

**“Urban Dreaming” Memories of the City in Migrant Discourses of Separation and Exodus to Australia and New Zealand, 1850–1930**

TAYLOR, Antony <<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4635-4897>>

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Christoph Cornelissen, Beat Kümin, Massimo Rospoche (Eds.)  
**Migration and the European City**

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## **Volume 5**

Christoph Cornelissen, Beat Kümin,  
Massimo Rospocher (Eds.)

# Migration and the European City

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from Early Modernity to the Present

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Antony Taylor

## “Urban Dreaming”

Memories of the City in Migrant Discourses of Separation and Exodus to Australia and New Zealand, 1850–1930

I

This chapter analyzes the experience of British migrants’ passage to colonial societies and areas of settlement through their cultural memory of urban poverty, decay and deprivation. Drawing on recent transnational perspectives, this chapter considers the displacement and exodus of migrants through the lens of the urban experience and the inability of the white settler dominions to cast aside memories of British urban blight. Placing the rejection of the urban milieu at the heart of the migrant journey, it argues for a vision of British cities, notably London, as instrumental in the decision to emigrate and as representative of the ills and social problem that the migrant journey was intended to rectify. Analyzing a wide range of material, including handbooks of migration, colonial crime stories, newspapers and writings by social investigators to the antipodes, it focusses on the rural and arcadian imagery harnessed by white settler societies as an impetus to emigration and stresses the role such imagery played in moderating perceptions of the migrant experience in white settler communities. At the heart of the narrative the white colonies of settlement in Australia and New Zealand relayed to themselves lay atavistic fears that urban development might replicate the social evils of the “old world” in the new. At the same time, old world remedies for urban blight also served to temper the dark vision of city life transported to the white settler colonies, notably through the construction of suburbs and suburban development and in the emergence of the dormitory suburb or the *ex-urbe* as a quintessential model for Australian urban growth. The overall theme of the chapter, then, is the tension between urban builders and planners in southern hemisphere white settler societies, the vision of new social harmonies they propagated, and the ancestral pull of overcrowded and decrepit British cities that represented British-style urban growth and development but stood for a broader narrative of the degeneration of the urban population at “home” to be avoided in new lands in the south.

Highlighting the manner in which such narratives acted as an antidote to “old world ways”, this chapter also considers the role of writers and opinion formers in settler societies like Australia and New Zealand, who emphasized the dangers inherent in urban expansion that might replicate the urban blight of the “old world” and create new “outcast Londons” transplanted to new world situations. In the Australian colonies this impulse resulted in repeated references to writers like G.R. Sims and



George Augustus Sala whose work came to stand as a warning for the ills of the metropole and the potential sickness posed by the transplanted fabric of British urban culture. It was the debate generated by this narrative that framed the urban expansion of new world cities in the Australian colonies in the mid-nineteenth century through to the early twentieth century and led to a rejection of some of the urban forms traditionally associated with European-style urban development. Taking the title of Graeme Davison's influential collection of articles on Australian cities as its inspiration, this chapter assesses the memories of British city life in Australia in shaping responses to urbanization and to migration<sup>1</sup>.

## II

The years following the first settlement of New South Wales were marked by attempts to recreate British urban society in the Australian colonies and in New Zealand. Early depictions of Australia ignored images of the bush for representations of Sydney as a picturesque port surrounded by parkland. The first artistic and cultural representations of the settlement were of Sydney depicted as an English "county" town characterized by the virtues of an English population in exile, notably trade, commerce and exchange. In the eyes of Anthony Trollope, Sydneysiders were abashed by their "provincial weakness" but the city stood astride a stunning harbour and the walks, parks and buildings were particularly scenic<sup>2</sup>. In the nineteenth century, the Australian colonies experienced unexpected urbanization similar to the expansion of the US economy. Urban centers in the Australian colonies grew rapidly in tandem with the infrastructure of empire, stimulating the expansion of peripheral cities like Brisbane and prompting unrealistic and fantastical estimates of future population increase on the back of urban expansion<sup>3</sup>. Ordered, mannered and espousing the nineteenth-century "civic gospel", by the 1850s these new world cities could boast libraries, botanic gardens, parks and other civic amenities. It was on this basis that Asa Briggs devoted a chapter to Melbourne in his *Victorian Cities* entitled "a Victorian community overseas"<sup>4</sup>. By the 1900s Australian cities were ceremonial centers, havens of imperial pageantry and loyalism and the headquarters of imperial agencies like the Scouts movement<sup>5</sup>.

Against a background of migration following the gold rush of the 1850s, "boosterists" or emigration "crusaders" as James Belich has christened them, promoted the

1 G. Davison, *City Dreamers: The Urban Imagination in Australia*, Sydney 2016, pp. ii–xxi.

2 Anthony Trollope, *Australia*, vol. 1, Gloucester 1987 [1873], pp. 126–134.

3 See J. Griffiths, *Imperial Culture in Antipodean Cities, 1880–1939*, London 2014, pp. 1–48; R. Fitzgerald, *A History of Queensland. From the Dreaming to 1915*, St. Lucia 1982, pp. 271–277; P.J. Cain, *Character, Ethics and Economics. British Debates on Empire, 1860–1914*, London 2018, chap. 3.

4 A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, London 1963, pp. 277–316.

5 J. Griffiths, *Imperial Culture in Antipodean Cities*, chaps. 1–2.

vision of a renovated urban society in new colonies of settlement that had the potential to amend and address the many social problems associated with the decayed and collapsing fabric of British urban life<sup>6</sup>. Sydney, however, was a problematic urban centre. Numerous associations with the convict past kept the memory of Sydney as a slave city alive into the mid-nineteenth century, even after the formal end of transportation to New South Wales in 1850. Francis Adams wrote: “Something of convictism and the convict stain still shows itself in Sydney – in the brutality of the old slave-owning official families administering hideous and unrepealed statutes”<sup>7</sup>. These connections with the penal history of the state lingered on in poor areas and ghettos like the Rock, where the residual memory of poverty and exclusion remained strong and organised programmes of slum clearance and civic improvement were applied on the model of British urban development<sup>8</sup>. Melbourne, which flourished in the aftermath of the gold rush, was the first real embodiment of localised Australian urban expansion. As with other cities in the southern hemisphere, Melbourne had a “single founder” in the form of the buccaneering John Batman who sequestered the land around Melbourne in 1835 from the Yarra River people in a “trinket treaty”<sup>9</sup>. His “remembered” role as an entrepreneur and pioneer of urban expansion gave him the position of a heroic figurehead, bestowing on the city a pedigree rooted in the classical precedent of hero founders<sup>10</sup>. Thereafter, Melbourne was an example of an “instant” or “mushroom” city, developing rapidly to answer the need for tools and supplies sold to miners en route to the gold fields, but marred by its rapid expansion and carrying “the signs of it on the surface”<sup>11</sup>. At the height of the gold rush, it provided banking facilities for the money returned from gold towns like Ballarat and Bendigo<sup>12</sup>. By the 1880s it was the third biggest city in the empire after London and Bombay, four out of five of the inhabitants of Victoria lived there, and the population stood at 700,000. It was christened by contemporaries “the New York of the south”, “the queen city of the empire of the south,” “Marvelous Melbourne” and was often compared to Philadelphia, or Chicago<sup>13</sup>. Like other expanding urban areas, it attracted visitors who came to marvel at these wonders, amongst them Mark Twain, George Augustus Sala and J.A. Froude. For Froude, the

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6 J. Belich, *Making Peoples. A History of the Newzealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century*, London 1995, pp. 298f.

7 Francis Adams, *Social Life in Australia*, in “The Fortnightly Review”, 50, 1891, p. 396.

8 I. Mayne, *The Imagined Slum. Newspaper Representations in Three Cities, 1870–1914*, London 1993, pp. 98–124.

9 J. Boyce, *1835: The foundation of Melbourne; the Foundation of Australia*, Collingwood 2011, chaps. 7–8.

10 See for the unveiling of a monument to Batman as the founder of the city in the old Melbourne Cemetery, “The Sydney Morning Herald”, June 5, 1882, p. 6.

11 James Anthony Froude, *Oceana or England and her Colonies*, London 1886, p. 81.

12 G. Davison, *Gold Rush Melbourne*, in I. McCalman / A. Cook/ A. Reeves (eds.), *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia*, Cambridge 2001, pp. 52–66.

13 G. Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, Melbourne 2004, pp. 280f.

city had all the hallmarks of major regional centres in Britain and had incubated a self-made municipal elite, similar to that of Liverpool or Birmingham<sup>14</sup>. The city was also well-known for its prosperity. Melbournians had high levels of job security and there was less income disparity than amongst comparable groups of workers in London. Melbourne was above all a city of banks, department stores, hotels and manerred living. This considerable affluence inspired a building boom in the 1880s that drew in workers, particularly from London, who had lost their jobs in the contraction in building work following the economic downturn of the 1870s<sup>15</sup>. In streets like Collins Street and Little Flinders Street up to date architectural styles were on display, notably the Corinthian, the Venetian and the Gothic. In the 1880s, as an indicator of the city's rising prosperity, the main complaint by wealthy families related to the difficulty of securing servants<sup>16</sup>. Melbourne typified Australian urban development, so much so that in 1880 it became the host of the second of Australia's International Expositions, and in 1888 the home of the Centennial Exhibition to commemorate the foundation of white settlement in New South Wales<sup>17</sup>. By the 1900s, however, Melbourne was seen increasingly as the home of a British migrant, pro-empire elite in Victoria, depicted as "the very counterpart of England", whereas Sydney was becoming a more quintessentially Australian city characterized by an assertive sense of colonial identity<sup>18</sup>.

A strong sense of ambiguity hung over the notion of urban life transmitted to the colonies of settlement and in relation to emigration as a solution to images of poverty in urban centers. Throughout the nineteenth century a profound ambivalence marked out the attitudes of radicals, reformers and the key agencies that characterized working-class associational life, particularly co-operative societies and trade unions. Some radical newspapers and the laborist press in Britain stressed the advantages of emigration, seeing it as a rational response to "the march of the landlords" in rural society, and emphasizing the benefits of cheap food and a regular diet of mutton in a healthier physical environment in which the rights of labor were protected<sup>19</sup>. Orators often stressed the greater longevity attained by migrants in healthier

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14 J.A. Froude, *Oceana or England and her Colonies*, p. 137.

15 G. Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, pp. 232–235 and 97–99 for income levels in the city and opportunities for migrant builders from Britain.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 245–247. For Melbourne's architecture see G. Wilson / P. Sands, *Building a City. One Hundred Years of Melbourne Architecture*, Melbourne 1981, chap. 1.

17 J. Griffiths, *Imperial Culture in Antipodean Cities*, pp. 173–176; L. Spillman, *Nation and Commemoration: Creating National Identities in the United States and Australia*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 50f., and G. Davison, *Festivals of Nationhood. The International Exhibitions*, in S.L. Goldberg / F.B. Smith (eds.), *Australian Cultural History*, Cambridge 1988, pp. 158–174.

18 Edwin Carton Booth, *Another England: Life, Living, Homes and Homemakers in Victoria*, London 1869, p. 1.

19 "The Bee-Hive", September 11, 1869. p. 5; *The Labourers' Herald*, 8 January 1874, p. 7 and 4 December 1874, p. 6; and the emigration statistics presented in Lord John Russell, *Competence in a Colony Contrasted with Poverty at Home, or Relief to Landlords and Labourers held out by Australian Coloni-*

climes from the public platform<sup>20</sup>. In its emphasis on abundance and culinary plenty much of this material emphasized the “settler utopian” quality to emigration highlighted by James Belich and others, depicting New Zealand in particular as a paradise of labor in a “Brighter Britain” of equitable social relations where industrial arbitration provided a protective “Magna Charta of labor” around the workforce<sup>21</sup>. Many of these descriptions were suffused by a romanticized vision of the perceived and imagined advantages of newly-developed colonial societies in Australia and New Zealand that highlighted the absence of a resident aristocracy, a standing army or navy, and an established church. For G.H. Fairley writing of “the workingman in Australia” in the “National Reformer” the chief advantage of emigration to the Australian colonies was that “no bloated aristocrat grows fat on the earnings of the poor man”<sup>22</sup>.

Other accounts were more skeptical about emigration as a counter to the decay of rural and urban society, focusing on the fantastical and the gothic nature of some experiences<sup>23</sup>. Radical organizations in Britain like the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) campaigned ardently against pro-emigration propaganda to the Australian colonies, asserting: “we of the SDF have strenuously and successfully resisted the advocacy of emigration in the past and shall continue to do so”<sup>24</sup>. First-hand accounts of the benefits of migration were balanced by a forlorn personal correspondence of disappointment and dejection in radical newspapers that highlighted the familiar exploitative practices resorted to by employers of unskilled labor in the settler colonies. Correspondence in the late Chartist press highlighted dire predictions of the disadvantages of emigration and featured descriptions of migrant jobs in the Australian colonies amounting to little more than the breaking of stones for a nominal wage<sup>25</sup>. Much of this narrative was borne out by revelations of migration scams

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*zation and Emigration*, London 1848, p. 15. For the fullest discussion of attitudes on the part of labor associations to emigration, see N. Kirk, *Comrades and Cousins. Globalization, Workers and Labour Movements in Britain, the USA and Australia from the 1880s to 1914*, London 2003, pp. 59–148.

<sup>20</sup> According to the socialist Annie Besant, the population of New Zealand reached an average age of 60 as opposed to the average age of death in Britain of 49 in 1919; see her speech in the “Manchester City News”, September 6, 1919, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> J. Belich, *The Rise of the Anglo-World. Settlement in North America and Australasia, 1784–1918* in P. Bruckner / D. Francis (eds.), *Rediscovering the British World*, Calgary 2003, pp. 39–58; R. Rives La Monte, *The New Zealand Myth*, in “The International Socialist Review”, December 1, 1908, pp. 444–450; the “Cotton Factory Times”, February 18, 1886, p. 7, and “The Reformers’ Year Book”, 1901, p. 31 and “The Reformers’ Year Book”, 1903, p. 68.

<sup>22</sup> “National Reformer”, April 8, 1888, pp. 229–231; and for the liberating absence of the British structures of authority and control, “Justice”, September 7, 1901, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> M.H. Beals, *Coin, Kirk, Class and Kin. Emigration, Social Change and Identity in Southern Scotland*, Bern 2011, pp. 178–185.

<sup>24</sup> “Justice”, August 12, 1899, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> “People’s Paper”, February 17, 1855, p. 1. See for the ambiguous nature of migrant correspondence, D. Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation. Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia*, Cork 1991, chaps. 18, 19, and 20.

and frauds by “unscrupulous land grabbers and exploiters from distant lands” that received detailed exposure in the radical press. Details of an emigration fraud to Queensland were revealed by “The Clarion” newspaper in 1893 which recommended government protection against “the fraudulent promises of money grabbing adventurers”<sup>26</sup>. Lurid descriptions of poverty and unemployment released by colonial labor organizations themselves were often given prominence in radical publications. Canterbury Trade Council’s warnings in 1906 to potential emigrants against seeing “New Zealand as a ready-made utopia with abundance of milk and honey for all comers” received extensive coverage in the labor press in Britain<sup>27</sup>. Revelations about the importation of enforced migrant workers from the Melanesian islands in the Pacific, trafficked to provide bonded labor in the sugar cane plantations of Queensland in an Australian slave trade and exposures of an influx of poor migrants from southern Europe were also used as a deterrent to suppress migration to Australia. These narratives presented a vision of the Australian colonies as a society of the exploited and the coerced where migrants themselves were often used as “scab labor” in a country where the “blighting shadow of slavery has rested on their land” and where it was believed a glut on the labor market created by the entry of “the low type of southern European” would depress wages and conditions<sup>28</sup>.

Many of these tensions between migration optimists and pessimists were played out in industrial disputes in the Australian colonies and in New Zealand, where the cleansing and reviving effects of colonial life were disputed in strike action in mining and dock-working that drew on the migratory displacement of single male workers, experiencing poor working conditions and pitting themselves against settled and entrenched employer and worker interests in the colonies. These factors contributed to a wave of strikes in New Zealand in particular in the years 1908–1914 and created pockets of support for unskilled workers’ organizations, particularly the IWW (the International Workers of the World) in centers of restless migrant energy like Auckland<sup>29</sup>. As Eric Richards has commented, the traffic of migrants to the Australian colonies was far from one-way, and as many as forty percent of all migrants returned in a “reverse migration” after failing in the new environment; in some white colonies of settlement there was orchestrated opposition by local trade unions to formalized em-

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<sup>26</sup> “The Clarion”, April 22, 1893, p. 2, for earlier warnings about migration frauds, the “People’s Paper”, August 19, 1854, p. 1; and for migration propaganda to New Zealand as intrinsically a “fraud”, see “Labour’s Northern Voice”, April 1, 1927, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> “The Clarion”, October 19, 1906, p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> “National Reformer”, June 28, 1885, pp. 468–469 for bonded labor in Queensland; “The Workers’ Weekly”, February 17, 1923, p. 1 for migrant “scab labor” in Australia and for southern European migration to Australia, “Labour’s Northern Voice”, June 24, 1927, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> See F. Shor, *Bringing the Storm. Syndicalist Counterpublics and the Industrial Workers of the World in New Zealand, 1908–1914*, in P. Moloney / K. Taylor (eds.), *On the Left. Essays on Socialism in New Zealand*, Dunedin 2002, pp. 59–72.

igration projects<sup>30</sup>. In Britain apostate emigrants and disillusioned returnees like the future Labour Party leader George Lansbury who regretted a failed family relocation to Queensland, provided a network of speakers attacking emigration projects. At public meetings on Mile End Waste and other open ground in London in the 1900s, lecturers and campaigners issued entreaties to working-men to resist the siren call of the emigration agent<sup>31</sup>.

### III

At the heart of the experience of migration remained the memory of city life, and, especially, of London, seen as the prevailing embodiment of poverty and exclusion. The popular fiction writer and exponent of emigration, H. Rider Haggard, was one of those who despaired of a Britain of unrestricted urban growth surrounded by a desolate waste emptied of productive agriculture. In a colonial comparison reflecting his time spent in the empire he talked of “this England of ours spotted with huge overgrown cities” and drew comparisons between the barren countryside in Britain and his memory of “great stretches of what in Africa we should call veldt – that is unimproved or scarcely improved country broken here or there by the mansions of rich colonial or city types encircled by their areas of sporting lands”<sup>32</sup>. In such accounts the desire not to reproduce the inequities and social injustices of the capital was integral to a boosterist propaganda that emphasized the reviving and restorative effects of yeoman lifestyles that might be reconstructed away from the tainted fabric of British urban society. Much of this material focused on the perceived social advantages of emigration. The advantages of life under the British flag in societies like New Zealand that were “British to the very core” and where British religious, fraternal and literary life flourished in exile were emphasized in most positive accounts of migration<sup>33</sup>. In this narrative, many contemporaries were attuned to the problems raised by British urban life and remained skeptical of a colonial environment in which the hab-

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**30** See E. Richards, *Running Home from Australia: Intercontinental Mobility and Migrant Expectations in the Nineteenth Century*, in M. Harper (ed.), *Emigrant Homecomings. The Return Movement of Emigrants, 1600–2000*, Manchester 2005, pp. 77–104. For local opposition to Joseph Arch’s emigration scheme for agricultural laborers to Canada, see J. Remes, “Movable Type”. *Toronto’s Transnational Printers, 1866–1872*, in L. Fink (ed.), *Workers across the Americas. The Transnational Turn in Labour History*, Oxford 2011, pp. 384–408, here p. 395.

**31** For anti-emigration meetings at Mile End Waste, see G. Lansbury, *My Life*, London 1928, pp. 62f.

**32** Quoted in “Justice”, May 13, 1899, p. 1. For H. Rider Haggard’s support for re-settlement of displaced rural workers on colonial land as an antidote to residual feudalism at home, see H. Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life. An Autobiography*, London 1926, vol. 2, p. 265.

**33** For idyllic images of New Zealand and its associational life, the Rev. J. Berry, *New Zealand as a Field for Emigration*, London 1879, pp. 15f., and, for an analysis of this narrative, J. Belich, *How Much Did Institutions Matter? Cloning Britain in New Zealand*, in J.P. Greene (ed.), *Exclusionary Empire. English Liberty Overseas, 1600–1900*, Cambridge 2010, pp. 248–268.

its and muscle memory of British life carried with incoming migrants might mean a context of “new places, old problems”<sup>34</sup>. In contrast to an agenda that suggested that the white settler societies were a laboratory, where “they will [...] in the first place educate themselves and afterwards furnish object lessons to other countries”<sup>35</sup>, prophets of urban decline and degeneration feared that the problems of urban deprivation in the old world were too entrenched for resolution in white settler societies like the Australian colonies and New Zealand, where a dark vision of Anglo-Saxon urban life would overshadow and retard the future development of colonial society. This rejection of cities and city life meant that the formative experience for many Australians was in small towns like Ballarat in Victoria and Bathurst in New South Wales which were identified as repositories of Australian national character and civic virtue. In many instances they became crucibles of Australian radical/nationalist ideas, as manifested in the career of the post-war Labour premier, Ben Chifley, born outside Bathurst, whose governing program was marked by a fusion of ancestral memories of Irish dispossession and a strong sense of upholding Australia’s national interest<sup>36</sup>.

For many contemporaries the prism that framed the failures of urban life in the Australian colonies was provided by the memories of decrepitude and degeneration that featured in Britain’s towns and cities<sup>37</sup>. British migrants brought with them images of urbanization as demoralizing and squalid, particularly the narratives of poverty and exclusion that coloured the accounts of “slummers” and casual visitors to the East End of London. Most of the established descriptions of London focused on these conventional depictions of a debased eastern quarter of the city that by the 1880s had become lodged in the popular imagination as representative of everyday life in the East End. Charles Booth’s descriptions of the most poor and abject in his social survey as living the lives of “barbarians”<sup>38</sup> with its echoes of colonialism, primitivism and the vision of “darkest England” inevitably found their way into the colonial press in white settler societies. “What an awful condition England is in” wrote the “Maoriland Worker” of social conditions in the East End of London at the time of George V’s coronation in 1911<sup>39</sup>. In the early part of the twentieth century the metropole remained a byword for moral failings expressed in “a letter from

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**34** W.B. Sutch, *The Quest for Security in New Zealand*, London 1942, p. 35.

**35** “The Co-operative News”, December 24, 1898, pp. 1445f.

**36** D. Day, *Chifley*, London 2002, chap. 2. For “small town” Australia, see W. Bate, *Lucky City. The First Generation at Ballarat, 1851–1901*, (new ed.) Melbourne 2003, chap. 1, and A.G.L. Shaw, *A History of the Port Phillip District. Victoria before Separation*, Melbourne 2003, chaps. 1–2.

**37** For images of “degeneration” relating to city life in Britain, see B. Luckin, *Revisiting the Idea of Degeneration in Urban Britain, 1830–1900*, in “Urban History”, 33, 2006, 2, pp. 234–252.

**38** A. Lees / L. Hollen Lees, *Cities and the Making of Modern Europe, 1750–1914*, Cambridge 2007, p. 152; W.J. Fishman, *East End, 1888. A Year in a London Borough among the Labouring Poor*, London 1988, pp. 1–16, and M. Freeman, “Journeys into Poverty Kingdom”. *Complete Participation and the British Vagrant, 1866–1914*, in “History Workshop Journal”, 52, 2001, 1, pp. 99–121.

**39** “Maoriland Worker”, August 11, 1911, p. 5.

London” in the New Zealand “Truth” which highlighted the “tittle-tattle” of London around immorality and depravity: “the shameful salacity of the sly-smiths – a modern Sodom and Gomorrah – the Hinfluence of the Haristocracy – the Awful Abode of Virulent Vice [...]”<sup>40</sup>. Even some of the pilgrims who visited the settler colonies in search of progressive models for application in Britain were shocked by the pockets of poverty they found in Australian cities and were moved to make comparisons with the East End of London. The Labour leader Tom Mann commented on parts of Sydney and Melbourne that poverty there was as bad as “the worst parts of Shoreditch, Bethnal Green, Rotherhithe and Deptford”<sup>41</sup>. As Graeme Davison has noted, the world of “outcast London” or the “submerged tenth” in which voyeuristic social investigators sought out lurid images of poverty, recorded the excesses of the poor and the destitute and subjected a sub-stratum of the population to a merciless and relentless scrutiny, is very apparent in the imitative social surveys conducted by social investigators and “slummers” in “outcast Melbourne”. In the manner of social investigators in London, slummers and salvationists saw Melbourne as “a Babylon” or “a Gomorrah” in a narrative of poverty that subjected the “outcasts of Melbourne” to remorseless inquiry<sup>42</sup>. In Sydney many of these images of urban blight cohered around descriptions of Paddy’s Market, seen as the resort of the poor, the unemployed and the excluded in a squalid informal economy on the model of blighted street markets in London in which “the few who strode with the free air of the ideal Australian workman were lost”<sup>43</sup>. Moreover, Australia’s new urban growth carried fears of race mixing and the blurring of white identities on the contemporary model of the East End of London<sup>44</sup>. In many of these accounts the opium den stood for anxieties about the fragility of white culture in the southern hemisphere poised to be swept aside by the hordes of Asia<sup>45</sup>. Images of rookeries and the East

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**40** “The Truth”, February 16, 1907, p. 8.

**41** T. Mann, *The Industrial and Social Outlook of Australia*, in “The Social Democrat”, August 15, 1909, p. 338. For Tom Mann as a transnational personality drawing on the examples of social developments in the Australian colonies, see N. Kirk, *Transnational Radicalism and the Connected Lives of Tom Mann and Samuel Ross*, Liverpool 2017, pp. 66–110.

**42** G. Davison / D. Dunstan, “This Moral Pandemonium”. *Images of Low Life*, in G. Davison / D. Dunstan / C. McConville (eds.), *The Outcasts of Melbourne. Essays in Social History*, Sydney 1985, pp. 29–57. For “slumming” in London, see S. Koven, *Slumming. Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London*, New Jersey 2004, pp. 25–74.

**43** John Miller (William Lane), *The Workingman’s Paradise: An Australian Novel*, ed. by M. Wilding, Sydney 1980 [1892], p. 37. For the impoverished community reliant on street markets in London, see V. Kelley, *Cheap Street. London’s Street Markets and the Cultures of Informality, c.1850–1939*, Manchester 2019, chap. 4.

**44** London remained a far more diverse city than Melbourne during this period, hosting the first Pan-African Conference in 1900; see J. Schmeer, *London 1900. The Imperial Metropolis*, New Haven CT 1999, chap. 9.

**45** C. McConville, *Chinatown*, in *The Outcasts of Melbourne*, pp. 58–68. For the realities of Chinese community life in the Australian colonies unmediated through fears about the threat they posed, see J. Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie. Chinese Australians in White Australia*, Sydney 2007, chaps. 3 and 5. For



End remained potent here. Crime and thriller writers like Fergus Hume in his *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* highlighted a dark underworld landscape of opium dens, prostitution rings and displaced East End gangsters who cohered around criminalized fraternities at Mother Guttersnip's lair, where residents lived lives of unimaginable poverty. The area of Little Bourke Street navigated by his hero, Carlton, he describes as "so like that of the Seven Dials in London that he kept as closely to the side of his guide as did Dante to that of Virgil in the Infernal Regions"<sup>46</sup>. Sensationalist exposes like that of John Freeman in his *Light and Shadows of Melbourne Life* (1888) and John Stanley James in *The Vagabond Papers* (1896) also carried strong echoes of the separate city of poverty described by Arthur Morrison in London<sup>47</sup>. Sydney similarly attracted a panic-driven literature relating to the bohemian and excluded population that lived around King's Cross. The works of G.R. Sims and other prominent writers in the "sunshine and shadows" tradition of writing about London life were frequently invoked as representative of this dark side of metropolitan life<sup>48</sup>.

The vision of urban life as one that scarred, undermined and contributed to the decay of the nation was one that featured prominently in propaganda promoting migration to the white settler colonies in particular. Throughout the later nineteenth century the imperial metropole was represented as ailing and in a state of advanced collapse that threatened the fabric of empire itself<sup>49</sup>. J.A. Froude drew on the classical precedent provided by the decline of the Roman Empire, recalling the poet Horace's observations on city living, and noting the tendency of "people in the later stages of civilization to gather into towns [...] Horace had seen in Rome what we are now seeing in England – the fields deserted, the people crowding into cities"<sup>50</sup>. The poor conditions apparent in Britain's cities provided a spur to supporters of utopian land settlements like the socialist advocate William Lane, who promoted a return to pastoral living in the Australian colonies and in Latin America to counter the shade of urban blight. In his homilies to rural values, he depicted city living as a rebuke to "civilization" and lamented the physical and mental decline of the

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whiteness, see P. Edmonds, "I Followed England Round the World". *The Rise of Trans-Imperial Anglo-Saxon Exceptionalism and the Spatial Narratives of Nineteenth-Century British Settler Colonies of the Pacific Rim*, in L. Boucher / J. Carey / K. Ellinghaus (eds.), *Re-Orientating Whiteness*, London 2009, pp. 99–115.

<sup>46</sup> Fergus Hume, *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*, Melbourne 2000 [1886], pp. 178f. For the Antipodean city and crime, see R. Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure. Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction, 1875–1914*, Cambridge 1995, pp. 155–178.

<sup>47</sup> F.B. Smith, *Lights and Shadows in the Life of John Freeman*, in "Victorian Studies", 30, 1987, 4, pp. 459–475.

<sup>48</sup> See for Sims, "The Truth", October 27, 1906, p. 8 and January 5, 1907, p. 8, and for an article on James Thomson, "the laureate of pessimism" extracted from "The Clarion" newspaper, the "Maori-land Worker", April 20, 1911, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> D. Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order 1860–1900*, Cambridge 2007, pp. 46–62.

<sup>50</sup> J.A. Froude, *Oceana or England and her Colonies*, p. 8.

city type: “stunted in body, wizened in soul, the grandchild of city streets is beaten down by the stalwart, trusting countryman. Nor can we alter the process by laying out a park or two however desirable such things may be”<sup>51</sup>. His writings reflected a prevailing view that the British race might recreate itself in a healthy atmosphere on the imperial margins as the urban heartland declined. These ideas were sometimes linked to notions of a “Better Britain”, where the fading rural society of the Home Counties was represented as flourishing in exile, a theme that colored the popular perception of New Zealand in particular<sup>52</sup>. Drawing on these ideas, projects that hoped to re-settle migrant workers on the land provided a means for the renovation of English rural society in the colonies, with the aim of creating a new revived population on the peripheries where the senescence of the “old world” might more easily be overcome and yeomen proprietors flourish<sup>53</sup>. J.A. Froude wrote: “who in his senses – even if it were possible – would be the peasant proprietor of half a dozen acres in England, when, for the sum for which he would sell them, he could buy a thousand in countries where he would still be under his own flag, among his own kindred; with an unexhausted soil?”<sup>54</sup>. Migration handbooks in particular extolled the virtues of a vigorous physical existence against the background of a frontier environment in which character was tested to its limits and rural prosperity would send “a recurring ripple of demand across the whole surface of the labour market”<sup>55</sup>. Images of the Australian colonies as a rural idyll expressed in a continuous narrative from Cole-ridge to Edward Gibbon Wakefield, William Charles Wentworth and H. Rider Haggard were a strong part of this outlook, linked to a vision that saw the mother country as diminished by the ills of urban culture.

This idea of creating a nation of rural smallholders was still a common resort embraced as late as the 1920s, and sometimes relating to issues of defense in Australia and the construction of an armed rural yeomanry<sup>56</sup>. It achieved considerable success in New Zealand where a world of harvest festivals and arcadian pastimes un-

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51 W. Lane, *Selections from the Writings of “Tohunga”*, Auckland 1917, pp. 44–45. For Lane’s attack on “civilization” see “New Australia: The Journal of the New Australia Co-operative Settlement Association”, January 28, 1892, p. 1. For Lane and ruralism see A. Taylor, “*We Dream Our Dream Still*”. *Ruralism, Empire and the Debate about New Australia in Britain*, in “Labour History Review”, 77, 2012, 2, pp. 163–187.

52 J. Belich, *Making Peoples*, pp. 292–306.

53 E. Richards, *Destination Australia. Migration to Australia since 1901*, Manchester 2008, pp. 70–74.

54 J.A. Froude, *Short Studies of Great Subjects*, vol. 3: *On the Uses of a Landed Gentry*, London 1903, p. 426.

55 *New South Wales. The Mother State of Australia: A Guide to Immigrants and Settlers*, Sydney 1906, p. 353.

56 K. Fedorowich, *Unfit for Heroes. Reconstruction and Soldier Settlement in the Empire between the Wars*, Manchester 1995, chap. 1; B. Scates / M. Oppenheimer, *The Last Battle. Soldier Settlement in Australia 1916–1939*, Cambridge 2016, chaps. 1–2; for the return of veterans to the land to create a soldier yeomanry, E. Hammond Foot, *The Land Problem. Its Only Real Solution*, in “The Nineteenth Century”, 94, 1923, pp. 577–582.

derlay an idealized rustic community life<sup>57</sup>. The high circulation of the works of rural writers like Richard Jefferies, W.H. Hudson and Gilbert White in the Australian colonies provided validation for this return to a rural community life promoting rural handicrafts, folk traditions and an immersion in the natural world as an antidote to the malaise of urban society in Melbourne, in emulation of the themes in Gilbert White's *The Natural History of Selbourne*<sup>58</sup>. Much of this narrative crossed political divides, embracing the conservatism of Froude, but also allowing space for a more utopian vision of an idealized England of contented rustic workers in exile. Very evident in this nostalgic ruralism was the prospect of supplanting the "bitter" memories of rural suffering in Britain by an emphasis on the advantages, rather than disadvantages, of a return to the land in a new social environment<sup>59</sup>. In Canada the reconstruction of rural life in the empire was seen as reflective of a "growth of liberty" mediated through the memories of the punishments meted out to pioneers of rural trades unionism like the Tolpuddle martyrs, initially transported to Tasmania, but, thereafter, settling in Canada<sup>60</sup>. In New Zealand, utopian land projects like Fabian socialist William Ranstead's attempt to set up a model agrarian community in a "socialist Canaan" were driven by the notion that "everything English transplanted here flourishes", with the exception of the sins of the Old World: "here there is no aristocracy, no snobbery, there are no very rich people and no poor"<sup>61</sup>. This vision of a revived English rural arcadia in the Australian colonies was always somewhat misguided; rural employers complained of British migrants who demonstrated only a rudimentary knowledge of rural skills; Greek and Italian migrant farmers acclimatized to farming in arid environments fared better. Moreover, the rural sectors of both countries were in decline at this time, a factor which was inadequately appreciated by contemporaries<sup>62</sup>. The renewed ruralism of the 1920s, which was intended to allay fears amongst urban workers about the impact of imported migrants under

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57 A. Clarke, *Communities Celebrating Landscapes. Harvest Festivals in Nineteenth-Century Otago* in T. Ballantyne / J. Bennett (eds.), *Landscape/Community. Perspectives from New Zealand History*, Dunedin 2005, pp. 103–116.

58 T. Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors. The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*, Cambridge 1996, pp. 121–123 and 130 f.

59 R. Arnold, *The Farthest Promised Land. English Villagers; New Zealand Immigrants of the 1870s*, Wellington 1981, p. 354 and for images of idealized rural workers in emigration propaganda, "The Labour Leader", February 6, 1913, p. 11.

60 See H. Brooks, *Six Heroes in Chains. A True Tale of Sacrifice*, Wessex 1929, pp. 41 f.

61 William Ranstead in "The Clarion", January 6, 1900, p. 5. For Ranstead and other advocates of utopian emigration projects to New Zealand, see E. Richards, *Human Traffic*, in M. Hewitt (ed.), *The Victorian World*, London 2012, pp. 141–159.

62 E. Richards, *Destination Australia*, pp. 97 f. and 118 f. For the success of farmers from Southern Europe, see J. Jupp, *The English in Australia*, Cambridge 2004, pp. 33 f.

the 1922 *Empire Settlement Act*, only accelerated a drift to the cities after failed migrant farming experiments in the outback<sup>63</sup>.

This pronounced anti-urban strain in Australian culture manifested itself in a rejection of urban society, and the resort to a vision of an Australia defined by landscape and the environment. The reverence for the landscape and the bush grew out of the complexities of Australia’s relationship to its past and the ambiguities surrounding the role of the city in the colonial imagination. Far from a “restive fringe” or an area of marginal economic significance, the bush gained an immense national symbolism<sup>64</sup>. A figure grounded in rebellion against the metropole and urban identity, the “bushman” was a representative of settler colonialism and the pioneer spirit in which the figure of resourceful male pioneers tamed the landscape and lived the life of a community of masterless men. Images of the bushman were devised by a group of urban writers congregating around the literary journals and newspapers published in Sydney. A city of itinerant incomers full of boarding and lodging houses in areas like the Haymarket and King’s Cross, it was the city where the strongest evidence of rebellion against urbanization manifested itself, resulting in the emergence of the rural/pastoralist writers who cohered around “The Bulletin” newspaper. For such bohemian writers, the bushman symbolized a streak of authentic Australianess that challenged an imported cultural sense of English identity<sup>65</sup>. The mythology surrounding the figure of the bushman stressed itinerancy, hunting, dependency on the land and a culture of “mateship” in an egalitarian world without women. The figure was used to represent the Federation movement in 1901<sup>66</sup>. The bushman’s traits of self-reliance carried strong suggestions that true character was built on the margins of empire when the imperial heartland was in decline<sup>67</sup>. He was viewed as an embodiment of all that was best in Australian identity, and symbolized acceptance of the landscape by displaced migrant Britons. The bushman had incarnations across a range of political positions, appearing as an embodiment of an insubordinate plebeian identity caught in a relationship between employers and wage laborers in outback sheep stations that fed into the creation of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and

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63 S. Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia*, vol. 4: *The Succeeding Age, 1901–1942*, Oxford 1986, pp. 207–211.

64 J.M. Powell, *An Historical Geography of Modern Australia*, Cambridge 1988, pp. 20–46.

65 G. Davison, *Sydney and the Bush. An Urban Context for the Australian Legend*, in G. Whitlock / D. Carter (eds.), *Images of Australia. An Introductory Reader in Australian Studies*, St. Lucia 1992, pp. 191–204; B. Garner, *Bushmen of the ‘Bulletin’: Re-examining Lawson’s “Bush Credibility” in Graeme Davison’s “Sydney and the Bush”*, in “*Australian Historical Studies*”, 43, 2012, 3, pp. 452–465; and for the intellectual ferment of the 1890s that characterized the Sydney literary landscape, M. Bellanta, *Rethinking the 1890s*, in A. Bashford / S. Macintyre (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Australia*, vol. 1: *Indigenous and Colonial Australia*, Cambridge 2013, pp. 218–241.

66 J. Hirst, *The Sentimental Nation. The Making of the Australian Commonwealth*, Oxford 2000, chaps. 4–10; H. Irving, *To Constitute a Nation. A Cultural History of Australia’s Constitution*, Cambridge 1999, chaps. 1–3.

67 L. Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present*, London 2015, p. 3.

became an element in stories, songs and theatre. Descended from the “yeoman”, the life of the bushman was attuned to and interlinked with the sufferings of the outback worker: “he too listens to the bitter cry of the destitute swagman, the unemployed of the bush”<sup>68</sup>. Within the ALP, this large rural support base was a distinctive component element, characteristic of Australian labor politics<sup>69</sup>. The bushman was both a symbol of national awakening and of resolve in times of national peril or acted as a noble figure with a chivalric code of honour representing the people militant<sup>70</sup>. The “jolly swagman” was frequently invoked to represent a retreat from urbanization by bohemian intellectuals like Henry Lawson and A.G. Stephens of “The Bulletin” school, who depicted cities as vectors for “old world” ills like poverty and overcrowding. Stephens remarked: “It was in the cities, not the bush, that the national fibre was being slackened and destroyed”<sup>71</sup>. Australian writers were both tortured and conflicted by their relationship to the metropole, as typified by the experiences of Henry Lawson in London, where the lure of London publishing houses attracted aspiring colonial authors at the same time as the social divisions and poverty of the capital repelled them<sup>72</sup>.

## IV

Graeme Davison has written that Australia lacked a vision for city growth and reform of the urban environment that stood in stark contrast to the emphasis on city reform evident in US progressive politics<sup>73</sup>. He argues that there was no impulse in Australia to reform the municipality, not because of the cultural weakness of urbanization or city life *per se*, but as a consequence of the ambivalence of migrants to urban living in a white settler society not culturally attuned to cities. Australian suburban development and the “hybrid” nature of urban society in the Australian colonies provided by the suburb was, in part, a response to the uncertainty, and, sometimes, downright

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<sup>68</sup> Francis Adams, *The Labour Movement in Australia*, in “The Fortnightly Review”, 50, 1891, p. 189. For the itinerant bushman and political activism, see V. Burgmann, *Wobblies Down Under: the IWW in Australia*, in P. Cole / D. Struthers / K. Zimmer (eds.), *Wobblies of the World. A Global History of the IWW*, London 2017, pp. 168–185, and for the image of the bushman in New Zealand as a symbol of masculinity, J. Phillips, *A Man’s Country. The Image of the Pakeha Male – A History*, Auckland 1987, chap. 1. Eric Hobsbawm talked about the rootless itinerant Australian bush-worker and bushranging as “the essential Australian national myth”, see E.J. Hobsbawm, *Fractured Times. Culture and Society in the Twentieth Century*, London 2013, p. 276.

<sup>69</sup> R. Archer, *Why Is There No Labor Party in The United States?*, Princeton NJ 2007, pp. 40–42.

<sup>70</sup> A. Thomson, *Anzac Memories. Living with the Legend*, Oxford 1994, chap. 2.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in G. Davison, *Sydney and the Bush*, p. 204.

<sup>72</sup> M. Tasker / L. Sussex, “*That Wild Run to London*”. *Henry and Bertha Lawson in England*, in “Australian Literary Studies”, 23, 2007, 2, pp. 172–184.

<sup>73</sup> See G. Davison, *City Dreamers*, xvi-xvii, and for progressivism and urban renewal in the United States, D.T. Rogers, *Atlantic Crossings. Social Politics in a Progressive Age*, New York 1998, pp. 112–159.

hostility, that surrounded emigration projects to white settler societies. The construction of suburbs reconciled the divisions between aversion to older images of cities imported from Britain, positive and negative views of migration, and the need to build a renewed urban environment as an intrinsic part of colonial economic development. Melbourne remains a city of suburbs and from the early twentieth century onwards most Australians were resident in suburbia. The suburb was not derided as in Britain but became the desired locale for Australian families to establish themselves; increasingly it came to represent the identity of Australia itself<sup>74</sup>. These suburban developments are characterised by low density housing, rather than the high-density housing of European cities; in fact, they were explicitly designed as an antidote to tenements. In the Australian colonies the suburb became the most desired location for establishing a home. Suburbs were part of a British style of ex-urban development taken to Australia by British migrants. They grew out of a British puritan dislike of cities, which were seen as sinful and soulless, whilst allowing for the construction of dwellings that placed an emphasis on the domestic, and the benefits of hearth and home<sup>75</sup>. Melbourne’s suburbs expanded as cheap land was purchased for the construction of new homes. Like many “instant” cities Melbourne was built on a grid system (a feature of city life in the US) which meant the city lacked the piazzas and squares common to European cities and reduced the potential for inner-city living. Given this limiting and circumscribed topography, residential accommodation was forced further and further out of the city to the peripheries. Melbourne was an “octopus” city, very British in the model of a centre that acted as a communications hub with outlying and suburban areas. From the early 1880s it had an Omnibus and Tramways Company that by 1891 was the world’s biggest integrated cable system servicing the outlying districts of the city<sup>76</sup>.

Suburbs provided an antidote to the overcrowding and dirt of the city, but remained set apart from the alien and strange outback whose “weird melancholy” was feared and shunned by the first generations of European settlers<sup>77</sup>. Visitors from Europe to the Australian colonies often expressed skepticism about this new suburban growth<sup>78</sup>. Moreover, there were many internal critics of the move towards suburbanization and urban sprawl<sup>79</sup>. In New Zealand, anxieties were frequently expressed about the ability of unregulated and unchecked suburban ex-

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74 N. Conrad Hamman, *Nationalism and Reform in Australian Architecture 1880–1920*, in “Historical Studies”, 18, 1978/79, 72, pp. 393–411.

75 G. Davison, *City Dreamers*, pp. 86–88.

76 G. Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, pp. 183–211.

77 The term “weird melancholy” was used by Marcus Clarke, see M. Clarke, *The Australian Bush*, in C. Barrett (ed.), *The Swagman’s Note-Book. An Anthology of Australian Prose and Verse*, Melbourne 1943, p. 93.

78 A. Gilbert, *Anti-Suburbanism*, in *Australian Cultural History*, pp. 33–49.

79 T. Rowse, *Heaven and a Hills Hoist. Australian Critics on Suburbia*, in R. White / P. Russell (eds.), *Memories and Dreams: Reflections on Twentieth-Century Australia*, Sydney 1997, pp. 213–228.

pansion in Auckland and Wellington to outrun the provision by the municipal authorities of both services and infrastructure<sup>80</sup>. Graeme Davison, however, has depicted this move towards privately owned and constructed houses as a method of reconciling the dream of a yeoman proprietorship with the vision of safe, secure and stable living on the fringes of cities with all the advantages that lifestyle conferred for new migrant communities. This blend of British aspiration and the growth of cheap, easily affordable housing was realized in the Australian dream of “a quarter acre block and a pen of chooks” and the sacred space of the Australian back-yard<sup>81</sup>. For D.H. Lawrence, visiting from Britain, the Australian suburb was about both uniformity, and democracy. He recorded “the little square bungalows dot-dot-dot, close together and yet apart, like modern democracy, each one fenced round with a square rail fence”<sup>82</sup>. Suburbia provided an attractive and affordable way of life in Australia. It provided low density housing to counteract the overcrowding of the tenements that featured in the recollections of many British migrants<sup>83</sup>. Suburbs also preserved the names of British towns and dormitory areas. Outlying areas of Melbourne were given British names, often ones with metropolitan associations, notably Kew, Windsor, and Surrey Hills that were reflective of transplanted suburban lifestyles. Beneath the patina of prosperity, however, remained the memory of British urban poverty. For British migrants, suburban living substituted for the co-operatives, building societies and friendly society activity that underlay self-improvement at “home” and conferred respectability on individuals seeking a route out of poverty<sup>84</sup>. Such organizations were far less in evidence in the Australian colonies in particular than in Britain, indicating a realization of the benefits the suburbs conferred<sup>85</sup>. The suburbs were and remain the real canvas against which the dramas of identity, culture and position were played out in Australia.

## V

This chapter has reappraised the role and significance of migration narratives in relation to emigration projects and the growth of urban society in the Australian col-

<sup>80</sup> “New Zealand Herald”, January 31, 1923, p. 3 and April 16, 1937, p. 14.

<sup>81</sup> G. Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, p. 225 and G. Seddon, *The Australian Back Yard*, in I. Craven (ed.), *Australian Popular Culture*, Cambridge 1994, pp. 22–35.

<sup>82</sup> D.H. Lawrence, *Kangaroo*, London 1980 [1923], p. 15.

<sup>83</sup> Even more so for the migrant generation of the 1940s, see A.J. Hammerton / A. Thomson, *Ten Pound Poms. Australia’s Invisible Migrants*, Manchester 2005, chap. 7.

<sup>84</sup> J. McCalman, *Class and Respectability in a Working-Class Suburb. Richmond, Victoria before the Great War*, in *Memories and Dreams*, pp. 21–37.

<sup>85</sup> See for the failure of co-operative associations in Australia, the “South Australian Chronicle and Weekly Mail”, September 4, 1869, p. 6 and the “Evening News” (Sydney), January 28, 1891, p. 2.

onies and in New Zealand in the period 1850–1930. Drawing on a range of sources in Britain and Australia, it problematizes conventional accounts of migration by reassessing the social context of migratory activity and taking seriously the narratives that highlighted the personal failures and casualties, as well as the successes, of the migrant odyssey. In so doing, it reassesses the appeal of migration to the Australian colonies and emphasizes the ambivalence of British co-operatives, trade organisations and many of the institutions of working-class life towards migration as a solution to social problems in Britain. Here, the remembered image of the East End as a separate ghettoized world of poverty became a rebuke to models of urban development characteristic of Britain and imported into the Australian colonies but recalled in visions of an “outcast Melbourne”. This chapter directly addresses these links with emigrant and diasporic narratives of yearning, regret and aspiration in relation to city living.

Australia is the most highly urbanized country in the world. The majority of Australians live in the narrow coastal plain around the continent; over 85% of the population live in suburban areas<sup>86</sup>. This developmental model reflects an influx of migrants from Britain who sought highly skilled urban occupations. It is this “Britishness” of the new growth city of Melbourne that was very apparent until the 1880s when the majority of migrants into Melbourne were still British and the town espoused the “civic gospel” that was typical of British regional centres in the nineteenth century. Since the late nineteenth century in Australia there has been a steady drift out of the rural areas into towns and cities leading to the depopulation of the “back-blocks”. Nevertheless, for many exponents of migration a nostalgic ruralism was depicted as an antidote to the malaise of urban society. Migration propaganda that celebrated re-settlement on the land depicted a return to an agrarian economy as the answer to the problems of urban blight at “home” and proffered a preferred economic model for migrant activity. These schemes carried echoes of a “Better Britain” that held out possibilities for the resurrection of the “white race” on the imperial periphery as the heartland declined. From Coleridge’s *Botany Bay Ecologues* in 1796 to William Charles Wentworth’s view of the revival of a “Merrie England” in exile, a vision of the Australian colonies as an arcadia stood in opposition to the realities of urban expansion across the continent creating a tension with the country’s urban and metropolitan outlook. In the Australian colonies the suburb became the most desired location for establishing a home, away from the dirt of the city, but not in the alien and strange outback which was shunned by the first generations of European settlers. This allowed for the very British phenomenon of the expansion of suburbia. By reconciling images of the urban and the rural, and relating them to different visions of migratory activity, architects and developers in the Australian suburbs created an acceptable

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<sup>86</sup> See T. Hogan, *Australian Cities*, in P. Beilharz / T. Hogan (eds.), *Sociology. Antipodean Perspectives*, Oxford 2012, pp. 19f.



pattern of *ex-urbe* development that defined the *rus in urbe* as the overall pattern for urban development and expansion in Australia. This rather than an urban, or a rural future, provided the embodiment of the migrant dream in the farthest outposts of the empire.