories; my point is essentially a matter of relative coverage.

inhibited of historical sources. At some time in this century the oral record overtakes the written form. Several archives are now systematically collecting oral testimonies from immigrant groups, though one suspects that the British immigrant has attracted less than proportional attention.¹⁰

Even more promising, in terms of the texture of the historical experience, is the data generated by the great administrative apparatus of this century. I am thinking especially of the material employed in the last two chapters of Michael Roe's book on immigration from Britain in the inter-war years,¹¹ and in Ann Marie Jordens' account of post-war immigration derived from Department of Immigration archives.¹² Much of their data is systematic in detail and covers certain classes of immigrants over considerable lengths of time. The administrative archives are awe-inspiring in volume and scale, and not yet much explored. The immigration bureaucracy, in common with many modern corporations, has been jealous to preserve its own version of the recent past: the Department of Immigration has promoted its own official histories in territory where academic historians have hardly yet ventured.¹³

A great deal of individual-level documentation in the twentieth century is also material studiously created with an eye on posterity. I am thinking of many autobiographies, diaries, and reminiscences—which are often marked by a particular provenance. 'I prefer diaries to memoirs,' remarked

¹⁰ There are, for instance, emerging collections in the Migration Museum in Adelaide, and in the Oral History Section of the National Library of Australia. In the latter there are already substantial deposits of interviews with Hungarian-, Italian-, Greek-, Polish-, Maltese- and Chinese-Australian subjects. Almost all interviews are conducted in English. I thank Justine Sheldon for this information.

¹¹ Michael Roe, *Australia, Britain and Emigration* (Melbourne, 1995).

¹² Arn-Marie Jordens, *Redefining Australians: Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity* (Sydney, 1995).

¹³ See, for example, Harry Martin, *Angels and Arrogant Gods: Migration officers and migrants reminisce, 1945-85* (Canberra, 1989), which declared its determination to avoid an exercise in mutual congratulation so that the project would have 'true historical value'. It gathered material widely; 'the bad as well as the good'.

the Canadian writer Charles Ritchie, 'they are less made up afterwards.'¹⁴ Letters have the same attraction in the hierarchy of sources but most of the European immigrant experience has been evoked in retrospective form, by way of memoirs and interviews. Moreover, in this century, there appears to be more concerted individual and government-funded data collection than previously.¹⁵ Perhaps history in this century has been more deliberately constructed than ever before: immigrants are certainly not immune from this tendency.

Twentieth-century sources are likely to be categorically different, partly because the nature of immigration itself has changed. As the structure of immigration has shifted, so too have the forms of its documentation. This prompts some schematic and introductory thoughts, and some suggestions for new directions.

The new century's immigration, in reality, remained remarkably similar to its predecessor for at least four decades. I am thinking in terms of the continued dominance of the British through to 1947, and even beyond. This was maintained despite the falling average propensity of the British people to emigrate.¹⁶ The continuity was reinforced by the installation of 'White Australia' with Federation, and also by the astonishing decline of the Irish component in Australian immigration. When we speak of 'Visible Immigrants', we should also think of those who fade out of the record. The decline of Irish immigration was a critical realignment of Australian immigration sources in the early twentieth century. Thus the Australian immigrant record became whiter and more British after 1900, more homogeneous

¹⁴ Quoted by Simon Brett (ed.), *The Faber Book of Diaries* (1987), p. viii.

¹⁵ See, for instance, the photographic collection of the Information Branch of the Department of Immigration, which is avowedly the result of a large effort to create a continuous documentation of thousands of 'Migrant success stories'. The central intention of the photographs was overseas publication 'to stimulate interest in Australia amongst prospective migrants'. See *Immigration in Focus, 1946-1990: A Photographic Archive* (Canberra, 1990).

¹⁶ Australian assistance schemes after 1947 may eventually come to be seen as successful efforts to extend British mass emigration beyond its natural life span.

and more monocultural. Until 1940 the old continuities remained, with a continuing emphasis on rural settlement, on youthful immigrants, on single males and domestic servants. The colonial priorities were re-affirmed, at least in terms of policy. There is some basis in this for talking about 'the very long nineteenth century' which, in migration terms, did not expire even in 1945. Australian immigration in this century has been preponderantly British, despite the great changes in the past four decades.

Other dimensions of the story eventually expose the evolving structural changes. Thus, for example, the dominance of female immigration by domestic servants appears to subside by about 1925, and did not re-activate, even with the growth of Asian immigration in the past three decades. Female immigration has changed dramatically from the colonial period, though we have yet fully to define this change. Similarly, we can ask basic comparative questions about the ways in which very poor immigrants achieved international mobility in the two eras. Our questioning of the colonial data about notions of 'home' are equally central in the new century, though they have now become overloaded with matters of identity and citizenship. The question of return migration is no less slippery now than it was historically, and it is not surprising that we call upon anthropology to assist our understanding of its interior meanings.

The evolving changes in the character of British emigration to Australia also mirrored the adjustments in the political and economic relationships between the two countries. The paper by John Lack and Ian Rae bridges the two centuries and shows the early interlocking of nascent industrial enterprise in the colonies with the mother economy in industrial Britain. The transit of migrants and travellers became entwined with the transmission of commercial intelligence. Peripatetic members of the Cumming family, drawn like a magnet back to their origins in Scotland, soon provided a caustic commentary on the industrial decay of Britain in the new century: the migrants re-appraised their colonial status, at least in terms of technical and economic competence. In the course of the coming century the relationship between Australia and Britain became that of two industrial

economies, and the passage of people between them inevitably reflected the shift in status.

One of the enviable strengths of the historical record, apart from the richness and the eclectic character of its documentation, is its necessarily long time-dimension. We can follow immigrants across the oceans and the generations (though this is never easy). This is done differently in the twentieth century. The means of monitoring immigrants are much more systematic and prying, as illegal immigrants might testify. And there are small armies of social scientists advising governments on the geographical and social mobilities of immigrants of recent decades. The evidence of social surveyors can be lined up over many decades already. Yet the best known longitudinal work in this field is that of Reginald Appleyard, a somewhat isolated venture in terms of maintaining such a brief over historical time.¹⁷ Nor are we able to escape the unsolved problem of accounting for the anonymous unassisted immigrant, a characteristic of the Australian story in both centuries.

In the first half of the twentieth century we are dealing with an immigrant host which was more British and less Irish than before. And then there followed further drastic change. The scale, intensity, and diversity of Australian immigration was revolutionised after 1950. This then becomes the greatest challenge to immigration historians. The faces and the voices change; we are out of the Anglophone world and into a different babble, which means that much of it is sealed-off from monolingual historians.¹⁸ It means that our historical understanding, at the most basic level, requires us to cover the horizon for new and different sources and to incorporate them into new narratives and employ them in new and longer historical comparisons.¹⁹

¹⁷ Reginald T. Appleyard, *British Emigration to Australia* (Canberra, 1964).

¹⁸ The question of literacy among immigrants disappeared for sixty years in this century and then began to re-appear in the multicultural and neo-mercantilist immigration systems of recent decades.

¹⁹ If the immigrants are different in some categorical sense then we might bring precision to the point by asking comparative questions about, for

So there is now some sense of immigration historians taking possession of the twentieth century. Already John Lack and Jacqueline Templeton have delineated new categories of documentation.²⁰ We find that many of the previous assumptions shift—most interesting, perhaps, are the changes in the sheer velocity and quantity of intercontinental mobility by migrants between Australia and the countries of origin. In the recent past, the meanings of 'home' and 'return' seem to become substantially more variegated.²¹ Consequently the mental world of the immigrant requires new maps. Of all the continuities in Australian immigration history that stretch from the old to the new century, the great commitment to 'social engineering' appears to have been best preserved throughout. Australia has maintained its tradition of demographic and social planning, by way of its manipulation of immigration assistance and regulation, despite the passing cycles of ideological change. Moreover, looking back a century, Australia in the 1990s seems to regard a return to mass immigration as no more likely than did the Australia of the 1890s.

In the fifth *Visible Immigrants*, therefore, we expose some further possibilities and questions to ask about this most important theme in Australian history and recent political debate. We search for ways of comprehending the twentieth-century phenomenon of mass immigration, and we especially seek sources which liberate historians from the structured images created by the engines of propaganda so typical of the now fading twentieth century.

example, their respective health, human capital, literacy, skills, etc. over the long period, say 1840–2000.

²⁰ John Lack and Jacqueline Templeton, *Bold Experiment: A Documentary History of Australian Immigration since 1945* (Oxford and Melbourne, 1994). *Sources of Australian Immigration History, 1901–1945* (Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1991), is unfortunately out of print.

²¹ Return migration is bound to figure prominently in the twentieth-century story because of the very high rates of return which have characterised the process; and because return brings the two worlds of the migrant into immediate juxtaposition. Return migration, as two of the present papers demonstrate, illuminates the psychology of migration and the pangs of identity and belonging.

John Lack and Ian D. Rae

MANY HAPPY RETURNS:
MIGRATION, HOME VISITING AND
TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER –
BRITAIN, NORTH AMERICA AND
AUSTRALASIA 1873–1925

IN 1908 James Cuming, a successful and wealthy Scots businessman, then in his 75th year, returned to Melbourne from the last of his six world trips visiting his brothers and sisters and their children in New England and the maritime provinces of Canada, and the wider family connection in 'the old land'. The trip, he concluded, had been 'a mistake': his travelling companions had proven uncongenial or fallen ill, and Cuming's own health was failing. His homecoming to 'Myrus', his residence in Yarraville, in Melbourne's western suburbs, gave the disconsolate widower little relief: his family adored him but were married and dispersed; Charles Campbell, his partner in founding the outstandingly prosperous chemical and fertiliser business Cuming Smith & Co., had passed on; and he was uncertain about his son James's handling of the enterprise. As a form of therapy, at the urging of his brother Mari in New York, Cuming wrote a memoir, published privately after his death in 1911 as *An Autobiography*.

This 'history of a humble life', a plain testament penned 'for the benefit of the connection' in North America and Scotland,¹ is

¹ James Cuming, *An Autobiography* (edited by M.A. Cuming and privately printed 1916); repr., edited with an introduction by John Lack (City of Footscray Historical Society, Footscray, 1987), p. 98, 25. The second quotation is from M.A. Cuming's Preface. All references are to the 1987 reprint.

an intriguing example of the literature of material success, moral improvement and social mobility, a genre which flourished in the age of industrialisation and migration.² Cuming's *Autobiography* tells the complex story of the emigration and fragmentation of the Cuming and Smith families: how they left Aberdeen for North America in the 1850s, how fragments came to Australia in the 1860s, and how another fragment entered New Zealand in the 1880s. James Cuming and his brother-in-law George Smith were sons of small farmers-cum-veterinarians in north-east Scotland, who became farriers and emigrated first to St John, New Brunswick, and Portland, Maine, before they came to Melbourne, where they pioneered the Victorian acid and fertiliser industry, and extended it to South Australia, New Zealand and Western Australia. The entire family panoply of characters appears in *An Autobiography*, which also explains how, after decades of separation, contacts were renewed, firstly by correspondence, and then by visiting. Naturally, James occupies centre-stage, offering historians a valuable account of an entire migrant career.

'One of the several advantages historians possess over other social scientists', Eric Richards has recently reminded us, 'is the chance to see the migrant career played out to its end, that is, to survey the long run which is usually denied to contemporary investigators'.³ As historians move to engage more fully the history of Australian immigration in the twentieth century, which has been so much the preserve of sociologists and demographers, James Cuming's memoir has in it much that is suggestive about the value of the completed life story, and the

² Book-length Australian examples relating to the colonial period are rare. Among manufacturers: Moritz Michaelis, *Chapters from the story of my life* (Melbourne, 1899), and the 'as told to' biography by George Taylor, *Making It Happen: The Rise of Sir Macpherson Robertson* (Melbourne, 1934), which covers the family's migrations and early business history. See also Graeme Davison, 'The Dimensions of Mobility in Nineteenth Century Australia', *Australia 1888*, Bulletin No. 2, August 1979.

³ Eric Richards, 'Return Migration and Migrant Strategies in Colonial Australia', in David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Home or Away? Immigrants in Colonial Australia, Visible Immigrants: Three* (The Australian National University, Canberra, 1992), p. 78.

function of the migrant narrative in presenting that life. Memoirs of colonial migrant experience may alert us, not only to continuities of purpose with twentieth century migrant narratives, but to the rich nuances of the completed life story, considered in the context of family migration, and explored in private letters, diaries, and published travel notes and autobiography.

Cuming's *Autobiography* and its complementary documentation⁴ are richer still, for they introduce us to the subject of return migration or, rather, the phenomenon of return visiting. Over a period of almost fifty years 1873–1925, spanning the centuries, the original Cuming emigrants and members of the second and third generations made extensive overseas visits. Their many happy returns to the old lands reflected not only a lingering nostalgia for the countries of origin, and a sense of responsibility to the 'home' family, but also the demands and opportunities for keeping abreast in business by studying the latest technology. The cultural baggage migrants brought with them consisted not only of language, dialect and accent, religion, customs, and so on, but skills, penchants, drives and ambitions, folk memories of 'how things had been done' and ideas of how they might be done better. The technologies for an industrialising society were carried first in migrants' heads before they were conveyed by print and machine. The Cuming story underlines the intimate relation between migration and technology transfer, and how critical was the role played by migration and travel in technological diffusion to British settlement overseas.

CUMING AND SMITH: FAMILY EMIGRATION AND BUSINESS SUCCESS

THE Cumings and the Smiths contributed to and responded to the dramatic nineteenth-century transformation of Scotland's

⁴ The Cuming-Smith & Co. Papers, University of Melbourne Archives [UMA], is a substantial collection of business and family papers, including the travel diaries and letters of three generations of the Cuming family, and correspondence with relations overseas.

economy and society: a rapidly expanding population, the growth of large-scale landlordism and capital-intensive tenant farming. For four generations the Cumings had large families of eight to eleven *surviving* children. The emigration to New Brunswick of Marianus Cuming and his family in 1852 was not, however, an act of desperation, but an example of what has been termed the 'migration of rising expectations'.⁵ Marianus surmounted the pressures in north-eastern Scotland, cleared his tenant-farmer father's debts at Macduff, prospered, studied veterinary science at Edinburgh, and moved his family to Ellon, where he established his first practice. Restless, ambitious and mobile people are more likely to cross boundaries and oceans than are stay-at-homes. In 1852, at the age of 39, with nine children (the eldest— James — just commencing his apprenticeship as a farrier in Aberdeen, and the youngest newborn), Marianus decided to leave his comfortable practice to establish a shoeing forge across the Atlantic for the St John (New Brunswick) Agricultural Society. There his overbearing behaviour and financial mismanagement brought ruination.

'Oh, the pity of it all, and the folly of it as well, the struggle, the disheartening failure, and death in less than six years!', his son James lamented 50 years later.⁶ Opening as a tale of a father's failure, but concluding as a story of migration redeemed by the son's successful emigration and settlement in Australia, *An Autobiography* demonstrates both the obligations of family and the limits of those obligations: James broke his indentures to join and assist his father, but when the situation proved hopeless, he returned to Aberdeen, married his sweetheart Elizabeth Smith, his former master's daughter, and took her to America, along with their infant love-child Robert Burns, Elizabeth's brother George and sister Annie. They settled in Portland, Maine. Marianus eked out a living as a stationmaster and journalist, and when he died his widow supported their large family by keeping a boardinghouse.

⁵ Eric Richards, 'Varieties of Scottish Emigration in the Nineteenth Century', *Historical Studies* 21(85), October 1985, p. 478.

⁶ *An Autobiography*, p. 55.

Meanwhile, James Cuming's father-in-law and former master, Anthony Smith, bankrupted in Aberdeen, had taken his family to Melbourne, and was urging James and Elizabeth to join them. James decided for Australia, a choice which he passed over quickly and somewhat uncomfortably in his *Autobiography*: 'Children came fast and I could not help [Mother] much, but I adopted one of the younger boys, George, and in other ways did what I could'.⁷ Another of Elizabeth's sisters he rejected because of what he regarded as her unsatisfactory marriage.

In Melbourne Elizabeth's brother-in-law, James Clark, constructed Victoria's first chemical works, and George Smith and James Cuming found employment on the project as builders' labourers. Cuming became interested in the process of making sulphuric acid, studied at night at the Melbourne Public Library, and concluded that 'there was money in the business, if properly managed'.⁸ Sulphuric acid was fundamental to the chemical industry, vital in the making of soap, candles and beverages, and a critical first step in the manufacture of a range of other essential acids. Indeed, in the nineteenth century a country's industrial health was commonly gauged from its production of this staple chemical.

Distance protected Melbourne from Sydney competition, for sulphuric acid was dangerous and expensive to transport. When the Melbourne business came up for sale, Cuming (by this time prospering as a farrier) approached 'an old Aberdeen friend' as partner. Thus was Cuming Smith & Co. born in 1872, the 'Co.' being the merchant Charles Campbell, who put up £3300 of the £4000 capital—£1600 on his own account, £500 to Cuming to make up his share of £1200, and the whole of George Smith's share of £1200. The technology was not so complex that it could not be learned by intelligent application, yet guarding one's knowledge of the processes and of improvements was vital to success; reliable partners, preferably from within the family, were critically important.

⁷ *An Autobiography*, p. 64.

⁸ *An Autobiography*, p. 75.

The Cuming Smith venture is almost a classic case of the Scots initiative which distinguished the development of Australian capitalism in the nineteenth century, particularly in Melbourne, 'the scene of the greatest flowering of Caledonian commercialism'.⁹ Campbell, Cuming and Smith fit almost perfectly Malcolm Prentis's characterisation of the Scots who went into manufacturing—artisan-entrepreneurs with minimal business backgrounds, often rural in fact—*except that* these three men were from the Episcopalian north-east. The family connection was also particularly close and significant: two brothers-in-law, and a merchant financier (in Campbell) who had married a Smith cousin. Campbell had money, commercial experience and city connections; Smith had managerial experience (with Clark); and Cuming had savings (he and Elizabeth saved £700 from the shoeing forge in ten years), the nous to judge a good investment prospect, and an urge to improve the business.

Cuming Smith got established, diversified its products, and extended its markets. Consolidation involved the transfer of state-of-the-art technology from the metropolis to the periphery (Britain to the colony of Victoria). Indeed, up-dated technology and product innovation were the means by which the business constantly re-invigorated itself. Family members were regularly despatched to the centre to learn the latest manufacturing techniques, commencing with George Smith who studied in England for six months in 1873, bound by agreement to give the Company the sole benefit of his new expertise.¹⁰ Shortly after Smith's return, the firm diversified into artificial manures (by buying a bonemill and treating bonedust with sulphuric acid to produce soluble fertiliser). Thus the summer

⁹ Malcolm D. Prentis, *The Scots in Australia: A Study of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, 1788-1900*, p. 135. Curiously, few of the Scots to whom we refer in this article appear in the Prentis study. H.V. McKay, who does, was Australian-born, of Scots Irish parentage.

¹⁰ Deed of dissolution, and Agreement Messrs Campbell and Cuming with Mr G.B. Smith, 1 December 1873: 6/5/4 (7) in Cuming Smith & Co. Papers, University of Melbourne Archives (UMA).



demand for chemicals linked with the beverages industry was balanced with fertiliser orders in winter.

The third phase, domination of the fertiliser market, saw the extension of industrial technology across the colonial periphery. This secondary migration of managers transferred business and technological expertise within Australasia, from a mature colonial economy and manufacturing base in Melbourne, to developing ones, in Adelaide, Dunedin, and Perth. Geographically, Cuming Smith was well-placed to supply South and Western Australia by sea, but the rapid extension of the grain frontier warranted the establishment of manufacturing plants, firstly in Adelaide, then in Otago, and finally in Perth. In 1880 Cuming Smith's principals acted in concert with those of the Melbourne pharmaceutical company Felton Grimwade & Co. to establish the Adelaide Chemical Works. When gold transformed Otago into the most populous and prosperous of the New Zealand provinces, and established Dunedin as the major entrepot and the leading financial and commercial centre, Scottish and Victorian capital flowed in. Campbell had early and diverse business dealings with the South Island, Cuming visited in 1876 to explore the prospects, and Cuming Smith was soon supplying New Zealand with acid and chemical manures in competition with Elliotts of Sydney. When the New Zealand government offered a bonus for the first production of sulphuric acid in 1881-82, the Melbourne companies backed a venture by Kempthorne Prosser's New Zealand Drug Company to produce

Photograph opposite: The Cuming family at home, 'Myrus', Yarraville, c.1898. Centre from left: Annie, James and Elizabeth Cuming, and Burns (manager, Adelaide Chemical Works); top from left: George Cuming (manager, acid works, Port Melbourne), Edward Campbell (manager, Colonial Sugar Refinery, Yarraville), Jean and Frank Sharp; Elizabeth Cuming, from the Scottish Cleghorn family of tannery managers; front: Grace and William (manager, Cuming Smith works, Yarraville). Mari (who replaced George as manager at Port Melbourne in 1902) is missing; it may be his wedding day. Cuming Smith & Co. Papers, University of Melbourne Archives.

acid and fertiliser.¹¹ In both Adelaide and Dunedin, Cuming Smith supplied the technology and the management.

New enterprises required experienced builders, chemists and managers. Factory managers had years of technical know-how, expertise in building and operating plants, skills in labour recruitment and management, and even useful social connections, which companies had to preserve at all costs from poaching by competitors. Owners did not lightly dispose of managers, even if they personally disliked them, and they preferred to keep the expertise in the family. Father-to-son management successions were common.¹² Hence James Cuming's eldest son Burns built and managed the Adelaide works, and George Smith the Dunedin works. In time, their sons, Burns Cuming and Anthony Smith, succeeded them, just as, in Melbourne, James Snr would be succeeded by his son James. The challenge for the parent companies was not only to monopolise as far as possible the accumulated wisdom of the business, but to keep ahead by ensuring state-of-the-art manufacturing methods. Here the travels of the Cuming family played a vital role.

BUSINESSMEN, RETURN MIGRATION AND HOME VISITING

ERIC Richards and Ken Inglis¹³ have drawn our attention to the 'least visible' and 'least studied'¹⁴ of Australian migrants, namely the return migrants (those who went home permanently, and those who vacillated) and those visiting home. Richards,

¹¹ J.R. Poynter, *Russell Grimwade* (Melbourne University Press, 1967), p. 19.

¹² Not only in the chemicals industry. See John F. Lack, 'Footscray: an industrial suburban community', PhD thesis, Monash University, 1976, for examples in sugar refining, ropemaking, tanning.

¹³ Richards, 'Return Migration and Migrant Strategies in Colonial Australia', and K.S. Inglis, 'Going Home', in David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Home or Away? Immigrants in Colonial Australia, Visible Immigrants: Three* (The Australian National University, Canberra 1992).

¹⁴ Richards, 'Return Migration' (1992), p. 64; Inglis, 'Going Home' (1992), p. 105.

asking how 'the idea of "going home" related to individual strategies of migration and to the realities of return', suggests that the greater real and psychic distances between Europe and Australia tend to support the conclusion reached by modern immigration studies: 'the more successful migrants have a higher propensity to return, being able to save the costs of return'.¹⁵ It may be true that a higher rate of return is to be expected among unassisted immigrants, who were more likely to keep their options open, to possess the resources to return, and to maintain through letter-writing the contacts with home.

The Cumings arrived unassisted, became financially comfortable, and later renewed contact with home, yet they did not share the more successful migrants' tendency to return home. James Cuming contemplated returning to America but he did not leave after achieving success as a farrier, and with the establishment of his acid and fertiliser business the thought of returning home seems to have vanished utterly. It was more than ten years after arrival in 1862 before Smith was despatched (1873), 20 years before a Cuming visited America and Scotland (1883), and 25 years before James Snr made the trip (1887). Thereafter the frequency of return visits increased. Between 1893 and 1925, at least ten family members (migrants and their children) made a total of fifteen trips abroad - mostly world trips. James Snr became an inveterate traveller, from 1893 spending one in five of his remaining years abroad. The Cumings and the Smiths therefore contributed significantly to the outward migration records with which Eric Richards is wrestling so valiantly to chart. None of these moves, however, belong to return migration at all. Indeed, some moves (Burns Cuming's and George Smith's) belong to further, secondary migration. Enterprising manufacturers like the Cumings properly belong to Ken Inglis's category of home 'visitors'. They were visitors, however, with a serious purpose. They point to the phenomenon of a type of reverse business visiting, which other evidence suggests was extensive.¹⁶

¹⁵ Richards, 'Return Migration' (1992), pp. 65, 67.

¹⁶ Consider, for example, George Kinnear, the ropemaker, and H.V. McKay of Sunshine Harvester fame, and their families; also tanners Moritz

The travels of the Cumings allow us to discern among peripatetic industrialists four main motives for home visiting: duty or obligation, particularly among those whose original emigration may have been tinged with guilt at leaving family; self-gratification, or the urge of the prosperous to display their success; the sheer pleasure of travel; and business obligations and opportunities. The last of these was very significant. Manufacturers were hands-on owners and managers, not merely successful enough to substitute travel for returning home permanently, and able to combine the pleasures of travel with the demands of business, but those for whom continued success as manufacturers was often conditional on return visiting.

When in 1883 James Jnr became the first to travel outside Australasia, one of his tasks was to make contact with the Cuming family in the United States and Canada, and with the Smiths in Scotland and England.¹⁷ One suspects that James' job was to test the water, particularly in America. In San Francisco he received a frosty reception from his mother's sister Annie and her husband—they appear in his diary, not as Aunt Annie and Uncle James, but as 'Clark and wife' with the terse comment 'disappointed with them', for they neither met his ship nor arranged the factory visits that he wanted. This was the Clark of the Melbourne acid works and clearly there had been some family breach. But James' welcome was warm in New York and at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, where he was startled by the strong family resemblances and where relatives were delighted to see 'the first of the Australian branch of the family'. James made pilgrimages to his birthplace and the site of his parents' home in Portland, and to his grandparents' graves

Michaelis and Isaac Hallenstein and their family links to England, Germany and New Zealand: *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

¹⁷ J.F. Lack and I.D. Rae, 'Fertilising Australia's Acid Industry: a manufacturer's world travels of 1883 and 1904', in Bart Gremmen (ed.), *The Interaction between Science and Technology* (Wageningen Agricultural University, Wageningen, the Netherlands, 1991). Our sources for James' travels are his diaries for 1883 and 1904: 12/6/1(1) and 12/6/1(4) in the Cuming Smith & Co. Papers, UMA, unless footnoted to the account published in the *Independent [Ind]* (Footscray) 1883-84 as 'Round the World'.

at St John, New Brunswick. He was able to report to his father on the material circumstances and health of the connection. Cuming Snr travelled across in 1887: 'From this visit there was opened up a very large correspondence between relatives and friends who had drifted apart, I being the connecting link', he later reflected. 'This and my subsequent visits did a great deal to put members of the clan in touch with one another.' James Snr proved most generous to his American family. At Christmas 1909, for instance, he sent £3000 for his brother Mari to distribute among them according to need.¹⁸

For successful migrants, a trip home to the scenes of earlier trials and tribulations served to confirm success. Cuming Snr visited the two smithies, in Aberdeen, where he had been apprenticed, and in Portland, where he established his first farriery. Though he was inclined to protest the fuss made of him in local papers (which he sent to the family in Australia), he was clearly gratified by the attention. Travel for pleasure was a luxury most migrants in this period could never afford. Travel was strictly utilitarian. As a result, even the more mobile migrants had little familiarity with their home countries: Cuming had seen little of Scotland outside the north-east corner, and little of North America beside St John and Portland. He wrote of the month he spent in Scotland in 1887: 'My knowledge of Scotland was confined to...Aberdeenshire and Banffshire. I had done all my early sightseeing on foot, as there were no railways north of Aberdeen when I left. Now I was free to go wherever I liked, so I did the Burns and Scott countries pretty thoroughly.'¹⁹

When he took his wife home in 1893:

Our greatest treat was a sixteen-days' drive from Aberdeen...our second honeymoon drive. We had a nice low double-seated phaeton. I knew all the roads, as I had walked them when a boy... We visited all the scenes of our youth,

¹⁸ *An Autobiography*, pp. 88, 122.

¹⁹ *An Autobiography*, p. 89.

seeing many of the old folks, still living... We were trying to feel ourselves young again, and succeeded fairly well.²⁰

They visited their birthplaces, and the places where they courted, and went to Portland, Maine, 'where Mother and I had spent three years of struggle, economy and happiness, and where Annie and Jim were born'.²¹ In 1900, after the death of his wife, Cuming took his daughter Grace on a world trip. Such travelling combined duty, self-gratification, and pleasure, and served, by demonstrating his material success and allowing him to exercise his generosity to relatives, to justify his emigration to Australia. Yet an over-riding motive for most of the Cuming visits, particularly those of the sons and grandsons, was the furthering of their business interests.

The world trip made by James Junior in 1883-84 was intended to groom him to take over the reins from his father. After matriculating from Melbourne Grammar, he studied chemistry under Cosmo Newbery at the Museum, and went on learning on the job. World travel now broadened his knowledge of industrial chemistry, and gave him at first hand a world map of the industry. The trip was a test of his earnestness and capacity, Charles Campbell flatly refusing to admit Cuming's son to partnership until he had passed this test. James left Melbourne within a month of his 21st birthday in 1883, and the itinerary for his factory visits that year reads like a world catalogue of the late Victorian chemical industry. He was met by his businessman Uncle Mari in New York and, armed with letters of introduction, began his visits to acid works in New York, Boston and Portland. He saw many American factories, but there were, inevitably, some disappointments. At Baltimore, a major centre of fertiliser and manure works, he had to be content with merely visiting the city's monuments; in Philadelphia and Providence, only the company of family and old friends gave him some solace for several refusals. In London James had his way smoothed by a family friend (his future father-in-law) who was in Britain to report on railways for the Victorian government, and he began

²⁰ *An Autobiography*, p. 93.

²¹ *An Autobiography*, p. 94.

his northern trip armed with so many letters of introduction that he was confident of going it alone, a confidence confirmed at Newcastle where a relation in a prominent position (one of the Smiths) was able to open many doors.

These folks [he concluded] are not so conservative as would at first appear. It is not the stranger from the 'Bush Australia' they are afraid of—it is their next-door neighbour they don't want to know what is inside their gates. If they are perfectly satisfied with your credentials, and sure you are not likely to do their business any harm, they are as nice as can be.²²

The largest works seemed likely to prove the least useful: 'everything is on such a large scale they won't fit in with our little one-horse places'.²³ But the processes he observed, if not the scale of operations, allowed him to compare, and confirm or improve, home practices. He dismissed 'old fashioned' equipment, took careful notes of some 'immense establishments' at Glasgow, and the third largest chemical works in Britain at Widnes,²⁴ and reckoned his visit to one metallurgist and platinum manufacturer 'the most valuable experience I have had in all my travels'.²⁵ Platinum apparatus was essential for producing concentrated acid. James also visited factories in Iavil, France, and at Frankfurt, where he declared, 'The principal thing I came here to see was the German patent process of gas heating, with which I am fairly in love.'²⁶

The trip was a resounding success. James kept copious notes (illustrated with drawings of plant and processes), collected quantities of technical literature, and made many valuable contacts. In San Francisco he visited the editor of the *Chemical Review*; in New York he became a life member of the Society of Chemical Industry; in London he spent many hours in the

²² 'Round the World', *Ind* 3 November 1883.

²³ 'Round the World', *Ind* 3 November 1883.

²⁴ Diary, 10, 28 August and 1 October 1883.

²⁵ 'Round the World', *Ind* 9 February 1884, describing his visit of 4–5 December 1883.

²⁶ 'Round the World', *Ind* 15 March 1884, describing his visit of 27 December 1883.

machinery court of the South Kensington Museum.²⁷ He visited a score of factories other than chemical and acid works, all valuable in the study of management and production: ironworks, carriage works, meatpacking houses, soap works, indiarubber manufactories, slaughterhouses, manure depots, lead and antimony works, shipbuilding yards, soda works, kerosene shale-oil works, steel works, and Woolwich Arsenal.

Upon his return in 1884 James was admitted to partnership, and became head chemist and works manager. The knowledge acquired by the son in 1883–84 and by his father in 1887 proved vital to the Company, which was moving from traditional processes of making superphosphate from bonedust, to treating rock phosphate with sulphuric acid. The Yarraville acid concentrating plant was upgraded three times in fifteen years, after each of the visits of 1873, 1883 and 1887.²⁸ New sulphur burners were installed and perfected 1884–88. The firm was also responding to market changes and business competition, actual or threatened. 1896 saw Cuming Snr conducting two of his younger sons on a world tour—‘an educational excursion [during which] we managed to get into a number of the largest and best arranged plants in our business’.²⁹ In 1897 Felton Grimwade & Co. merged their acid and fertiliser interests with Cuming Smith; James Jnr became general manager, and his brothers George and William works managers at, respectively, Yarraville and Port Melbourne.

James Jnr made his second world trip in 1904: the inexperienced 21-year-old of 1883 was now general manager of the largest chemical and superphosphate works in Australasia and president of the Society of Chemical Industry in Victoria, the country’s foremost professional association. He visited many new plants in the United States and Britain, and extended his itinerary to Japan. Mt Lyell Mining and Railway Company was building a chemical works in Melbourne utilising the pyrites from their Tasmanian west coast mines, and Cuming’s keen

²⁷ Diary, 2 November 1883.

²⁸ *Ibid* 13 October 1888.

²⁹ *Autobiography*, p. 96. James Cuming contributed ‘A Traveller’s Notes’ to the *Independent* (Footscray) in 1896.

interest in the processes involved are shown by the diagrams in his diary,³⁰ sketched during evening reflections on what he had seen. The technology of acid manufacture was changing, too, from the chamber to the contact process. In 1904 he inspected contact acid plants in California, New Jersey, and British Columbia. Soon after his return, Cuming Smith introduced the contact process of acid manufacture, and added pyrites to their range of raw materials.

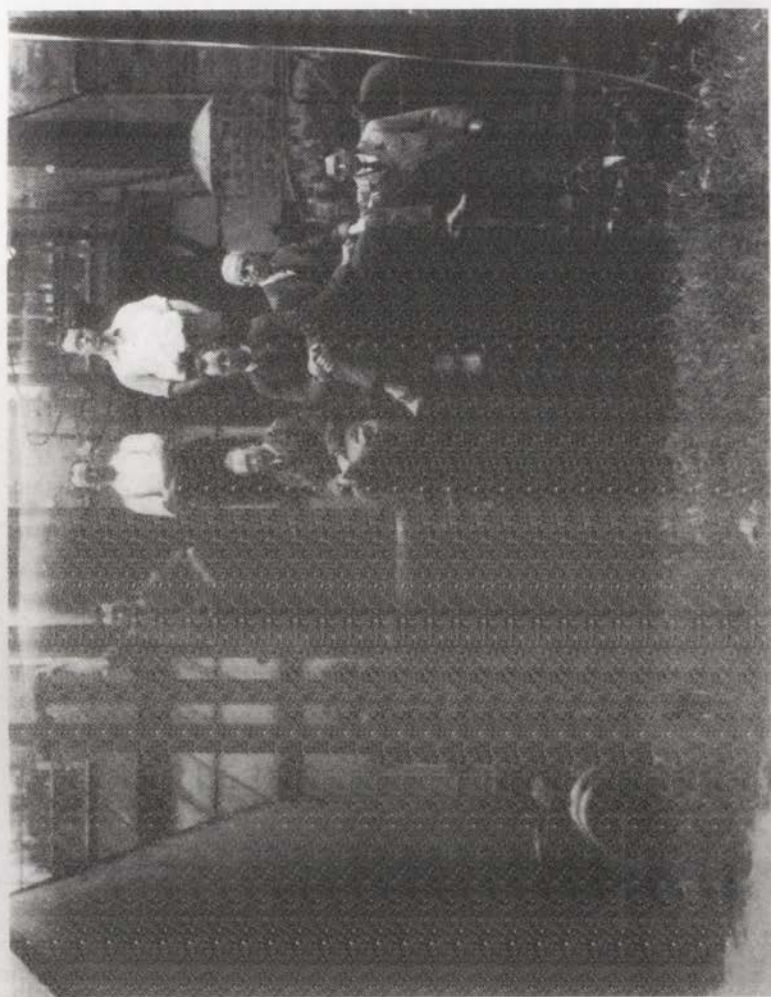
The Company's policy of choosing the most promising family members for overseas study tours continued into the third generation—James Jnr's eldest and youngest sons (William and 'Mac') and their cousin James, were selected. William visited Europe and America at the age of 25 in 1912–13. He called on Elliott Bros in Sydney and Kempthorne Prosser in Auckland, before inspecting some thirty U.S. industrial plants as far west as Chicago and south to Atlanta. Like his father, the captain of industry he was in time to succeed, he visited a wide range of industries—steel mills, meat packing houses, oil and metal refineries and motor assembly plants, as well as chemical and fertiliser works. Some of the owners, managers and chemists upon whom he called remembered his American-born father as 'the Australian' visitor of 1904–05. While several firms remained reluctant to exhibit their contact acid plants, William was generally delighted with his reception: 'Everybody is awfully fine and make you feel quite at home', he wrote from New York.³¹ By contrast, the gloom of London (he did not see the sun once in his first week) extended to business prospects: 'People do not seem to be too keen about running you around their plants and I am afraid I am not going to see over many plants in this country'.³²

Certainly he had misjudged the timing of his visit to Britain—it was the holiday season—but other factors explain why he saw only six plants in 60 days, including four during a short trip

³⁰ 12/6/1(4), Cuming Smith & Co. Papers, UMA.

³¹ W.F. Cuming to James Cuming, [New York] 24 October 1912: Letterbook [LB] 11/5/1 (2), Cuming Smith & Co. Papers, UMA.

³² W.F. Cuming to James Cuming, [London] 13 November 1912: LB 11/5/1 (2), Cuming Smith & Co. Papers, UMA.



to France and Belgium, but none in Germany. Rising tension between Britain and Germany, and a reluctance to exhibit plants which might play a key role in the coming struggle, particularly to globetrotters like Cuming, may have been to blame. A great game was being played out amid the smokestacks of industrialised Europe, perhaps every bit as critical as that shaping around the oilfields and the seaways. As the Cuming diaries show, industrialists, their managers and their equipment suppliers talked endlessly and broke confidences casually in the struggle for business advantage. An alert listener could gather most useful information from general conversation. Gaining access to plants required tact and discretion. As William was to advise his young brother 'Mac' in 1924: 'If interviewing any of these people [making the new 'double superphosphate'], do not appear too anxious for the information, but see all you can and report fully.'³³ In 1912-13, William had learnt of an Australian rival's plans for expansion at Newcastle, and he became aware of the keen Japanese interest in advanced technology. He had been preceded or followed by a Japanese agent at every major plant he visited.

On his second visit in 1919 William found the atmosphere in Britain far more welcoming. He saw 22 plants and made 35 contacts in three months spent mostly in England, Scotland and Wales, and was reunited with his brother Harry, lately demobbed from the AIF, who was studying agriculture and applied chemistry at Aberdeen in an attempt to cure war-related depression and prepare himself for return to work with the firm.³⁴ The family had to muster all the talent, for William's projected tour of United States industry in 1920 was cut short by

Photograph opposite: Mac [standing on right] and James Cuming with classmates and teacher: Gas producer trial, Imperial College, London, 1925. Courtesy Mr John Cuming of Melbourne.

³³ W.F. Cuming to Mac Cuming, [Melbourne] 26 May 1924: in 11/6/3, Cuming Smith & Co. Papers, UMA.

³⁴ Harry Cuming to James Cuming, [Aberdeen] 17 March 1919: in 11/5/1 (1), Cuming Smith & Co. Papers, UMA.

news of his father's illness, which proved terminal. By 1926 William was in charge, as general manager. His unfinished business in America had been completed in 1924-25 by Mac and cousin James, on their way to the Imperial College, London. Every generation received a better formal education: James the elder had little schooling; Burns finished primary and his apprenticeship as a farrier; James Jnr attended Melbourne Grammar; and after Grammar William went to the Working Men's College; Mac and cousin James, having completed university science degrees, took diplomas in chemical engineering. They went to England via America, attending the BAAS Conference in Ashville, Georgia, and joining the Conference's industrial tour, to which they added their own itinerary of visits and inspections.

To test his young brother's application and diplomacy, William asked Mac to gather information about the plant and methods employed to make what the Americans called 'double superphosphate', and all he could learn about American experimental work in making phosphorus in electric furnaces. Mac responded enthusiastically to the challenge. He saw the volatilising work at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's experimental farm at Arlington, but double superphosphate, a subject far more central to Cuming Smith's interests, proved more elusive: 'It's kept pretty quiet'.³⁵ Mac and James travelled to the Anaconda Copper Company in Montana, and spent two days inspecting the mine, refinery and superphosphate plant. 'It would have been good to have had another look around the plant today', Mac wrote on 23 July 1924, 'but I'm afraid we would have worn out our welcome, which wasn't very intense as it was'.³⁶ Mac obtained from the conveyor belt (and mailed home) a sample of the final product, gathered vital printed matter (from the publisher, rather than the company), and reported at length.

³⁵ Mac Cuming to William Cuming, [Chicago] 14 July 1924: 11/6/3, Cuming Smith & Co. Papers, UMA.

³⁶ Mac Cuming to W.F. Cuming, [Livingston, Montana] 23 July 1924; in 11/6/3, Cuming Smith & Co. Papers, UMA.

The Cuming family's 'many happy returns' to North America and Britain were concerned with more than fact-grubbing, making business contacts and harvesting the latest technology. Travel taught the young men of the family how to meet and relate to industrialists and their managers, and how to mix with the international fraternity of industrial chemists. In New York in 1904 James Jnr attended meetings of the Society of Chemical Industry and the Chemists' Club, contacts which William renewed in 1912. William attended the BAAS Conference, as would Mac and James in 1924, where, apart from making many useful contacts and gathering letters of introduction, they heard lectures from very distinguished scientists: the famous Braggs, physicists, father and son, and Sir Ernest Rutherford on the atom. Referring to his old teacher at the University of Melbourne, Mac wrote 'Prof Masson gave us rather a clearer outlook on it all than did Rutherford'.³⁷ In London they studied under Professor W.A. Bone whose research made him a world leader in fuel technology.³⁸ The Cumings were attracted, too, by World Expositions: James the elder by the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 ('the grandest effort of the kind in history, and nothing in that line attempted since has approached it in magnificence'),³⁹ James Jnr by the Louisiana Exposition in St Louis 1904, and William by the Toronto Fair of 1912. James Jnr's diary records several days spent in St Louis questioning the chemicals exhibitors and gathering pamphlets to be mailed back to Melbourne; having crossed the continent to Toronto by train, William was preoccupied with practical matters: 'In the end I got a bed with 6 others but I was able to get a good bath'.⁴⁰

For these youngest and brightest, travel was meant to be broadening in a general sense, to expose them to other cultures, and not only business ones. Although he wrote that his brother

³⁷ Mac Cuming to W.F. Cuming, [New York City] 30 August 1924: in 11/6/3, Cuming Smith & Co. Papers, UMA.

³⁸ *Dictionary of National Biography 1931-1940* (Oxford University Press, London, 1949), pp. 85-6.

³⁹ *An Autobiography*, p. 95.

⁴⁰ W.F. Cuming to James Cuming Jnr, 9 Sept 1912: LB 11/5/1(2), Cuming Smith & Co. Papers, UMA.

Mari, the New York hatter was 'a writer of verses, but I don't think he has ever let this interfere with business', James Snr was no Philistine. Before embarking for Australia from Liverpool in 1862, he went to hear Dickens reciting. When travelling, the Cumings not only went sightseeing, but visited galleries, attended concerts and frequented the theatres. James Jnr collected mementos of his pilgrimages: a piece of stone from George Washington's tomb, some gravel from around that of Héloise and Abelard, and a piece of the old church belonging to the monastery of the Venerable Bede. In London in 1924 Mac heard Galli-Curci sing (and considered Melba her superior). It is true, though, that nothing seems to have been thrilled them quite as much as a vista of chemical works or the plumes of smokestacks: James Jnr waxed lyrical in his account of his trip down the Tyne: 'this is one of the sights of England. The distance is about 12 miles, and the river bank on both sides is lined the whole distance by immense works—cities in themselves—principally alkali works, shipbuilding yards, iron and cement works,'⁴¹ — [his diary but not his published account, recorded] 'each belching out their smoke and making the air black'.⁴² 'There was a beautiful fume at the Stack', William recorded of Elliott's acid works in Sydney in 1912.⁴³

The Company and the family intended travel to identify and groom the next generation of managers and chemists, and to extend their horizons and to build their confidence. 'By this time', William wrote to Mac in New York in 1924, 'I suppose you will see the world in a very different light than when we left you in Sydney.'⁴⁴ His letter was crossed by Mac's who reported that he and James were 'Getting more confidence in ourselves and better able to do things and talk to people. Travelling around gives you the chance of balancing up and comparing things

⁴¹ 'Round the World', *Ind* 10 November 1883.

⁴² Diary, 23 July 1883: Cumings Smith Papers, UMA.

⁴³ W.F. Cumings to James Cumings Jnr., [Sydney] 28 July 1912: LB 11/5/1(2), Cumings Smith & Co. Papers, UMA.

⁴⁴ W.F. Cumings to Mac Cumings, [Melbourne] 26 May 1924: in 11/6/3, Cumings Smith & Co. Papers, UMA.

doesn't it?'⁴⁵ They noted striking differences between Australian, British and American business cultures. Australian-American differences had been remarked upon by James Jnr when he returned in 1905 determined to transform relations in the Australian chemical industry. He told the Society of Chemical Industry of Victoria:

One of the things that impressed me very much was the good feeling between those masters of industry in America. There was not that suspicious rivalry that one sees so much of in this country between men engaged in the same business... Perhaps the great difference is the big market they have for their goods. Here, if an article is wanted, it is only wanted in small quantities, and producers fall over one another to supply it.⁴⁶

He lamented the long, careworn faces of Victorian businessmen, the personal animosity which often accompanied business rivalry, and the want of joy which came from 'the fun of the work'. Cuming Smith was feeling the pressure. The company had absorbed four opposition companies in the 1890s, but in the 1900s two new major rivals appeared. By 1907, however, James had formalised gentlemen's price agreements into the Victorian Fertilizer Association, essentially a cartel.

Mac found in 1924 that U.S anti-trust laws had put an end to good feeling in the chemical industry, but American friendliness, efficiency, and advanced technology retained their magnetism. By contrast with the U.S., Mac was appalled by the rundown condition and wastefulness of British industry: 'Things are pretty bad in this old country. There seems [sic] to be instances [of waste] like that all through the land. In their iron and steel industries they waste coal in a shocking manner and wonder why they are losing their grip on the trade. But still the Rolls Royce cars abound. People have tons of money. It's only the poorer classes who are feeling the pinch so far.'⁴⁷ Significantly, to this

⁴⁵ Mac Cuming to W.F. Cuming, [New York] 9 July 1924, in 11/6/3A, Cuming Smith & Co. Papers, UMA.

⁴⁶ *Proceedings of the Society of Chemical Industry of Victoria* (1905).

⁴⁷ Mac Cuming to W.F. Cuming, [S.S. Ormonde, Norway] 9 July 1925: in 11/6/3A, Cuming Smith & Co. Papers, UMA.

member of the third generation, 'the old country' had become 'this old country'.

Migration had taken the Cumings across the world, and they had taken the technology of the acid and fertiliser industries from the centre to the colonial periphery. Further diffusion took place from the colonial node. Their travels had followed the centre of the industry as it moved from Scotland and England, to the Continent and America. Where, after all this movement, was home, and where was the centre?

GOING 'HOME' AND COMING HOME

THE centre for James Cuming Snr had been the family farm at Banff, in Scotland, where his father had experimented with seed, crops and manures, 'with sacrifice of the kail-yard, no small loss where there was a growing family... The first superphosphate produced in Scotland was made in our barn'.⁴⁸ He thought of himself as fulfilling some original promise, unrealised by his impractical father. When in his closing years James Cuming reflected on his life, and came to set down his reminiscences, the act became as much an exercise in the biography of his father, as of autobiography. James was puzzled and disturbed by the paradox of a gifted man brought down, and an 'ordinary man raised up to wealth and position'. James, the farm boy emigrated as a farrier in desperation and became a captain of industry on the frontier of Empire; Marianus, the farmer, self-educated scholar and mechanic, who became a veterinary surgeon and emigrated in expectation of reputation and material success, failed. The son explained his success in terms of 'a lucky choice of parents', 'ambition', and 'a fortunate marriage', respectively a sound constitution, hard work and a wife who was an excellent manager and saver who thus placed him in a position to invest in business. But James' advantages also included a supportive familial and regional-ethnic connection (the Scots Episcopalian Aberdonian network), chance or being in the right place at the right time (Melbourne in the

⁴⁸ *An Autobiography*, p. 40.

early 1860s, during Victoria's first industrial boom),⁴⁹ as well as his adaptability, flexibility and levelheadedness.

If home is where the heart is, Scotland perhaps remained home for James Snr. But Scotland was not home for his children. When James Jnr returned from England in 1883, his first sight of Australia—it was Adelaide on a scorching day—left him disconcerted:

The people...all looked burnt up; no peach colored cheeks as in England. The soft hats of the gentlemen and large straw hats of the ladies with their gay colors gave them the appearance of country lads and lasses in town for a holiday. How small everything looked too. When I was in Adelaide two years before I very much admired many of its buildings and King William Street could not be beaten. But now the buildings seemed dwarfed. In fact it looked like a little country town.

Yet he valued the perspective the tour had given him on 'our little corner of the globe...for one's ideas do get contracted when [one] never goes from [sic] home'.

And he was clear where home was. His friends' commonest question—'of all the places you have seen, where would you like to live?'—elicited the response:

I decidedly say Britain! The gem of the earth, if I could afford it. But for a young man who wants to rise in the world, I should as decidedly say Australia. Here there is more opening or scope for energy, the lowest born may attain to the highest position in the land. There are no harsh lines drawn in society, and the only test for position in it, is, one's own behaviour. For these reasons and the fact that home is always dear no matter where it be, I love our own Australia; the grandest country on the face of the earth.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Factory employment increased threefold, perhaps fourfold, in the decade: G.J.R. Linge, *Industrial Awakening: A Geography of Australian Manufacturing 1788 to 1900* (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1979), pp. 198, 742–3.

⁵⁰ 'Round the World', *Ind* 5 July 1884.

In 1924 James Jnr's son Mac, who would succeed his brother William just as William had succeeded their father, was asked directly what he was making of the world now that he had seen a little more of it. He replied that he was

convinced that the best place from which to judge the world as a whole, is from our own home away on the outskirts of it all. Out there we get, comparatively [sic] speaking a mass of world wide news... Whereas in America...you get very little news of places... It's appalling to see the lack of knowledge the average American has of the rest of the world...they know nothing of England, or Europe or Asia. We Australians on the other hand have to depend on other parts of the world for our existance [sic] and must needs take an interest in them. I thought the Americans inclined to be narrow minded as a result of this. They seemed to lack the broad worldly outlook...that you find in a Britisher.⁵¹

James Cuming's sons and grandsons became, not return migrants, but confirmed Australians, if British Australians, and, as travellers, agents for the transfer and adoption of industrial technology. Jan Todd's *Colonial Technology: Science and the Transfer of Innovation to Australia*⁵² has recently reminded us that technology is a social product, and its diffusion a social process. If we are to explore the rich complexities of the history of Australian industrialisation and of technology transfer, then we must integrate into that history the story of emigration in all its dimensions, familial, regional and ethnic. In return, the history of business and technology will enrich migration studies.

Return migration from Australia was more significant in the twentieth century than in the nineteenth, but much return migration was more apparent than real—movements generated by undecided 'yo-yo' migrants, restless sojourners, and business travellers like the Cumings. Developing ideas about business migration will profit from consideration of families like the Cumings, who admired energy and enterprise in others, and

⁵¹ Mac Cuming to Nance [Annie, wife of W.F. Cuming], [London] 22 October 1924: in 11/6A/1, Cuming Smith & Co. Papers, UMA.

⁵² Cambridge University Press, 1995.

thrived on competition. Groups that excited suspicion, contempt and fear in colonial Australia found their champion in James Snr: young Irish assisted women immigrants, 'fine strapping lasses' travelling steerage to Melbourne; the Chinese he encountered in Victoria and whose persecution he abhorred, publicly; the southern and eastern Europeans whom he saw transforming America at the turn of the century; and the Japanese he surveyed on a visit in 1905 ('I like the Japs; they will be a great people yet').⁵³ Such sentiments, and the Cuming story broadly, may prove instructive. They provide a further dimension to studies of return migration and sojourning, and historical depth to the current notion that a culturally diverse, multi-skilled population can be a national asset in a global market.

⁵³ *An Autobiography*, pp. 73, 97. These views were not simply those of the employing class, but reflected Cuming's broad tolerance as a citizen of the world. He was untroubled by the Japanese as actual business competitors or potential military threat.

Jan Gothard

A BURDEN ON THE STATE? THE 'UNFIT' IMMIGRANT

THE SUBJECT of this paper is exemplified in a recently made film about the experiences of a Cypriot family who came to Australia to live. The short film *The Butler* particularly focused on the relationship of the film maker to her brother, who had a mild intellectual disability. When the film maker's mother had applied to migrate, she was told, *you* are welcome to come to this country—but your children are not. That is the subject of this paper: the policies and practices of excluding people from this country on the basis, ultimately, that they are 'unfit' to be part of Australia.

This is hardly a new theme. All historians of nineteenth-century immigration to Australia are aware of 'the unfit immigrant' as a perennial cause of dispute between the colonists and the British agents, government and private, who selected emigrants for Australia. The alleged 'shovelling out of paupers' by British government agents, the despatching of emigrants 'for their country's good'—if not necessarily for the good of the country they were sent to—was a continuing bone of contention in the nineteenth century and the complaint continued to echo throughout the twentieth century. 'Unfitness' was usually understood in terms of occupational criteria and, for single women, in terms of morality. Most of these so-called 'unfit' immigrants very quickly adapted and became 'fit' for Australian conditions after arrival, particularly at times of peak demand for labour. Some, however, were deemed 'unfit' by reason not simply of occupational background (usually a transitory disqualification), but for what were perceived as 'bodily' reasons: because of physical or intellectual disability, or physical or mental health reasons. The implementation of

restrictive immigration strategies was one of the first acts of the new Commonwealth government. The *Immigration Restriction Act*, 1901, is renowned amongst historians of immigration, and indeed Australian historians generally, as a flagrant statement of Australian racism. Its principal aim, thinly disguised in the form of the notorious Dictation test, was well understood to be keeping Australia white. Yet it also served to keep out those other types of undesirable or 'unfit' immigrants. Amongst the health/physical/bodily categories of people listed for exclusion in 1901 were those defined as idiots and the insane, those suffering from 'an infectious or contagious disease of a loathsome or dangerous character', or those considered likely to become 'a charge upon the public or upon any public or charitable institution'. Others whose entry was prohibited included convicted criminals, prostitutes or those living on the proceeds of prostitution. Over the years too, other political categories were added, including anarchists or those advocating the violent overthrow of government; and 'aliens', a category introduced during the Second World War. This paper however is confined to the 'bodily' categories of prohibited immigrants: those who were defined in terms of physical, mental or intellectual condition as 'unfit' to enter Australia.

From 1958, with the repeal of the dictation test, the implicitly racist categories of the *Immigration Act* (as it was known from 1912) were dropped, although this was not intended to signal the end of a 'white Australia' but merely to facilitate its implementation.¹ With the passage of the Racial Discrimination Act in 1975, discrimination on the basis of race became unlawful within Australia and race and ethnicity were no longer criteria affecting immigration entry policy. Yet the discriminatory provisions which governed the entry into Australia of other categories—those whom we now label people with physical and intellectual disability, or people with physical and mental health problems—remain in place. Despite the passage in 1992 of the Disability Discrimination Act,

¹ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates* (House of Representatives) (hereafter CPD), 1 May 1958, p. 1397.

immigration remains explicitly exempt from the Act. An analysis of exclusionary and discriminatory immigration policies and practices in twentieth-century Australia is, therefore, of both historical and contemporary relevance.

In contrast to Australia, this topic has aroused considerable interest amongst historians in other national contexts. In the United States, for example, the development of restrictive immigration policies designed to 'keep out the unfit' has been well documented. This is particularly so with regard to the roles played by eugenicists, who worked hand-in-glove with government officials and politicians in the first decades of this century to introduce restrictive immigration measures based on avowedly eugenicist beliefs. In some South American contexts too, the eugenicist principles underpinning aspects of immigration policies are equally well acknowledged.² There is, as yet, nothing comparable in the twentieth century Australian context relating to restrictive immigration based on disqualifications other than race. This paper, then, reports preliminary work on restrictive immigration, sketching some of the parameters of restrictive immigration practices in twentieth-century Australia. This, indeed, entails 'searching neglected sources' in a relatively new field.

With the Act of 1901 and Australia's 'great white walls' in place, the attention of public policy-makers turned to other, less visible, invasions and contagions. Alongside the push to exclude the 'coloured' races from Australia had been the desire to keep Australia free from diseases. Australia's proximity to Asia and its people, and the emerging prospect of lucrative commercial exchanges with the region, were repeatedly cited as a rationale for tightening up Australia's quarantine regulations. This was particularly evident among the advocates of federal quarantine, writing in the *Australasian Medical Gazette*, the *Medical Journal of Australia* and the *Transactions of the Intercolonial*

² Nancy Leys Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1991).

Medical Congress.³ The distinction between immigration restriction and quarantine requires emphasis. Quarantine involved the controlled incarceration of those suffering from temporary ailments until they no longer represented a risk of infection, whereas immigration restrictions were designed to exclude altogether any person with the undesirable condition absolutely and permanently. However, immigration restrictions apply only to *aliens*, whereas quarantine is directed at all, alien and citizen alike. Diseases with a short incubation period such as yellow fever, smallpox and cholera could be dealt with reasonably effectively through quarantine. Tuberculosis, however, a disease which aroused considerable interest within the pages of medical journals, particularly amongst public health officials, called for a different approach, as was acknowledged by the Commonwealth Quarantine Conference in 1904.⁴ J.H.L. Cumpston, then recently appointed Medical Officer at the West Australian Board of Health, conducted a study into deaths from tuberculosis in that state between 1903 and 1905, which found that more than 55 per cent. of those who died of the disease had been resident in the state less than ten years; they were immigrants from both interstate and overseas.⁵ The United States provided a model for classifying all tubercular patients as prohibited immigrants and compelling the shipping companies who carried them to repatriate them at company expense. Cumpston acknowledged that tubercular patients should have the right to enter Australia to benefit from the fine climate, but that right should be limited. The consumptives' movements should be restricted, and they should accept confinement in sanatoria at their own expense and at the authorities' pleasure, as the price of entry. Failing that, Cumpston recommended such persons be deported at the shipping company's expense, which

³ See, for example, 'Federal Quarantine: Editorial', *Australasian Medical Gazette* (hereafter *AMG*), 8, February 1889, p. 135; 'Reform in Quarantine', *AMG* 18, 20 September 1899, p. 383.

⁴ 'The Commonwealth Quarantine Conference', *AMG* 32, 20 July 1904, p. 373.

⁵ J.H.L. Cumpston, 'The protection of our frontiers from invasion by disease', *AMG* 28, 20 July 1909, p. 350.

would presumably strongly discourage shipping companies from carrying any tubercular passengers at all.

Although Cumpston was not present, the 1911 conference of the states' principal medical officers endorsed the types of measures which he had suggested. The conference report further endorsed the United States model which monitored immigrants after they entered the country. Under this policy an immigrant found to be suffering from tuberculosis was deported as a prohibited immigrant. It was also agreed that the current system of state medical examinations of assisted immigrants was insufficient to detect those suffering from consumption or other illnesses or infirmities, and should be replaced by a Commonwealth system of examination prior to departure.⁶ Earlier that year, the customs authorities who dealt with quarantine had already been instructed to treat people arriving from overseas with tuberculosis as prohibited immigrants.⁷ These concerns were largely dealt with under the requirements of the *Immigration Act*, 1912, which henceforth required all those intending to enter Australia to possess an appropriate certificate of health (section 3b) and explicitly named pulmonary tuberculosis and trachoma, a contagious condition resulting in blindness, as proscribed diseases (section 3e).⁸ At the same time, Cumpston's associate Dr W. Perrin Norris, Commonwealth Director of Quarantine, was appointed as the Commonwealth's first medical officer in London whose responsibilities included the implementation of the new health procedures.⁹

Whereas previously only assisted immigrants had been required to undergo a medical inspection, henceforth both assisted and unassisted immigrants were targeted. The need for such a medical reform was now considered urgent. More than

⁶ *Consumption. Report of a Conference of Principal Medical Officers on Uniform Measures for the Control of Consumption in the States of Australia*, 1911, p. 16.

⁷ AMG 30, February 1911, p. 93.

⁸ *Immigration Act* 1912, sections. 3a (certificate of health) and 3e. (tuberculosis and trachoma).

⁹ Michael Roe, *Nine Australian Progressives* (University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1984), p. 113.

fifty per cent. of immigrants to the Commonwealth were now unassisted, and the medical inspection provided for state-assisted immigrants was regarded as perfunctory and quite inadequate as a screening measure.¹⁰ By the 1920s and 1930s medical investigation suggested that tuberculosis, if not widespread, was now endemic in Australia and despite continuing perceptions to the contrary, it was no longer being introduced by immigrants to any significant extent.¹¹ In 1931, Cumpston, now Commonwealth Director-General of Health, concluded that, of TB cases which had proven fatal within five years of immigrant arrival in Australia,

a considerable proportion is imported but a very small proportion indeed would have been detectable even with very rigorous examination

implying that there was no further need to tighten up immigration health requirements.¹²

THE THREAT OF THE 'FEEBLE MINDED'

TUBERCULOSIS was not the only focus of the changes introduced in the Act of 1912. Tuberculosis was a public health issue, but 'racial health' and 'national efficiency' were also at stake. With that in mind, the language of exclusion also changed, with the original categories of 'liable to become a charge on the public' (section 3b), 'idiot and insane' (3c) and 'suffering from an infectious or contagious disease of a loathsome or dangerous character' (3d), now broadened considerably. Any person categorised as an 'idiot, imbecile, feeble-minded person, or epileptic' (3c), as 'suffering from a serious transmissible disease or defect' (3d), or 'from any other disease or mental or physical defect, ...in the opinion of an officer, liable to render the person...

¹⁰ CPD, 10 December 1912, p. 6740.

¹¹ M.J. Holmes and Frank R. Kerr, 'Some figures and conclusions drawn from an investigation into tuberculous invalid pensioners in Australia', *Medical Journal of Australia*, 12 April 1924, p. 355.

¹² J.H.L. Cumpston, 'Tuberculosis in Australia', *Medical Journal of Australia*, 8 August 1931, p. 160.

a charge upon the public' (3f), was henceforth to be excluded. While these words now strike us as simply a longer series of unattractive labels for much the same sort of thing, in the early twentieth century they described very specific differentiable categories, which could be identified with great precision using new psychometric techniques. Dr W. Birmingham, of Western Australia's Lunacy Department, outlined the different categories in 1911:

Using the term defective in a general sense, it may be said to include all those whose mental equipment is inferior to that of the average amongst their fellows; the condition may be either congenital or acquired. Of the congenital defectives there are three grades, idiots, imbeciles, and feeble-minded. The idiot is a person who, from birth or from early life, is so defective in mind as to be unfit to guard himself from ordinary physical dangers, such as, in the case of young children, would prevent their parents from leaving them alone.

Imbeciles are persons who, owing to mental defect existing from birth or from early life, are unfit to earn their own living, though they can guard themselves from ordinary physical dangers.

Feeble-minded are persons who, through mental defect existing from birth or from early life, are not fit to manage their affairs with prudence, and who are not fit to compete with the average person in the struggle of life, though they may be capable of earning their living under favourable conditions—for instance:- under supervision, or in an institution.¹³

Other categories included 'moral defectives'; and there were also the borderline cases whose condition rendered them 'socially inefficient' and in need of special treatment or training.¹⁴ People in these latter categories, like those with

¹³ Birmingham Report; pp. 9-10; Acc. 752/1911/1108, AN24; Public Records Office of Western Australia.

¹⁴ Andrea Gaynor and Charlie Fox, 'The Birth and Death of the Clinic: Ethel Stoneman and the State Psychology Clinic, 1927-1930', in Charlie

mental health problems, could all be excluded on the grounds that they might become a charge on the state. Category 3c was further widened in 1920 to include, 'any idiot, imbecile, feeble-minded person, epileptic, person suffering from dementia, insane person, person who has been insane within five years previously, or person who has had two or more attacks of insanity'.¹⁵

The significance of widening the categories to include the feeble-minded was not lost on those who debated the Bill in 1912. The member for Angas, Patrick Glynn, one of very few who questioned the shift in focus of immigration restriction, warned:

Our present law provides that an idiot or imbecile may be excluded; but it is now proposed to extend the scope of that provision to embrace a "feeble-minded person." One could scarcely walk down Bourke-street without meeting, in the opinion of some, a "feeble-minded person", or "defective" within the meaning of this Bill.

Glynn objected further to the exclusion of those suffering from a 'transmissible disease or defect', arguing both that the terms were imprecise and that the implementation of the Act was left to the uninformed opinion of Customs officers.¹⁶ Yet objections raised were few and, like Glynn's, called for greater leniency rather than a further tightening of procedures, which suggests that the issue had not aroused significant passion in the House or outside it. As the statistics suggest, the existing provisions were not often invoked (see Table). Once Parliament was assured that ministerial discretion could prevent what were seen as tragic cases of exclusion, for example, a whole family excluded because just one child was 'defective', the Bill passed readily enough.¹⁷

A decade later, in a different international climate, the same issue prompted greater passion, although no further action. During an extended parliamentary discussion of immigration in

Fox (ed.), *Historical Refractions: Studies in Western Australian History* 14, 1993, pp. 96-97.

¹⁵ *Immigration Act 1901-1920*, section 3c.

¹⁶ CPD, 10 December 1912, p. 6742.

¹⁷ CPD, 13 December 1912, p. 7064.

Immigration Restriction Act

Returns of persons refused admission to the Commonwealth

Persons refused admission under paragraphs 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e. and 3f
of the Acts of 1901, 1912. *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers*,
1903-1929.

Year	s. 3a	s. 3b	s. 3c	s. 3d	Total W
1902	618	32	2	0	653
1903	136	16	0	0	152
1904	115	0	2	0	117
1905	104	2	0	0	106
1906	no return found				
1907	61	0	1	0	62
1908	107	0	1	0	108
1909	107	0	1	0	108
1910	26	2	1	2	42
1911	40	4	3	20	83
1912	71	11	4	36	187

- 3a dictation clause
- 3b charge upon the public
- 3c idiot or insane person
- 3d infectious or contagious disease

1923, F. McDonald, the member for Barton, raised the issue of the introduction into Australia of people 'more dangerous to us than criminals and idiots'—namely the 'mentally defective or feeble-minded'.¹⁸ Well read in the American eugenicist literature of Goddard and Eastabrook, McDonald brought before Parliament the powerful images of the Jukes and the Kallikaks, two American families each with a fecund and feeble-minded branch descended, it was claimed, from one 'mental defective'.¹⁹ The extended genealogies of these two families continued to inform the work of eugenicists for the next three decades as 'proof' that

¹⁸ CPD, 17 August 1923, p. 2993.

¹⁹ H.H. Goddard, *The Kallikak Family: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness* (Macmillan, New York, 1912).

Year	s. 3a	s. 3b	s. 3c	s. 3d	s. 3e	s. 3f	Total W
1913	38	0	9	0	23	9	109
1914	8	0	10	0	15	8	54
1915	25	0	2	0	3	2	56
1916	217*	0	2	0	8	1	233
1917	10	0	0	1	1	0	13
1918	4	0	0	0	0	0	16
1919	no return found						
1920	2	0	0	0	2	1	26
1921	16	0	1	0	1	1	29
1922	no return found						
1923	12	2	7	0	5	0	49
1924	no return found						
1925	no return found						
1926	14	0	7	0	1	4	58
1927	7	0	5	0	5	7	88
1928	0	0	1	0	5	15	32

3a dictation clause

3b person not possessed of prescribed certificate of health

3c idiot, imbecile, feeble-minded or epileptic

3d serious transmissible disease or defect

3e tuberculosis, trachoma; dangerous diseases

3f disease or defect, liable to become a public charge

* Include. 208 Maltese, to which figure is appended a note: 'Practically all of these men have since been admitted to the Commonwealth'.

W Includes 'Stowaways', an often substantial category which sometimes makes up the difference between the sum of those categories listed and the total of persons refused admission to the Commonwealth.

mental defectiveness and associated criminality were hereditary, although the evidence was later shown to be both contrived and fatally flawed. The example of these two families was also used as evidence that the feeble-minded were prolific breeders. 'That indicates', suggested McDonald,

the importance of prohibiting the entry of even one of these persons into Australia. They are more dangerous than idiots, because idiocy is easily detected, and we confine the idiot in an asylum, whilst these persons are allowed to roam at large, to make assaults upon our people, to become criminals, and transmit these feeble-minded and criminal tendencies to their descendants.²⁰

Therein lay the 'threat of the feeble-minded': they bred prolifically, they transmitted their defective genes to future generations and they were so like the normal population as to be dangerously invisible.

The 1912 Act's new emphasis on the 'feeble-minded' and on preventing the 'unfit' immigrant from passing on hereditary defects was closely aligned to eugenicist ideas about intellectual disability then prevalent in both Britain and the USA. McDonald, in 1923, looking to the United States as a model of how to deal with the feeble-minded was aware of the legislative shifts then occurring in that country, including the move towards compulsory sterilisation. However, no one suggested the 1912 Bill did not go far enough to exclude 'defectives', and McDonald himself doubted whether Australians would stomach the permanent solutions proposed by the Americans.²¹ Given the emphasis noted in parliament on parallels between Australian and North American legislation, however, a comparison with the United States is illuminating.

Unlike the situation in Australia, United States eugenicists were working hand-in-glove with those involved in formulating immigration policy and practices over this period. In the first decades of the twentieth century, eugenics in the United States had developed into a fully-fledged discipline, with a broad

²⁰ CPD, 17 August 1923, p. 2995.

²¹ CPD, 17 August 1923, p. 2995. See Moira Fitzpatrick, 'Preventing the Unfit from Breeding: The Mental Deficiency Bill in Western Australia, 1929', in P. Hetherington (ed.), *Childhood and Society in Western Australia* (University of Western Australia Press with the Centre for Western Australian History, Nedlands, 1988), for a discussion of the sole (and unsuccessful) Australian attempt to legislate for the compulsory sterilisation of the intellectually disabled.

following among academics, wealthy industrialists, and middle-class professionals. From the 1880s up to the First World War, European immigrants had begun pouring into the United States from Eastern and Southern Europe, from the Balkans, and from Russia. Many were Jewish, and most were ethnically and culturally distinct from earlier waves of Western European immigrants: Anglo-Celtic and Anglo-Saxon peoples from Germany, England, Ireland and Scotland, and Scandinavia.²² By about 1912, some aspects of eugenic thought in the United States focused on explaining differences between racial, ethnic and national groups in terms of heredity. Eugenecists shifted their attention to immigration and its implications for racial health.²³ Ellis Island, the clearing house in New York through which immigrants from Europe passed, with its captive pool of ethnically-varied guinea pigs, seemed a perfect testing ground for determining the correspondence between ethnicity and innate mental faculties. Eugenecist Harry H. Goddard began to conduct IQ tests there, enabling him to 'prove' that more than 80 per cent. of the Jewish, Hungarian, Polish, Italian and Russian immigrants coming into the country were mentally defective, or 'feeble minded', confirming scientifically what many 'older' Americans already felt. Calls for restrictive immigration grew rapidly following Goddard's revelations, but it was not until after the First World War that Albert Johnson, head of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, prepared to introduce a bill which would seriously limit immigration from those countries producing the new waves of immigrants. Eugenecists were called upon to demonstrate the 'defective' pedigrees, as they saw it, of the new immigrant groups. Further, they showed that mental hospitals and prisons housed a

²² Useful sources on United States immigration restrictions are Michael C. LeMay, *From Open Door to Dutch Door: An Analysis of U.S. Immigration Policy Since 1820*, New York, Praeger, 1987; and Alan Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the "Immigrant Menace"* (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, 1995).

²³ Following references come from Garland E. Allen, 'Science Misapplied: The Eugenics Age Revisited', *MIT Technology Review*, August/September 1996, <<http://web.mit.edu/techreview/www/articles/as96/allen.html>>

disproportionate number of immigrants from the European countries in question, and cited the testing already carried out at Ellis Island as proof of the 'defective' status of those immigrant groups.²⁴ So in 1924, on the basis of those findings, the Johnson Act or the Immigration Restriction Act, was duly passed, with immigrant numbers restricted to just two per cent. of the number of residents of that nationality already living in the United States as recorded in the 1890 census, at a time before the crest of the incoming flood was reached and when the US population was still overwhelmingly dominated by those of Anglo-Celtic and Anglo-Saxon background. (Similar restrictions were placed on assisted immigrants coming out to some Australian colonies in the mid nineteenth century, and served the same purpose: restricting an unpopular ethnic group, the Irish, without explicitly naming them.) Having established the link between race or nationality and mental defectiveness, the American legislation erected barriers to keep out large proportions of whole groups, without the trouble of looking at individuals. American eugenicists considered the passage of the 1924 Act a great political triumph.²⁵

The US Act of 1925 had an impact on Australia, with a proportion of US bound immigrants from Southern Europe redirected to Australia. Indeed, anti-Italian sentiment in Australia from that time, in Queensland in particular, may have drawn support from ideas then current in the United States. In other ways, however, the Act had fewer reverberations in Australia. Doctrines of racial health were always specifically invoked in terms of keeping Australia white, yet, while such 'progressive' ideas were fundamental to eugenicist discussion in Australia over this entire period, the notion was used less freely to justify the exclusion of the 'feeble-minded' or the 'mentally

²⁴ Harry H. Laughlin, 'Nativity of Institutional Inmates', *Eugenics in Race and State. Second International Congress of Eugenics, 1921* (Baltimore 1923. Reprinted Garland Publishing Inc, London and New York, 1985), pp. 402-406.

²⁵ Jay K. Varma, 'Eugenics and Immigration Restriction: Lessons for Tomorrow', *Journal of the American Medical Association* 275 (9), 6 March 1996, p. 734; Allen, 'Science Misapplied: The Eugenics Age Revisited'.

defective' from the country.²⁶ Unlike the United States, Australian eugenicists were apparently satisfied that the Act of 1901, by excluding Asian or non-white immigrants from their shores, had largely dealt with external aspects of the 'racial health' issue, by prohibiting the entry of those most obviously 'decaying' or 'degenerate' groups; while the smaller numbers of non-British Europeans entering Australia over this period were insufficient to raise anxiety levels. The Australian eugenics project was more an internal one, as Birmingham expressed very clearly in 1911 in a call for the 'compulsory and permanent segregation' of Australia's feeble-minded:

We are careful that no black or brown skins should be found in our white Australia, but we are doing nothing to protect the transmission of degenerate brains to those who come after us.²⁷

Where immigration and eugenics coalesced, it was more in terms of so-called 'positive' eugenics, for instance, in the work of Richard Arthur through the Immigration League of Australia.²⁸ Positive eugenics was manifest in the age-old state emphasis on bringing out the best blood to Australia; but a 'negative eugenicist' agenda entailing an even tighter exclusion policy was less evident. Australia's immigrants were overwhelmingly Anglo-Celtic prior to the Second World War, and therefore any wide scale equation of 'immigrant' with 'feeble-minded' would devalue the existing Australian stock. Perhaps for that reason, where eugenicist ideas about excluding the 'feeble-minded' were raised in the immigration context, the subtext was environmentalist as much as hereditarian which, as Stephen Garton has argued, was not uncommon in eugenicist thought in

²⁶ See, for example, *Whither away? A study of race psychology and the factors leading to Australia's national decline*, by a Psychologist and a Physician (Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1936), for a classic statement of the doctrine of 'racial health' in the Australian context.

²⁷ Birmingham Report, p. 49.

²⁸ Michael Roe, *Nine Australian Progressives*, pp. 161–2, 165–6. See Rob Watts, 'Beyond Nature and Nurture: Eugenics in Twentieth Century Australian History', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 40 (3), 1994, p. 322, for a discussion of positive and negative eugenicist practices.

Australia at that time.²⁹ Thus McDonald said, in calling for stricter defences against the feeble-minded in 1923:

We are tapping the reservoir of the great manufacturing cities of the Old Country... The wretched conditions under which many people in the Old Country are living, with their attendant sickness and misery, have produced a great number of these people, so that by an indiscriminating selection of immigrants we should run great danger of bringing quite a number of these undesirable people to Australia.³⁰

This is further evidence of the direct continuation of selection ideologies current in the nineteenth century, with their emphasis on avoiding transplanting the by-products of Britain's urban decay.

In the Australian context, once the dictation test was in place, the rationale invoked to justify restrictive immigration practices was seldom racial purity, but was rather, that of preventing 'unfit' immigrants from entering the country and becoming a 'charge on the state'. 'Fitness', therefore meant fit to contribute to national wealth, by way of employment or through the reproduction of a healthy white race. 'Unfitness' involved the state in the burden of support. Once non-European races were excluded, the inherent 'quality' in the immigrant population was less an issue, than the financial cost of maintaining that population should it prove incapable of supporting itself.

POST-WAR POLICIES AND PRACTICES

NOTIONS of racial health and racial purity were less freely voiced after the holocaust and associated revelations about the Nazis' 'euthanasia' programme. 'Eugenics' was removed from public discourse in the United States and in Australia for a number of decades. Nonetheless, medical aspects of immigration

²⁹ See Stephen Garton, 'Sound Minds and Healthy Bodies: Re-considering Eugenics in Australia, 1914-1940', *Australian Historical Studies* 26 (103), 1994, for a discussion of the co-incidence of environmental and hereditarian thought in Australia.

³⁰ CPD, 17 August 1923, p. 2996.

remained a focus during the war years, and the exclusion of people with disabilities and illnesses and the mentally ill remained fundamental to post-war migration practices.³¹ In Europe, the selection mechanisms followed by officers implementing Australia's post-war immigration programme were designed to ensure that the selection of migrants represented 'the pick' of the available crop. Consequently, individuals within families who exhibited any physical or intellectual disabilities, or showed signs of mental illness, were excluded. The policy was represented vividly in the film *Mike and Stefani*.³² In reality the policy frequently operated to exclude in their entirety families which were otherwise acceptable, since they declined to leave members with disabilities behind to fend for themselves. Speaking in 1952 to the Australian Citizenship Convention, on the occasion of the minister's official announcement of immigration policy for the year, Convention Chairman R.J.F. Boyer referred poignantly to that film, with its 'brief glimpse of those people whose age or physical infirmity rendered them ineligible for acceptance as migrants', their rejection, according to Boyer, leading to 'a pathetic remnant of homeless, stateless, economically useless people known the world over as the "hard core"'.³³ Boyer himself wished Australia could have put aside 'the obvious national interest of concentrating on the economically useful' to permit a small portion of the 'aged and ill, limbless and economically useless' to enter Australia; but he tempered his wish with a recognition that the people of Australia would simply not accept such immigrants. All Australians knew that economic utility was a paramount virtue.

With the obviously disabled excluded, physical and mental health issues associated with immigration assumed centre stage. Tuberculosis and other chest conditions, and some orthopaedic

³¹ F. McCallum, 'Some medical aspects of migration', in Commonwealth of Australia, *Report of the National Health and Medical Research Council*, tenth session (Canberra, 1941), appendix 1.

³² *Mike and Stefani*, Commonwealth Film Unit, 1951.

³³ *Digest*, Australian Citizenship Convention (Department of Immigration, Canberra, 1952), pp. 27-8.

conditions were not difficult to detect,³⁴ but increasingly the psychiatric problems among newly resident refugee immigrants and Displaced Persons (DPs) began to attract Australian media attention. It was widely believed that the circumstances which had created DPs and refugees also engendered social dislocation, even mental illness, in a new country. As early as October 1949, the South Australian government complained to the Commonwealth that, not only had twenty displaced persons already been admitted to mental institutions in the state, with two likely to remain there, but the South Australian taxpayer had to pay for their maintenance. The states argued that the Commonwealth ought to take financial responsibility for the burden it was imposing on the states and that deportation should be considered.³⁵ The premiers of other states and the media made similar complaints over the following few years.³⁶ The Commonwealth's position was clear, however. It certainly had the power to deport, under section 8A of the *Immigration Act*, 1901-1949, but the DPs were a special category, brought to Australia on compassionate grounds. Unlike other immigrants, they had already been medically examined at least three times in Europe and again after arrival and it would therefore be difficult to argue a pre-existing or concealed condition. The humanitarian argument against returning mental patients to Europe was also compelling.³⁷ The inconvenient reality was that most DPs, almost by definition, had no state to which they could be returned.

³⁴ Ian R. Mackay, 'Medical selection of migrants from the displaced persons population of post-war Europe', *Medical Journal of Australia*, 14 March 1953, pp. 370-71.

³⁵ Letter, Premier of South Australia to Prime Minister, cited in Report by J.P. Coombe, Migration Officer (Displaced Persons), Re DPs in Mental Institutions, 23 February 1950. Australian Archives (hereafter AA): Series A446/T31, Item 1975/78356.

³⁶ Premier of New South Wales, cited in *Daily Mirror*, 14 February 1951; John Cain, Premier of Victoria, to Prime Minister, 17 September 1954. AA: A446/T31, 1975/78356.

³⁷ Report by J.P. Coombe, Migration Officer (Displaced Persons), Re DPs in Mental Institutions, 23 February 1950. AA: A446/T31, 1975/78356.

The growing visibility of non-British immigrants in psychiatric institutions, however, remained an issue and official complaints continued into the 1960s.³⁸ The tabloids latched onto the issue, producing such journalistic gems as 'Slug for migrant maniacs', 'A burden the state should not carry' and 'Mad when they came'.³⁹ Cost remained the issue, and the *Sydney Truth*, for example, reported that the annual burden on the states of maintaining 'migrant maniacs' (passed as mentally and physically fit by Commonwealth immigration officers) amounted to more than £500,000, a sum which, *Truth* reminded its readers, did not take into account migrants kept in prison at the states' expense.⁴⁰ If they didn't go mad, it seemed, they turned criminal. Profiles were drawn up, some on the basis of medical data, others with a freer hand. Young, single, Polish men were said to be most prone to schizophrenia, often also associated with paranoia. The 'rootless, remote, uncommitted lives' they had led since arrival in Australia, it was said, had 'a strong Dostoevskian flavour' and contributed to their breakdown. The mad female migrant, on the other hand, was more likely to be Dutch, with her breakdown manifest in hysteria or acute depression, sometimes leading to suicidal behaviour. Such women were often found to be 'insecure, mother-dependent and hostile in the first instance to emigration', and perhaps not quite so romantic as the itinerant Dostoevskian Pole.⁴¹ According to the press at least, the immigrant criminal was almost always male and homicidally violent.⁴²

Without statistical evidence, the Commonwealth was unable to dispute the claims that migrants were disproportionately prone to psychiatric illness, nor able to convince state governments that they and their coffers were not being imposed

³⁸ Premier of Queensland to Prime Minister, n.d. (August? 1959). AA: A446/T31, 1975/78349.

³⁹ *Sydney Truth*, 16 February 1958, *Sydney Sun*, 26 May 1958; *Sydney Truth*, 10 August 1958, in AA: A446 T31, 75/78356.

⁴⁰ *Sydney Truth*, 16 February 1958, in AA: A446 T31, 75/78356.

⁴¹ Eric G. Saint, 'The medical problems of migrants', *Medical Journal of Australia* 1 (10), 9 March 1963, p. 336.

⁴² *Truth*, 10 August 1958.

upon. In 1957 the Department of Immigration initiated a long term investigation into mental health amongst immigrants, and the report, which finally appeared in 1961, demonstrated that immigrants were no more represented in asylums than were the local population.⁴³ Even after this report was published, however, the belief that immigrants were overly represented in mental institutions was still common. Further, the argument that immigrants with pre-existing psychiatric illnesses were being admitted into the country was juxtaposed with notions of 'assimilation neurosis', the belief that the very process of being required to assimilate into Australia could be a threat to mental health.⁴⁴ Vindicated by the findings of its survey, the Commonwealth took no further steps to tighten up screening procedures.⁴⁵

What if the statistics had shown otherwise? In response to the Commonwealth's positive report, an article in the *Medical Journal of Australia* concluded that, regardless of statistics, the problem was insoluble. No medical officer could predict the recurrence of a psychiatric complaint. 'Many... [mental] illnesses are episodic in nature—such as depressive or schizophrenic reactions which are impossible to detect during remission'. Any suggestion of tightening up screening would therefore be both

⁴³ *The Incidence of Mental Illness Among Migrants. Report by a Committee of the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council*, Canberra, Department of Immigration, 1961. See also, Sir Harry Wunderley, 'A Survey of Immigration and Mental Health in Australia', in Charles A. Price, *The Study of Immigrants in Australia: Proceedings of Conference on Immigration Research* (The Australian National University, Canberra, 1960), p. 187.

⁴⁴ Cited in typescript extract from I.A. Listwan, 'Mental disorders in migrants – Further study: industrial accidents and crime', *Medical Journal of Australia*, 4 August 1962, in AA: A446T31, 75/78349. See also, Jean Martin, *The Migrant Presence* (George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1978), chapter 5; Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Sang and Angela Fielding, *Ethnicity, Immigration and Mental Illness: A Critical Review of Australian Research* (Bureau of Immigration Research, AGPS, Canberra, 1992).

⁴⁵ Wunderley, 'A Survey of Immigration and Mental Health in Australia', p. 191.

⁴⁶ 'The screening of mentally ill applicants for immigration', *Medical Journal of Australia*, 9 March 1963, p. 361.

difficult, given language differences and the virtual impossibility of obtaining a complete and accurate medical history, and probably no more effective. Similar justifications for the apparent failure of medical screening to eliminate 'unfit' immigrants had been proffered by medical officers since the outcry began. In 1953, for example, the Commonwealth Department of Health acknowledged that tubercular sufferers were entering the country, and attributed the failure of medical screening to exclude them to poor quality of x-rays, medical difficulties associated with determining which tubercular lesions were healed and which active, the possibility of the disease emerging in the months between the last medical clearance and embarkation, and migrant substitution. The practice of sending a substitute of similar build for an x-ray was apparently not uncommon and, in the absence of rigorous identification checks, was cited by one doctor as 'the most likely explanation of displaced persons with extensive tuberculosis being discovered in Australia'.⁴⁷

Such responses were predictable among representatives of the medical profession who may have felt their colleagues were carrying too much responsibility for permitting 'defective' immigrants to enter the country in the first place. Perhaps more surprising, however, was the argument gradually emerging amongst some medical professionals, that tighter psychiatric screening of immigrants was not even ethical. Arguing against the principle which had underpinned Commonwealth immigration policy since 1901, and colonial policy before that, the lead article in the *Medical Journal of Australia* in 1963 argued that screening should be less, not more stringent:

Australia, with its living standard and resources, should be careful about becoming known as a country that restricts from immigration the comparatively small number of applicants who suffer from mental illness. This is doubly important in

⁴⁷ Ian R. Mackay, 'Medical selection of migrants from the displaced person population of post-war Europe', p. 369.

the case of refugees: a high incidence of mental illness is hardly a surprise in them.⁴⁸

The cost-effective rationale remained, but was now tempered with a recognition of social responsibility:

If a country is able to accommodate hosts of healthy, active migrants, it can absorb a proportion of those mentally less fortunate. And after all, nobody has maintained that people with mental illness are a complete social disaster. In fact, large numbers of them are contributing usefully, even unusually, to society.⁴⁹

Here, perhaps for the first time, was a notion of 'fitness to immigrate' which was not housed in purely economic terms.

CURRENT APPROACHES

FROM 1988 and the release of the Fitzgerald report, restrictive immigration and immigration policy entered another phase.⁵⁰ The original Act of 1901 had given enormous discretionary powers to Commonwealth immigration officers to implement policy and, although the *Migration Act* 1958 saw the removal of the dictation test clause, it still left the implementation of the Act in the hands of migration officers. With regard to health and disability, an arriving immigrant suffering from a 'prescribed disease' (being any 'disease, or a physical or mental disability or defect' listed by the regulations in force at the time), became a prohibited immigrant liable for deportation.⁵¹ Decisions were often perceived as arbitrary, erratic, and unquestionable. From 1989, however, it became far simpler to appeal against Department of Immigration decisions. This was a response both to some of the recommendations of the Fitzgerald

⁴⁸ 'The screening of mentally ill applicants for immigration', *Medical Journal of Australia*, 9 March 1963, p. 362.

⁴⁹ 'The screening of mentally ill applicants for immigration', *MIA*.

⁵⁰ Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies, *Immigration: A Commitment to Australia* (AGPS, Canberra, 1988), 3 vols (otherwise known as the Fitzgerald Report).

⁵¹ *Migration Act* 1958, section 16 (1) (c i), 16 (2).

report, and to the *Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act*, 1977, which was intended to simplify access to review of departmental decisions generally.⁵² In 1990 a Joint Standing Committee on Migration Regulations was set up to examine existing regulations further, with a subcommittee on conditional migrant entry focusing particularly on the operation of the regulations as they related to health and disability.⁵³ The whole field of immigration legislation and practice continues in a state of flux.

From the point of view of the Human Rights Commission, two issues associated with immigration, health and disability, required urgent attention.⁵⁴ The first was the indiscriminate lumping together of the categories of disability and health, which listed disability alongside the prescribed diseases as constituting a threat to public health. This was dealt with in the new regulations introduced in December 1989.⁵⁵ Less satisfactorily resolved, however, was the fact that disability remained a ground for automatic exclusion, despite the terms of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Disabled, which gives precedence to a person's *abilities*. As the Human Rights Commission argued in 1985,

That is not to say that people with physical disabilities or those who are intellectually disadvantaged should be given

⁵² Sean Cooney, *The Transformation of Migration Law* (Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research, AGPS, Canberra, 1995), pp. 14-16.

⁵³ Australia, Joint Standing Committee on Migration Regulations, *Conditional Migrant Entry: the Health Rules* (Canberra, AGPS, 1992).

⁵⁴ See Human Rights Commission, *Human Rights and the Migration Act 1958*, Report No.13 (AGPS, Canberra, 1985).

⁵⁵ Irene Moss, Race Discrimination Commissioner, Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, 'Human rights and Australian immigration law', unpublished paper presented at the Immigration Seminar, Immigration Policies and the Law, NSW Institute of Technology, 12 February 1988, pp. 4-5; Brian Burdekin, 'Human Rights. Address to NCID AGM 1990', *National Council on Intellectual Disability: Interactions*, 5, no.1, 1991, p. 28.

an automatic right to immigrate. Rather, ...disability *per se* should not be an automatic bar to immigration.⁵⁶

To highlight the workings and limitations of present legislation and regulations, I am able to present a contemporary case history. In May 1997, Ms Thi Hue Yen Nguyen's application for a child visa to enter Australia was refused before the Immigration Review Tribunal.⁵⁷ Her original application had been lodged in Bangkok, in May 1993, and was refused 15 months later, in September 1994. A subsequent application for internal review commenced in November 1994 but the refusal was confirmed in October 1995. The final application for review was made in December that year and the decision took a further 18 months. The whole process took four years. Thi Hue Yen Nguyen was a citizen of Vietnam, born in November 1980, and was 12 when she and her twin brother and younger sister applied to join their mother in Australia. (The mother had arrived in Australia as a refugee in November 1992; her father had earlier remarried and lost contact with his family.) On that occasion, in May 1993, her brother and sister had been permitted to join their mother in Australia but the 12 year old girl was not. She was left behind in Vietnam, living with her elderly grandmother, who is now 78 years old.

According to the 1993 report of a doctor at the Mental Health Centre in Ho Chi Minh City, the applicant suffered from what he described as 'mild' mental retardation'. She had had disrupted and inadequate education and, perhaps as a consequence of her family circumstances, was quiet and submissive with underdeveloped social skills. However the doctor assessed her as capable of attending school, of being able to hold a job, as independent in terms of self care, with very good domestic capabilities, exhibiting no harmful behaviour, and 'not likely to need extensive medical care'.

⁵⁶ Human Rights Commission, *Human Rights and the Migration Act 1958*, p.15.

⁵⁷ All references to this case come from 'Immigration Review Tribunal Decisions N95/03091 #Number 9627', *Immigration Review Tribunal Decisions*, at <<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/irt/unrep8781.html>>.

In seeking further evidence, the Tribunal considered the evidence put forward by Professor Susan Hayes, head of the Department of Behavioural Science in Medicine, University of Sydney. Hayes argued very strongly that, if indeed the applicant did suffer from mild intellectual disability (and she was not convinced of this, raising questions about the examination made by the original doctor, its methodology and the accuracy of its conclusions), 'there are many Australians with mild intellectual disability who reside in the community without access, or need for access, to any specialist services'; and further, that '[p]eople with mild mental retardation ...can obtain employment and can live independent in the community'. She concluded that

[t]o continue to make the assumption that people with an intellectual disability are incapable of holding a job and living independently is to ignore the available evidence, and may be discriminating against people in this category.

Nonetheless the young woman's application was refused by Australian immigration authorities. According to her doctor in Vietnam, she did have a mild degree of intellectual disability and that was a condition which *might* require her to have access to special schooling and vocational training, facilities which were classified by the Department of Education, Employment and Training as 'scarce resources'. And as the Tribunal pointed out, it was not sufficient in law to argue that 'there was no real evidence that she *might* impose a cost on the community; rather the case had to be proven that it was *unlikely* that undue cost would result.⁵⁸

In handing down its judgement, however, the Tribunal spelled out quite clearly that it had little if any discretion, and indeed implied that it was unhappy with the conclusion it was forced to reach. Its conclusion is therefore worth citing at length:

The Tribunal realises the hardship on the child and her family in Australia resulting from this decision. The Tribunal accepts that the rights of the child is [sic] a primary consideration and that this child is better off to be united

⁵⁸ Emphasis added.

with her family in Australia. The Tribunal also realises that it is in Australia's interest to be seen as a humane and caring society. However, Parliament has not given the Tribunal unfettered discretion to waive the health criteria. If it had done so, the result may have been different.

According to Sean Cooney, the earlier broadly discretionary system which had characterised immigration policy since 1901 had fostered a process of 'arbitrary and inconsistent decision-making', 'open to political interference' and with decisions often 'not adequately reviewed'. The shift to a more transparent codified system, after 1989, was therefore a desirable one which has received cautious acceptance.⁵⁹ But as the case of Thi Hue Yen Nguyen shows, the absence of discretionary powers means that decisions which even the Tribunal accepts are inhumane are now forced upon decision makers by an inflexible system which permits no exercise of compassion outside the prescribed guidelines. The regulations now in force still require immigrants to be free from diseases or conditions which constitute a public health risk, or from any disease or condition which might require significant care or treatment or community resources in short supply; or which might lead the applicant to become a significant charge on public funds. On that basis, people with a disability, for example, or who have experienced psychiatric problems, face the prospect of automatic exclusion and a long (and usually unsuccessful) battle through the appeals system. Disability, in effect, remains an automatic ground for exclusion from this country.

In one other respect too, we are in danger of coming full circle. In 1901, in restricting immigrants of 'undesirable' race, it was simultaneously possible to keep out various illnesses, conditions and diseases which were seen as more likely to be harboured by peoples of particular ethnicity or national origin. Racial exclusion came first in 1901, but nowadays exclusion on such a basis is illegal. Yet increasingly we are seeing the links resurrected between carriers of certain diseases, and race or ethnicity. Of late we have seen a reemergence of the association

⁵⁹ Cooney, *The Transformation of Migration Law* (1995), p. 110.

between Asian immigrants and the spread of tuberculosis and hepatitis B, an issue given currency this year by Pauline Hanson, amongst others.⁶⁰ The 1992 parliamentary inquiry into health issues has already endorsed the view that applicants from high risk hepatitis B areas should be required to produce a certificate of immunisation or accept vaccination.⁶¹ While the public health issue is real and unavoidable, this is only a small step away from a new form of structural health-based discrimination along national or ethnic lines.

Since 1901, the language of exclusion has changed and immigration restrictions on the basis of race have been removed as social attitudes have shifted. Yet, despite the Disability Discrimination Act, the effect of our present immigration regulations requires the automatic exclusion of people with disabilities, and even of those suffering from health conditions which do not threaten public health. No attention is paid to the positive social consequences of having immigrant people with disabilities or health and psychiatric conditions within the community; no credit given for the family and community support that may be available to such a migrant; no acknowledgment made of the economic value of work performed by people with disabilities in the paid work force. And contrary to the economic rationale for restricting the immigration of people with disabilities, if special education and vocational training are scarce community resources, then the introduction of an immigrant who will require those services may be even more economically advantageous than the introduction of an immigrant with different sorts of needs.

The notion of the 'unfit' immigrant is today still understood in terms of a charge on the state. Such a notion denies the social value of diversity and difference which, given any other criteria, we see as fundamental to Australian multiculturalism.

⁶⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 August 1997. See also, Rod Spencer, 'Immigration and the control of hepatitis B in Australia', *People and Place* 2 (1), 1994, pp. 10-14.

⁶¹ Joint Standing Committee on Migration Regulations, *Conditional Migrant Entry*, p. 58.

It remains to be seen how human rights and disability advocates will respond as the shortcomings of the recent shift in immigration policy and regulations become more apparent.⁶²

⁶². See for example, Arthi Patel, 'Migrant Rights: Time to Assess', *Alternative Law Journal* 21 (2), April 1996, pp. 69-70; Jane Goddard, 'What the Migration Reform Act Really Means', *Law Society Journal*, March 1994.

Jacqueline Templeton

HERE, THERE OR NOWHERE? ITALIAN SOJOURNERS WRITE HOME

FOR THE people of the Valtellina (Lombardy)¹ migration for work was traditional. For centuries, local, seasonal and temporary migrations to other parts of Italy or to nearby European countries, particularly Switzerland and France, were a taken-for-granted of everyday life. The object of these migrations was to earn cash. In this society of small peasant farmers, most had land, but not in sufficient quantity to support them. Large families and partible inheritance were the norm. Cash was necessary to pay debts or to buy more land, and earnings from emigration was virtually the sole means, in this entirely agricultural society, of obtaining it. Married men emigrated to support their families; young men did so to be able to marry and start their own family.

In the last century, the Valtellinese ventured beyond Europe: from the 1850s to Australia, and by this century routes between the Valtellina towns and Australia were well-worn. Their Australian migrations, too, were in intention if not always in outcome, sojourn migrations, undertaken to earn cash to send or take home, rather than for permanent settlement. The emigrants did not, as a rule, know, or even need, English, they did not bring their womenfolk or families, and they did not sell their properties before leaving. Australia had become part of the recognised world of the Valtellinese, but it was known chiefly as a place of labour for young and fit males, most often in the form of backbreaking timber-felling in remote parts, or canecutting in tropical heat, or life-threatening underground mining. The idea was to earn as much as possible in as short a time as possible, before beating a quick return home. They referred to these

¹ See Map, p. 89.



Renewing old ties. Returners from Australia share their news and a drink with friends in Tirano.

emigrations as 'making sacrifices'. I have argued elsewhere that, for this reason, the temporary migrations to Australia were not fundamentally much different from, and merely extensions of, traditional migrations undertaken, time out of mind.²

Yet, so common was Italian sojourn migration to Australia that it is easy to overlook its extraordinary nature. The letters the Valtellina migrants wrote from Australia this century afford insight as do few other sources on the ways these migrants interpreted their own experience of these antipodean sojourns, and permit one to revisit the assumption that the Australian journeys were simply extensions of traditional migrations. Correspondence examined here, written between 1900 and 1960, suggests a quite different order of experience, either from that of their traditional migrations, closer to home, or from migrations undertaken for permanent settlement.³

The original letters are in Italian, the language learned by the writers at primary school where most, by this century, attended to Grade Five. Their mother tongue, the language of everyday life, was one or other version of the Valtellina

² See my "'Italy is whoever gives us bread': migration between Lombardy and Victoria, 1850-1914', in David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Home or Away? Immigrants in Colonial Australia, Visible Immigrants: Three* (The Australian National University, Canberra 1992), pp. 39-63. Patterns of sojourn migration noted in the nineteenth century continued strongly into this century. C.A. Price estimated that in the two decades before World War II, some thirty per cent. of the Italian migrants made trips home, returned home permanently, or migrated to another country (*Southern Europeans in Australia*, Melbourne 1963, pp. 30-2; 100-2). Even after 1945, return migration continued to be very common.

³ Letters discussed here were collected from the region by the writer between 1991 and 1994. My thanks to the donors for permission to publish. Translations are by Geoffrey Hull (Ferrari, Rinaldi and Della Vedova), David Fairservice (Reghenzani) and myself (Armanasco, Caratti, Togni, Pola). All names have been substituted to preserve confidentiality. The translators have not attempted to translate or replicate poor grammar or spelling, and have sought to convey the sense and tone as faithfully as possible, in colloquial English. Space precludes detailed discussion here of related problems. However, a certain loss in translation is inevitable, and is recognised.

dialect, a language in its own right, and very different from standard Italian. Most correspondents, especially before World War II, were translating from their own dialect into Italian. Writing could therefore be a laborious exercise. This in itself raises questions of interpretation. At the same time, much of the value of this correspondence lies in the fact that, in common with the letters discussed by Eric Richards and David Fitzpatrick⁴, it reaches into the ranks of the less literate, and provides unique insight into the concerns of ordinary migrants whose experience is otherwise undocumented, except in official data. How representative were they? In the end, one can claim only that the writers represented themselves, although it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that the sentiments and interests they expressed or reflected were not necessarily confined to those individuals, but were more widely shared by others undergoing similar experiences.

Letters drawn on here, all by migrants who left with the intention of returning, reflect and were governed by, the concerns of sojourners. For all migrants, finding work was important, but for sojourners it was, by definition, central, and a central theme in their letters, and the difference in attitudes to this work between these migrants and the Irish of David Fitzpatrick's study is striking. These were settlers, and, like most emigrants from the British Isles, they sought a more comfortable and satisfying life than was possible at home. They commonly aspired to an independent livelihood, or even a career. Among the expected rewards of emigration for Irish correspondents, Fitzpatrick writes, was 'liberation from physically exhausting labour'. '[H]ard work' was widely regarded as 'an unpleasant and unhealthy pursuit', to be avoided wherever possible.⁵ They sought more satisfying work, work with perhaps greater

⁴ See Eric Richards, 'Voices of British and Irish migrants in nineteenth century Australia' in C.G. Pooley and I.D. Whyte (eds), *Migrants, Emigrants and Immigrants* (London & New York, 1991); David Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation: personal accounts of Irish migration to Australia* (Melbourne University Press, 1995).

⁵ David Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation*, pp. 569-70, 611.

responsibility but which was lighter, and preferably not manual, and which perhaps bestowed a higher status.

Sojourners' letters reflect quite different expectations. With only their physical strength and their powers of endurance to offer, and without a knowledge of the language, Italians expected nothing other than heavy, hazardous and exhausting work. They sought a better life, but not in Australia. Luigi Reghenzani, from a small Valtellina town, Bianzone, left his wife and children in 1907. Enduring periods of unemployment during his 12 years in Australia, he travelled far and wide in search of work, first in Victoria, later in the southwest of Western Australia, timber-cutting, to send home money to keep his family and to buy more land, essential for their longer-term survival. His letters reflect the heavy responsibility for his wife and two children, both young at the beginning of his long sojourn, and dependent on his remittances, and he had frequently to apologise for the meagreness of the amounts he was able to send.

I tell you dear wife that I can't send you money before the middle of August which means that you'll get it about the middle of September I can tell you that Cinto B—is going home and I've given him two pounds to give to you ...⁶

Reghenzani was not seeking an easier life, or more satisfying work, or work of higher status. His letters never mention its nature, its location nor the conditions—these may be surmised only from his addresses—but one may be sure that he neither expected nor found work that was not hazardous, and exhausting. What counted was its availability, its regularity and the pay. When work ran out in Kurrawang (where Valtellina migrants commonly worked in the isolated timber camps that serviced the Kalgoorlie mines), he travelled to Jarrahdale in Western Australia's south west:

I've come here to where Valli is and also the nephews. I've found work but a day's pay is only 8 shillings which seems a

⁶ Luigi Reghenzani, Kurrawang, to his wife and son, Bianzone, 27 July 1913; see also same to same, Jarrahdale, 25 October 1913.

bit too little however I'll see if I'll stay here or not if there aren't any openings up north I'll definitely stay here.⁷

His correspondence documents his continued search for work across the state.

Sojourners thought themselves lucky to get any sort of regular and well-paid work. Guido Ferrari from Tirano emigrated to Ingham, North Queensland, in 1922. Too many sought work in the sugar-growing districts at this time and Guido counted himself fortunate in finding continuous employment in a gang 'stuck out in the bush' on a cousin's farm in Ingham. 'As for work, there's always plenty of that. I can't complain about my luck', he writes. The heat was killing—'the worst in the whole of Australia'—and it was 'the hardest work there is [but] it's better paid than other jobs. It's loading the cane that's the worst part'.⁸ Like the Irish, he was seeking a more comfortable existence, but not here. He urges his brother in Tirano to look out for a good investment back home.

Let me know how things are going. If any good plot of land comes up, do buy it. But not one [a vineyard] that means carrying back-baskets about, because after a while in Australia you lose the knack. Anyway, let me know what the possibilities are.⁹

Since the 1890s the 'woodlines' as they were known, which supplied timber for the mines of Western Australia's Golden Mile had been a mecca for Valtellina migrants, and even after World War II the Valtellinese continued, in a pattern which has changed little, to follow kin and friends for timber-cutting in the isolated bush camps.¹⁰ In 1951, Agostino Armanasco, recently

⁷ Luigi Reghenzani, Jarrahdale, to his wife and son, Bianzone, 25 October 1913.

⁸ Guido Ferrari, Ingham, to his sister-in-law, Tirano, 16 January 1923; 30 April 1924.

⁹ Guido Ferrari, Ingham, to his sister-in-law, Tirano, 30 April 1924.

¹⁰ Most worked in Kurrawang near Kalgoorlie, and were employed by the main timber company for the region, the Lakewood Firewood Company Pty Ltd, formerly the Goldfields Firewood Supply Pty Ltd (for further details, see Lenore Layman, 'Migrant Labour under contract: the first years of post-war migration, 1947-1952', in R. Bosworth and R. Ugolini (eds),

married in Lovero, had one infant and his wife was again pregnant. They had no money for a house, and there was no remunerative work in Lovero. Agostino had reluctantly to leave his young wife for what turned out to be an eight-year stint at Lakewood near Kalgoorlie. He confessed he found the work of timber cutting 'terribly hard'.¹¹ 'I'm always tired from the hard work because the work here is far harder and heavier than in the factories.' But, '[a]s you know you never get anywhere without making great sacrifices'. He blessed his good luck, and reiterated his overwhelming gratitude to an uncle who had found him the job.¹²

Sojourners generally avoided jobs which tied them down.¹³ Yet some Italian sojourners in Australia went to amazing lengths, taking out naturalisation and buying land, not to settle, but as a way of amassing a quick fortune to take home. Filippo Della Vedova from the Baruffini, took out naturalisation early in 1929 on the usual grounds of wanting to stay in Australia. His letters bear witness to another agenda. He wrote home and persuaded his brother Pietro (who had emigrated but returned to Italy),

to come back here for five or six years. That way we can buy a farm together, make sacrifices for a few years, and then go back to Italy...if you want to get on Australia is the only place.¹⁴

War, Internment and Mass Migration: the Italo-Australian experience, 1940-1990, Rome, 1992, p. 181).

¹¹ Agostino Armanasco, Lakewood, to his wife, Lovero, 1 September 1951.

¹² Agostino Armanasco, Lakewood, to his wife, Lovero, 21 October, 16, 17 September 1951.

¹³ Mark Wyman (*Round-trip to America: the immigrants return to Europe, 1880-1930*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1993, p. 49) argues that in America sojourners avoided farming because it didn't fit their goals; Dino Cinel (*The national integration of Italian return migration, 1870-1929*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 112) suggests that in America permanent settlement was usually the intention of those embarking on farming.

¹⁴ Filippo Della Vedova, South Johnstone, 29 January 1931 to his brother Pietro, Baruffini, temporarily returned to Italy.

Filippo subsequently purchased a developed cane farm in Silkwood, North Queensland, for £1 500.¹⁵ Working it together, 'in three or four years...we can make a sizeable fortune', he wrote.¹⁶

Even more adventurously, Antonio Rinaldi from Sondrio, in 1937 selected, alone, a 3 290 acre block 8 miles out of Moura in the Dawson Valley, under the Queensland Government's Prickly Pear Development Scheme. He intended clearing the land of its prickly pear and brigalow scrub for cotton-growing and cattle grazing—hardly an enterprise for a temporary migrant, and to all intents and purposes Rinaldi was a typical pioneer settler. Yet he at no stage appeared to have the slightest intention of staying. In 1938 he wrote: 'Having bought this land I've had lots of expenses, but if things go well in the next four or five years I'll be able to sell and come back to a pretty good living in Italy.'¹⁷ The term of his Australian sojourn was carefully calculated.

These days land is very much in demand and I think that unless I suffer a setback I'll be able to sell in three years. I can't sell before five years of residence on the property... I hope to make a killing in three years' time. Then I can come home and enjoy the quiet life.¹⁸ ... When I come home I'll bring some skins and we'll have some expensive shoes made with them. If all goes well, in 1943 I'll be back with you all. I really can't wait to see my dear loved ones again after so many years away.¹⁹

Few of these correspondents evince much interest in Australia, except as a source of (hopefully) quick returns. They say little of Australia or its inhabitants (except, occasionally, where hostility is concerned), of Australian society, or its institutions.

¹⁵ Filippo Della Vedova, South Johnstone, 12 February 1931.

¹⁶ Filippo Della Vedova, Silkwood, 17 May 1931.

¹⁷ Antonio Rinaldi, Moura, to Giovanni Bianchi, Sondrio, 22 February 1938. Bianchi, Rinaldi's legal proxy, was also a distant relation, and friend.

¹⁸ Antonio Rinaldi, Moura, to Giovanni Bianchi, Sondrio, 16 November 1939.

¹⁹ Antonio Rinaldi, Moura, to Giovanni Bianchi, Sondrio, n.d. [1939].

Their recipients at home had no picture of the Australian context in which the letters were written, and these migrants were rarely equipped to provide it, so they wrote of the amazing, the unusual, especially of the country's size and distances, and photographs sent home regularly show the emigrant and his mates posed, heroically, before lofty sugar cane or giant trees they must fell. The climate is of mild curiosity, as it impinges on their ability to work and on their health, or as it affects crops. This material is far from unproblematic, and problems of interpretation will be addressed fully elsewhere. However, as noted above, the correspondents were not skilled in writing, and one must at least ponder the question of whether, at times, gaps and silences are attributable as much to a lack of writing skills, as to a lack of interest in particular subjects. However, it remains the case that the letters convey little sense of persons endeavouring to find a foothold in this society, of engaging socially, of coming to terms, and adapting to another culture.

Rather, these letters reflect their preoccupation with their families, and their financial or property interests which those families are managing, and with friends and neighbours. Luigi Reghenzani's complaints of not being kept properly informed on these matters are typical:

I want to know how much there still is in the bank and what the countryside looks like and tell my son Antonio to write proper letters and to let me know all the family news as you don't tell me enough and even if you don't get a letter from me write all the same saying what you need and what's happening.²⁰

He is preoccupied with his family, and whether they were managing, or managing competently. Hence detailed instructions—even after seven years in Australia:

you told me that as regards the wine perhaps it doesn't go off and in this it is better as compared with the bought wine but you'll see that in August it will go off so if you my dear wife don't need it you are to sell it at the going price even if this means losing money but make sure you always have some wine

²⁰ Luigi Reghenzani, Jarrahdale, to his wife, 22 June 1914.

in the cellar because if you have to decide whether to buy something you'll need it and if you haven't finished paying for it then you'll have to finish as for the land I'm glad to hear that it's looking good.²¹

In similar vein, Pietro Della Vedova, some four years after his return to join his brother, Filippo, on their Silkwood (Queensland) farm, worries about how well their mother and brother are managing their property, savings and financial affairs, and collecting rents and debts for them. He writes nothing about Australia. His letters are little more than detailed directions, at times an irritable harangue:

Now about that matter you mentioned. I did tell you to drop it but you've brought it up again. Really I think you should still leave things as they are, and when I return I'll sort them out ... As for Emilio T—, he must pay without fail the annual interest for me. Please have the money deposited into my account at the Piccolo Credito Valtellinese Bank. All the other annual interest payments should be deposited without fail as well...remember you have our things and money for safekeeping ...²²

As the years passed Pietro went on trying to control the family at home, and meddling in the *minutiae* of their management of the vineyards:

Look after the vines and work them well and don't let them take root near the grafted parts and don't let them grow too long. Also whatever you do, don't let them grow over each other, because otherwise you'll ruin them all in a few years... And you should plant some new vines...in the area between the stone walls, too: some at the bottom, some at the top, and a row down the middle. If you do this properly, it will yield good grapes... As for manure, you can make it yourself, get someone else to prepare it, or just buy a bit.²³

²¹ Luigi Reghenzani, Kurrawang, to his wife and son, 27 July 1913.

²² Pietro Della Vedova, Silkwood, to his mother and brother, Baruffini, 21 January 1935.

²³ Pietro Della Vedova to his brother, Giuseppe, n.d. [1938].

Health was a recurring theme. Earning money depended on a capacity to continue performing backbreaking labour, and sojourners were particularly at risk. The demands of families at home, and the desire for as speedy a return as possible, made it tempting to work too hard, and easy to neglect health. An old hand in the Lakewood timber camp warned of the hazards:

Those who work too hard and don't eat enough because they are so bent on saving they end up in hospital or the cemetery ...you can't save on the food bill, you [have to] live like lords, because if you don't eat you end up in the Cemetery, the work is very hard. A lot can't resist, they want to economise on the food and they end up in hospital.²⁴

Guido Ferrari's health would be seriously undermined by overwork in Ingham's heat.²⁵ 'You need staying power and health here in Australia', he confessed, '...the hard work really ages you'.²⁶ His letters report other deprivations: 'I do shifts, and by being thrifty can save bit of money, especially with continuous work. Since I got here [three months earlier] I haven't been into town and won't go until Christmas.'²⁷ Christmas was then over four months off, and in the event he spent it instead 'in Bortolo's company, and with Pietro who's also here', reporting in the new year:

I would have liked to have gone into town to spend the holidays there, but you know, out there are lots of dangers and it's best to stay away from the towns.²⁸

Was he referring to the temptations to spend money or to the unpleasantness suffered by Italians in the Ingham district at this time? Either way, the comment draws attention to the social isolation of these migrants.

²⁴ Simone Caratti, Lakewood, to his niece, Lovero, 18 April 1950.

²⁵ Guido Ferrari, Adelaide, Paringa Line, to his sister-in-law, Tirano, 22 June 1925.

²⁶ Guido Ferrari, Ingham, to his sister-in-law, 30 April 1924.

²⁷ Guido Ferrari, Ingham, to his brother, 14 April 1922.

²⁸ Guido Ferrari, Ingham, to his sister-in-law, 16 January 1923.

The presence of *paesani*²⁹ tempered the isolation and sense of alienation. But they were often the sole source of comfort in Australia, and mostly this came down, at best, to small and shifting groups of equally lonely itinerants without women, isolated together in remote timber camps or the canefields. Agostino Armanasco knew *paesani* in Lakewood with whom he could occasionally 'spend a few hours reminiscing about Lovero and telling a few yarns'.³⁰ His letters, however, were written, sitting in his tent, after solitary evening meals. Simone Caratti described their 'dog's life' there: 'forever in the bush deprived of every comfort and without any entertainment'.³¹

You stay working in the bush...every 3 and sometimes 5 months you move camp, you take up all your camping gear and like gypsies we settle ourselves in another place and so on, with torn trousers, shirt in rags, a hat like a scarecrow, ours is a quiet life ...³²

Theirs was not just 'a quiet life', but a quite unnatural one, and one more reminiscent of that of the Chinese in Australia, than of Gypsies. They were without women, socially isolated because they had no language for communication beyond the superficial, or because, working in unfamiliar and remote rural places, they were physically separated from the general population. Work teams in timber camps, were usually organised along ethnic lines—Australians (or British migrants), 'Slavs' or Italians—as were the cane gangs in Queensland. Even communication with their own *paesani* could be more limited or spasmodic than that enjoyed in well-organised Chinese rural communities. As with the Chinese, physical separation from other Australians did not guarantee immunity from hostility and prejudice. Trade unions did not usually provide avenues for communication. Union hostility to the strong Italian presence in the timber industry

²⁹ Persons from the same *paese* (town or village).

³⁰ Agostino Armanasco, Lakewood, to his wife, 21 October 1951; see also Agostino Armanasco, Lakewood, to his wife, 1 September 1951.

³¹ Simone Caratti, Lakewood, to his niece, 20 November 1949.

³² Simone Caratti, Lakewood, to his niece, 18 April 1950.

and the sugar industry provoked royal commissions in Western Australia (1901-2; 1904) and Queensland (1925).

Deprivations were endured because a speedy return was assumed. But circumstances frequently conspired against early repatriation. Returns were often postponed repeatedly, a chief reason being the knowledge that they would only be going back to the conditions which forced them to leave in the first place. They would never find work, or at least work of equivalent or sufficient remuneration, so they were under pressure to earn substantial sums to make their emigration worthwhile, and periods of unemployment or ill health or injury could cut into savings. Return without a decent nest egg meant loss of face, and was pointless. As Antonio, son of Luigi Reghenzani, put it, after fourteen years in Australia:

I enclose a draf [sic] for four pound again you'll say that it's not much but if I too come home then there will no longer be anyone here to send some money now and then, I also hear about those who went home, with the hope of having a good life there but instead they're talking about coming back to Australia... It's true that if I could come I'd come tomorrow... because I'm completely on my own without anyone to give me comfort.³³

They all knew *paesani* who had gone home and sent back bad reports of prospects, and of the disenchanted who had re-emigrated. Filippo Della Vedova wrote in 1931 of friends who had had to re-emigrate, having found that things in Italy were 'terrible':

I hear that there are serious problems back home...everyone wants to leave. Cantoni is back... In Italy people are going hungry, while here there are possibilities.³⁴

After two years, Guido Ferrari, earning well, hoped for a quick return: 'Just three or four more years the way it's gone so far and I'll be able to come home...'.³⁵ But he wondered what he

³³ Antonio Reghenzani, Vasse, to his father, Bianzone, 14 November 1938.

³⁴ Filippo Della Vedova, South Johnstone, to his brother Pietro, 12 February 31; 29 January 1931.

³⁵ Guido Ferrari, Ingham, to his sister-in-law, 30 April 1924.



Italy 1987. Two brothers and their mother welcome news from another brother, in Australia since 1956. Courtesy Loretta Baldassar.

could do at home. 'We'll see how things are in Italy and whether I can stay there. I might have to come back here.'³⁶ He wanted to marry and knew by then that one of their friends had returned, and that his own brother was about to, because they had not taken home enough the first time to achieve their aspirations.³⁷ Success in earning was as much an inducement to stay as was failure, inflating ambitions. He later wrote: 'I wanted to come home this year but now things are going so well I want to put it off till a bit later'. So he stayed on.

Many stayed indefinitely but without making any actual decision to settle, or commitment, always contemplating return, and thus continuing to behave, think and live as sojourners. Commitments to landownership inevitably generated very long stays. Rinaldi's return was repeatedly postponed. The war interrupted any hope of an early return. In 1946 he declares that '[i]t's still my intention to come home but that won't be for a couple of years as I have to wait for things to return to normal.'³⁸ He is lonely and homesick. His aspiration, now a refrain in almost every letter, was 'to return to Italy and open a little shop'.³⁹ But he was unable to sell his land in Moura until 1952, and even then he did not return. Instead he bought a house in Rockhampton. In 1959, he nevertheless wrote that: 'I still intend to return to Italy once I have tied up my affairs'.⁴⁰

In sojourners' correspondence their loneliness, as the years dragged on, is palpable. The letters carry little suggestion of meaningful relationships forged with Australians. There were few opportunities. Guido Ferrari's efforts to make light of the loneliness, which he found increasingly unbearable, were transparent: 'Australia is good, but you need forbearance. Here I have to do women's work, tidy up and cook and wash and eat dry bread ...'.⁴¹ He begs for newspapers: 'a good pastime for me out

³⁶ Guido Ferrari, Ingham, to his sister-in-law, 8 October 1924.

³⁷ C. Bassi, Kurrawang, to Luigi Ferrari, Tirano, 24 October 1924.

³⁸ Antonio Rinaldi, Moura, to Giovanni Bianchi, 15 January 1946.

³⁹ Antonio Rinaldi, Moura, to Giovanni Bianchi, 2 April 1946.

⁴⁰ Antonio Rinaldi, Rockhampton, to Marino Bianchi, 17 June 1959.

⁴¹ Guido Ferrari, Adelaide, to his sister-in-law, 16 September 1925.

here in the bush where you see nothing but birds'.⁴² He wishes his brother 'Luigi were here too so we could work together'.⁴³ 'I'm happy about Luigi's departure,' he writes when he hears his brother intends re-emigrating, 'and I'd be pleased if he came up here as we'd be good company for each other... [L]ife isn't bad but loneliness and lack of company are a problem.'⁴⁴

One might suppose that farming should have provided avenues for communication with others. But Antonio Rinaldi's relations with his neighbours were at best tenuous, at worst hostile, and he declared, after battling alone on his vast tract of prickly pear and brigalow for ten years:

I've had enough of all this hard slog so far away from the nearest town, making two trips a week to buy food, washing everything by myself and after working on such a large farm having to walk long distances to do jobs.⁴⁵

Rinaldi's bi-weekly trips on his bicycle eight miles through thick bush to the General Store in Moura brought what was for him rare human contact in these years. Reviled by his Australian neighbours during the war, he regularly took flowers to the store manager's wife in what was surely a desperate attempt at friendship.

Agostino Armanasco coped with loneliness by evoking his wife's image and that of his infant son. Her letters helped him sustain an illusion that they were really all still together, to imagine he was still sharing their family life:

I think of [Bernardo], and see him, in every moment of the day just as if I were with you...trying to forget how far away I am ...and that at the end of the day and after my hard work I can't have before me everything that made me happy, listening to him, seeing him, playing with him. And instead for now I have to content myself with thinking of him and

⁴² Guido Ferrari, Ingham, to his sister-in-law, 16 January 1923.

⁴³ Guido Ferrari, Ingham, to his sister-in-law, 30 April 1924.

⁴⁴ Guido Ferrari, Ingham, to his sister-in-law, 8 October 1924.

⁴⁵ Antonio Rinaldi, Moura, to Giovanni Bianchi, 2 April 1946.

imagine he's in front of me happy and mischievous, just how he was, and I escape into my thoughts and am happy.⁴⁶

Not all reported truthfully, one suspects, on how they found solace. Frank confessions were more likely to bring disapproval than understanding and sympathy, from family at home. Giacomo Togni seemed not to mind his solitude too much, perhaps because he was doing well as a prospector near Southern Cross (Western Australia). He countered his sister's evident disapproval of his way of life with unusual honesty and a happy-go-lucky lack of shame:

You say you are displeased to hear that I waste my money on beer and amusements but what do you expect I can't find myself the right girl so it's better to enjoy yourself while you are young...and last Friday was my birthday and...my hand is still shaking because of all the booze I drunk myself blind on for seven days partly as a consolation for maybe having found a bit of land which might even hold my fortune and partly for [my] 25th birthday ...things are going well hoping to get more [gold] out the next time I keep on digging galleries and holes in search of the yellow always cheerful nobody to disturb me I'm going alright.⁴⁷

Sojourners often felt that those at home did not appreciate the sacrifices they were making. Demanding families could exacerbate the pain of separation, and the pressures. Letters, while of comfort, could increase the sense that the family did not fully appreciate how hard it was for the emigrant, as well as his sense of frustration and failure. Luigi Reghenzani wrote, after 8 years in the bush:

I got the letter from our Rosetta [his daughter] in which she tells me that you're all well this was a great comfort for me and the rest of the letter was a great torment as she told me to come home so we can all be poor together things seem to be very bad but I don't believe you're suffering from lack of food and drink and as for having to work too hard or being a bit short of money that I can believe a bit and because of the war

⁴⁶ Agostino Armanasco, Lakewood, to his wife, 1 September 1951.

⁴⁷ Giacomo Togni, Marvel Loch, to his sister, Tirano, 11 September 1936.

and it's the same here in Australia anyway the war will end ... I'm sending you 10 lire because the job has come to a stop and I can't do without everything.⁴⁸

A quarter of a century later, Luigi's son, Antonio, would write to his father in similar vein when Luigi complained of being left alone by his son's (then) sixteen-year-absence in Australia: 'You tell me that you're alone, but haven't you got Rosetta, I'm the one really alone, far from all affection.'⁴⁹

Those at home could find it difficult to understand why they were absent so long, and their very success in sending money home was easily read at home as 'easy money'. Guido Ferrari, toiling in the canefields, was infuriated by a brother's failure to understand the personal cost: 'Let him come and try it out in Australia, where he seems to think we just rake in the pounds.'⁵⁰

Letters reflect much frustration. The sojourner's heavy responsibilities went with a lack of control over affairs at home. Sojourners were dependent on family members at home to manage their property and financial affairs, including their remittances. Emigrants might and did continue to meddle, direct, instruct, or bully—but they had no direct control, and long absences diminished their ability to exert influence, as the emigrant became an increasingly shadowy and, except for their remittances, irrelevant, element in the lives of those at home. In these families people built their lives round each other or round a key member. Emigration of an elder son or head of the family meant those at home had to adjust, to re-assign roles. Fear that the waters were closing over them is a constant one in letters. The arrangements for temporary migrations depended ultimately on trust. Long absences increased the likelihood of mistrust, especially where there was sibling rivalry, or where younger siblings or the emigrants' own children, grown to adulthood during the emigrant's absence, and perhaps scarcely knowing him, inherited the role of management from wives or ageing parents, or at least succeeded to a position of influence in the

⁴⁸ Luigi Reghenzani, Bullfinch, to his wife, 8 April 1913.

⁴⁹ Antonio Reghenzani, Vasse, to his father, 5 April 1940.

⁵⁰ Guido Ferrari, Ingham, to his sister-in-law, 16 January 1923.

family. Some correspondence reflects suspicion and distrust that those at home left to manage their affairs were exploiting their efforts to their own advantage and profit.

Luigi Pola from Bianzone spent many years in mining and timber work in 'this accursed land', round the turn of the century, sending generous remittances for his father's maintenance and payment of debts and for investment in land on his own behalf. But his letters are suffused with bitterness and frustration at his father's repeated failure to follow his wishes and his management, or mismanagement, of his affairs. He suspects (whether rightly or wrongly is beside the point) that his brother has been attempting to turn his father against him in order to deprive him of his share of his inheritance, on the grounds that he sent home little from Australia. In a lengthy and acrimonious correspondence Luigi repeatedly berates his father for stealing from him the fruits of his sweat and toil in Australia to enrich his brother and sister at home. 'I've been the one to keep the wolf from the door, and now this is how you repay me', he writes.⁵¹

There were many costs. Most, like Guido Ferrari, were, at least at the start of their migration, young men in their prime, but compelled to put their lives on hold, and as the years wore on, and returns postponed, long-stayers were conscious of missed opportunities at home, especially in the marriage stakes, and that their youth was being consumed. Guido had been sending home his savings to be invested in land to enable him to marry. He heard rumours, later confirmed, that the girl he had hoped would wait for him had married a rival. He confided to his sister-in-law:

Now the terrible storm of a loving but broken heart is starting to pass away but here the sacrifice you make is greater than people think in our country, especially for a young fellow in his prime. I'm still working and save a bit, but I'm tired.⁵²

The longer they stayed the more difficult going home could become. Long absences bred a fear of return, a questioning of

⁵¹ Luigi Pola, Perth, to his father, Bianzone, n.d. [c.1904].

⁵² Guido Ferrari, Adelaide, to his sister-in-law, 12 August 1926.

whether there was anything to return to, whether they would just find themselves outsiders, 'on the shelf'. Martino Reghenzani had grown tired of his marginal existence, of the long years of bachelorhood, in a boarding house in Busselton (Western Australia). Yet he had stayed too long for return to be easy, and, now nearing forty, wondered if he had missed the boat altogether. He wrote hopefully to a cousin, who would scarcely have remembered him as she was 'still a little girl when I left Bianzone. Now you're grown up and in the flower of youth when everything is roses and flowers and all thoughts are of love'. An embarrassed and laborious effort at testing her feelings, betrays his diffidence and his ambivalence, about returning:

I think that I'll perhaps come home in May next year you would say that I'm not coming for another five years. I no longer care much even about coming home soon because there are no girls waiting for me the men of my age are all married and the women of your age have no time for an old man who can't keep peace in a house any more... I'd like to keep in touch with you not with any intentions just out of friendship.

When I come home and if you're not married I'll buy sweets. [sic] I'd like to be in Bianzone for a fortnight or a month at most because I'd soon get tired but just to wander about and see if there are still some of my old friends but I think that everything will have changed completely.⁵³

His cousin, Antonio Reghenzani, after 14 years in Australia, was desperately lonely and bitterly regretting the loss of his youth, and his life chances:

as for the photograph that I sent you, you have to remember that when I left you, I was 21, and now I'm almost 36, I tell you that I haven't spent my time strolling along the avenues or enjoying my youthful years, as so many do, although it would have been better if I had.⁵⁴

Two years later, and no further advanced in economic success or personal well-being, he wrote:

⁵³ Martino Reghenzani, Busselton, to his cousin, Bianzone, 22 August 192[5?].

⁵⁴ Antonio Reghenzani, Vasse, to his father, 14 November 1938.

I tell you dear father that if I had known that I was to have such a miserable life it would almost have been better if I had never come to Australia. Things are fine here for those who have only themselves to think of but if you have your mind in two places as I have had, it's a lonely life, going without all pleasures, thinking that one day you'll find happiness, it seems to me that that day is becoming more and more distant...but there's nothing for it but courage and hope and keeping on going.⁵⁵

Minds of sojourners were, by definition, in two places. Yet it would be wrong to suppose that the sense of isolation and alienation, even of 'exile' which pervades their letters, was necessarily due simply to a desperate longing to return 'home' to Italy. Most men with wives and families were centred emotionally in Italy. Their returns, and the effects of their migrations on family relationships, I explore elsewhere. But young single men were not necessarily yearning desperately to return, whatever they might write to families applying pressure, by various means, for them to do so. They did not necessarily mind Australia, and often quickly saw that prospects were better than those at home. They might indeed welcome the chance to escape and to forge a new life in Australia. Memories of hunger, debt and misery at home were sometimes deeply etched.

But while some degree of comfort was achievable in Australia, as Fitzpatrick observes, 'well-being was not so easily achieved. Without the human companionship provided by networks of relatives and friends, the emigrant could not become a settler.' Letters of Irish emigrants illuminate the search for companions.⁵⁶ If the letters of Italian long-stayers often suggest that their writers are stuck, mentally and emotionally, 'at home', it was because, even wanting to stay, they might have few ways of finding stable companionship, or a marriage partner, of becoming a part of this society, and finding a new centre. Sojourners were ill-equipped for successful settlement.

⁵⁵ Antonio Reghenzani, Vasse, to his father, 5 April 1940.

⁵⁶ Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation*, p. 589.

Some managed it. Filippo Della Vedova intended to stay only a few years. But when he married in 1935 he did not even bother informing his family, until they wrote enquiring specifically, and even then he left it to his brother Pietro. 'You ask whether Filippo has married. Yes, he has. He married an Italian girl'. The wife was Australian-born—'better than the ones at home'.⁵⁷ Filippo's ties with home were cut, it would appear, with little ceremony. The brothers were very successful farmers, but the '3 or 4 years' of 'making sacrifices' to win their fortune, had stretched to a lifetime of toil. Pietro never married and long outlived Filippo. He made no further trips home. After his brother's death in 1947 he sold their farm and spent several years cutting cane on other farms, and leading a solitary existence, with few friends and few pleasures, rarely going into town and then never for the pub. Work filled his days. In the 1950s he retired to a Sydney boarding house in Surry Hills. His brother, Giuseppe (now alone in the Baruffini) pressed him to return to Italy. But Pietro (now Peter⁵⁸) no longer belongs there:

I don't think I'll be coming home now. There doesn't seem to be much point. I wouldn't be of much help and I'd find things hard there. Here at least I'm coping.⁵⁹

Pietro seemed to have stayed more or less by default: less because Australia was home than because Italy was not.

When Antonio Reghenzani wrote: 'If I could come [home] I'd come tomorrow, because I'm completely on my own without anyone to give me comfort', it was not so much that he longed to go back.⁶⁰ He had already decided that returns—so often followed by re-emigrations—served only 'to keep the shipping companies in business.'⁶¹ He desperately wanted to make Australia his home, but felt handicapped by his lack of English

⁵⁷ Pietro Della Vedova, Silkwood, to his mother and brother [Giuseppe], 21 January 1935.

⁵⁸ Listed on electoral roll as Peter, 1955–76.

⁵⁹ Pietro Della Vedova, Surry Hills, Sydney, to his brother Giuseppe, n.d. [1954/5].

⁶⁰ Antonio Reghenzani, Vasse, to his father, 14 November 1938.

⁶¹ Antonio Reghenzani, Capel, 4 May 1928.

and of education. He battled on alone as a struggling cocky farmer. Not successful in achieving his life goals and in establishing a family, his emotional centre seems to have remained in Italy. His centre is there, because it is not here. That centre would only shift for him after a trip home in 1960 when he returned with a wife. We know less of his cousin, Martino, who died, unmarried, in Busselton in 1958, aged 72.

Guido Ferrari's eagerness to return to his loved ones turned to a sentimental nostalgia for place after his sweetheart rejected him. He thanks his sister-in-law

for the photo you sent me, and which enabled me to see again our old village which is so dear to me, and the most beautiful place on earth as far as I'm concerned.⁶²

He did not mind Australia. Only the loneliness was what he had to overcome. He took out naturalisation and evidently thought of staying. But, working in turn at cane-cutting, sleeper-cutting, tall timber cutting, he continued living and working as a sojourner. When a crippling work accident brought him close to death, his greatest fear was of dying among strangers:

I believe that this time my life will end in Australia... Soon I will not belong to anyone, and if I don't have the luck to survive, the state will take care of my burial...all I can do is weep because I don't even have the consolation of seeing by my bed of pain some member of my family who could comfort me a little. Always strange faces who look after me, but with little enthusiasm and no affection.⁶³

Guido recovered and returned to Tirano.

Antonio Rinaldi for a brief period seemed to have found his centre in Australia. In 1960, he wrote what appears to be his last letter home, joyfully, from Stanthorpe. His proxy, Giovanni Bianchi, his only remaining tie in Italy, had died, and Rinaldi wrote to his son:

Here the winter climate is very different from where I lived before, but in time I'll get used to it. I have many friends here who knew me years back. My wife and I are very happy and

⁶² Guido Ferrari, Adelaide, to his sister-in-law, 12 August 1926.

⁶³ Guido Ferrari, Perth, to Luigi, 8 January 1930.

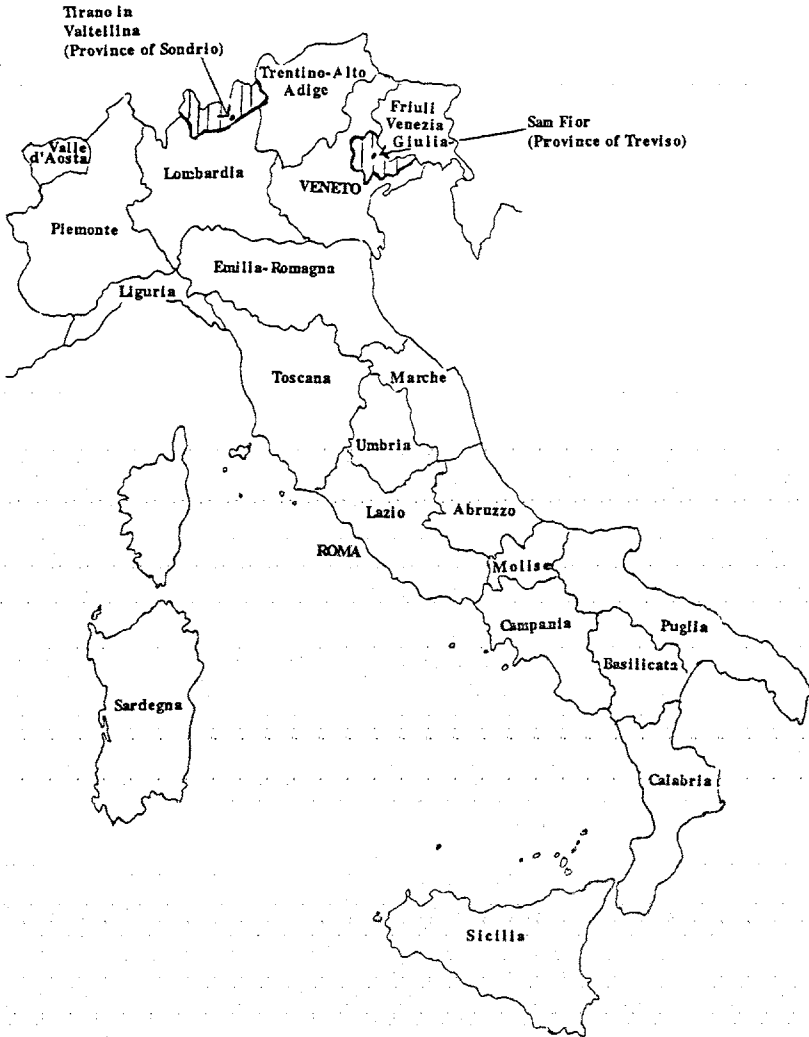
so we will spend the few years we have left here in Stanthorpe.⁶⁴

Home, at last? He has substantial savings, and has been reunited with his wife, estranged many decades earlier, and is among friends. But his newly reconciled wife died shortly after, leaving him without ties here or there. Rinaldi returned to Rockhampton, where he lived as a hermit virtually till his death, in 1984.

These long-stayers were often economically very successful. Well-being was more elusive. At best, like Peter Della Vedova, they found a *modus vivendi*: 'here at least I can cope'. Some sojourners, one suspects, barely succeeded even in that.

⁶⁴ Antonio Rinaldi, Stanthorpe, to Giovanni Bianchi, 10 September 1960.

THE REGIONS OF ITALY



Origins of the Italian migrants discussed in this book

Barry York

OFFICIAL STATISTICS IN IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC HISTORY

HISTORIANS of Australian immigration and ethnic groups have an under-utilised resource in the form of official statistical data. This paper draws attention to two such sources: the Commonwealth and the colonial censuses, and the annual returns on immigration that had to be tabled in the Australian Parliament under section 17 of the Commonwealth Immigration Act.

There are, of course, limitations to raw data. The annual returns on immigration could never tell me why people emigrated, why they chose Australia over other destinations, or why they chose particular parts of Australia. Similarly, census data cannot tell me why people chose to settle in particular places—but it can reveal authoritatively the patterns of settlement of particular groups.

What is actually available in the form of census data, both colonial and Commonwealth, and Immigration data?

CENSUS DATA: COLONIAL AND COMMONWEALTH

THE 1828 census, the first official census of New South Wales, is useful to historians because it provided information on the ship and date of arrival of settlers as well as their conditions of servitude. Regular censuses were taken in the Australasian colonies; they were based on the census tradition of the United Kingdom, which officially commenced in 1801.

In 1881, for the first time, an attempt was made to co-ordinate the Australasian colonial censuses and to adhere to a common census date with a view to standardising information. This was planned as part of the first census of the British Empire. Up to

1881, 36 separate Australasian colonial censuses had been held. Tasmania's first was in 1841, followed by South Australia (1844), Western Australia (1848), Victoria (1854) and Queensland (1861). In 1891 and 1901, co-ordinated inter-colonial censuses were again taken. These three censuses—1881, 1891 and 1901—were an important step in the march toward Australian federation and nationhood. Thus, there were effective 'national' censuses (with the exception of Queensland in 1886) in Australia from 1881 up to Federation in 1901. The first Commonwealth census took place in 1911.

These censuses are valuable in reflecting notions of 'race' in the colonies. Generally speaking, the colonial and inter-colonial censuses did not classify the entire population according to 'race'. Rather, certain groups only were singled out and classified separately according to their 'race' — a reflection of colonial anxieties. Governments of the day were preoccupied with particular groups: those most visible within colonial societies, such as the Chinese and the Aborigines. Fear of 'racial contamination' played a big part in the development of census gathering in the colonies from the middle of the nineteenth century and fear of undermining of 'White Australia' played a large part for most of the twentieth century. For this reason, the censuses of the Colony of Victoria are an excellent source for the numbers of Chinese on the goldfields. New South Wales censuses included birthplace from 1846. Prior to 1846, religion was already a category; it has provided a good, and in fact, the only statistical, record of Jewish settlement since 1828.

The Commonwealth censuses took place in 1911, 1921, 1933, 1947, 1954, 1961, and every five years thereafter, and have always used birthplace as a category. The 1991 census used 232 birthplace categories in all. Of course, birthplace does not always indicate parentage or ethnicity. Race was the major concern of 'White Australia' for most of this century and additional data on non-Europeans was collected until 1966.

Racial classifications were based on 'full-blood' and 'half-caste' categories and included some ludicrous groupings such as

'Hindus', 'Asiatic Jews' and 'Asiatic Turks'. The 1911 census defined 'Hindu' as 'all native races of India'.¹

In 1996, the Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies (CIMS) published in a single volume the data on 'race' selected from Commonwealth censuses held between 1911 and 1966. This data counts men and women, by race, in Australia and the States/Territories, but the many cross-classifications of the original censuses were not included. The terminology used in the CIMS volume remained loyal to the original censuses. Thus, classifications that would not be used today—such as 'Negroes' and 'Half-caste'—were retained. The unselfconscious usage of such language by the Commonwealth Statistician is indicative of a way of seeing the world in an era when Australia was obsessed with the purity of 'White Australia'.

The various Commonwealth Statisticians found race problematic in terms of census-collecting. The use of the concept was based on geography and nationality. This approach classified people by their 'commonly recognised' groupings; thus, an 'Afghan' was a member of the main ethnic group normally found in Afghanistan. Such an approach reflected the basic objective of keeping check of groups whose appearance and culture were at odds with the prevailing notion of a 'White Australia'. As with the Commonwealth of Australia Immigration (Restriction) Act of 1901, which had as its main rationale the exclusion from permanent settlement of non-white peoples, the Census and Statistics Act of 1905 made no mention of race. Commonwealth Statistician G. H. Knibbs justified the great detailed interest taken in race in the first Commonwealth census (1911) on the ground that it was an issue of special interest to the Australian people.² Such was the 1911 census's attention to detail that one Tibetan male was tabulated, along with a Burmese male, two Mexican males, a Bermudan male, two Armenian males and one Armenian female. Reporting on the 1933 Census, Commonwealth Statistician Ronald Wilson admitted

¹ Knibbs, G.H., *Statistician's Report: Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 1911, p. 235.

² Knibbs, *Statistician's Report*, 1911, p. 222.

that the data on race was, at best, only a 'rough indicator' of ethnicity but justified the inclusion of a question on racial origin in terms of its value in the administration of government policies and 'other practical purposes'.³ While Wilson was right to point to the very limited usefulness of the race data to the 'anthropologist or ethnologist', the data today is a valuable source for the historian.

The first Commonwealth census in 1911 was remarkable for its systematic and exhaustive approach. Race was a central feature of the 1911 census and its 114 tabulations according to 'race' remain an excellent primary source for historians. 'Non-European Races' were classified and cross-classified by: sex, numerical strength in States/Territories, age, nationality, length of residence, education, conjugal condition, birthplace and occupation. Tabulations on occupational status by race reveal what the particular groups did for a living, and how they contributed to the industrial, commercial, and economic life of early twentieth century Australia. We find, for example, that in 1911 there were 33,344 male breadwinners in Australia who were non-European. The largest group—roughly one-third—were in agricultural pursuits, mainly market-gardening. The next main bread-winning occupation for non-European men was commerce, with 5,330 men involved mainly as storekeepers, shop assistants and hawkers. Next came fisheries, with 3,720 men, mainly pearlers, and the manufacturing industry, which involved 3,701, mainly in furniture manufacture. Domestic service accounted for 2,976 non-European men, many of whom were laundrymen, and the maritime industry accounted for another 2,717. About 3,000 were involved in mining, mainly gold and tin mining, and in pastoral pursuits.

The above data can be further broken down into the specific 'race' categories of the time. For example, 21,140 Chinese men were breadwinners in Australia in 1911. Of the 10,900 non-European men involved in agricultural pursuits, 7,315 were Chinese market-gardeners. Market-gardening was their main

³ Wilson, Ronald, *Statistician's Report: Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 1933, p. 117.

occupation; it was followed by furniture manufacturing, in which 1,926 Chinese were employed. From an ethno-historical perspective, we learn that more than half of the 3,257 'full-blood' Japanese male breadwinners were pearl fishers, and nearly half of the 3,127 Hindu male breadwinners were in the maritime industry, as seamen, stokers, stewards or ship servants. A high proportion were also merchants and dealers, of whom 554 were hawkers. Syrians also tended toward hawking, with more than half of the 894 male breadwinners in 'merchant' occupations; 189 specifically made and/or sold textile fabrics. Researchers with an interest in 'Pacific Islanders' can make good use of the 1911 census, which had a Polynesian category. Of 1,468 Polynesian male bread-winners, 837 were in agriculture, 410 being farmers and farm hands and 244 sugar planters. These figures can be further broken down by State/Territory divisions, thanks to the 1911 census. Occupational data on non-European female breadwinners was also tabulated.

The censuses of 1921, 1933 and 1947 are also excellent sources, not least for their tabulations of race by Local Government Areas within States and Territories. The spatial distribution of particular groups can thus be accurately measured. These censuses also provided classifications of the various 'races' by urban and rural divisions, and by age and occupation. The 1933 census looked at race in conjunction with period of residence, with blindness and deaf mutism, and with income. The 1947 census also tabulated race by period of residence and by birthplace, as did the 1954 and 1961 censuses. All census tabulations had separate data for men and women and for distribution by urban and rural divisions. Up to 1961, tabulations were divided into 'Half-caste' and 'Full-blood' categories.⁴ In 1961, the census used 'European/Other' and 'Non-European' instead of 'Half-caste' and 'Full-blood' categories. The Commonwealth Statistician defined 'European/Other' as: 'Persons with European blood to the extent of one-half and blood of a non-European race to the extent of one-half'. In 1966, the 'European/Other' category was

⁴ For full lists of classifications and cross-classifications, researchers should consult the tables of contents at the start of the relevant part of each census volume.

submerged into the 'Non-European' category and a 'Non-European' became any person 'of more than 50 percent of the race specified, or of 50 percent of the race specified and 50 percent European'.

The Reports of various Commonwealth Statisticians confirm how, more than anything else, 'race' was a social construct. The process of classifying human beings into groups on the basis of race presupposes that there is a particular group doing the naming and identifying. This was not an objective process, and the changing definitions and classifications reflect the changing preconceptions and assumptions of the different races. In the annual immigration returns, for instance, immigration authorities had a rather fluid approach to the categorisation of 'Asiatics' and 'Other Coloured Races'.

Between 1901 and 1946 the following were listed as 'Asiatics': Afghans, Armenians, Assyrians, Arabs, Chaldeans, Chinese, Cingalese, Eurasian, Filipinos, Hindoos, Japanese, Javanese (who, after 1943, were listed as 'Indonesians, including Javanese'), Kurds, Malays, Syrians, Eurasians, Maoris, Mauritians, Natives of India & Ceylon (who were listed as 'Hindoos' and 'Cingalese' prior to 1925), Palestinians, Syrians and Timorese. The Mauritians posed a problem for the official counters and appeared as 'Asiatic' until 1920 when they joined 'Other Coloured Races'. The 'Other Coloured Races' category was used between 1905 and 1929. Previously, it was simply 'Other Races' and, from 1930, became 'Other Non-European Races'.⁵ The following appeared under the 'Other' categories: 'American Negroes' (who, prior to 1931, were listed under 'Americans'), Dutch Eurasians, Egyptians, Koepangers, Maoris, Mauritians, Natives of New Guinea & Papua, Pacific Islanders (who became 'South Sea Islanders' as of 1945), Papuans, South Sea Islanders, Thursday Islanders, Timorese and West Indians.

The word 'race' has been part of the English language for about 450 years (i.e., originally it simply meant 'group' or 'category'), but its use in an allegedly scientific way—developed

⁵ I have retained the original categories and the original spellings of each group.

with the rise of imperialism and the subjugation of indigenous peoples.

In the mid-eighteenth century, Linnaeus, the great pioneering classifier of the natural world, classified human beings into four racial types: Europeans, American Indians, Asiatics and Africans. Over the next century the idea of race was accepted as a scientific concept for classifying human beings. Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) came to be used as justification for the idea of a hierarchy of species, with the most advanced races being the most developed and those down the evolutionary ladder being closer to the non-human species. This outlook became known as 'Social Darwinism' but really had no support in Darwin's theory of evolution which was not meant to be applied to groupings within the human species; nevertheless it was adopted and adapted to legitimise colonial exploitation. During much of the nineteenth century, the dispossession of indigenous peoples, including the Australian Aborigines, was frequently justified in terms of 'scientific racism'. It was regarded as legitimate for an advanced race to do away with an inferior race, either physically or culturally, if the end result was 'progress'; the attainment of a higher rung on the evolutionary ladder. 'Full-blood' Australian Aborigines were not tabulated in censuses until 1971, following a referendum in 1967 which amended the Australian Constitution. Governments believed that 'Half-caste' Aborigines could not be true Aborigines because their blood was not purely Aboriginal, but they also assumed that the mix with European or other non-Aboriginal blood would guarantee 'Half-caste' survival.

Cultural differences were explained by reference to 'race' or biological differences. This biologically deterministic way of accounting for cultural difference became the essence of racism. It is manifest in the Commonwealth Statistician's Report for 1933, which defined an ethnic group as 'an aggregation of human beings with a genetic inheritance of physical and perhaps temperamental and other psychological characteristics common to all, and whose general average combination of such characteristics is distinguishable from that of other ethnic

groups'.⁶ This definition assumed that cultural traits are biologically- and genetically-inherited, or determined and, moreover, that they are innate and immutable. The biological-determinist view of race had credibility for several decades; it was eventually repudiated by advances in the biological and social sciences after the second world war. And, needless to say, the scientific brand of racism suffered a massive blow as a result of its practice, as a foundation of public policy, especially in Nazi Germany and the 'deep south' of the United States. There, the world saw what racism meant.

The biggest blow to the intellectual basis of racism came from scientists, particularly from geneticists who challenged the notion that cultural or personal traits were attributable to biological or genetic make-up. They agreed that where there are genetic differences (such as skin tone) between human groups, they are trivial when compared to the shared characteristics. Genetic variations do exist among social and cultural groups but they cannot be neatly categorised as races. The study of genetics has shown that human group traits are not sharply delineated but merge in varying degrees. There is no 'pure race' of any kind, just as there are no race genes; no Jewish genes, no Nordic genes.

Australia's second post-war census, that of 1954, reflected the diminishing significance attached to notions of race in public policy. Race was excluded from the main tabulating programme that year and was treated as part of a supplementary set of tabulations. There was no data on race organised by Local Government Areas, and the supplement on race was only 33 pages. In 1961 and 1966 the one-time leading or central position of race was even further diminished by the inclusion of a mere handful of cross-classifications by race. In 1961, the census tabulated 'Population according to Race, 1947-1961' as well as cross-classifications looking at males and females by race, and race and age, conjugal condition, birthplace and period of residence. In 1966, the following tabulations appeared: 'Australia 1933-1966', 'Population by Race, urban and rural, States and Territories, 1966', 'Population by Race, percentage

⁶ Wilson, *Statistician's Report*, 1933, p. 117.

distribution within each race, urban and rural, States and Territories, 1966', 'Overseas-born population by race, States and Territories, 1966', and 'Persons, by race, intercensal change: States and Territories, Australia, 1947-1966'.

The 1966 census was the last year in which racial categories were tabulated, apart from Aboriginal Australians. At the 1971 census, Aborigines were recorded following the repeal of Section 127 of the Commonwealth Constitution. Section 127 stipulated that 'in reckoning the number of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted'. Thus, the pre-1971 Commonwealth censuses tabulated only 'half-caste' Aborigines, as these were deemed not to be 'aboriginal natives' within the meaning of the Constitution. 'Half-caste' aborigines were defined as Aborigines 'of less than half aboriginal blood'. It is worth pointing out, however, that many so-called 'full-blood' Aborigines were in fact counted by Census collectors prior to 1971, but the census cards or forms pertaining to them were eliminated in accordance with Section 127. It is one of the myths of European-Aboriginal relations that Aborigines were not counted in censuses until the 1967 referendum overturned Section 127. 'Half-castes' had been counted and tabulated in previous censuses. 'Full-bloods' who lived or worked near white settlements had been counted but not tabulated. In 1933, Commonwealth Statistician Wilson reported that 'collectors were instructed to ascertain as fully as possible, by means of the ordinary schedule, detailed information concerning full-blood Australian aboriginals who were in contact with the white population'.⁷ That year, collectors counted 13,408 full-blood Aboriginal men and 11,038 women; a total of 24,446 full-blood Aborigines. These figures were gross understatements of the true numbers, since many Aborigines did not live close to white settlements. Only in recent times has census data on Aboriginal Australians become reliable, meaningful and useful.

⁷ Wilson, *Statistician's Report*, 1933, p. 117.

IMMIGRATION STATISTICS: THE ANNUAL RETURNS ON IMMIGRATION

IN 1901 the first national parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia formulated an immigration act. Its final adoption as the Immigration (Restriction) Act that year indicated in its title the preoccupation of the newly federated nation to exclude people who were deemed undesirable. This was mainly a racial concern and one member of parliament summed it up as a commitment not just to a 'white' Australia but to 'a pure and spotless snow-white' one.⁸ There was a consensus on the issue of excluding the coloured races. Prime Minister Barton had previously declared that the Enlightenment doctrine of the equality of man was never meant to extend to equality of the races, while the Labor leader, John Watson, expressed the view that the main objection to Chinese immigration was not of an industrial nature but rather 'the possibility and probability of racial contamination'.⁹

Some parliamentarians, including Watson, wanted a straightforward honest racialist immigration policy that would openly exclude persons who were 'aboriginal natives of Africa, Asia, or the islands thereof'. Others, however, were more concerned about the opposition to such overt racism expressed by the British Colonial Office. The Secretary of State for Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, had made it clear to colonial premiers in 1897 that Her Majesty could not grant Royal Assent to any immigration bills that differentiated between members of the Empire on the grounds of race.¹⁰ He made it clear, nevertheless, that he respected the objective of a White Australia, and proposed that the 'educational test' that had been used by the Colony of Natal in South Africa be adopted in any Australian

⁸ James Ronald MHR, 6 September 1901, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (CPD)*, vol. 4, p. 4666.

⁹ For Barton quote, see *CPD*, 26 September 1901, vol. 4, p. 5233. For Watson, see *CPD*, 6 September 1901, vol. 4, p. 4633.

¹⁰ Chamberlain's view was expressed in writing in a letter to the Victorian Government. The letter is quoted in *CPD*, 12 September 1901, vol. 4, p. 4808.

legislation. In this way, undesirable races could be excluded in a 'non-racist' way; that is to say, the racist intent was camouflaged by an administrative measure that, in principle, could be applied to people of all races.

Chamberlain's advice carried the day and an enormously wide definition of a prohibited immigrant was contained in Section 3(a) of the Immigration (Restriction) Act. That paragraph created the infamous dictation test whereby a customs officer could administer a dictation test to any immigrant or visitor at an Australian port. Various amendments to the Act modified the dictation test in minor ways but, essentially, until its abolition in 1958, the test consisted of no more than fifty words, in any European language, and could be administered at the discretion of a customs officer at a port or by a police officer in cases where the immigrant had disembarked. Initially the test could be applied within one year of a person's disembarkation but this was extended by amendment in 1932 to within five years. Failure of the test meant that a person was a prohibited immigrant subject to six months' imprisonment and deportation.

The dictation test provision highlighted the dual purpose of the Act's regulation, namely: to keep out alien races, especially Asian peoples (in keeping with the efforts of the former Australian colonies who had formulated statutes or general Acts toward that end), and, secondly, to keep out persons who were undesirable as inhabitants of Australia for medical, moral or economic reasons.

That the dictation test was an all-encompassing mechanism for exclusion by subterfuge, directed at the peoples of Asia, was frankly acknowledged both in the parliamentary debates of 1901 and in the following statement from the Commonwealth Year Book of 1929:

In pursuance of the "White Australia" policy, the general practice is not to permit Asiatics or coloured immigrants to enter Australia for the purpose of settling permanently. Exclusion is effected, where necessary, by the application of a dictation test which may be imposed in any European language at the discretion of the officer who applies it. In

other words, the test when applied is used as an absolute bar to admission; but, as a matter of fact, occasion does not arise for the test to be applied to any great extent, as shipping companies refrain from bringing coloured passengers to Australia unless they have authority to land on the ground of former domicile or temporarily for business purposes, etc.¹¹

The effectiveness of the test lay not only in its almost total guarantee of successful exclusion but in its deterrent effect on shipping companies. Under the Immigration Act, the owners, agents, charterers and masters of ships could be fined the huge sum of £100 for each prohibited immigrant they carried to Australia.

The original Act named seven categories of prohibited immigrant, and the dictation test was the final obstacle. However, alongside the paragraphs defining persons to be excluded stood a number of paragraphs defining persons who were to be excepted from prohibition.¹²

It was through the excepted categories that members of the 'alien races' were allowed into Australia on a temporary basis. The alien races were officially defined in the Naturalization Act of 1903 as 'aboriginal natives of Asia, Africa or the Islands of the Pacific, excepting New Zealand'. The following nationalities show up in the data as groups who were only admitted temporarily and as exceptions to prohibition within the Act: American Negroes, Chinese, Indians, Cingalese, Afghans, Egyptians, Koepangers, Indonesians, Syrians, Filipinos, Arabs, Chaldeans, Hindoos, Japanese, Kurds, Mauritians, Javanese, Malays, Pacific Islanders, Natives of New Guinea and Papua, Palestinians, Eurasians, West Indians and Timorese. Between 1902 and 1946, more than 130,000 migratory movements of 'Asiatics' and 'Other coloured races' occurred through various 'exceptional' categories contained in the Act. Of these migratory movements 62,174 were Chinese. Most were admitted under Certificates of Exemption from the

¹¹ *Commonwealth Year Book* 1929, p. 931.

¹² See 'Exceptions contained in Section 3 of the Immigration (Restriction) Act, 1901 and 1925'.

Dictation Test (CEDTs) or as former domiciles. Thus, the figure of 130,000 represents movements rather than individuals; many were the same persons departing and returning in accord with the requirements of their CEDTs or other conditions. The figure of 130,000 alien race admissions needs to be seen in the context of figures on 'departures of coloured persons', which were compiled between 1905 and 1946 and were also available in the annual returns. In total, there were more departures than admissions. This great flux is hidden in census data. It can only really be found in the annual immigration returns. Census data, for all its strengths, only shows the Chinese population for the year in which the census was taken; for example, 20,994 in 1911 and 6,404 in 1947.

The Chinese were the largest 'Asiatic' group to be admitted (and to be prohibited from admission), and the data in the annual returns demonstrates the scholarly potential of this source.

First, the Annual Returns illuminate the categories of Chinese who travelled here in full expectation that they would be admitted but who were excluded once they attempted to disembark at an Australian port. The prohibited immigrant, the person excluded, did not normally expect to be excluded. The 1,527 Chinese excluded between 1901 and 1957 (when figures ceased to be compiled in the same way owing to the overhaul of the Immigration Act in 1958) travelled in the expectation that they would be admitted.¹³

The number of Chinese excluded was quite small but this was a product of the deterrent effect of the Act. Few attempted to enter; few were excluded. The annual returns on departures, which were compiled according to race, are also relevant. Only 1,527 Chinese were excluded but, between 1905 and 1946 (the period for which figures on departures from Australia were kept) a total of 70,006 Chinese departed. Chinese departures accounted for half of all departures of 'coloured persons' from Australia between 1905 and 1946. Of the grand total of 1,932 persons kept

¹³ The figure of 1,527 does not take into account the years 1906 and 1925, as data could not be found for those years.

out under the dictation test 1,204 (62 percent) were Chinese. In 1902 alone, 459 Chinese were excluded by the dictation test. In no other year was such a large group of any race or nationality excluded by section 3(a). In fact, the next largest exclusion was that of the 208 Maltese who, in 1916, were sent on to New Caledonia on a French ship after they failed a dictation test in the Dutch language. The test was therefore chiefly used against the Chinese between 1902 and 1913. After that, few Chinese attempted to come to Australia unless confident of admission (as former domiciles with re-entry permits or as holders of Certificates of Exemption from the Dictation Test). A high proportion of those excluded after 1913 and up to 1957 were stowaways.

The data on Chinese admitted into Australia reveals a total of 62,174 admissions between 1901 and 1946.¹⁴ The main category of Chinese admitted was former domiciles; they accounted for more than half of the total admissions. The figures for former domiciles declined during the 1930s, reflecting the ageing population covered by that category.¹⁵ The figures indicate a high level of coming and going on the part of the former domiciles.

The next biggest category of non-European entrants was persons travelling on Certificates of Exemption from the Dictation Test. (CEDTs accounted for 6,379 admissions or roughly a tenth of the total. CEDTs were created under Section 3(h) of the principal Act.) The CEDTs basically applied to the temporary admission of non-competitive labour. Deserters and criminals were dealt with by the courts and the data shows that more than a thousand Chinese were deported as deserters. Pearlman are another notable category who were allowed in temporarily under strict conditions. More than 300 Chinese pearlman were admitted. During the second world war, another

¹⁴ This figure includes available numbers of Chinese admissions for 1901.

¹⁵ Former domiciles had originally been covered by section 3(n) of the Immigration Act but this paragraph was abolished in 1905. Nonetheless, those persons covered by it, and with evidence in the form of re-entry permits issued prior to 1905, continued to be re-admitted as former domiciles after 1905.

category emerges: evacuees, in the form of 964 Chinese evacuees admitted on humanitarian grounds between 1942 and 1945; 2,033 CEDTs were issued to Chinese during that period.

Passport holders were admitted under the same legislation. After 1912, when a special arrangement was entered into with the Chinese government, merchants, students and tourists were admitted temporarily on specially endorsed passports. More than 1,130 Chinese were admitted on passports between 1912 and 1946, when figures were no longer compiled in this form.

During the first five years of federation, 103 Chinese were admitted under section 3(m), which applied to the wives and children of Chinese resident in Australia who were not prohibited immigrants. But this paragraph was repealed in 1905, ending for many decades the prospect of family reunions and resulting, as the parliamentarians had expected, in a high rate of return on the part of Chinese men back to China. Under Section 3(l), which excepted from prohibition all 'duly accredited government representatives', 148 Chinese were admitted as consuls and other officials between 1902 and 1946. The figures suggest that the Chinese presence in Australia was more substantial during the post-federation White Australia era than is sometimes supposed. Before 1973 there were already 32,997 Chinese in Australia; not to mention approximately 14,000 other non-European 'non-whites'.

These annual returns were based on data collected at ports by customs officers. They represent an essential source for the history of immigration into Australia. They are an authoritative statistical source, which provides data by year on persons admitted and excluded by nationality or race, the countries whence they embarked for Australia, and departures from Australia by nationality or race. The returns also indicate the sections and paragraphs of the Immigration Act under which persons were admitted or excluded and those who were not required to pass the dictation test. After 1946, the data listed place of last permanent residence. Hidden beneath the

thousands of individual statistics lay thousands of real human stories waiting to be uncovered.¹⁶

The annual returns data included the raw figures on the immigrants' ports of embarkation and consequently also throw light on shipping routes in the immigration story. The data on countries whence immigrants embarked was conveniently totalled for each group in the annual returns from 1924. Some interesting features are revealed. For example, there were more embarkations from New Zealand (373,770) than from Great Britain (367,712). Presumably, this reflected a high rate of travel to and from New Zealand on the part of Australians, who were counted in the returns as 'British'. No less interesting is the fact that migration to Australia via Italian ports accounted for 59,339 admissions while those from the United States accounted for 43,599 over the same period. The annual returns allow a complete outline to be drawn up of the places of embarkation for 3.3 million pre-1947 twentieth century immigrants.

Finally, while I have focused on minority immigrant groups, there are challenges to historians in the data on the biggest immigrant category—the 'British'. Who were these people? New Zealanders, South Africans, Canadians and Australian returnees were not listed separately: hence the category 'British' included those four groups as well as those of United Kingdom nationality. But the category excluded British subjects such as the Maltese and Indians, who were counted separately. The story of British citizenship is complex and the original compilers of the annual returns used a racial criterion in separately listing some 'Britishers' outside the British category. How else can one explain the inclusion of Canadians in the British listing but the exclusion of Indians?

¹⁶ Historians often use the summary data which appears in the Commonwealth Year Book, which is very incomplete when contrasted with the wealth of detail in the original returns. CIMS has published the data on the 3.3 million admissions between 1901 and 1946 and on the 2.1 million between 1947 and 1957, as well as the data on the much smaller number of persons excluded between 1901 and 1957, and on the 140,014 departures of 'coloured persons' between 1905 and 1946.

V. Joan Joynson

'SOMETHING YOU LIKE TO FORGET:
YOU KNOW, A BIT LIKE THE WAR.'

BRITISH ASSISTED MIGRANTS, AND HOSTELS, IN THE 1950s

JEAN'S MEMORIES of Brooklyn hostel in Melbourne are not pleasant ones. 'We were walking around kind of bewildered, thinking "what had we done", it wasn't very nice in the hostel, it's something you like to forget, you know, a bit like the war.'¹

Migrants arriving in Australia from the British Isles under the mass immigration schemes launched in 1945 outnumbered by far those from any other source country. They were invited migrants who were encouraged by the assistance of the £10 fare offered under agreements reached between the British and Australian governments. Between the late 1940s and the early 1960s, most assisted British arrivals came either as 'personal or group nominees'—sponsored by relations, employers or other non-government bodies such as churches, who were required to guarantee accommodation to the migrants—or, lacking such sponsors, as 'Commonwealth Government nominees'. As a sponsor for the latter, the Government provided accommodation by its use of hostels.²

¹ Jean, a 1960 arrival. Taped interview February, 1989. I am indebted to New World Arts for taped interviews deposited in the Melbourne Living Museum of the West Inc.

² AA: CRS A445, Item 22/610; Correspondence files, Commonwealth Immigration Policy – New Scheme for Commonwealth Nomination of British Migrants, 1950. AA: MP240/1, Item 1950/47A/7011; Department of Labour and National Service; General Correspondence; 1950 (for acceptance of full responsibility for accommodation and employment for British nominated migrants.)

Emigrating to Australia, another part of the Commonwealth, Britons have often been seen, then and since, as 'family' who were simply 'moving house', their settlement and 'assimilation' assumed to pose few problems. As a consequence, they have been little studied as 'migrants'. Because of their cultural similarity to their host society, and because they received a degree of assistance not normally accorded to other migrants, they have been written off as the most 'pampered and protected' of Australia's migrants.³ While most Britons, in time, appear to have settled very successfully, the difficulties—even trauma—often faced by new arrivals have not been appreciated. Historians have deployed newspaper reports, parliamentary papers and migrants' own accounts to touch on the problems encountered by many British arrivals, especially those whose first experience of Australia was in the Commonwealth hostels. Reg Appleyard, Alison Ray and Allen Segal have alluded to depressing converted woolsheds and Nissen huts that the Government provided for their accommodation. James Jupp depicted the soul-destroying nature of the hostels and the Immigration Department's defensive attitude about the hostels. Jupp also noted the pervasive prejudice of Australians towards migrants in general, an experience which British migrants did not escape.⁴

Archival records of the Commonwealth have been less studied, and these comprise a rich source for further exploring the initial settlement experience of British assisted arrivals, whether personal, group or Commonwealth nominees. While most non-government nominees settled in uneventfully, these records suggest that a number suffered misfortune and adversity, and as individuals, their problems did not receive the publicity that Commonwealth nominees were able to generate. Here I look briefly at a sample of the letters written to the Immigration

³ R. Bosworth, 'Australian and Assisted Immigration from Britain 1945–1954', in *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 34 (1988), pp. 187–200; J.I. Martin, *The Migrant Presence: Australian Responses 1947–1977* (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1978), p. 207.

⁴ Reg. Appleyard with Alison Ray and Allan Segal, *The Ten Pound Immigrants* (Boxtree Ltd, London, 1988), pp. 69–70; James Jupp, *Arrivals and Departures* (Cheshire–Lansdowne, Melbourne, 1966), pp. 25–9, 109.

Department by assisted migrants who were personally sponsored by relatives, or by employers. By its nature, such correspondence is not necessarily representative of all in this category. If migrants feel that all is well with their world, they find it unnecessary to communicate with the Immigration Department. Those who wrote did so when and because they had a grievance, when circumstances overwhelmed them, and when they had no idea where to turn for advice. Nevertheless, such letters afford valuable insight into the experience of many, and strong evidence that Britons, even those personally nominated, as much as any migrants, were not immune from hardship and disillusionment in their efforts to settle. The first part of this paper suggests the sorts of problems that arose for personally sponsored migrants.

Internal records of the Immigration Department throw light on the experience of Britons sponsored by government rather than by individuals—the Commonwealth Government nominees—whose initial settlement experience was not with relations or employers, but with the Commonwealth Hostels. The second part of the paper explores issues relating to an ongoing stratagem of the Immigration Department in relation to hostel residents who found cause for complaint. Departmental records suggest that many of those who have been easily stereotyped as ‘Whingeing Poms’ had very good grounds for complaint, as do the petitions signed by British migrants from various hostels. Records examined here lend insight into the administration of the hostels and reveal the attitude of members of the Department from the Minister of Immigration down to the management by hostel managers in relation to the migrants. The sequential nature of the retelling of various aspects of the hostel experience is essential in order to grasp the significance of the actions and reactions of the Immigration Department. This data provides a substantial body of evidence which throws new light on the common assumption that settlement for Britons, given their ‘favoured’ treatment was necessarily easy. My paper will examine the reverse side of the coin in relation to British migration, where fundamental expectations for a number of migrants were not realised.

ON THE face of it, migrants who were received by relations, should have found their initial settlement easy. Yet some found that living with relatives was stressful in ways not foreseen or imagined. The euphoria experienced by many personal nominees in the excitement of reunion with relatives appears far from universal, and could be short-lived.⁵ Life could be made extremely miserable by relatives or other private sponsors. For example, John Cowan and his wife found that accepting a nomination from a distant relative was disastrous. Shortly after arrival in 1949 with a young baby 'we realized that dictatorship did not die with Hitler'. The relative put the family out on the street without notice on Anzac Sunday. John found that he could not apply for a Housing Commission home because he had not yet qualified. The family was taken in by a 'kindly lady' on a very temporary basis, but was desperate for more settled accommodation. John, like other migrants in similar circumstances, knew of no official body to whom he could go for advice.⁶

The housing shortage remained acute for many years after the war. The Leschens, too, were nominees living with relatives, but this was only a temporary arrangement. After searching without success for alternative accommodation, Winifred Leschen appealed in desperation to the Department for assistance. The Housing Commission deemed the family to be already adequately housed, and therefore refused help. The Leschens bought a 'small neglected property' but were shattered to find they were unable to obtain possession. Their property was tenanted by an ex-serviceman, who, refusing to leave, was protected by the law. They felt that 'English people have no protection of that same law if they need possession of their home. When many of us return...we are called disgruntled and worse, actually many of us are heartbroken and in many cases nearly bankrupt.' The family was unfamiliar with Australian law on this matter, but it is difficult not to be struck by the unsympathetic attitude they encountered. The departmental

⁵ Reg Appleyard et al., *The Ten Pound Immigrants*, pp. 67-8.

⁶ AA: CRS A436, Item 48/5/5748, Part 11; Housing Difficulties of Migrants, 26 June 1949.

reply was that 'you came to this country to participate in the good aspects as well as the bad, and I am afraid that housing is one of the latter.'⁷

Ex-serviceman Donald MacGillivray's arrangements with his nominee were also on a short-term basis and, desperate for alternative accommodation, he sought hostel accommodation and was refused. Referring to a newspaper report of Government preparations to house Displaced Persons in 1949 because 'the Government felt responsible for them', MacGillivray angrily wrote to Arthur A. Calwell (Minister for Immigration, 1945-1949), 'I should have thought that your responsibility was first to see that the ship-loads of migrants from Britain were housed'. Having haunted Housing Agents' offices and

asking every one we meet, we are no nearer to securing a place ...and we could not hope to find between £2000 and £4000 to buy a house. How can a man give of his best under these circumstances, especially when he sees his wife worrying herself into a nervous breakdown? To think that we had to break up a beautiful home - sell everything at a loss to come over here to nothing - it's just not fair!

He concluded that there was no alternative but to go back to Britain. 'I can assure you Mr Immigration Minister that if we have to go home, your Department will get plenty of publicity'. MacGillivray was informed that the camps for the Displaced Persons were purely temporary measures and that the present occupiers must make way for further intakes of Displaced Persons.⁸ MacGillivray, a personal nominee, was not eligible for hostel accommodation, yet one can appreciate his frustration and incomprehension as an invited migrant.

If living with relatives often failed to turn out as imagined, nominations by complete strangers could be even more unpredictable. Fred Wilson, his wife and four sons arrived in December 1949. A farmer from Smithton in Tasmania undertook to employ Fred and his 18 year old son, and the family was to be provided with a six room house on the property. However, the usual mandatory check of the premises by immigration

⁷ AA: CRS A436, Item 48/5/5748, Part 11; 14 April 1949.

⁸ AA: CRS A436, Item 48/5/5748, Part 11; 18 May 1949.

authorities had never been carried out. The house was in such a bad state of repair with crude facilities and ruined ceilings from a leaking roof that the Wilsons found it impossible to stay. When Fred complained, the farmer told him that they had 'expected very poor people who would be grateful to accept any conditions'. Following this disastrous experience, the health of his wife was now such that a return to Britain was the only solution. On enquiry to the Department he was told that the Government was unable to waive repayment of the fare if the family returned to Britain.⁹

George Molden's experience was similar. Arriving at Newnes Junction in New South Wales in 1949 with his wife and two boys, he found that what was provided for his family was well-nigh impossible to live in. The family were compelled to sleep in one room, and again, no-one from the Department had inspected the premises. He explained his position to Calwell:

Don't think that we were expecting a palace, far from it, but we at least expected a clean and comfortable place to cook our food on, not something where dirt is an inch thick. Also the bed they gave us for the two boys was alive with maggots which crawled all over our clean sheets and blankets.

After complaining to the owner, he was told to go, so he trudged the length and breadth of Lithgow in a vain search for alternative premises. 'Don't think I'm trying to get him into trouble as I don't think they know any better', George wrote, and explained that

we left a good home and sold all our possessions to come out here, not for worse but for better...the shock of coming to such conditions in which we find ourselves has been too much for her (his wife) and I appeal to you once more, not for myself but for...assistance for them to go back home until I can get them a proper home to come out to.¹⁰

⁹ AA: CRS A445/1, Item 124/1/6; Letter to T.H.E. Heyes, Secretary, Department of Immigration, from Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau and Immigration Department, 31 March 1950.

¹⁰ AA: CRS A436, Item 48/5/5748, Part 11; Housing Difficulties of Migrants, G. Molden to T.H.E. Heyes, 31 May 1949.

The Department declined to assist them financially. However, 'the New South Wales authorities would be pleased to assist you in any way possible. Once your initial difficulties have been overcome, you and your family will settle down happily...'. But the problem was much more immediate for the Moldens, and in despair, they returned home in September 1949.¹¹

These are but a few cases. Hundreds of letters were received by the Department from non-government sponsored migrants desperate for a roof over their heads, and appealing for hostel accommodation. But only Commonwealth nominated migrants were eligible, and almost all others were refused on the grounds of a shortage of hostel accommodation. Any vacancies were allocated for the next influx of migrants. Persons who left the hostels and attempted to make a go of it out in the wider community but later found themselves in difficulties were refused re-entry. Even the eligible could find inter-hostel transfers (sometimes necessary for reasons of work location) well-nigh impossible. Transfers, or admissions for those not normally eligible, were granted only 'if there are very grave reasons' for 'a change of policy'.¹² What constituted 'grave reasons' was not made clear.

Imminent homelessness was not deemed a valid reason for admission. Harold Arnould paid his own passage and arranged for his family to come to Australia on the assisted passage scheme. The family was split up, the daughter accommodated with a friend, while Harold, his wife and son lived in a garage. The request for short-term accommodation until a cottage could be found so that the family could be re-united, was refused on the grounds that the breadwinner had been in Australia for more than twelve months.¹³

¹¹ AA: CRS A436, Item 48/5/5748, Part 11, Molden to Heyes, 31 May 1949.

¹² AA: CRS B3854/0-Box 1; 1-12 (1955); Department of Labour and National Service (hereafter DLNS), Central Office, Correspondence on application by migrants for hostel transfers and re-admittance, 1953-1966, 3 May 1955.

¹³ AA: CRS B3854/0, Box 3 (1956), File 25, 13 January 1956.

On occasions little compassion was shown, even when extreme stress and hardship were evident. One Commonwealth nominee had resided at Matraville hostel with his wife and four children but left to enlist in the Royal Australian Navy. When his wife deserted him and their four children he was discharged on compassionate grounds. A failed attempt at reconciliation left him with the three youngest children. Confident that he could care for the children, provided he had accommodation, he applied for re-admission to Matraville, but was refused.¹⁴ In another instance a mother and her children, living in Nelson's Bay Hostel, requested a transfer to a Sydney hostel when her husband's employment was transferred to Sydney. Apparently ill, she explained that 'having the care of four children day and night is affecting my nerves and illness alone is bad enough...but coupled with loneliness and separation it is becoming unbearable'.¹⁵ Her application seemed to be among what Henry Bland, Secretary of the Department of Labour and National Service (DNLS), was inclined to see as 'hard luck cases', and was also refused.¹⁶ Asked if he would make an exception to his rule of non-admission in the case a young British couple who were expecting a child, 'Yes', said Bland, 'for the sake of the unborn Australian'.¹⁷

Harold Holt, Minister for Immigration (1949-56) and for the DLNS (1949-58) had derided Calwell in 1945 for his belief in the need to provide housing for migrants, still seeing immigrants in terms of the pioneers of 18th and 19th century America, where 'the people who did the pioneering did not look for amenities already provided'.¹⁸ In 1951 both Holt and the Australian High Commissioner in London, Tom White, paid tribute to the 'better type of middle-class migrant who does not ask for Government

¹⁴ AA: CRS B3854/0, Box 3 (1956), File 25, 22 October 1956.

¹⁵ AA: CRS B3854, File no 2; DLNS Correspondence on applications by migrants for hostel transfers and re-admittance, 1953-1966, 4 May 1955.

¹⁶ AA: MP1722, Item 1952/45/4036; Department of Employment and Youth Affairs, Correspondence files, annual single number series, Letter from Calwell to H. Bland, 27 June 1952.

¹⁷ AA: MP1722, Item 1952/45/4036; Letter from Calwell to Bland, 27 June 1952.

¹⁸ *House of Representatives Debates*, vol. 184, 29 August 1945, p. 4997.

assistance'. Holt appreciated the 'independence and initiative' of 'these people'. They are 'among the best migrants who come to us...'. The Department, continued White,

could do a service to the better class of migrant who does not ask for Governmental assistance. There are undoubtedly sad cases where they have sold their property and possessions, ...but found housing was difficult, and their finance dwindling in hotels and boarding houses...and returned with a sense of disappointment.¹⁹

This was, of course, precisely what was happening to Government-assisted migrants like Donald MacGillivray or George Molden who had also sold their worldly possessions before emigrating. But apparently compassion did not extend to recipients of assistance. Holt's sentiments leave one to reflect on the yardstick by which he administered the hostels for Commonwealth nominated migrants.²⁰

Prospective Commonwealth nominees were told that they did not require any 'outlay of capital'—merely a 'sufficient amount of ready money to cover small incidental personal expenses'.²¹ The Commonwealth Government was responsible for accommodation and employment of these government-sponsored migrants. Plans for family hostels with two to three bedrooms, sitting room and kitchen were scrapped following the protracted coal strikes (1949) and the re-introduction of National Service Training (1950), but publicity brochures distributed in Britain informed migrants that family hostels were still under construction. However, in February 1950, the Government elected to house British migrants in existing hostels, previously occupied by Displaced Migrant workers—the 'Commonwealth Reception

¹⁹ AA: MP1722, Item 51/47A/6334; Department of Employment & Youth Affairs, Central Office, Correspondence Files 1946. Tom White to Harold Holt, 31 August 1951; Holt to White, September 1951.

²⁰ Harold Holt held the portfolio of Minister for Immigration from 1949–1956, and that of the Department of Labour and National Service from 1949–1958.

²¹ *Australia Offers — Assisted Passages under the Commonwealth Nomination Scheme*. Published by the Australian News and Information Bureau, London, 1st edn, December 1950.

Centres'—then under the control of the DLNS.²² (This responsibility was transferred, early in 1952, to a government agency, Commonwealth Hostels Limited.)

One of the most criticised aspects of the treatment of Displaced Persons by the Australian government has been the requirement to sign a two-year work contract, agreeing to go wherever they were sent. Unrecognised to date, however, is that many British Commonwealth nominees too, were compelled to work in prescribed employment, to provide labour for essential industries. William Funnell, Secretary of the DLNS (1946–51)²³ notified regional branches of a proposal 'to require British migrants accommodated in these hostels, to enter into undertakings to remain in approved employment'.²⁴ Until further notice, British employment under this system would be in 'industries now approved for Displaced Persons'.²⁵ By August 1951, the Chief Migration Officer in London was instructed to formalise the work contract requiring Commonwealth-nominated migrants to sign a declaration that

I fully understand that I have been recruited for employment in...industry and that the Australian Government is willing to provide accommodation for me and my family only on the condition that I continue to work in that industry.²⁶

Sir John Jensen, as a member of the Immigration Planning Council, saw this method as part payment for the 'generous assistance' given by the community to Commonwealth assisted migrants.²⁷

²² AA: CRS B146, Item 60/818; Letter from W. Funnell to H. Bland, 4 September 1959.

²³ Funnell was subsequently Chairman of Commonwealth Hostels Limited.

²⁴ AA: MP240/1, Item 1950/47a/7011; Letter from W. Funnell to all regional branches, 28 February 1950.

²⁵ AA: CRS A445/1, Item 124/6/15, 1949, for work allocation: AA: MP240/1, Item 1950/47A/7011; Letter from W. Funnell to regional branches, 28 February 1950.

²⁶ AA: MP240, Item 51/47B/4131; DLNS Minute by Executive Officer R. Marsh, 6 August 1951.

²⁷ Sir John Jensen, Member of the Commonwealth Immigration Planning Council (hereafter CIPC), 'The Immigration Policy Of Australia And The Administration Problems Which Flow From It', in *Public Administration*, vol. 10, nos. 3 & 4 (New Series) September–December 1951, p. 531.

Before long, incessant complaints were voiced about the physical conditions in hostels, the rudeness and arrogance of managers and the quality of the food.²⁸ Claims of tainted food and fly-blown meat were declared publicly by the Department to be 'totally unfounded', but an internal memo conceded that occasionally there was 'fly-blown meat which was difficult to control during the summer'.²⁹ At Finsbury in South Australia, there was no privacy, flimsy walls came only part of the way to ceilings and every word could be heard two or three rooms away.³⁰ The wool stores or Nissen huts had concrete or bitumen floors, or floorboards with draughty gaps. Some hostels afforded little shelter from the elements. During a storm the roof of one hut at Wendouree hostel in Ballarat collapsed, and another was blown off, scattering live electric cables. In some huts wind and rain penetrated the roofs and walls.³¹ Tasman Heyes, Secretary of the Immigration Department (1946-55), had been concerned that if the standard was too high, 'the public was likely to protest that the Government was doing more for the migrant than the rest of the community, and the success of the programme would be jeopardised'.³² Sir Douglas Copland, a member of the Immigration Planning Council, agreed that 'we need [not] be very apologetic about housing migrants in hostels ... we are overcoming...[the strains of migration] by the standard of accommodation we are providing'.³³

Tired migrants arriving at Brooklyn hostel at dusk were 'welcomed' by the Manager: '[W]e don't make it the best so that you don't stay too long. It's too late to open the canteen, we're not

²⁸ On the issue of food see: Jean, Taped interview (1989).

²⁹ AA: SP446/1 Item 339/13/3, 1951-1952, Box 14; St. Mary's Residents' Complaints. Internal Memo.

³⁰ AA: SP446/1, Item 502/13/3, Box 14; DLNS Correspondence 1948-1952, Finsbury Residents Complaints 1951-2.

³¹ AA: SP446/1, Item 401/13/3, 1950-1951, Box 14; Ballarat Residents Complaints. Complaints also published in *Ballarat Courier*, May 1951.

³² AA: MP240/1, Item 1950/47A/7011; T.H.E. Heyes, Sec: Immigration Department to Henry Bland, Sec. DLNS, 16 June 1950.

³³ Sir Douglas Copland, Member of CIPC. Address to Jubilee Citizenship Convention 1951, p. 8. (McLaren Collection, Baillieu Library, the University of Melbourne).

prepared for you'.³⁴ Nor was it only Nelson's Bay hostel manager who retorted to migrants who complained about the food, that 'they could find accommodation elsewhere', aware this would have been impossible. Joseph Johnson declared that he was 'prepared to suffer some inconvenience, but he had not come all the way from England to be fed and treated like a dog'.³⁵ Finsbury Hostel in South Australia had problems with the food, and with the lack of hygiene and of heating. Lamenting the gulf between promises made and the stark reality, one angry resident declared:

when a family comes here with very great promises from Australia House, London, and have got to exist like a pig and pay for it, well the old British Bulldog has got something to bite on. We are not British scroungers...³⁶

The problem for British migrants was the difference between what had been promised them and what they found on arrival. Holt admitted in 1951 to a colleague that the 'trouble' with British migrants was due to excessive expectations drawn from inaccurate information. This admission to High Commissioner, Tom White, not intended for the media, was 'that rather too rosy a picture was painted by our officers in the first place'.³⁷ The reality was, as Funnell informed Bland, that it was 'still not possible to provide either quantitatively or qualitatively the accommodation originally contemplated'.³⁸

Many hostel residents claimed that they were brought to Australia under false pretences. David, a former resident of Brooklyn hostel, remembered: '[I]t was a good advertising campaign... they were snaring the people in [but] it wasn't true to

³⁴ Jean, Taped interview (1989).

³⁵ AA: SP446/2, Item 313/13/2, DLNS to Acting Controller, 11 November 1951.

³⁶ AA: SP446/1, Item 502/13/3; DLNS Correspondence, 1948-1952, Finsbury Residents Complaints 1951-1952, Box 14.

³⁷ AA: MP1722, Item 51/47A/6334; Department of Employment & Youth Affairs, Letter from Harold Holt to Tom White, High Commissioner for Australia, London, 14 September 1951.

³⁸ AA: CRS B146 Item 62/4029; W. Funnell, Chairman, Commonwealth Hostels to Henry Bland Secretary, DLNS, 12 June 1952.

form. They offered the earth, the moon and the stars....'.³⁹ Ex-serviceman, Peter Smith, from Bunnerong hostel, angrily aired his grievances, listing the disparity between promise and reality:

the whole point at issue was that the Australian Government promised certain things and these should be included in the rules. One gets the impression that we wouldn't be welcome unless the authority was afraid of the Chinese or Japanese...⁴⁰

Another migrant told of the false advertising material distributed in Britain which 'stipulated in 1951 that special hostels with kitchens were being built' and observed 'I have seen the 1953 booklets and a lot of the same trash in it is still misleading'.⁴¹ In confirmation of what migrants were claiming, a former chaplain on a migrant ship was adamant that 'applicants [were] not fully informed of the conditions of hostel life':

Photographs [were] very misleading and [gave] no indication of the lack of privacy, the wet-weather conditions of the trek to the communal conveniences and bathrooms, the heartbreaking battle in caring for and feeding sick children and a thousand other pinpricks of an enforced submission to hostel regulations.⁴²

The constant rise in the tariff for board and lodging created conflict between migrants and the administration. The way it was structured left little capacity to save. The tariff was based on nominal rates, not on the basic wage. The more money the breadwinner earned, the more he had to pay.⁴³ Wives who were

³⁹ David, taped interview, February 1989, Collection by New World Arts, deposited in the Melbourne Living Museum of the West Inc.

⁴⁰ AA: SP446/2, Item E344/13/2; Bunnerong Residents Complaints 1950-1952, Letter from P. Smith to J. Carrington, Controller of Hostels, Canberra, ACT, 26 July 1951.

⁴¹ AA: CRS B146, Item 56/2643; Note of interview between deputation and Acting Commonwealth Migration Officer forwarded by T.H.E. Heyes to P.H. Cook, Assistant Secretary DLNS, 10 July 1953.

⁴² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 August 1954, p. 2. Rev. K.N. Shelley, Kiama.

⁴³ *HR Debates*, Labor MHR, D. Curtin, 10 September 1953, p. 167.

employed were also classified as workers for tariff purposes.⁴⁴ In a 1952 personal communication to Treasurer, Arthur Fadden, Holt conceded that the tariff was designed to create 'economic pressure...which would compel residents to look for other accommodation as quickly as possible'. In effect, it was, as he said, at the 'upper limit that could be charged'.⁴⁵

The Department established a Committee of Enquiry (November 1952) to investigate the hostel dwellers' complaints, in order to silence growing criticism which received wide coverage in the media. The parameters of the Committee's brief were stipulated by Harold Holt. The members chosen by Holt were all members of the Immigration Advisory Council, a body which made recommendations to the Department on the running of the hostels.⁴⁶ In effect, it was 'stacked' to ensure a favourable outcome for the Department. The enquiry, inevitably, concluded that the 'tariffs...[were] fair and reasonable'.⁴⁷ Harry Boreham, Federal President of the British Migrants Welfare Association, disillusioned, declared that the Committee 'had purposely set out to whitewash the migrants' complaints'.⁴⁸ A member of ASIO was present during the enquiry at Holt's request; it was a time when fears of Communism were at their height. High Commissioner, Tom White, at one time informed British

⁴⁴ AA: CRS B146, Item 56/2273; DLNS General Correspondence 1953 onwards, Commonwealth Hostels Ltd, Hostel Board and Lodging.

⁴⁵ AA: CRS A445/1, Item 221/6/10; H. Holt to A. Fadden, 2 June 1952, p. 1.

⁴⁶ The four members chosen for the Committee of Enquiry were G.W. Brown, MBE MP, Chairman of the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council; R.R. Broadby, Sec. ACTU; Mrs F.G. Kumm, OBE, Vice President of the International YWCA; J.C. Neagle, Gen. Sec. of the Federal Executive RSSAILA.

⁴⁷ AA: CRS A445/1, Item 221/6/7; Report of the Committee Appointed By The Minister For Immigration To Investigate The Grounds for Withholding Of Tariff Payments By British Migrants In Commonwealth Hostels, November 1952.

⁴⁸ The British Migrants' Welfare Association was formed in order to have an effective voice to represent migrant's problems. It also provided the media with relevant information about their problems.

newspapers that British migrants who complained were 'either occasional communists or typical grouzers'.⁴⁹

Angry migrants from a number of hostels stepped up their campaign in 1953, and some went on strike, refusing to pay the latest of the frequent tariff increases, some boycotting the cafeteria, the second major area of contention. In return, the Department tightened its control and promptly drew up a new contract for almost all 50,000 hostel residents in Australia, the terms of which required unconditional acceptance. Non-compliance brought with it eviction within seven days. The Department also refused to countenance any change in the major existing problems associated with the conditions in the hostels. It was also incumbent on the residents to *unreservedly* accept all 'varying tariff charges, any proposed charges for sundry services, electricity or any other rules'. But the regulation which created the greatest outcry was that permitting the manager 'to enter the living quarters of any family at any time'. Residents vehemently refused to accept this invasion of a basic right to privacy.⁵⁰ It was impossible, declared hostel resident, Mr D. Sceats, a member of a three man deputation speaking to an acting Commonwealth Migration Officer,

to have managers or staff have the right to enter our quarters at any time...without permission. At one time they came when a woman was undressing. The little privacy we have is broken by this agreement we have been asked to sign.⁵¹

They were not wealthy people, declared a third member of the deputation. 'These people have not a bank balance, they are just ordinary people coming to make a fresh start in life. They

⁴⁹ AA: MP1722, Item 51/47A/6334; Department of Employment and Youth Affairs, Central Office, Correspondence Files, 1946, Tom White to Harold Holt, 31 August 1951.

⁵⁰ AA: CRS B146, Item 56/2273; DLNS General correspondence 1953 onwards, Commonwealth Hostels "D" Hostel Board and Lodging.

⁵¹ AA: CRS B146, Item 56/2643; Complaints by three-man deputation representing British Migrants from Brooklyn Hostel, D. Sceats to Acting Commonwealth Migration Officer, 10 July 1953, p. 1.

would make good citizens, first-class tradesmen, but they are not given a chance.'⁵²

Cries of condemnation came from hostel residents around the country. The institutional constraints were such that 'to impose these rules is to take away our liberties inside our own homes', therefore 'we will lose our freedom as citizens inside the hostels', declared a Bradfield Park resident.⁵³ 'We strongly object to the dictatorial attitude...that we have to pay whatever is charged to us', declared another. 'Commonwealth Hostels [is] not subject to Price Control, therefore this amounts to a demand for an "open cheque".'⁵⁴ Another resident from Brooklyn hostel in Melbourne could not believe the conditions until he experienced them himself:

Thousands would not have come and thousands [were] waiting to go home. These people must have some reason. I know fifty families who have left Brooklyn...and have gone to live in caravans and sleep-outs, to save money to go home.⁵⁵

In May 1956, Commonwealth Hostels Limited directed Managers not to recognise any inter-hostel migrants' association, presumably because a broadly based association might more effectively 'press for what it considere[d] to be necessary reforms in the administration of hostels'.⁵⁶

Resistance to the Department's ultimatum grew, and many were evicted for refusing to pay the increase in rent or obey the rules unconditionally. Requested by migrants, Archdeacon Williams in Melbourne offered to act as intermediary in the ongoing controversy before, as one migrant feared, it could 'end in

⁵² AA: CRS B146, Item 56/2643; Report from Acting Commonwealth Migration Officer sent to T.H.E. Heyes, 10 July 1953.

⁵³ *SMH*, 12 May 1953, p. 3.

⁵⁴ Board and Lodging Tariff was decontrolled for the Hostels under State Laws in November 1952.

⁵⁵ AA: CRS B146, Item 56/2643. Note of interview between deputation and Acting Commonwealth Migration Officer forwarded by T.H.E. Heyes to P.H. Cook, Assistant Secretary DLNS, 10 July 1953.

⁵⁶ AA: CRS B146, Item 56/1658; Department of Employment and Industrial Relations. Correspondence Files, Funnell to Bland, 14 May 1956.

bloodshed'.⁵⁷ Heyes reluctantly agreed, and arranged for a delegate, Philip Cook, First Assistant Secretary to the Minister for DLNS, to seek a meeting with the Interchurch Migration Committee, but urged Cook to confine discussions to himself and the committee.⁵⁸ Evictions continued. The personal belongings of a number of the residents were deposited in the street while parents were at work and children at school, the general manager of Commonwealth Hostels insisting that their 'licence to remain in the hostels had been cancelled because they had not observed certain conditions'. A working wife, with two children, in one hapless family declared, 'I don't know what we'll do or where we'll go tonight... We wanted to get out of the hostel and start building...but we've never had enough money to start'.⁵⁹ 'The condition of these people is self-imposed,' Funnell declared of evicted hostel dwellers. '[T]hey can go back into the hostel at any time if they pay *our* tariff and obey *our* rules.'⁶⁰ Reading Funnell's report, Sir Phillip McBride, acting Minister for Immigration, expressed 'satisfaction with the way [the] matter had been handled'.⁶¹ Following the 'eviction action' which had been 'successful in other hostels', Funnell proposed similar action at Bunnerong, 'along the lines approved by the Company's legal adviser'.⁶²

By the middle to later 1950s the Department was hard put to find a suitable strategy to attract migrants rather than deter them, if its advertising brochure contained the stark facts about the hostels. The dilemma, Cook informed Funnell, was the quite 'difficult task of present[ing] the *essential facts* without presenting either too rosy a picture or on the other hand one

⁵⁷ AA: CRS B146, Item 56/2643; Letter from D. Sceats to Archdeacon Williams, St. Pauls Cathedral, Melbourne, 18 June 1953.

⁵⁸ AA: CRS B146, Item 56/2643; Heyes to Cook, 20 July 1953.

⁵⁹ SMH, 17 June 1953, p. 4.

⁶⁰ SMH, 28 June 1953, p. 4 (my emphasis).

⁶¹ AA: CRS B146, Item 1953/2125; Bland to Funnell, 12 June 1953.

⁶² AA: CRS B146; Item 1953/2934; Funnell to Cook, 7 August 1953. Bunnerong and Goulburn hostels posed a problem in that they were not situated on Commonwealth-owned land. Funnell had feared that the British Migrants Welfare Association might be successful in obtaining an injunction against Commonwealth Hostels on these grounds.

which might seem a bit too forbidding'. Incredibly, he too, then advocated painting the rosy picture by having 'a briefing tour of *selected* hostels...with *suitably selected* representative photographs of hostel life' shown to a captive audience of British migrants *en route* to Australia.⁶³

In 1955 the Department of Immigration implemented a Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Council recommendation to reduce the allocation of rooms to each family to cater for an increased intake.⁶⁴ What was euphemistically called 'a living room' was no longer to be allowed. Apart from the need to squeeze more migrants into the same number of rooms, the CIAC thought making residency more uncomfortable would act as an additional deterrent to long stays.⁶⁵ Families were allocated bedrooms only, leaving nowhere for the family to be together. So stringent was the allocated accommodation that enterprising migrants rearranged bedroom furniture in order to give themselves a sitting room. Bland was 'particularly disturbed where residents had put more than three beds in one room...some of these room sizes are so small that such action would appear to be impossible'. He feared criticism on 'health grounds' and where teenage children of mixed sexes are concerned, criticism on 'moral grounds'.⁶⁶ It was overcrowding such as this that led to comment in the Parliament on the case of a family squeezed into two rooms measuring approximately 11 feet by 6 feet, with a mother attempting to care for four children with a contagious illness.⁶⁷

By 1957 Bland realised that a 'new and fresh public relations policy of goodwill' toward residents was vital to avoid 'such rumblings as may reach the press' concerning the overcrowding of the hostels. Sympathy and an 'understanding attitude' toward migrants would 'indicate that the Hostel manager [was] taking a genuine personal interest in their well-being' rather than as

⁶³ AA: CRS B146, Item 60/2049; P.H. Cook to W. Funnell (my emphasis), n.d. [middle to late 1950s].

⁶⁴ *HR Debates*, MHR W. McMahon, Minister for DLNS, quoting the decision of 1955. 6 October 1959, p. 1762.

⁶⁵ *HR Debates*, MHR W. McMahon, Minister for DLNS, quoting the decision of 1955. 6 October 1959, p. 1762.

⁶⁶ AA: CRS B146 Item 62/4029; Bland to Funnell, 26 August 1957.

⁶⁷ *HR Debates*, vol. 14, 28 March 1957, p. 334.

migrants 'who had to be fitted in'.⁶⁸ It was, in effect, a trade-off for the overcrowding of the hostels.

If there was need for any more proof to establish the validity of the claims of the hostel residents, the admission came from within the Department itself. In 1957, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, then visiting Australia, was invited to inspect one of the hostels. When Brisbane's Colmslie was suggested, Bland was quick to protest that from his recollection Colmslie was 'well below average standard. It would be quite undesirable for the British Prime Minister to form his impression of hostels in Australia from a visit to Colmslie.' After much consultation Nunawading hostel in Melbourne was chosen as the only one suitable for inspection. Without further ado, arrangements were made to ensure a spick and span appearance for the visit.⁶⁹ Ironically, so huge was the bevy of officials, photographers and press personnel that the Prime Minister 'had some difficulty in seeing the hostel but he was impressed with what he had seen', a memo noted.⁷⁰

Idly seeking guidelines on the fundamental laws of overcrowding, Cook was astonished to find, in 1957, that the Company—Commonwealth Hostels Limited—was in breach of the State Health Department laws. Because of the dome-shaped Nissen huts and the irregular shaped cubicle rooms, 'our accommodation standards fall short of the legislation of New South Wales, Victoria and possibly Queensland and West Australia.'⁷¹ Yet it was totally 'impractical for Commonwealth Hostels to provide accommodation to conform' with State Health regulations. If these were to be observed, 'accommodation would have to be provided on what would undoubtedly be a very generous, if not extravagant basis', relative to the existing conditions.⁷² That the Company might not be able to recover hostel dues when in breach of the law,

⁶⁸ AA: CRS B146 Item 62/4029; Bland to Funnell, 1 June 1957.

⁶⁹ AA: CRS B146, Item 1957/3191; Bland to Funnell, 5 December 1957.

⁷⁰ AA: CRS B146, Item 1957/3191; Report of inspection of Nunawading hostel, 7 February 1958.

⁷¹ AA: CRS B146, Item 62/4029; Cook to Bland, 9 October 1957.

⁷² AA: CRS B146, Item 62/4029; Cook to Bland, 9 October 1957.

nonetheless, was still a main concern, and Bland suggested that covert inquiries be carried out regarding the right to collect tariffs when in breach of health laws, but in order to avoid any hint of publicity, gave instructions not to 'make inquiries outside this office'.⁷³ A. Townley, then Immigration Minister, however, preferred to let well alone. If legal problems arose, they would 'be considered when they do'.⁷⁴

Bland told Heyes, late in 1957, that it would [now] be neither practicable nor desirable for hostel managers to seek to enforce observance of the official accommodation arrangement [because] we could not contemplate applying sanctions such as eviction of those found guilty [of noncompliance].⁷⁵

But this correspondence provides conclusive evidence that the punitive evictions carried out by hostel managers had the full support of the DLNS and the Department of Immigration. The Department's instruction to modify managers' attitudes was merely due to fear of any revelation of Commonwealth Hostels' breach of the State Health Department laws. Thus Funnell went so far as to say that he did not favour giving a definite period of notice at all. This applied to some 'cases [where] the reasons are substantial and where the issue of notice would be *publicly indefensible*', as with genuine cases where eviction of widows or widowers with children 'could be seriously criticised on *humanitarian grounds*'.⁷⁶ The change of heart emanated not from compassion, but from fear of censure from the community.

The corollary to the preference expressed by Holt and White for the 'better class of self-funded migrants' was that assisted migrants were inferior. But this was not a migration of the unemployed. These Britons were working-class migrants who were proud of their status as trades-people, seeking better opportunities for themselves and their children than they could find at home. Nor did they ask for assistance as High

⁷³ AA: CRS B146, Item 62/4029; Bland to Cook, 14 October 1957.

⁷⁴ AA: CRS B146, Item 62/4029; Bland to Cook, 14 October 1957.

⁷⁵ AA: CRS B146, Item 62/4029; Bland to Heyes, 25 October 1957.

⁷⁶ AA: CRS B146, Item 56/7723; Funnell to Bland, 16 October 1957 (my emphasis).

Commissioner Tom White had intimated. They were invited migrants, lured by promises which were never properly honoured. Many of them had little collateral, but they began their journey rich in optimism. For the assisted who had been privately nominated, no responsibility was accepted if they found themselves in trouble, often through no fault of their own: they were considered to be the failures of migration. Where government sponsored migrants were concerned, Australian governments were supersensitive to poor publicity, but not to the reasonable needs of these migrants they had sought so energetically to encourage. The hostels which were supposed to ease their initial settlement were described in the Parliament as 'pits of degradation and despair', and being 'worse than the worst slum conditions' that could be 'found in any of our cities'.⁷⁷

The history of the hostels in the late 1940s and during the 1950s was not one in which the Immigration Department could take particular pride. Harold Holt saw immigrants in terms of the eighteenth and nineteenth century pioneers, but as Alan Richardson observed, '[c]ircumstances have changed, but expectations change as well, and today an immigrant quite rightly expects more than his predecessors'.⁷⁸ The hostel residents fought for what had been promised them rather than accept the sub-standard fare that was offered. One cannot diminish their experiences by characterising them, as has so often been the case, simply as 'whingers' or trouble-makers. The hostel experience was not a happy one for many British migrants who went through them. The sources suggest that for many it was 'something you like to forget'. History has been in danger of forgetting too.

⁷⁷ *HR Debates*, Vol. 24, 9 August 1959. p. 381.

⁷⁸ A. Richardson, *British Immigration and Australia: A Psycho-Social Inquiry* (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1974), p. 167.

Loretta Baldassar

**THE RETURN VISIT AS PILGRIMAGE:
SECULAR REDEMPTION AND CULTURAL
RENEWAL IN THE MIGRATION PROCESS**

THIS paper deals with ethnography and discursive practices, with imagination, myth, and the social construction of reality. Thus, in terms of the title of this workshop, 'Searching neglected sources', it would be more appropriate, with reference to my paper, to talk about searching neglected concepts or processes.

Here I consider the relationship between identity and migrancy by analysing Italian-Australian migration from a transnational perspective. There are two conceptual issues I explore. Firstly, the notion of the return visit as secular pilgrimage and of the migrant as pilgrim. I contrast three pilgrimage models—Islamic, Protestant and Catholic—in an effort to theorise the return visit as part of the migration process. These models, like all theoretical tools, are inadequate explanatory devices on their own. However, they help illuminate the migrant's progress, especially if seen as different types of discursivity or as separate traditions of symbolic language through which people attempt to make sense of their experiences. The second conceptual issue of concern is the notion of home as a shifting centre that does not stabilise. The return visit becomes the arena in which ethnic identities and connections to place are constructed and transformed. Here, I am interested in how identities are shaped through migrancy.

Most of the data for this paper come from my PhD research conducted in the early 1990s in the town of San Fior in the province of Treviso, north eastern Italy¹ and in the city of Perth,

¹ See Map, p. 89.

Western Australia. About 200 individuals migrated from San Fior to Perth between 1920 and 1965. I analysed the transnational interactions between the inhabitants of San Fior and the emigrants from this village who had settled in Australia. The migrants' visits to their natal town became the focus of my thesis (1994) which I titled *Visits to the shrine* to highlight the importance of return visits in the migration process.²

In this paper, I attempt to extend the argument developed in my thesis by analysing the return visit as a form of pilgrimage explicitly and in a comparative context. Before discussing the pilgrimage models, I briefly outline some of the main propositions about the return visit and migrancy drawn from my research. I then place my work in the context of other studies of Trevisano migrants in Australia in order to provide an overview of the way return visits have been dealt with in the literature in the past and to highlight the importance of theorising the return visit as a component of the migration process.

MIGRANCY AND THE RETURN VISIT

THE following propositions grew out of an analysis of the concept of migrancy and, in particular, migrant identity:

- Migration is not only an economic strategy but also a cultural process—it is necessary to consider not just economic push-pull factors but histories, both personal and collective.
- The migration process does not end with settlement—this idea has implications for the way culture and ethnic identity are theorised; if the migration process is seen to extend beyond settlement, then so too is ethnicity.
- With regard to Italian migration at least, the phenomenon of return visits must be conceptualised as part of the migration process, as one of its stages.

² L. Baldassar, '“Visits to the Shrine”: A Study of Migration as Transnational Interaction between the San Fiorese of Western Australia and Northern Italy', unpublished PhD thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Western Australia, 1994.

- In order to theorise the return visit as part of the migration process, migration must be analysed as transnational interaction and the home and host societies must be understood as part of the same social field. These notions begin to question bounded conceptions of place, community and identity. If people can interact across national borders, then so too can communities and identities.

- It is not so much actual places as the idea of place which is integral to the formation of migrant identities, in particular, the notion of the 'sacred' homeland and the myth of return. As Gerald Gold explained, an 'important genre of transnational contacts is homecomings'.³ Here, the place of expectation, collective myth and even fantasy becomes an important consideration in the analysis of migration and identity.

Surprisingly, the concept of migrancy is seldom the focus of migration studies; rather, the effects of migration are given primacy. Migrancy is not simply about geographical movement but cultural continuity, discontinuity and transmutation. The social construction of identity and, in particular, the constructs of 'family', 'community' and 'identity', are profoundly affected by migrancy.

In dealing with two fieldwork sites, San Fior and Perth, as part of the same social field, I am trying to connect people and places, separated not only by thousands of miles, but also by different experiences dependent upon such factors as time of departure, the social and economic conditions of these various times, as well as such personal issues as motive for departure, gender, age and class. The challenge of linking such disparate entities theoretically was perhaps first self-consciously undertaken by Phillip Mayer (from the famous Rhodes-Livingston Institute of the 1960s) who saw the studies of Africans in towns and the separate studies of Africans in the home-tribal lands as incomplete. To deal with this arbitrary and deceptive distinction, Mayer called in 1962 for a study of migrancy itself:

³ Gerald Gold (ed.), *Minorities and Mother Country Imagery* (Canada, 1984), p. 12.

It might well challenge the anthropologist to redefine such concepts as social personality, role, status, or social field—or at least to inquire whether redefinition is necessary—so as to suit a situation where Ego habitually moves back and forth between urban ‘society’ and tribal ‘society’. The concept of migrant, as such, requires sociological scrutiny.⁴

Situations where ‘Ego habitually moves back and forth’ between two places have become a distinguishing feature of this century. Bottomley begins her book, *From Another Place*, with a quote by Salman Rushdie who has dubbed this century the century of the migrant: ‘perhaps there have never been so many people who end up elsewhere than they began, whether by choice or by necessity’.⁵ Even this quote, however, only gives us one side of the story. The very term ‘migrant’ conjures up an image of someone who is elsewhere from where they began: not just *from* another place but *in* another place. My work with the San Fioresi shows that migrants often end up back where they began, but that, whether ‘back there’ or elsewhere, they often feel out of place. A key question for such migrants thus becomes: Where is home?

⁴ P. Mayer, ‘Migrancy and the Study of Africans in Towns’, *American Anthropologist* 64 (1962), p. 576.

⁵ G. Bottomley, *From Another Place: Migration and the Politics of Culture* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 3. This characterisation is very true for the nation of Italy. According to the Director of the Giovanni Agnelli Foundation: ‘Between 1876 and 1985 the total number of overseas migrants, mainly directed towards the Americas and subsequently to Australia, amounted to a net outflow of approximately 12 million Italians: one of the largest migrations in modern history (Pacini in S. Castles, C. Alcorso, G. Rando & E. Vasta (eds), *Australia’s Italians: Culture and Community in a Changing Society*, Sydney, 1992, p. viii). The Italian journal, *Il Ponte*, published a ‘special edition’ titled, *Emigrazione Cento Anni 26 milioni*, whose editors estimate the total emigration from Italy in the century since unification in 1860 at ‘no less than 26 million’ (E. Agnoletti, *Emigrazione Cento Anni 26 Milioni*, Florence, 1975, p. 1219, my translation). Castles et al. points out that ‘some 25 million Italians emigrated between 1876 and 1965—which is roughly equivalent to the whole Italian population of 1861’ (p. 36).

AUSTRALIA-TREVISO RESEARCH

IN order to situate my work in relation to other Australian studies, I outline the two major anthropological/sociological works on migration to Australia from Treviso.

Rina Huber's 1977 study, *From Pasta to Pavlova*, analyses the migration of people from the province of Treviso to New South Wales. Her work stands out in the literature on Australian migration because at a time when most studies of ethnic groups predicted the loss of culture, Huber considered the transformation (she uses the term 'metamorphosis') of cultural values rather than their disintegration or stasis. In addition, Huber's methodology included an analysis of Trevisani migrants in both NSW and in Treviso itself.⁶

Huber identifies various stages in the migration process and one of these stages is the return visit to Treviso. It is during this visit, Huber explains, that the migrants decide whether to settle in Australia or to repatriate. Because she was writing in the 1970s, when migrants were just beginning to afford a trip home, Huber did not conceive of return visits becoming frequent and regular in the 1980s and 90s. Instead, she describes the first visit home as if it were the only visit home and identifies this visit as the 'clinch factor' determining whether migrants will return to Australia, an observation my data support:

After spending between four and twelve months at home the visitors found they no longer felt at ease. They realised that they had more in common with their settled compatriots in Sydney....Australia also no longer connoted a migration into the unknown. They were therefore closer to *severing the umbilical cord* that had bound them to their village.⁷

Those migrants who decided to return to Australia enter Huber's fifth and final stage: 'They returned to Australia, started

⁶ R. Huber, *From Pasta to Pavlova: A Comparative Study of Italian Settlers in Sydney and Griffith* (St. Lucia, 1977).

⁷ Huber, *From Pasta to Pavlova*, p. 196. My emphasis.



'New Australian?' A Trevisano migrant (centre) returning from a visit 'home', Fremantle 1965.

afresh, and now oriented their life and ambitions to permanent settlement. They had ceased to straddle two worlds'.⁸

Huber is working from the premise that individuals in the home and host countries are not in continuing interaction with each other, or at least that this interaction is insignificant. She equates what she defines as the final stage of migration—the one that inevitably precedes settlement—with the migrants ceasing to straddle two worlds. These worlds are conceived as separate bounded entities. There is no acknowledgment of the interactions we now characterise as the processes of globalisation. With hindsight that includes another two decades of Italian settlement in Australia, the continuing influence of return visits, for both the first and second generation, is evident (see Table One). Such transnational interactions include reciprocal obligations between kin, as well as the ongoing relevance of *campanilismo*—connections to place. While the umbilical cord that binds the migrant to his or her hometown may have been transformed, it is rarely severed; rather, the two worlds form part of the same social field.

The province of Treviso has a long tradition of seasonal migration to neighbouring European countries and, according to Fofi, this type of migration was an accepted part of life.⁹ The emigrants were predominantly men seeking work abroad during periods of unemployment who would return to their families in Italy when there was a demand for labour. The migration of North Italians to America and Australia developed out of this tradition of seasonal migration.¹⁰ Thus, contrary to the rather naive perceptions of Australian authorities in the postwar years, most of these migrants saw themselves as guest-workers and their goal as *sistemazione* (settlement) in their homeland. Huber herself points out, for example, that the Trevisano migrants she interviewed had all intended to return: 'the

⁸ Huber, *From Pasta to Pavlova*, p. 141.

⁹ G. Fofi, 'Immigrants to Turin', in C.J. Jansen (ed.), *Readings in the Sociology of Migration* (Oxford, 1970), p. 267.

¹⁰ Cf. F. Alberoni, 'Aspects of Internal Migration Related to Other Types of Italian Migration', in Jansen (ed.), *Readings in the Sociology of Migration*, p. 288.

TABLE ONE: RETURN VISITS TO SAN FIOR FROM PERTH (1950-1990)

#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	yr
*	*	*	**	**	**	**	*	**	'90
	*			*	**	**	*	*	'88
		*	*	**	**	**	*	*	'86
			*		*	**			'84
*			**		*	**			'82
		*		**	**	**			'80
	*			**	*	*			'78
					*	**	*		'76
									'74
		*	*	*	*		*	*	'72
	*	*	*	*	*			*	'70
	*		*	*					'68
									'66
									'64
				*					'62
				*	*	*		*	'60
						*			'58
									'56
									'54
									'52
*						*	*		'50

This Table depicts the return visits made by nine couples to San Fior from Perth.

migrants traditionally planned to return and were nearly always emotionally tied to their place of origin'.¹¹

The major work on Italian return migration from Australia is Stephanie Lindsay Thompson's *Australia Through Italian Eyes*.¹² Thompson's study aimed to identify the factors which led initially to emigration and subsequently to return and resettlement in Italy over the period from 1960 to 1970. Thompson conducted 138 interviews with returned migrants from Australia in the provinces of L'Aquila (in the Abruzzi region) and Treviso in 1970. The study was inspired by the relatively high rates of Italian 'settler loss' or return migration—33.5 per cent. between 1960 and 1969—which were alarming to the Australian government, given its policy of settler migration.¹³

That the Australian government wanted permanent migrants rather than guest-workers was evident in the fact that new arrivals (at least those deemed acceptable by Australian immigration standards) were called 'new Australians'. Un-naturalised residents were encouraged to take out citizenship as without it they could not enjoy certain privileges. Thompson's findings questioned the assumption by Australian immigration officials at the time that Italians and other groups emigrate to Australia for permanent settlement. Thompson reports that few, if any, of the migrants she interviewed had anticipated their emigration to Australia to be permanent. 'On the contrary, most seemed to have regarded it as a temporary period of hard labour overseas, the returns from which would enable them to enjoy a higher standard of living back in Italy'.¹⁴

While all Thompson's informants reported the pursuit of financial gain and economic security as the main motives for migrating, their reasons for repatriating included: family ties, concern for care in old age, discrimination, health and nostalgia. Thompson distinguishes between stated reasons and apparent

¹¹ Huber, *From Pasta to Pavlova*, p. 46.

¹² S.L. Thompson, *Australia through Italian Eyes: A Study of Settlers Returning from Australia to Italy* (Melbourne, 1980).

¹³ Thompson, *Australia through Italian Eyes*, p. xix; cf. J. Wilton & R. Bosworth, *Old Worlds and New Australians* (Victoria, 1984).

¹⁴ Thompson, *Australia through Italian Eyes*, p. 36.

reasons for return, noting that informants' responses suggested it was not acceptable to state economic failure as a reason for returning, highlighting the migrants' need to prove that their migration was successful.

With regard to my work, one of the most significant aspects of Thompson's study is her discussion of the influence of visits on the decision to return home. It is apparent from Thompson's research that home visits, although expensive, were common. 'In many cases, resettlement was preceded by a visit during which employment prospects were ascertained'.¹⁵ The other significant finding which bears out my own data is Thompson's central argument that Italian migrants did not intend to settle in Australia but saw their migration as temporary. I argue, somewhat controversially, that San Fiorese migrants were in fact morally obliged to return—partly as this was the cultural tradition of the region and in part because of their obligations to townspeople and kin.¹⁶ I develop this argument below with reference to the notion of the return visit as pilgrimage.

In no Australian study has the phenomenon of return visits occupied centre stage. Rather, return visits are either noted as a way of gauging ties to the home country and of deciding where to settle, or are entirely overlooked. Di Leonardo notes that return visits to the USA went unnoticed by immigration officials and the re-migrations of individuals were counted as separate migrations:

The majority of emigrants, for the entire period of heavy emigration, left intending to return. The evidence suggests that large numbers were counted as new emigrants and immigrants, by the Italian and American governments, as

¹⁵ Thompson, *Australia through Italian Eyes*, p. 228.

¹⁶ Cf. L. Baldassar, 'Home and Away: Migration, the Return Visit and "Transnational" Identity', in I. Ang & M. Symonds (eds), *Communal plural: Home, Displacement, Belonging* (Sydney, 1997); L. Baldassar, 'Migration as Transnational Interaction—Italy Re-Visited', *Convivio: Journal of Ideas in Italian Studies* 1/2 (1995), pp. 114-126.

they left a second, third, or more times in their periodic returns and remigrations.¹⁷

Price has shown the same situation for Australia. The official statistics, 'simply record the total number of entries and exits, irrespective of whether the persons concerned are making their first or fifth entry or exit'.¹⁸

While most studies do not analyse return visits and repatriations as part of the migration process, return visits are integral to this process. The incidence of return visits made by the Australian-born generations is, I think, clear proof that the migration process extends beyond settlement and is characterised by transnational interaction. All second generation San Fiorese respondents expressed a keen desire to visit Italy and their parents felt it was their moral responsibility to finance their children's visits 'home'.

The visit home is not always, however, an entirely positive experience. Both first and second generation migrants experience a sense of dislocation and of not belonging. The tensions involved in deciding where to stay, (whether with a relative or not and if so, which one and for how long) are indicative of the fractious family relations that develop due to migration. It is important to note also that many of the Australian-born visitors only make their time in San Fior a very brief part of a much longer European tour. In this way, their visits to San Fior, like those of their parents, are secular pilgrimages to a shrine.

So the question remains: Why bother to visit at all? Is pilgrimage part of the answer?

PILGRIMAGE

THE continual identification with home-town despite the tensions and rivalries which exist between townspeople and migrants is the subject of Carol Delaney and Ruth Mandel's

¹⁷ M. Di Leonardo, *The Varieties of Ethnic Experience* (Ithaca, 1984), p. 49.

¹⁸ C.A. Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia* (Melbourne, 1963), p. 10.

papers on Turkish guest-workers (*gastarbeiter*) in Germany.¹⁹ Mandel's 1990 paper, 'Shifting centres and emergent identities: Turkey and Germany in the lives of Turkish Gastarbeiter', distinguishes Turkish migrants from non-migrant Turks and describes the consequences of migration on the migrants' identity:

On the one hand, their 'Turkishness' marginalises the migrants in the German context; on the other, the markedness of being *Alamancilar* [ie. German-like] in Turkey, the inability to merge back into the Turkish main-stream, entraps Turkish *Gastarbeiter* in a circular quest for an increasingly elusive identity.²⁰

Mandel conceives of the migrant and non-migrant identities in terms of Edward Shils' notion of centre²¹:

The centre that I am concerned with is geographically located, but also finds salience in the realm of individual perception. This centredness is articulated in terms of a geographic core which becomes, in effect, a metaphor for an ideological core around which one's identity revolves.²²

This notion of an ideological core around which one's identity revolves can be contrasted with Anthony Cohen's notion of a symbolic boundary within which one's identity is contained, though the two views are not necessarily mutually exclusive.²³

¹⁹ C. Delaney, 'The Hajj: Sacred and Secular', *American Ethnologist* 17 (1990), pp. 513-30; R. Mandel, 'Shifting Centres and Emergent Identities: Turkey and Germany in the Lives of Turkish Gastarbeiter', in D. Eichelman & J. Piscatori (eds.), *Muslim Travellers. Pilgrimage, Migration and the Religious Imagination* (London, 1990).

²⁰ Mandel, 'Shifting Centres and Emergent Identities', pp. 160-1.

²¹ E. Shils, *Centre and Periphery: The Logic of Personal Knowledge* (London, 1961); E. Shils, 'Roots—The Sense of Place and Past: The Cultural Gains and Losses of Migration', in W.H. McNeill & R.S. Adam (eds), *Human Migration: Patterns and Policies* (Bloomington & London, 1978).

²² Mandel, 'Shifting Centres and Emergent Identities', p. 153.

²³ A.P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London, 1985); see also F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Culture Difference* (London, 1969); F. Barth, 'Enduring and Emerging Issues in the Analysis of Ethnicity', in H. Vermeulan and C.

Mandel is concerned to show how the relevant centre and periphery of the migrants undergo fundamental transformations in relation to each other. In Cohen's terms, the meanings prescribed to the symbolic boundary are transformed through the process of migration.

Mandel argues that the diaspora has ironically assumed the authority of a legitimate and even desirable 'centre' in contrast to an increasingly 'peripheral' Turkey.²⁴ This 'shifting' centre has not, however, stabilised, with the result that 'a vicious circle of sorts reflects the migratory cycle itself and eventually results in a situation in which the centre finds itself wherever the migrant is not, be it Turkey or Germany'.²⁵ The resultant disorientation experienced by the migrants, in particular the second generation, is not surprising. Their status as guest-workers means that they will never be permanent settlers in Germany and their experience of migration, in fact, strengthens their identification as Turks—they become 'more Turkish'. Mandel notes, for example, that migrants become more religious in Germany; men who were not observant Muslims in Turkey became so in Germany and women who did not wear headscarves at home began to in Germany.²⁶

During their visits back home, however, the migrants are expected to take on the role of the rich 'Europeanised' relative—they are expected to have become 'less Turkish'; and 'As such, they are effectively barred from returning to their former identities and relationships'.²⁷ According to Mandel, the return visit thus becomes disorienting, disillusioning and disappointing. The migrants spend a great deal of money and energy living up to the expectations of their compatriots in Turkey, they make the costly trip home and buy expensive gifts, yet, the pressures foisted upon them by their compatriots do not

Govers (eds), *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond 'Ethnic Groups and Boundaries'* (Amsterdam, 1994), pp. 11-31.

²⁴ Mandel, 'Shifting Centres and Emergent Identities', p. 154.

²⁵ Mandel, 'Shifting Centres and Emergent Identities', p. 167.

²⁶ Mandel, 'Shifting Centres and Emergent Identities', p. 162.

²⁷ Mandel, 'Shifting Centres and Emergent Identities', p. 159.

mean they are re-incorporated. In consequence, the migrants often seek out other visiting guest-workers with whom they identify and feel more at ease.

ISLAMIC MODEL OF PILGRIMAGE

Mandel's paper is particularly relevant to my work because she theorises the visit home as part of the migration process. Similarly, Delaney notes that, 'for Turks the annual journey home is itself an integral part of their experience as immigrants, perhaps *the* integrating factor in their lives, yet it has been conceptually invisible'.²⁸ Although they are usually allocated to different, mutually exclusive fields of study, Delaney compares Turkish migrant return visits and the *hajj*—the sacred pilgrimage to Mecca. Both journeys have to do with the patterned movement of people, but, Delaney notes, because pilgrimage is assumed to be undertaken in relation to spiritual matters and migration for secular ones, they are thought to refer to different areas of human experience.²⁹ Delaney argues that this distinction between 'sacred' and 'secular' has more to do with Western categories than Muslim ones. She suggests that instead of theorising migration and pilgrimage as separate domains, each with its own rhetoric and symbols, the *hajj* can be seen as a 'key symbol'³⁰, that 'shape[s] the imagination and motivate[s] the behaviour of Muslims'.³¹

Delaney argues that the return home is a secular pilgrimage because it shares several things in common with the sacred *hajj* to Mecca. Most significantly, they both represent a 'journey home', the importance of which has been overlooked in migration studies. The journey home enables the migrants to renew their identity as Turks and gives them dignity.³² The pilgrimage to Mecca brings about a transformation in the male

²⁸ Delaney, 'The Hajj', p. 513.

²⁹ Delaney, 'The Hajj', p. 513.

³⁰ S.B. Ortner, 'On Key Symbols', *American Anthropologist* 75 (1973), pp. 1338-46.

³¹ Delaney, 'The Hajj', p. 514.

³² Delaney, 'The Hajj', p. 525.

pilgrim whose status is subsequently increased in his home town. Delaney shows how the migrant's status is also improved during his or her visit home, even if this status change is only transitory, highlighted by the fact that migrants return bearing expensive gifts.

There are, of course, differences between the journey home and the journey to Mecca. Delaney points out that while the journey to Mecca fulfils the obligation of a lifetime, the journey home represents a lifetime of obligation. The most significant difference is that the *hajj* pilgrim represents the values of Islam, while the returning migrant represents Western values. The migrant brings gifts from the West which are distributed to particular people and not shared with everyone as gifts from Mecca are: 'Such action testifies to the transformation of values from a more collectively oriented ethic to an individually oriented one, a process that is associated with the "West", with industrial capitalism, and with Protestantism'.³³

Delaney contrasts the return visit as a secular *hajj* with its antithesis, the migration, as a secular *hijra* (see Figure One) Like Italian migrants to Australia, most Turks intend their migration to be only temporary. 'Their journey away from home appears to be thoroughly secular in nature, undertaken for financial rewards rather than spiritual enrichment'.³⁴ In this way, Delaney defines the journey outward as a kind of secular *hijra*:

The term *hijra* originally referred to the emigration of Muhammed and his followers from Mecca to Medina, but it has been used to refer to other migrations, economic as well as political. It means not an abandonment of home but a temporary withdrawal until conditions change and it is possible to return. In a sense, the *hijra* not only invoke ideas of *hajj*, but provides a dimension of meaning and a psychological orientation to migration and the journey home that are unavailable to non-Muslims. Muslims, therefore, have at their disposal a wide symbolic framework within which

³³ Delaney, 'The Hajj', p. 525.

³⁴ Delaney, 'The Hajj', p. 523.

their own migration may be modelled, justified, and interpreted.³⁵

Figure One:

ISLAMIC MODEL OF PILGRIMAGE

pilgrimage = *HAJJ* (journey home)
antithesis = *HIJRA* (journey outward)

According to Delaney, the image of the 'sacred' homeland legitimises the migrants' sojourn and 'keeps them going'. She even proposes that the Turkish migrants 'may be aware that to return home for good would vitiate the image and render it secular'.³⁶ A question this argument raises for me is: Do the Protestant and Catholic models of pilgrimage similarly provide psychological orientations to migration?

THE CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE MODELS

The San Fiorese share with the Turks a strong sense of attachment to place (*campanilismo*) and a world view or set of values which orient their behaviour homeward and from which develops a keen sense of *nostalgia*: the desire to return home. Delaney points out that 'there is an intimate relationship between psychological and physical topography: geography is invested with meaning'.³⁷ '[T]he small bit of land from which they come is still one of the most salient items in the construction of identity'.³⁸ Like Delaney, I wish to analyse migration in the context of the migrant's own cultural world. For this reason, I highlight the cultural codes of *campanilismo* and *sistemazione* and the fact that seasonal migration is a traditional economic and social strategy practised over the last century by the San Fiorese.

Obviously, pilgrimage is not as overt a cultural practice for most Italians as it is for most Turks. However, pilgrimage is a

³⁵ Delaney, 'The Hajj', p. 523.

³⁶ Delaney, 'The Hajj', p. 526.

³⁷ Delaney, 'The Hajj', p. 517.

³⁸ Delaney, 'The Hajj', p. 522.

religious tradition practised by San Fiorese. In addition, a number of informants defined themselves as pilgrims or spoke about their return as a form of cultural renewal. This 'rhetoric of pilgrimage' tended to be implicit rather than explicit. For example, people often justified their visits by explaining that they needed to breathe the air of their home-town in order to get their strength back, or that they needed to see their homeland and hear their town's bell-tower, as if these experiences would nourish them. They also spoke of needing to reunite with family and of being expected to attend special occasions like funerals and weddings. That the migrants are morally obliged to return is evidenced by both the frequency of their visits and by their unwillingness to finance trips that do not include a visit to San Fior.³⁹

Zygmunt Bauman in a 1996 paper points out that 'the figure of the pilgrim...is as old as Christianity'.⁴⁰ He quotes St Augustine, who wrote that the 'true city of the saints is in heaven', while here on earth 'Christians wander as on a pilgrimage through time looking for the kingdom of eternity', and Richard Sennett, who states that 'Judeo-Christian culture is, at its very roots, about experiences of spiritual dislocation and homelessness...Our faith began at odds with place'.⁴¹ So, the Christian is a 'pilgrim through time'.

According to Bauman, the medieval Christian who consciously chose to lead life as a pilgrim was a hermit, existing in a desert—apart from the 'hurly burly of family life, away from the village, from the mundane, from the polis'; an existence

³⁹ My analysis of return visits in this paper does not include a discussion of economics. The pattern of return visits evident in Table One can easily be explained by the increase in funds migrants had available to them over time and also the increase in the ease and speed of travel. Notwithstanding these changes, the fact that San Fiorese spend their time and money on return visits to San Fior, rather than to other destinations, supports my argument about the visit home being a moral obligation.

⁴⁰ Z. Bauman, 'From Pilgrim to Tourist—Or A Short History of Identity', in S. Hall & P. du Gay (eds), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London, 1996), p. 19.

⁴¹ Bauman, 'From Pilgrim to Tourist', p. 20.

outside of a place.⁴² However, the Protestant, Bauman explains, drawing on Weber, 'accomplished a feat unthinkable for the lonely hermits of yore: *they became inner-worldly pilgrims* [sic]. They invented a way of embarking on pilgrimage without leaving home and of leaving home without becoming homeless'. How did they do this? By making the world placeless. 'In the new post-Reformation city of modernity, the desert began on the other side of the door'. Bauman defines this type of city as modern society, where, he argues, 'pilgrimage is no longer a choice of a mode of life; less still a... 'saintly choice'. Pilgrimage is rather 'what one does of necessity, to avoid being lost in a desert; to invest the walking with a purpose while wandering the land with no destination': the pilgrim's progress.⁴³

THE PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC MODELS COMPARED

While Delaney employs the symbols of Islam to explain the actions of Turkish migrants, Gwen Kennedy Neville, in her *Kinship and Pilgrimage* uses the world view of Protestantism to explain the incidence of reunions in the southern United States.⁴⁴ Neville does not define pilgrimage using the term 'key symbol' as Delaney does. Her analysis is similar, however, in that she seeks to interpret behaviour according to its symbolic expressions of the paradigms at the root of the Protestant cultural world.

Neville theorises reunions as part of the system of Protestant pilgrimage. In the Protestant tradition, pilgrimage is the process of leaving home to seek one's fortune: 'One must leave the warm, loving relationship of family and kin in order to fulfil the obligation of becoming an individual, acting out one's destiny, being actualised as a self'.⁴⁵ In the same way that Delaney shows how the *hajj* and the *hijra* invoke each other, Neville argues that the ideal of setting out on one's own necessarily implies its antithesis, the ideal of being part of a family (see Figure Two). The reunion is, therefore, part of the

⁴² Bauman, 'From Pilgrim to Tourist', p. 20.

⁴³ See Bauman, 'From Pilgrim to Tourist', p. 21.

⁴⁴ G.K. Neville, *Kinship and Pilgrimage: Rituals of Reunion in American Protestant Culture* (New York, 1987).

⁴⁵ Neville, *Kinship and Pilgrimage*, p. 3.

pilgrimage system in Protestantism because it represents a way of incorporating the antithetical ideals of being an individual alone and being part of a family. At one and the same time, the reunion is a celebration of the bonds of family and a celebration of the individual pilgrim journey: 'It enables those who give homage to the ideals of success and individual achievement to pause and give homage to the virtues of staying behind in tight-knit fellowship'.⁴⁶

Figure Two:

PROTESTANT MODEL OF PILGRIMAGE (MODERNITY)

[reformation of Medieval Catholic tradition]

pilgrimage =	journey out (alone)
	'pilgrim's progress' (individualism)
antithesis =	reunion (family)

The Protestant reunions in America's deep south do not have a counterpart in Scotland, the ancestral land of the pilgrims. According to Neville, 'the family reunion is apparently a product of the colonising migrations, which created a world of social and geographic mobility and gave to its participants a complicated set of cultural prescriptions and contradictions'.⁴⁷ Those children who could not be accommodated on land at home were sent out to seek their fortunes. In consequence, the American South was colonised by individuals who, according to Neville, were 'the non-inheritors who did not marry locally or go into the church'. The reunion is thus a celebration of the Protestant pilgrims' idea of 'success': 'In the drama about the ancestor and in the drama about the reunion itself as a social form, history is being retold as its recipients would like it to be'.⁴⁸

The Protestant pilgrimage system of leaving home to seek one's fortune and periodically reuniting with family is based on the reverse of the medieval and Roman Catholic pilgrimage, which Neville defines as, 'a system of travelling outward from

⁴⁶ Neville, *Kinship and Pilgrimage*, p. 63.

⁴⁷ Neville, *Kinship and Pilgrimage*, p. 8.

⁴⁸ Neville, *Kinship and Pilgrimage*, p. 62.

home on a pilgrim journey in order to seek one's spiritual "fortune" in the form of salvation or expiration'.⁴⁹ In medieval Christianity and subsequent Roman Catholicism the individual is seen as rooted in a particular village or town within a highly structured set of social relationships. The only acceptable mode for the Catholic to travel was in the institution of pilgrimage. A pilgrimage was essentially a movement out of, and away from, an individual's set of primary identity-forming relationships to a shrine or place of worship (see Figure Three). In contrast, the Protestant, Neville explains, 'is now seen not as a resident of a parish...over which the church holds sway and out of which he or she must travel in order to undertake a pilgrim journey, but as an individual citizen of the world at large on a personal pilgrimage through life and society'.⁵⁰

Figure Three:

CATHOLIC MODEL OF PILGRIMAGE (MEDIEVAL)

pilgrimage =	journey out (with other pilgrims) to a shrine to seek salvation (as individual soul)
antithesis =	home structured social requirements tightly knit community

Neville makes clear that the Protestant version of pilgrimage has taken shape over 300 years of post-Reformation industrialism and following the spread of Protestant christianity to the new World: 'The actual repeated journey made by the Protestant pilgrim is not one of going out as in the classical pilgrimage but one of going back periodically as a way of escaping the individuation and depersonalisation experienced as a member of a scattered, mobile, and often anonymous urban industrial society'.⁵¹ Unlike the Catholic, the Protestant is not required to seek salvation through 'good works' for s/he has

⁴⁹ Neville, *Kinship and Pilgrimage*, p. 4

⁵⁰ Neville, *Kinship and Pilgrimage*, p. 20.

⁵¹ Neville, *Kinship and Pilgrimage*, p. 20.

already been saved by Grace. Roman Catholics, in contrast, are obliged to follow the pronouncements of the Bishop of Rome. In order to achieve salvation, Catholics must do 'good works'. Protestants, however, deplore the theory of salvation by works.

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the pilgrimage to a shrine was seen as a 'good work' which would help an individual achieve salvation. According to Neville, 'these shrines provide a classic example of the concrete social expression of what Turner calls root paradigms—cultural models for behaviour that exist in the heads of the main actors in a social drama'.⁵² The pilgrimage to the shrine for the Catholic can be theorised in the same way that Delaney theorises the *hajj* for the Muslims (as a 'key symbol' that shapes the imagination and motivates their actions) and as Neville theorises Protestant pilgrimage (as a cultural model for behaviour). The San Fioresi are steeped in a millenarian tradition of Roman Catholicism. The question for me, then, is: Can return visits be compared to the Catholic pilgrimage to the shrine?

SAN FIORESE SECULAR PILGRIMAGE

I use the notions of *campanilismo* and *sistemazione*, as well as the Christian pilgrimage models, to make sense of the Italian migrants' return visits home. The home-town becomes the secular shrine to be visited for, not spiritual, but 'ethnic renewal' and rebirth. The Roman Catholic migrant who has settled in a distant land, 'set up' (*sistemazione*) family and community there is obliged to pay homage to the natal land. As Neville explains:

The medieval pilgrimage is a symbolic process commenting on the cultural contradictions implicit in a world in which the person lives within a tightly ordered, traditional social system but is under the religious imperative to be saved as an individual soul. The Protestant pilgrimage comments on the opposite—a world in which the person lives in a constant state of individual striving and self-actualisation but in which the religious imperative calls for communal life and

⁵² Neville, *Kinship and Pilgrimage*, p. 18; V. Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, 1974), p. 64.

loyalty to one's family and kin. Both these worlds hold irreconcilable cultural contradictions. And, in each one, the pilgrimage acts as a vehicle for constructing meanings, for making sense of the contradictions, for attempting a ritual resolution of seemingly impossible cultural demands.⁵³

The pilgrimage has been theorised by Victor Turner as a rite of passage.⁵⁴ The movement or journey leads the individual to a state of liminality. In Protestantism, this liminal state is represented by the reunion. In Catholicism, the liminal state is represented by the visit to the shrine. According to Turner, liminality is one of the locations for true *communitas* to take place.⁵⁵ In Cohen's terms, the reunion and the visit home provide a powerful symbol with which the reuniter and the visitors, respectively, identify.⁵⁶ Neville⁵⁷ states that each culture creates its own version of the liminoid phenomenon of pilgrimage: 'each style of pilgrimage provides what Geertz⁵⁸ would call a "metasocial commentary" on its own social universe', and thus a key (symbol) to understanding the symbolic construction of identity:

Medieval pilgrimages are seen in the Turners' study within the construct of ritual liminality as defined by van Gennep. The pilgrim in medieval Christianity was a person in transition, entering on a long journey to a saint's shrine in order to experience penance or expiation or to fulfil a vow to a departed loved one. By the visit to the saint's shrine the pilgrim was transformed from his or her daily state of structured social requirements and personal village obligations into a new state of communal life shared with the other pilgrims. Through his or her pilgrimage the person underwent a process similar to a tribal initiation, becoming removed from society in order to become purified and

⁵³ Neville, *Kinship and Pilgrimage*, pp. 21-2.

⁵⁴ See Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*.

⁵⁵ Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*.

⁵⁶ Cohen, *Symbolic Construction of Community*.

⁵⁷ Neville, *Kinship and Pilgrimage*, p 14.

⁵⁸ C. Geertz, (ed.), *Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973).

immersed in the sacred lore and then being returned in a renewed state, one of greater spirituality.⁵⁹

My findings clearly show that the return visit has a significant influence on the migrant's *campanilismo* and ethnic identity. Through their visit experiences, and thus their passage through the liminoid, the first generation of migrants are culturally renewed and the second generation are culturally transformed.⁶⁰ Both generations renew and re-affirm their ethnic identity.

The notions of good works, penance and obligation (keeping a vow) are evident in the San Fiorese visit experiences. Some incidents from my fieldwork include a visit performed after one man was involved in a serious accident and narrowly escaped death; he said 'I better go to Italy' and the implication was, 'to thank God'. I have already noted the way people define their visits as necessary to feel rejuvenated, renewed. In addition, San Fiorese in Perth often organise visits together. The solidarity between visitors helps ease the potential pain of disorientation often experienced during the visit as migrants have more in common with each other than with the non-migrants they are visiting. Thus, the experience of *communitas* is often shared by fellow travellers, as in the Catholic pilgrimage model.

In using the pilgrimage models to make sense of San Fiorese return visits, I assume that both Catholicism and Protestantism inform the actions of the San Fiorese. Neville documents the pilgrimages of people whom she describes as 'verbal, rational, and capitalistic in their lifeways...who view their lives as individual pilgrimages and who are free to move away from family and kin in order to achieve their personal goals'.⁶¹ These attributes are described as Protestant, but they are also

⁵⁹ Neville, *Kinship and Pilgrimage*, p. 15; A. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, tr. M.B. Vizedom & G.L. Caffee, (London, 1960).

⁶⁰ Cf. Baldassar, 'Visits to the Shrine': A Study of Migration as Transnational Interaction between the San Fiorese of Western Australia and Northern Italy; Baldassar, 'Home and Away: Migration, the Return Visit and "Transnational" Identity', Ang & Symonds (eds), *Communal plural: Home, Displacement, Belonging*.

⁶¹ Neville, *Kinship and Pilgrimage*, p. 76.

attributes of the Western world. Delaney too, argued that the contemporary experience of Turkish return visits is affected by the values of the West, industrial capitalism and Protestantism.⁶²

Neville explains that, in the secular world surrounding the medieval church where the predominant social unit was the family and local neighbourhood, an individual's most precious loyalty and obligation was to the Church. Social relationships were corporate and hierarchical and social life highly structured, thus pilgrimage 'provided the opportunity for expression of the counterpoint of that world in antistructural individuation on the pilgrim way'.⁶³ In the modern world of Protestant (Capitalist) America, in contrast,

the individual is expected to live out life as a unit apart, a pilgrim on a journey every day through the labyrinth of a legal-rational social universe, seeking one's fortune alone, exemplifying the virtues of ingenuity, thrift, hard work, and fulfilling one's destiny in a most personalized way. The structure in this world is the structure of the rational-technical world of work, where people are hired, transferred, moved, promoted, and dismissed on their own individual merit or lack of it, and where they are conceived in, socialized by, and launched from ideal nucleated household units with only fragile ties to extended kin. In this setting the antistructure is quite the opposite from the liminality of the personal pilgrim journey (for this is now the motif of daily life). It is the antistructure of obligation to a large family unit and a citizenship in a sacred locale, a place to call home. Its social expression, then, is in reunion, the reuniting of the wandering individuals, and in homecoming, the returning to a place from which they or their ancestors have gone away.⁶⁴

San Fiorese migrants visit their hometown for cultural and spiritual renewal, as in the Catholic tradition of visiting a shrine. But, the visit also represents a reunion with family and

⁶² Delaney, 'The Hajj', p. 525.

⁶³ Neville, *Kinship and Pilgrimage*, p. 64.

⁶⁴ Neville, *Kinship and Pilgrimage*, pp. 63-4.

tradition. At one and the same time, the visit is a form of good works obtained by travelling outward from the established homeland as well as a reunion or return to family to escape the individualisation of the migrant's progress in the new (modern, Western) world.

One of the difficulties in applying the pilgrimage models to the phenomenon of return visits is the ambiguity surrounding the notion of home. Where is the migrant's home/centre? Is the migrant's visit to be understood as a movement out of home or towards home? San Fior, and by extension Italy, are seen as the centres of cultural authenticity. Australia has long been characterised, by non-migrant San Fioresi, as culture-less and 'nothing but desert'. Indeed, one of the identities of the migrants, as perceived by the non-migrants, was as people who sacrificed life, civilised life, in order to make enough money to be able to return to it. Obviously, most migrants do not subscribe to this view. (It is important to note that this negative image of Australia is changing as visits begin to be made here! Are these to be understood as part of the migration process as well?)

Most young adult San Fioresi in Perth, like most young adult San Fioresi in Italy, prefer to find a job close to home. In fact, closeness to home is as important a factor in determining the value of a job as how good the wages are. However, in both countries, rather than lose the opportunity of a good job, young adults will move away from home, often to the great distress of their parents, for they are obliged to set themselves up (*sistemazione*).⁶⁵ In a society which values the family and village above the individual, migration is, to say the least, an interesting problem. I have already noted that seasonal migration has a long tradition in Treviso and it was an acceptable economic strategy precisely because the migrant returned home. Migration overseas, which grew out of the

⁶⁵ Two second-generation San Fioresi migrants from Perth moved to San Fior for work. Both sets of parents saw this, on the one hand, as a positive move, because it further consolidated their ties to the homeland. On the other hand, their children's 'repatriation' made it difficult for them to justify their own original migration.



..... Returning 'home' after visiting 'home'. A Trevisano migrant and his Australian-born daughter, Perth 1990.

seasonal migration tradition was, as Thompson has shown, also meant to be temporary.⁶⁶ Those migrants who chose to settle abroad are, then, transgressing traditional obligations. The consequence of this transgression is that the migrant assumes a position of ambiguity in the family. At one and the same time, the migrant is contained within the reciprocal bonds of the family and independent of them.

TOWARDS A CONCLUSION: PILGRIMAGE, PLACE, IDENTITY

IT IS interesting to contrast Neville's ideas about Protestant pilgrimage suiting modern society with Bauman's ideas about postmodern (contemporary) society which, he argues, is inhospitable to pilgrims. Bauman's argument, in brief, is that in the period he defines as modernity, the "problem of identity" was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable; while in the current period of postmodernity, the "problem of identity" is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open.⁶⁷

In the postmodern world, the identity of both persons and things have lost their solidity, their definiteness and continuity; in such a world, 'identities can be adopted and discarded like a change of costume'.⁶⁸ In this society, according to Bauman, 'life as pilgrimage is hardly feasible as a strategy and unlikely to be chosen as one. Not by many anyway. And not with great chance of success'. The rules of the postmodern life game, undermined by the fact that the rules of the game constantly change during the course of the game, are to beware being fixed to anything, be it long-term commitments, to people, to a place, or a vocation. The postmodern identity must renounce responsibility, cut the present off from the past, abolish time and live in a continuous present: 'And so the snag is no longer how

⁶⁶ Thompson, *Australia through Italian Eyes*.

⁶⁷ Bauman, 'From Pilgrim to Tourist', p. 18.

⁶⁸ Lasch in Bauman, 'From Pilgrim to Tourist', p. 23.

to discover, invent, construct, assemble (even buy) an identity, but how to prevent it from sticking'.⁶⁹

Bauman argues that while the pilgrim 'was the most fitting metaphor for the modern life strategy preoccupied with the daunting task of identity building, the stroller, vagabond, tourist and player offer jointly the metaphor for the postmodern strategy moved by the horror of being bound and fixed'.⁷⁰ Space does not permit a definition of each of these types except to point out that, according to Bauman, none is an adequate metaphor of postmodern identity alone, but rather, they each form a part of the story but they never integrate into a totality. The most seminal characteristic these types share, according to Bauman, is their effects on popular moral and political attitudes⁷¹; all four intertwining and interpenetrating postmodern life strategies have in common that they tend to render human relations fragmentary and discontinuous; they are all up in arms against "strings attached" and long-lasting consequences and militate against the construction of lasting networks of mutual duties and obligations'.⁷²

In contrast to Bauman's ideas about postmodern 'no strings attached' identity, my findings attest to the antithesis, to the continuing importance of ties to, and commitments to, place and people. However, in recognising and highlighting their attachments to place, it is equally important to acknowledge that each of the identities—of the visitor, the pilgrim (of whichever religious model) and even Bauman's postmodern creatures—are characterised by movement. This migrancy renders geographical place into the idea of a place⁷³ and the home, as Mandel argues, into an ever-shifting centre that may find itself wherever the migrant is not.⁷⁴ I suggest elsewhere,

⁶⁹ Bauman, 'From Pilgrim to Tourist', p. 24.

⁷⁰ Bauman, 'From Pilgrim to Tourist', p. 26.

⁷¹ Bauman, 'From Pilgrim to Tourist', p. 32.

⁷² Bauman, 'From Pilgrim to Tourist', p. 33.

⁷³ Cf. W.A. Douglass, *Emigration in a South Italian Town: An Anthropological History* (New Brunswick, 1984).

⁷⁴ Mandel, 'Shifting Centres and Emergent Identities'.

that the migratory movements—the return visits—between two ‘homes’ may become themselves the creation of a sense of home.⁷⁵

Contemporary theorists of migration need to take into account identities characterised by movement. For example, Siu-lun Wong explains how the terms ‘emigrant’ and ‘returnee’ are inadequate to describe Hong Kong migrants who move into and away from Hong Kong regularly.⁷⁶ He suggests that ‘the fluidity of their status is better captured by the new and figurative term of “astronauts”’.⁷⁷ However, while the astronaut is often in orbit, away from home, his/her very identity is dependent on the notion of home. Like the identity of the pilgrim, the astronaut is defined in relation to home. Appadurai’s term *ethnoscape* which he defines as the ‘landscape of persons who make up the shifting world in which we live’ is, I think, a useful concept in analysing identities in movement, and shifting centres.⁷⁸ The San Fioresi are habitually moving back and forth but this movement is dependent on ‘homeness’ rather than homelessness, on the shrine that is San Fior and the pilgrims’ process that is their life in Perth.

The central argument of this paper rests on the notion that the concept of pilgrimage, usually the domain of spirituality and religion, can be applied to the secular phenomenon of return visits. Delaney argues, with reference to Muslim Turkish, that ‘it would be naive to think that a powerful symbol like the *hajj* is contained within the limits defined by religion (or by scholars of religion); such symbols overflow their boundaries and enter

⁷⁵ See Baldassar, ‘Home and Away: Migration, the Return Visit and “Transnational” Identity’, Ang & Symonds (eds), *Communal plural: Home, Displacement, Belonging*.

⁷⁶ S. Wong, ‘Deciding to Leave, Deciding to Stay, Deciding Not to Decide’, paper presented at the colloquium series ‘Cosmopolitan Capitalists: Hong Kong and the Chinese Diaspora at the End of the Twentieth Century’, University of Washington, 6 May 1997.

⁷⁷ Wong, ‘Deciding to Leave’, p. 19.

⁷⁸ A. Appadurai, ‘Global Ethnospaces: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology’, in R.G. Fox (ed.), *Recapturing Anthropology* (Santa Fe, 1991), p. 192.

into the cultural mainstream'.⁷⁹ Similarly, Neville argues that 'a culture constructs...a "systematic repertoire of ideas". This repertoire provides a pool from which to draw analogical extensions about the nature of the universe and of day to day events—a pool that is available to the writer, poet, and artist... and also to the ordinary person on the street...'.⁸⁰

While pilgrimage is not as prominent in Christian religions as in Islam, the pilgrimage models do elucidate the symbolic meanings and discursive practices that embody the San Fiorese migrants' return visits. The San Fiorese visit 'home' is a secular pilgrimage of redemption in response to the obligation of child to parent, townspeople to town. For the migrant, the visit home is a pilgrimage of renewal and atonement. In the case of the second generation migrant, the visit is a transformatory rite-of-passage brought about by the ties to one's ancestral past developed on the return. In this sense, return visits inform what it means to be Italian in Australia.

The pilgrimage to Italy ensures a 'cultural renewal' in the traditional Catholic sense. It reaffirms ties to relatives and, thus, the individual's position in both the family and the moral community of the town by providing shared experiences with kin and townspeople. The pilgrimage also reaffirms the emigrant's Italo-Australian identity by providing the experiences and markers necessary to 'prove' the authenticity of his/her ethnicity in Australia.

⁷⁹ Delaney, 'The Hajj', p. 514.

⁸⁰ Neville, *Kinship and Pilgrimage*, p. 18.

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